

This briefing provides information on the federally regulated expansion of the Salisbury Wicomico Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to include new identified urbanized area up the US13 corridor to the City of Seaford.

In 1962, the Federal-Aid Highway Act dedicated funding that would eventually create the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) that were to be the planning organizations for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more persons. Congress gave federal transportation officials the legal mandate and financing to transform the various regional planning groups across the country into multi-modal planning agencies. Both highway and transit funding was merged into one planning document. Currently, there are about 340 such urbanized areas with MPO's in the U.S.

The MPO planning process is required for "urbanized areas" that are designated after each decennial Census. The U.S. Census Bureau defines "urban areas" as those having population densities of 1000 persons per square mile. These urbanized areas can extend across State and County boundaries. New Castle County has been a part of the "Wilmington urbanized area" managed by the WILMAPCO MPO which also includes Cecil County, Maryland, since 1970. Kent County has been part of the "Dover urbanized area" managed by the Dover-Kent County MPO , since 1990.

The 2000 Census created an urbanized area centered on Salisbury, Maryland which extended northward along the U.S. 13 corridor and included the entire Town of Delmar and about 1,200 people residing in the portion of the town in Sussex County.

After the 2010 Census, the Salisbury urban area of Sussex County was extended further northward along the US 13 Corridor to Seaford. Approximately 24,000 persons in the urbanized clusters of Delmar, Laurel and Seaford were identified using Federally-established population density criteria. Because this population grew contiguous to an existing MPO, the Salisbury Wicomico MPO, federal laws require that the boundary of the Salisbury Wicomico MPO grow to accommodate the area from Salisbury, Maryland northward to Seaford along the US 13 Corridor.

The main MPO functions are to carry out the 3-C Planning Process: Continuing – update the plan every 4 years, Comprehensive – includes land use projections for housing and employment, and Cooperative – Technical and Public involvement. The MPO also maintain a long-range transportation plan that includes air quality conformity.

The trigger for including the newly identified urbanized area into the Salisbury Wicomico MPo planning boundary is concurrent with the update of their Long Range Transportation Plan.

This plan is currently going through public comment and is planned for adoption in September of 2015. There is a public meeting on the plan scheduled in Seaford on February 25, 2015. DelDOT is currently reaching out to the communities to make them aware of the plan and

What does this mean for Delaware, Sussex County and the Municipalities located in the urbanized area?

1. This is a federally regulated process and neither DelDOT, Sussex County or the Municipalities have the right to object to the expansion without jeopardizing DelDOT's federal funding.
2. All three entities will have a seat on the Council for the MPO
3. All three entities will have representation on the technical advisory committee that would in turn advise the council.
4. DelDOT will have to redistribute the federal funding that it receives to include a fair share for the Salisbury Wicomico MPO. This means that WILMAPCO and Dover Kent County MPO will receive less.
5. The MPO will be obligated to perform planning studies within the urbanized area in proportion to the level of funding they are receiving from Delaware.
6. DelDOT will have to coordinate with the MPO to ensure that the Statewide Transportation Improvement Plan is consistent with the local Transportation Plan developed by the MPO. This means that project lists within the urbanized area need to be consistent.
7. DelDOT will provide the air quality conformance analysis to the MPO.
8. For areas outside the urbanized area DelDOT and the OSPC will continue to support the County and Municipalities with technical support and guidance on Comprehensive and Transportation Planning.