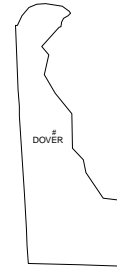


Dover/Kent Case Study

1990 Census Population	51,000
Central City	Dover, Delaware
Air Quality Status (1990)	Non-attainment
Governor Designation Date	November 2, 1992
Voting Policy Board Members	Governor's designee Kent County Levy court Mayor of Dover Another Kent County mayor DelDOT Delaware Transit Corporation
Non Voting Policy Board Members	FHWA FTA
PL and 5303 Funding (Year of Designation)	\$70,000
Initial Staff Size	1
Initial Staff Location	DelDOT
Modeling Responsibility	DelDOT
GIS Responsibility	Kent County
AQ Conformity Responsibility	DelDOT
Contacts	Juanita Wieczoreck, MPO Director Anthony DePrima, City of Dover Ralph Reeb, DelDOT Larry Klepner, DelDOT



The Dover/Kent County Metropolitan Planning Organization was formed in November 1992. It originally consisted of the urbanized area with the state capital of Dover as its center and a population of just over 50,000. The MPO region was expanded in 1996 to include all of Kent County, the New Castle County portion of the Town of Smyrna and the Sussex County portion of the City of Milford to better address air quality conformity issues. This decision also increased the MPO's share of planning funds. Although the number of people living in the urbanized area as of the 1990 Census was 51,000, the population of the MPO planning area was 114,523 in 1990, and 134,242 as of the 2000 Census.

There are six members of the MPO's policy board or council:

- Governor's designee,
- Delaware Department of Transportation (DelDOT),
- Delaware Transit Corporation (DTC),
- Kent County,
- City of Dover, and
- Mayor of another Kent County city elected to represent county municipalities

The first five were original members and the additional Kent County municipality was added when the MPO boundaries were expanded in 1996. FTA and FHWA are non-voting members of the policy board. DelDOT is the cabinet level transportation

department for the state. DTC is the statewide transit provider. Since the formation of the MPO, DTC has become a division of DeIDOT after previously being an independent entity.

In addition to the Policy Board, the MPO has two standing committees: the technical advisory committee and the public advisory committee. Membership on the technical committee is determined by MPO agreement or unanimous vote of the MPO Council and consists mainly of representatives from member governments or related agencies. Public advisory committee members are appointed for two-year terms by Kent County local governments.

The Dover/Kent County MPO is a stand alone MPO that deals only with transportation issues. At one time it was the only non-Transportation Management Area (TMA) stand-alone MPO in the country. The MPO's primary duties are the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program and the Unified Planning Work Program.

Steps Leading to Designation

In 1991, FHWA notified officials at DeIDOT that the Dover region would have to form an MPO. Subsequent to this conversation, the director of planning at DeIDOT began working with the mayor of Dover and the county executive in Kent County. Both local officials initially raised questions about the necessity of forming an MPO and the responsibilities of the new body. Other topics at this initial discussion were the membership of the policy board and the form that the by-laws would take. One DeIDOT respondent mentioned the Wilmington, Delaware MPO as an important resource for information for the officials during the development of bylaws. One resource that was not available but was cited as something that could have improved early discussions was a three-ring binder including examples of by-laws from other small MPOs around the country.

After the two local governments agreed to base policy board membership on the Intermodal Surface Transportation and Efficiency Act (ISTEA) guidelines, approval was demonstrated through the policy board members' signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The package of documentation forwarded to the governor to request his designation of the MPO included the MOU, the planning area map, and a resolution explaining the federal regulations and the need for the MPO's creation. The DeIDOT official said that the time between FHWA notification of Dover's designation as an urbanized area and the official MPO designation by the governor was approximately six months. The governor designated the Dover/Kent County MPO on November 2, 1992. The first meeting of the MPO Council was held on March 12, 1993.

Issues and Challenges

Regional Coordination

The MPO and City of Dover respondents felt strongly that prior to the creation of the MPO, coordination between stakeholders in the Dover area was rare as far as

transportation planning was concerned. Before the formation of the MPO, the City of Dover and Kent County did not work closely together. The MPO helped provide a regional forum for communication.

The lack of regionalism may have been a function of the state-county dynamic. In Delaware, the county governments do not own any of the roads. The state owns 92% of the roadway system, with the remainder owned by municipal governments. In other states where county ownership of roads is more common, the county government may provide some level of “regional” coordination. Without any significant jurisdiction over transportation facilities, Kent County had not provided that forum. Decisions and discussions about transportation at the regional level were the purview of the state government. State officials indicated that, although there was not a body whose sole mission had been outreach and advocacy, the state had made efforts at coordination before the MPO was formed.

Unique Delaware Challenges

The state’s ownership of the vast majority of transportation infrastructure has been one institutional characteristic that created challenges for a new MPO. Another distinct feature of Delaware government is the high level of proportional representation at the state level. There are more elected representatives to the state legislature than there are elected members of the county councils. As a result, Delaware state house districts are smaller in population than county council districts. Because of this, concerned citizens tend to petition their state representative if they have a transportation concern, thereby circumventing of the MPO’s public process.

Another challenge faced by Dover/Kent County (as well as the state’s other MPO in Wilmington) is the existence of two statewide organizations with missions overlapping with those traditionally falling to MPOs. The state’s Council on Transportation (COT) is a citizens-based committee appointed by the Governor to determine statewide priorities for transportation projects. COT predates the MPO by twenty years and at times overshadows the MPO’s role in this area.

The Population Consortium is another body that has oversight in the area of demographic information. The amount of successful coordination with these organizations has varied. The MPO has worked with the Population Consortium to refine forecasts and ultimately determines distribution of population and employment at the traffic analysis zone level. With COT, DelDOT is still trying to determine how to best have the two groups work together.

Administrative and Financial Resources

During the first year and a half a DelDOT planner served as the MPO’s staff. The MPO director was hired in 1994 and was the first full-time Dover/Kent County MPO staff person. She considered the support provided by policy board members to be instrumental in the first years. Between 1992 and 1994, DelDOT and the City of Dover assumed the administrative and financial management responsibilities of the MPO. The state in particular played a key role by assuming responsibility for MPO administration. After the

executive director was hired, DelDOT continued to house the MPO in its offices, as well as provide furniture, set up meetings, keep minutes and records, and provide technical support. She views the issue of “finding someone to house you” as critical for small MPOs because there is not a lot of money initially. In the first year of operations, the Dover/Kent County MPO’s allocation of PL and Section 5303 funds was just over \$70,000. Upon her arrival, all information necessary to fulfill the MPO’s duties was already in the office. This was critical as she the first UPWP was due almost immediately after her arrival. The MPO is now responsible for its own rent after recently moving into a new space, although DelDOT still provides financial assistance in the form of telephone and computer service. DelDOT’s rationale for providing computer service is that the agency, due to its greater buying power, can quickly and cheaply provide the MPO with access to its computer network. This frees up the MPO to focus on its programs because “they don’t have to focus on whether or not the computer works” while also allowing the state to further stretch their planning dollars.

The City of Dover was also a significant supporter of the MPO. During the first years, the City performed the function of financial administrator for the MPO. The City of Dover believed that it made more sense for one of the partners to handle the organization’s finances than to hire an independent accounting firm. The state was looking for an area where the city could contribute, and Dover already had a history of providing financial administration services for several local civic organizations. The MPO used the city’s purchase orders, checks and accounting system. After the MPO submitted a reimbursement request to DelDOT, the state would send the money to the MPO, which then turned it over to the City for deposit. According to the MPO and the city, this relationship ended after a few years because delays in the reimbursement of funds at the state and federal level were costing the city too much money. Since then, the MPO has maintained its own financial system. The MPO’s director cites cash flow as an ongoing concern for a small MPO.

Technical Resources

In terms of technical support, the state and county have both been instrumental. DelDOT performs all modeling work for the MPO and conducts air quality conformity analyses. The Director of Planning says that there were two principal motivations for doing the MPO’s modeling work. The first is a desire to have a set of consistent numbers. The second is that the state is concerned about the cost of maintaining more than one model. Since the MPO has input into demographics and traffic analysis zone (TAZ) boundary decisions, the state sees no real need for the MPO to maintain its own separate model.

Kent County has been a significant resource in the area of mapping. The MPO is working to further develop its skills in these areas. In addition to assisting the state in modifying TAZ boundaries, the MPO has a staff person with experience in GIS who is working with the county to coordinate map work.

Another important source of technical support has been the technical advisory committee. Members of the committee have been very involved in the MPO process. The city’s planning official suggested that, in order for the MPO to be effective, agencies and local

governments must give their representatives on the technical committee sufficient time to devote to the process.

Staff Resources

The MPO's executive director had previous experience with a large urban MPO. She believes this experience was critical in the early years of the Dover/Kent County MPO. Since she had seen what MPOs can do if given sufficient resources, she was able to push towards that. Her experience in a larger metropolitan area provided her with a different perspective on how to guide an MPO's work.

After five years, the staff had grown to include a director, executive secretary, GIS/planner and public affairs officer. The director places great importance on the hiring of staff with different skill sets. She cites the hiring of the MPO's public affairs person over the pressure to add another planner as one of the best staffing decisions she has made. One state official would have focused on technical skills, noting that nothing works better than "a giant map that says here is where the problems are and here are the conflicts." He believes that some tasks are better contracted out and does not view the responsibilities of a small MPO as necessarily requiring a large staff. He emphasized that small MPOs must be encouraged to focus on coordinating transportation efforts—"making sure the town is not going to tear up Main Street to put in a sewer line right after the state has finished repaving it."

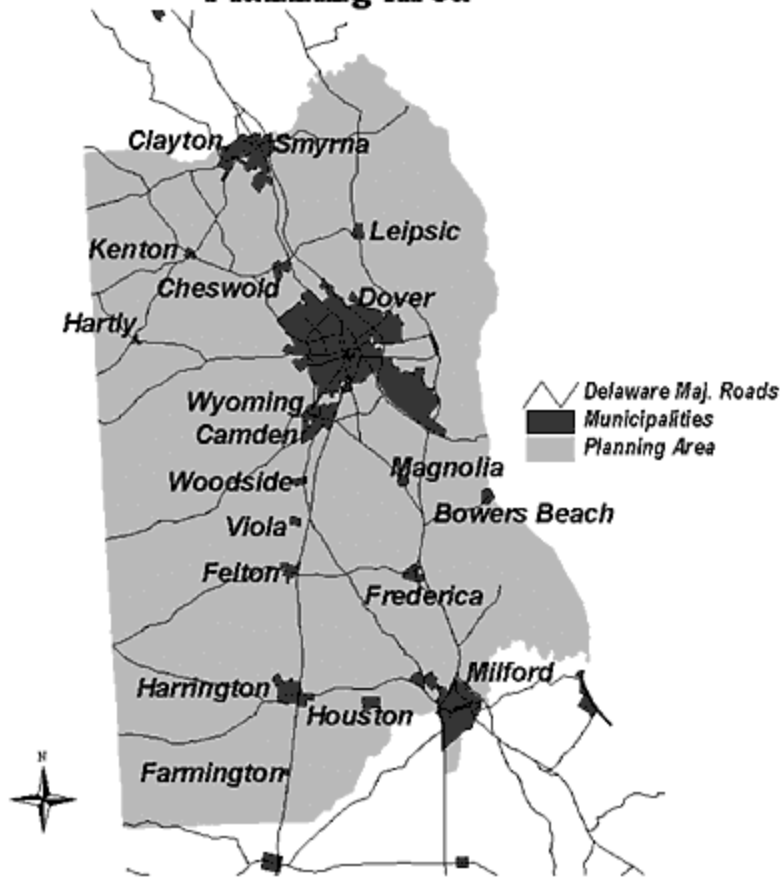
MPO Products

DelDOT officials suggested that the burdens placed on a small MPO in a non-attainment area are considerable. The expansion of the MPO boundaries to include all of Kent County and thereby the entire non-attainment area has helped with conformity modeling somewhat.

The first Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was the same as the statewide Capital Improvement Program. This has changed over the years as all projects submitted to the Dover/Kent County TIP are listed in addition to those programmed by the state. The primary challenge with early Unified Planning Work Program development was that the MPO would often identify traffic problems in more rural areas of the county that the locals did not want fixed due to historic preservation or aesthetic reasons.

Note: Four officials involved in the early formation of the Dover/Kent MPO were contacted for this study. These officials were the MPO Director, a representative of the City of Dover, and two state officials.

Dover/Kent County MPO Planning Area



Source: Dover/Kent website: <http://doverkentmpo.org>