

Census Urbanized Areas and MPO/TMA Designation Frequently Asked Questions

Federal Highway Administration

Revised 08/23/2012

FAQ Topics

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Introduction

*****This FAQ was updated on June 25, 2010 to include questions received in response to an April 27, 2012 webinar co-hosted by FHWA and Census Bureau Geography Division.**

On August 24th, 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau published the final criteria for the defining of urbanized areas (UZAs) and urban clusters (UCs) in the *Federal Register* ([PDF](#) or [TXT](#)). On March 27, 2012, the Census Bureau published the new list of UZAs and UCs based on the 2010 Census in the *Federal Register* ([PDF](#) or [TXT](#)) and released TIGER/Line geographic Shapefiles for the 2010 UZAs and UCs on the [2010 Census TIGER/Line Shapefiles](#) website. Although the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) has no direct role in the designation of UZAs and UCs, they are critical to the administration of the surface transportation program.

Key Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning and environment programs impacted by UZA and UC designations include:

- Designation of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and application of metropolitan planning requirements
- Designation of Transportation Management Areas (TMAs)
- Application of conformity requirements
- Surface Transportation Program (STP) funding availability:
 - STP attributable funds in UZAs with over 200,000 residents
 - Transit providers serving UZAs with 200,000 residents or less may use FTA Urbanized Area Formula Program funds for operating assistance (49 USC 5307). Providers serving UZAs with over 200,000 residents typically cannot use these funds for operating assistance.

This FAQ is intended to assist those with questions about the implications of the 2010 Census UZA and UC designations for the Federal transportation program. Questions not addressed here can be directed to the responsible individuals identified throughout the document. However, all questions concerning the criteria used and the process of designating UZAs and UCs should be directed to the Census Bureau staff at (301) 763-3056 or geo.geography@census.gov.

Please note that USDOT is currently operating under an extension of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) which expired on September 30, 2009. While Congress works on a new reauthorization act, many of the provisions where UZAs and UCs come into play are under discussion and subject to change. As a result, it is difficult to describe implications for the future transportation program with certainty. However, FHWA recognizes the need to continue providing guidance and direction to its State and MPO partners. FHWA will update the Census Issues website and this FAQ when new legislation is enacted and related information is available.

In developing these FAQ, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and relied on statutory and regulatory provisions where they existed. However, a significant portion of the following is based upon a "reasonable implementation strategy" rather than

statutory provisions directly. We have applied guidance, last issued in March 31, 2003, for the areas that became UZAs as a result of Census 2000, and adapted it where statutory or regulatory requirements have since changed. For additional information or for general questions not addressed here please contact:

- Lorrie Lau (Lorrie.Lau@dot.gov), FHWA , Office of Planning
- Candace Noonan (Candace.Noonan@dot.gov), FTA, Office of Planning

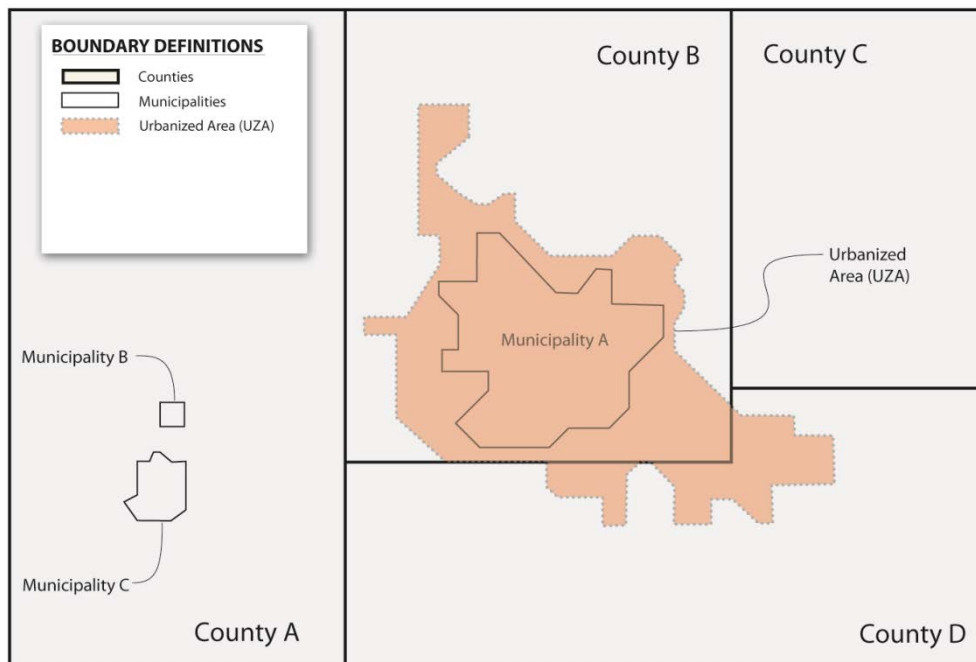
FAQ Topic 1: Definitions

- Urban Area
- Urbanized Area (UZA)
- Urban Cluster (UC)
- Adjusted UZA <Updated 08/23/12>
- Urban Place
- Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)
- Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) / Combined Statistical Area (CSA)
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- Transportation Management Area (TMA)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- For additional information

Urban Area - A Census-designated area consisting of a central core and adjacent densely settled territory that together contain at least 2,500 residents.

Note: Until 2000, urban areas were limited to areas with populations of 50,000 residents or more. However, since Census 2000, urban areas have included both Urbanized Areas (UZA) with populations of 50,000 residents or more, and Urban Clusters (UC) with populations of 2,500 to 49,999 residents. The Census Bureau uses the term “urban area” to refer to both UZAs and UCs collectively.

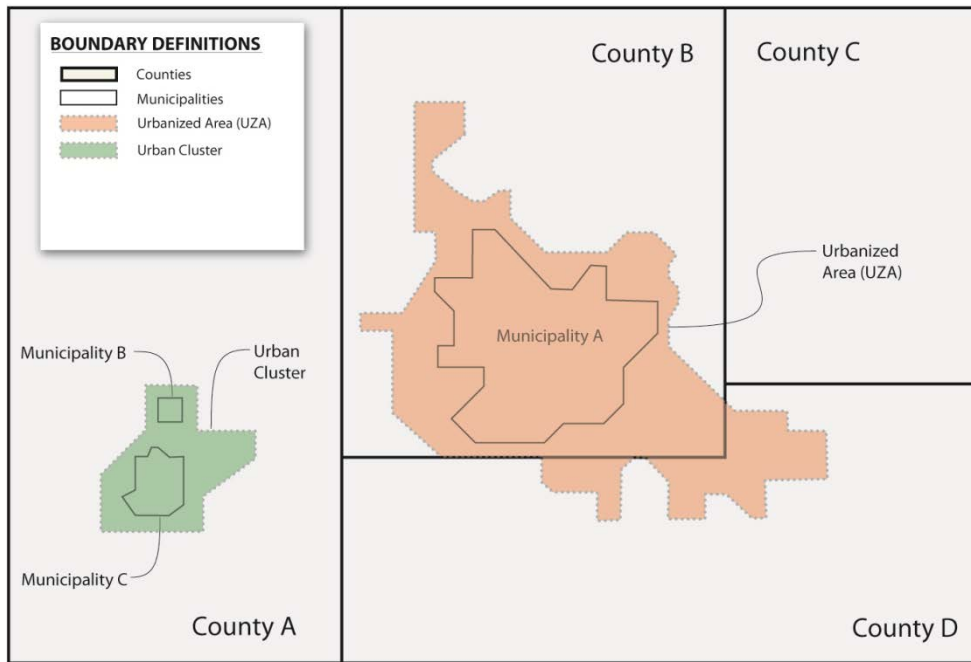
Urbanized Area (UZA) - A Census-designated urban area with 50,000 residents or more.



[Image shows a geographic area with several counties and three municipalities. An urbanized area boundary is shown surrounding the largest municipality, overlapping two county boundaries.]

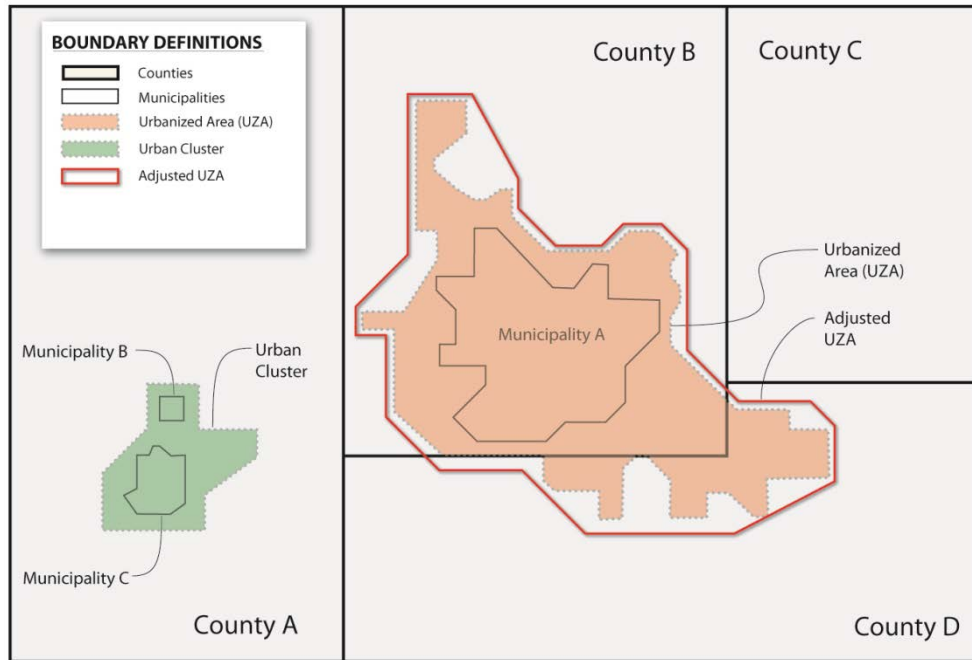
Note: USDOT typically uses the acronym “UZA” to refer to Urbanized Areas. The Census Bureau uses the acronym “UA.” They are synonymous.

Urban Cluster (UC) - A Census-designated urban area with at least 2,500 residents and no more than 49,999 residents.



[Image shows a geographic area with several counties and three municipalities. An urbanized area boundary is shown surrounding the largest municipality, overlapping two county boundaries. An urban cluster boundary is shown surrounding the two smaller municipalities.]

Adjusted UZA - A Census-defined UZA boundary that has been adjusted by a State DOT to include additional territory. Typically created to smooth irregular UZA boundaries, the Adjusted UZA must be submitted to FHWA for approval. <Updated 06/25/12>



[Image shows a geographic area with several counties and three municipalities. An urbanized area boundary is shown surrounding the largest municipality, overlapping two county boundaries. An urban cluster boundary is shown surrounding the two smaller municipalities. An adjusted UZA boundary is shown surrounding the urbanized area boundary. The adjusted UZA boundary has smoother edges than the urbanized area boundary.]

Note: Federal transportation legislation allows for State and local officials to cooperatively expand the Census-defined UZA boundaries. The adjusted UZA must encompass the entire Census-designated UZA and is subject to approval by the Secretary of Transportation (23 USC 101(a)(36) - (37) and 49 USC 5302(a)(16) - (17)).

Population derived from the Adjusted UZA is not used in the federal transportation programs where a population count is required for funding allocations. Where a population count is called for it is the Census-designated UZA population that is used.

The Adjusted UZA:

1. Must encompass the entire Urbanized Area or urban cluster area as designated by the Bureau of Census.
2. Should be one, single contiguous area.
3. Should encompass areas outside of municipality boundaries that have urban characteristics with residential, commercial, industrial, or national defense land uses that are consistent with or related to the development patterns with the boundary.

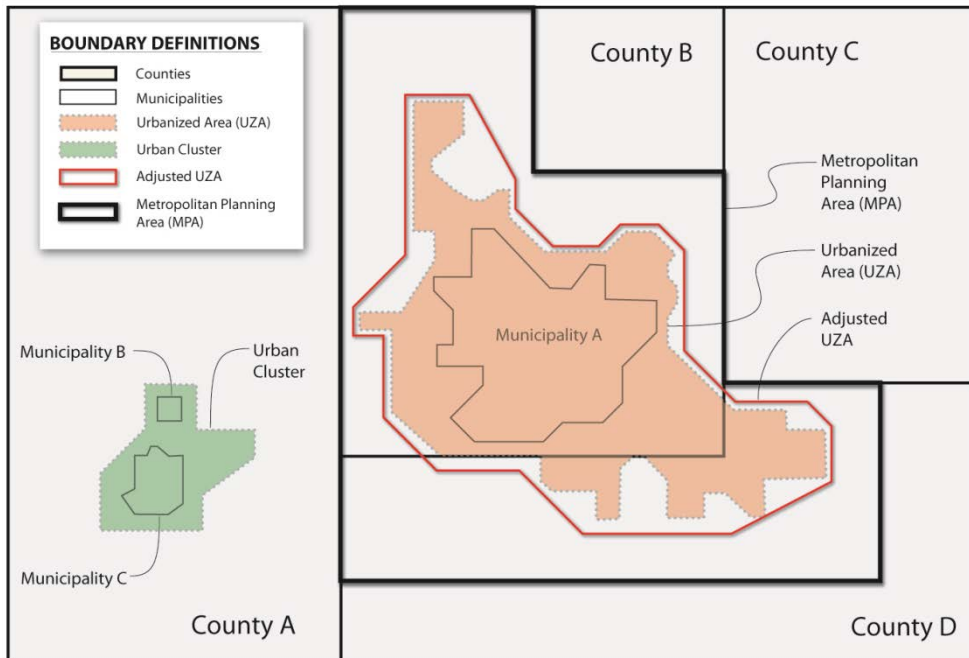
- Should encompass all large traffic generators that are within a reasonable distance from the urban area (e.g., fringe area public parks, large places of assembly, large industrial plants, etc.). This would include transportation terminals and their access roads (e.g., airports, seaports).

If an Adjusted UZA is not accomplished by June 2014 FHWA will consider the original 2010 Census UZA boundaries as the official boundaries in place for the 2014 HPMS data submission.

Urban Place - No longer exists in Census parlance.

Note: Prior to Census 2000, a place (incorporated city or town) with a population of 2,500 or more was classified as “urban” without regard to population density. The Census continues to define Incorporated Places and Census Designated Places, but these are not used as part of the urban/rural classification.

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) - The boundary in which the metropolitan transportation planning process must be carried out.

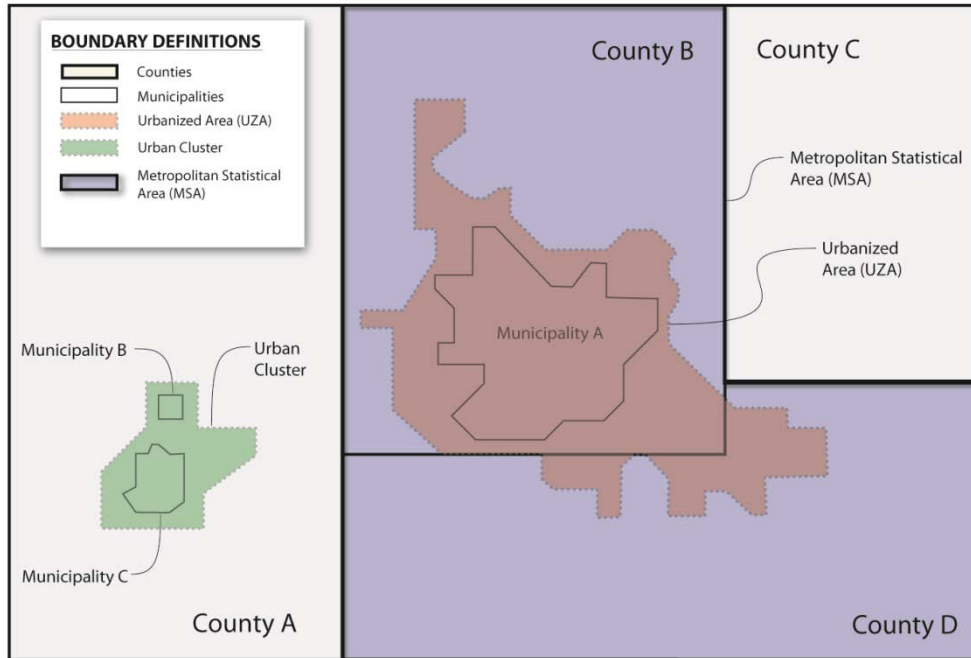


[Image shows a geographic area with several counties and three municipalities. An urbanized area boundary is shown surrounding the largest municipality, overlapping two county boundaries. An urban cluster boundary is shown surrounding the two smaller municipalities. An adjusted UZA boundary is shown surrounding the urbanized area boundary. The adjusted UZA boundary has smoother edges than the urbanized area boundary. A metropolitan planning area boundary is shown encompassing the urbanized area boundary and surrounding areas. The metropolitan planning area boundary does not necessarily conform to county boundaries.]

Note: The MPA must encompass the UZA(s) and the contiguous geographic area(s) likely to become urbanized within the next 20 years. In some cases, the MPA encompasses the entire

metropolitan statistical area (MSA) or combined statistical area (CSA), as defined by the Office of Management and Budget (23 CFR 450.104).

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) / Combined Statistical Area (CSA) – Geographies defined by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for use in tabulating statistical data about metropolitan areas.



[Image shows a geographic area with several counties and three municipalities. An urbanized area boundary is shown surrounding the largest municipality, overlapping two county boundaries. An urban cluster boundary is shown surrounding the two smaller municipalities. A metropolitan statistical area boundary is shown encompassing all counties that contain a portion of the urbanized area. The metropolitan statistical area conforms exactly to county boundaries.]

Note: MSAs consist of the core counties surrounding a UZA, plus adjacent counties with strong commuting patterns to and from the core counties. A CSA combines an MSA and one or more adjacent additional statistical areas defined by OMB.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - The designated local decision-making body that is responsible for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Note: Every UZA must be represented by an MPO (23 USC 134(b) and 49 USC 5303(c)).

Transportation Management Area (TMA) - A UZA with a population over 200,000, designated by the Secretary of Transportation.

Note: In some cases a UZA with less than 200,000 residents has been designated as a TMA, upon special request from the Governor and the MPO designated for the area.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - A prioritized listing/program of transportation projects covering a period of four years that is developed by an MPO as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process, consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan (MTP), and required for projects to be eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) - The long-range transportation plan for a metropolitan area. The MTP is the statement of the ways the region plans to invest in the transportation system over the next 20-25 years.

Congestion Management Process (CMP) - A way of systematically considering congestion-related issues using a set of technical tools, and basing evaluations on a discrete set of locally determined performance measures. A CMP is required for all TMAs.

For additional information

- To learn more about Census geography, terms and criteria please visit the Census Bureau Geography Division website: <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/>
- To learn more about metropolitan planning, terms, requirements, and funding please reference the [Transportation Planning Process Key Issues Briefing Book](#)

FAQ Topic 2: 2010 Urban Area Delineation

- Where can I find a description of the urban area delineation process used by the Census Bureau? <New 06/25/12>
- Did the Census use data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to define new UZAs, and therefore result in new MPOs?
- Where can I find the list of 2010 UZAs and UCs? <Updated 06/25/12>
- Did the Census Bureau use 2000 urban areas as the starting point for creating the 2010 urban areas? Why did some territories that were previously part of one UZA in 2000 move to another UZA in 2010? <New 06/25/12>
- Why are some unpopulated areas included in the urban areas? <New 06/25/12>
- What was the impact of including the 2006 National Land Cover Database (NLCD) Impervious layer in the criteria? <New 06/25/12>
- If an Urban Cluster is within 2.5 miles from an UZA, should it be joined to the UZA? <New 06/25/12>
- We have found some anomalies in our area. In one case, a subdivision was not included in a UZA. If it had been included, two UZAs would have been joined together. Why was this area excluded? <New 06/25/12>
- Does it make sense that only some UZAs in my State had an increase in population density between 2000 and 2010? Wouldn't you expect all of them to increase in population density? <New 06/25/12>
- Is it possible for UZA boundaries to overlap? <New 06/25/12>

Where can I find a description of the urban area delineation process used by the Census Bureau? <New 06/25/12>

For information on the process used by the Census Bureau to delineate 2010 urban areas, please reference this presentation, prepared by the Census Bureau Geography Division for the 2011 ESRI International User Conference ([HTML](#) or [PowerPoint](#) [12 MB]). Please direct any question to Census Bureau staff at (301) 763-3056 or geo.geography@census.gov.

Did the Census use data from the American Community Survey (ACS) to define new UZAs, and therefore result in new MPOs?

No. The ACS is a replacement for the Census "Long Form" to report demographic characteristics of the population. It is not an official count of persons, and does not have block-level population counts that are needed for UZA definition. UZAs are defined in-part on population density at the Census block level.

Where can I find the list of 2010 UZAs and UCs? <Updated 06/25/12>

The Census Bureau issued the list of 2010 urban areas in a *Federal Register* Notice on March 27, 2012. For the list of 2010 urban areas and additional related resources, visit the [2010 Census Urban and Rural Classification and Urban Area Criteria webpage](#). Please refer to the [schedule](#) for more important dates and milestones related to MPOs and TMAs.

Did the Census Bureau use 2000 urban areas as the starting point for creating the 2010 urban areas? Why did some territories that were previously part of one UZA in 2000 move to another UZA in 2010?

<New 06/25/12>

No, the 2010 urban areas were delineated from "scratch." The Census Bureau did not start with the 2000 urban area boundaries. Territory on the fringes of urban areas that are proximate or adjacent may have shifted from one area to another based on revised 2010 census block boundaries and population distribution/density patterns.

Why are there some unpopulated areas included in urban areas? <New 06/25/12>

The meaning of "unpopulated area" is dependent on the geographic scale of reference—that is, does this refer to census blocks with zero population, or to portions of census blocks that are not populated? Unpopulated areas have always been included in urban areas and, depending on location and context, can qualify for inclusion at various stages in the delineation of urban areas. These areas may encompass "downtown" business districts and other commercial/industrial areas that lack population but are surrounded by densely populated census blocks. Such areas typically have been included in an urbanized area via the enclave criteria. This ensures that the commercial and industrial cores that often form the basis for the existence of the urban area are included in the area.

Unpopulated portions of urban areas containing non-residential urban land uses can also include parks (e.g., Central Park in New York City or the National Mall in Washington, DC), schools and other institutional facilities that are part of the urban landscape. Other unpopulated areas may be included via the impervious surface criteria, particularly on the fringes of urban areas where large commercial and industrial areas may not meet enclave inclusion criteria. Hops and jumps that are used to join outlying densely settled areas with the main body of an urban area also may encompass unpopulated areas.

Census Block boundaries also play a role in that a census block may encompass parcels of land that contain population as well as parcels that lack population. If a census block qualifies for inclusion in an urban area based on its overall population density, then the unpopulated portions will also be included.

What was the impact of including the 2006 National Land Cover Database (NLCD) Impervious layer in the criteria? <New 06/25/12>

The Census Bureau added the use of the impervious surface layer from the 2006 National Land Cover Database (NLCD) to better account for the presence of non-residential urban land uses, such as commercial and industrial locations, that historically were excluded from an urban area, either because the associated census blocks failed to meet minimum population density criteria or because they were not included via enclave and indentation criteria. "Impervious surface" criteria was added in part, to alleviate some of the needs to adjust urban boundaries to include industrial areas and suburban employment centers on the urban fringe.

If an Urban Cluster is within 2.5 miles from an UZA, should it be joined to the UZA? <New 06/25/12>

There are multiple reasons why an urban cluster 2.5 miles from a UZA might not have been included. The area between the UZA and the UC might not have met the density criteria for a jump. Or, there

might have been another jump along the same road connection, and since only one jump along a given road connection is allowed, the second jump would not qualify.

Please contact Census Bureau Urban Area Delineation Program staff at 301-763-3056 or geo.geography@census.gov for further information.

We have found some anomalies in our area. In one case, a subdivision was not included in a UZA. If it had been included, two UZAs would have been joined together. Why was this area excluded? <New 06/25/12>

When delineating urban areas, the Census Bureau applied [published criteria](#) with geographic information contained within its geographic database (TIGER) and official 2010 Census population counts at the census block and census tracts levels of geography. All population density calculations rely upon official 2010 Census population counts and Census Bureau calculations of land area for census blocks and census tracts as defined for the 2010 Census. Please contact Census Bureau Urban Area Delineation Program staff at 301-763-3056 geo.geography@census.gov to discuss specific questions about your area.

Does it make sense that only some UZAs in my State had an increase in population density between 2000 and 2010? Wouldn't you expect all of them to increase in population density? <New 06/25/12>

The addition of land for industrial areas, suburban employment centers, and smaller airports, may have diluted the density increases you were expecting to see.

Is it possible for UZA boundaries to overlap? <New 06/25/12>

No. The Census Bureau assigns geographic areas to only a single UZA.

FAQ Topic 3: New MPOs

- Where can I find a list of new UZAs? Which new UZAs are contained within existing MPO boundaries? <New 06/25/12>
- When must new MPOs be designated?
- Must a new MPO be designated for each new UZA?
- How many MPOs should there be for an individual urbanized area? What are reasons for having more than one MPO? <New 06/25/12>
- Did the new transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, approved by Congress on June 29, impact the timeframe for establishing new MPOs? < Updated 07/05/2012>
- There is talk that the MPO threshold is going to be raised to 200,000 residents. < Updated 07/05/2012>
- What geographic area must be included within the MPA boundary? Are nearby UCs required to be included? Can the MPA extend as far as the MSA boundary? <Updated 06/25/12>
- What is required in order to designate a new MPO?
- Where can I find examples of MPO bylaws and the composition of policy boards for new MPOs? What sources of funding are typically used to establish a new MPO? <Updated 06/25/12>
- Can a new UZA, which is currently included in the MPA of an existing MPO, designate its own new MPO?
- If a new UZA adjoins an existing MPA, does a new MPO need to be established?
- How should projects be programmed for FTA and FHWA approvals in new UZAs? <Updated 06/25/12>
- Can FY2012 FHWA metropolitan planning (PL) funds be set aside for areas expected to be designated as UZAs in the spring of 2012?
- Can a new UZA receive FY 2013 FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds if an MPO has not yet been designated?
- How is conformity assured in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas that were previously isolated rural areas, but are now designated UZAs as a result of population growth recorded in the 2010 Census?
- My region is growing very rapidly and I believe it would meet the requirements for a new UZA. How can I get the Census Bureau to define it as a new UZA before the next decennial census?

Where can I find a list of new UZAs? Which new UZAs are contained within existing MPO boundaries? <New 06/25/12>

The Census Bureau 2010 urban area delineation process resulted in the identification of 36 new UZAs. Table 1 below lists the new UZAs and the primary State the UZAs are contained within. Table 1 also indicates whether, based on FHWA's knowledge, the UZAs were within an established MPO's MPA, partially within an established MPA, or completely outside all established MPA boundaries, as of June 1, 2012.

If you believe this information to be incorrect, it may be because FHWA has not received the most current MPA boundary for all MPOs. Please contact Supin Yoder (Supin.Yoder@dot.gov) to provide FHWA with updated MPA boundaries.

Table 1: New UZAs Resulting from the Census Bureau 2010 Urban Area Delineation

Urban Area Census Code	UZA Name	Primary State	Within Existing MPO Planning Boundary? ¹
22285	Daphne--Fairhope, AL	AL	No
19801	Conway, AR	AR	Yes -- Metroplan
14401	Casa Grande, AZ	AZ	No
46747	Lake Havasu City, AZ	AZ	No
81901	Sierra Vista, AZ	AZ	No
03196	Arroyo Grande--Grover Beach, CA	CA	Yes -- San Luis Obispo Council of Governments
22987	Delano, CA	CA	Yes -- Kern Council of Governments
96994	Woodland, CA	CA	Yes -- Sacramento Area Council of Governments
39758	Homosassa Springs--Beverly Hills--Citrus Springs, FL	FL	Partially -- Ocala-Marion County Transportation Planning Organization
80416	Sebring--Avon Park, FL	FL	No
14185	Cartersville, GA	GA	Partially --Atlanta Regional Commission
43615	Kahului, HI	HI	No
13591	Carbondale, IL	IL	No
53848	Manhattan, KS	KS	No
36514	Hammond, LA	LA	No
49594	Lexington Park--California--Chesapeake Ranch Estates, MD	MD	No
56980	Midland, MI	MI	Partially --Saginaw Metropolitan Area Transportation Study
53983	Mankato, MN	MN	No
13537	Cape Girardeau, MO--IL	MO	No
61840	New Bern, NC	NC	No
34246	Grand Island, NE	NE	No
51499	Los Lunas, NM	NM	Partially -- Mid-Region Council of Governments
92674	Watertown, NY	NY	No
00955	Albany, OR	OR	No

¹ Based on FHWA's database of MPO planning area boundaries, as of June 1, 2012.

Urban Area Census Code	UZA Name	Primary State	Within Existing MPO Planning Boundary? ¹
34516	Grants Pass, OR	OR	No
25849	East Stroudsburg, PA--NJ	PA	No
08434	Bloomsburg--Berwick, PA	PA	Partially -- Lackawanna-Luzerne Transportation
15184	Chambersburg, PA	PA	No
36784	Hanover, PA	PA	Partially --York Area MPO
39079	Hilton Head Island, SC	SC	No
79201	San Marcos, TX	TX	Partially -- Capital Area MPO
84630	Staunton--Waynesboro, VA	VA	No
95411	Williamsburg, VA	VA	Yes -- Hampton Roads Transportation Planning Organization
91405	Walla Walla, WA--OR	WA	No
93916	West Bend, WI	WI	Yes -- Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning
06139	Beckley, WV	WV	No

When must new MPOs be designated?

Each UZA listed in the 2012 *Federal Register* notice must be represented by a MPO within 12 months of the official Census Bureau listing. This list was published on March 27, 2012; therefore, new MPOs must be in place by March 27, 2013.

Must a new MPO be designated for each new UZA?

No. UZAs that are located within the MPA of an existing MPO are already represented and do not require designation of a new MPO.

How many MPOs should there be for an individual urbanized area? What are reasons for having more than one MPO? <New 06/25/12>

Generally, a UZA should be represented by only one MPO, unless there are some other extenuating circumstances, such as State laws that require county-based MPOs. Please refer to 23 CFR 450.310.

Did the new transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century, approved by Congress on June 29, impact the timeframe for establishing new MPOs?

<Updated 07/05/2012>

The schedule that new MPOs should be established by March 27, 2013 remains in place.

There is talk that the MPO threshold is going to be raised to 200,000 residents. <Updated 07/05/2012>

The new legislation signed by Congress on June 29 did not change the MPO threshold, therefore the current threshold of 50,000 remains.

What geographic area must be included within the MPA boundary? Are nearby UCs required to be included? Can the MPA extend as far as the MSA boundary? <Updated 06/25/12>

The determination of MPA boundaries is a State and local decision that should be made cooperatively between representatives of the local governments contained within the UZA(s), the Governor(s) and any adjacent MPOs. Boundaries must be approved by the Governor(s) and submitted to the FHWA Division Office(s). The MPA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census and the contiguous geographic area likely to become urbanized within 20 years.

Note: Please keep in mind that not all FHWA Division Offices have GIS capabilities; in some instances the State may be required to print hard-copy maps for the Division to review/approve. We stress that the approved (either signed or e-signed) boundaries files and maps must be retained and retrievable as part of the State's and FHWA's system file, until the next adjustment update.

The area likely to become urbanized within 20 years should be determined by the area's existing MPO(s) and State DOT. If nearby UCs are likely to become urbanized within 20 years than they should be included. The MPA may include the entire MSA or CSA as defined by the Census Bureau. The MPA boundaries for MPOs representing UZAs designated as non-attainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide pollution may be adjusted to include the entire non-attainment area identified under the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq.).

After the boundaries are approved, the State DOT(s) or the FHWA Division Office(s) should provide the boundary files electronically to the FHWA Office of Planning (HEPP-30) for inclusion into the FHWA Office of Planning Executive Geographic Information System ([HEPGIS](#)) database. The preferred submission formats are ArcGIS or TransCAD GIS file formats - the GIS software packages most commonly used by State DOTs and MPOs. E-mail or File Transfer Protocol (FTP) submissions are strongly encouraged. Submitting a CD or DVD via United States Postal Service (USPS) mail is also acceptable. Please contact Supin Yoder (Supin.Yoder@dot.gov) for detailed mailing and FTP submission instructions.

What is required in order to designate a new MPO?

Designation of a new MPO consists of a formal agreement between the Governor and units of general purpose local government that together represent at least 75 percent of the population to be included in the MPA. The agreement should, at minimum, identify the membership structure of the policy board and establish the metropolitan planning area boundaries (23 U.S.C. 134 (b) and 49 U.S.C. 5303 (c)).

A newly-designated MPO does not need to develop a MTP or TIP within the first 12 months. However, the initial MPO work plan should include tasks and a schedule to develop a TIP and MTP (23 CFR 450.308).

Where can I find examples of MPO bylaws and the composition of policy boards for new MPOs? What sources of funding are typically used to establish a new MPO? <Updated 06/25/12>

The FHWA Census Issues web site includes [several case studies](#) that document the experiences of MPOs that were established following the 2000 and 1990 decennial censuses. Because formal designation requirements may vary by State, it is best to reference examples from existing MPOs in your State whenever possible.

Can a new UZA, which is currently included in the MPA of an existing MPO, designate its own new MPO?

Except under extraordinary circumstances, the new UZA will remain with the existing MPO. Separation from an existing MPO would involve redesignation of the existing MPO. A request for redesignation requires agreement between the Governor and representatives of local jurisdictions that together comprise at least 75 percent of the population of the MPA (23 USC 134(d)(5) and 49 USC 5303 (d)(5)).

If a new UZA adjoins an existing MPA, does a new MPO need to be established?

Not necessarily. The existing MPA can be modified to incorporate the new UZA rather than establishing a new MPO. However, the Governor and MPO should review the previous MPO designation, State and local law, and MPO bylaws to determine if this can be accomplished without a formal redesignation (23 CFR 450.310).

How should projects be programmed for FTA and FHWA approvals in new UZAs? <Updated 06/25/12>

Until an MPO is officially designated, the State, in cooperation with local elected officials and officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the expected MPA, should meet to jointly determine an interim program of projects. Until a MTP and TIP are approved by the new MPO, an interim program of projects should continue to be programmed annually in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for all projects to be funded under the Federal Transit Act and Title 23. This interim program of projects should be separately identified in the STIP.

MPOs covering newly-defined UZAs will be given 12 months from publication of the list of 2010 UZAs to be designated by the Governor and begin developing a planning process meeting all the requirements of 23 CFR 450 and 49 CFR 613, including development of a MTP and a TIP.

Can FY2012 FHWA metropolitan planning (PL) funds be set aside for areas expected to be designated as UZAs in the spring of 2012?

No, the new UZA definitions will be used to allocate FY2013 PL funds. However, a State may provide State Planning and Research (SPR), National Highway System (NHS), Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Minimum Guarantee (MG) funds to support "start-up" planning activities in anticipation of a new MPO designation.

Can a new UZA receive FY 2013 FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds if an MPO has not yet been designated?

No, a new UZA cannot receive metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds until its intra-State formulae have been approved by the FHWA Division Office or FTA Regional Office (respectively) and an MPO has been designated. FY2013 funds allocated by the adopted intra-State formulae to the proposed MPO should be reserved by the State and allocated upon MPO designation.

How is conformity assured in air quality non-attainment and maintenance areas that were previously isolated rural areas, but are now designated UZAs as a result of population growth recorded in the 2010 Census?

Newly-designated UZAs, which are designated as air quality non-attainment or maintenance areas, would have previously been demonstrating conformity before being designated as a UZA because these areas were considered isolated rural non-attainment or maintenance areas (40 CFR 93.109(g)).

Within four (4) years of an area's designation as a UZA by the Census Bureau, the area's MPO must develop a new MTP and TIP, and the MPO and the USDOT must make a conformity determination for the MTP and TIP. A new conformity determination cannot occur until a MTP and TIP are in place. A conformity determination would be required to advance:

- A new non-exempt project that has not received a conformity determination.
- An existing non-exempt project that has already received a conformity determination, but three (3) years have elapsed since the most recent major step to advance the project occurred, or the project's design concept and scope has changed significantly.

If a MTP and TIP, and conformity determination are not completed within three (3) years of the area's designation as a UZA, then the area would be in a [conformity lapse](#).

My region is growing very rapidly and I believe it would meet the requirements for a new UZA. How can I get the Census Bureau to define it as a new UZA before the next decennial census?

You would need to have the Census Bureau conduct a [special inter-decennial census](#) in your area.

The Census Bureau charges \$200 to prepare a cost estimate for conducting the special inter-decennial census. The governmental units in your region would contract with the Census Bureau for the full costs of conducting the special inter-decennial census, which would need to cover the entire region, not just an area with new housing units.

[Flagstaff, Arizona](#) financed a special inter-decennial census between the 1990 Census and Census 2000, and was subsequently designated as a new UZA.

FAQ Topic 4: Existing MPOs

- When do MPA boundaries for existing MPOs need to be updated to reflect the 2010 UZA boundaries?
- What geographic area must be included within the MPA boundary? Are nearby UCs required to be included? Can the MPA extend as far as the MSA boundary? <Updated 06/25/12>
- What should I do regarding an area that is now part of “my” UZA with whom we don’t get along? What if the newly joined area doesn’t want to be part of our MPO? What if the newly joined area wants to start a separate MPO? <New 06/25/12>
- If the new UZA boundary lies entirely within an existing MPA boundary, must the existing boundary be adjusted?
- Does an MPA boundary adjustment require redesignation of the MPO?
- Two or more MPO’s MPAs now cover portions of a UZA. Must all MPA boundaries be adjusted to ensure that the UZA lies entirely within a single MPA? Will FHWA and FTA “strongly encourage” MPOs to merge in this situation? <Updated 06/25/12>
- A small area of a neighboring State is now included in our UZA. Does this area need to be included in our MPA? <New 06/25/12>
- What is the process for preparing and submitting adjusted MPA boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>
- If an existing MPO expands its MPA to include a new UZA, what changes need to be made to its governing board?
- If there are 5 transit agencies in my area, should each transit operator have a seat on the MPO Policy Board? <New 06/25/12>
- Will the MTP and TIP need to be modified immediately to assure that projects located in the new UZA boundary are eligible for advancement in existing MPO areas?
- We are in the middle of a Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update, but don’t expect to be done by October 2012. By what date must we complete modifications to our MPA boundary? <New 06/25/12>
- What happens to an MPO if the UZA population fell below 50,000 in the 2010 Census? <New 06/25/12>

When do MPA boundaries for existing MPOs need to be updated to reflect the 2010 UZA boundaries?

The MPA boundaries of current MPOs should be updated no later than the next scheduled MTP update after October 1st, 2012, or within four (4) years of the designation of the 2010 UZA boundary, whichever occurs first. This is consistent with the guidance (Q&As) provided by FHWA/FTA in 1992 and in 2003.

What geographic area must be included within the MPA boundary? Are nearby UCs required to be included? Can the MPA extend as far as the MSA boundary? <Updated 06/25/12>

The determination of MPA boundaries is a State and local decision that should be made cooperatively between local MPO representative, the State(s) Governor(s) and any adjacent MPOs. However, the MPA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census and the

contiguous geographic area likely to become urbanized within 20 years. The area likely to become urbanized within 20 years should be determined by the area's existing MPO(s) and State DOT. If nearby UCs are likely to become urbanized within 20 years than they should be included. The MPA may include the entire MSA or CSA as defined by the Census Bureau. The MPA boundaries for UZAs designated as non-attainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide pollution may be further adjusted to include the entire non-attainment area identified under the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq.).

What should I do regarding an area that is now part of “my” UZA with whom we don’t get along? What if the newly joined area doesn’t want to be part of our MPO? What if the newly joined area wants to start a separate MPO? <New 06/25/12>

Unless the newly joined area is part of a separate UZA as defined by the Census it cannot form a separate MPO. The new area could decide not to participate in the existing MPO, but then they would lack a direct role in how Federal transportation funds would be used in the area. The other members of the MPO, in cooperation with the State DOT and local transit operator(s), would determine which projects would be included in the MTP and the TIP in that area. The purpose of the metropolitan planning process is to support and facilitate regional cooperation in transportation system decisionmaking, so the parties need to find a way to work together as a region.

If the new UZA boundary lies entirely within an existing MPA boundary, must the existing boundary be adjusted?

No. The existing MPA boundary does not need to be adjusted if it contains the entire UZA boundary identified using the 2010 Census. However, the MPO may still need to adjust its MPA boundary to include new areas that are likely to become urbanized within 20 years.

Does an MPA boundary adjustment require redesignation of the MPO?

No. Expansion of the MPA boundary to reflect changes in the UZA boundary, or the addition of new members to the MPO policy board to provide representation for newly included areas, does not automatically require redesignation of the MPO. To the extent possible, it is encouraged that these changes be addressed without a formal redesignation. However, the Governor and MPO should review the previous MPO designation, State and local law, and MPO bylaws to determine if a formal redesignation is required (23 CFR 450.310).

Two or more MPO’s MPAs now cover portions of a UZA. Must all MPA boundaries be adjusted to ensure that the UZA lies entirely within a single MPA? Will FHWA and FTA “strongly encourage” MPOs to merge in this situation? <Updated 06/25/12>

FHWA and FTA strongly urge that one MPO cover an entire UZA, but for various reasons, that is not always the case. We will not require that existing MPOs merge unless the members of those respective MPOs agree to do so, with the concurrence of the Governor(s) and the redesignation provisions of 23 CFR 450.310 are followed.

There are at least three options available to handle this situation:

1. By mutual agreement, each MPO represents the portion of the UZA lying within its existing MPA boundary. This option requires no boundary adjustment or MPO redesignation, so long as the interests of the UZA population residing within the adjacent MPA boundary are adequately addressed.
2. The MPOs may adjust their MPA boundaries to ensure that the UZA is located entirely within a single MPA. This will result in a net increase in the size of one MPA and a corresponding decrease in the other MPA(s). This option may require redesignation of one or more MPOs, depending on State and local law and MPO bylaws.
3. Adjacent MPOs may decide to consolidate into a single MPO. This option definitely will require redesignation.

A small area of a neighboring State is now included in our UZA. Does this area need to be included in our MPA? What if the area in the neighboring State only contains two residents? <New 06/25/12>

Yes. All territory contained in the Census-designated UZA must be included in the MPA. The jurisdiction(s) on the other side of the State line shall be given the opportunity to be a part of the MPO Policy Board and planning process. To what extent those representatives need to be part of the process can be tailored to meet their needs and interests. Any Federal transportation funds spent in that area still need to be included in the relevant MTP and TIP. The existing MPO for the UZA will need to work with the relevant jurisdictions and the Governor of the neighboring State to develop an agreement to include that area in the MPO's planning process and MPO Policy Board, to the extent appropriate.

If you believe the Census Bureau has made an error, please contact the Census Bureau Urban Area Delineation Program staff at 301-763-3056 to discuss specific situations.

What is the process for preparing and submitting adjusted MPA boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>

The determination of MPA boundaries is a State and local decision that should be made cooperatively between local MPO representatives, the Governor(s) and any adjacent MPOs. All boundary adjustments must be approved by the Governor(s) and submitted to the FHWA Division Office(s). The MPA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census and the contiguous geographic area likely to become urbanized within 20 years.

Note: Please keep in mind that not all FHWA Division Offices have GIS capabilities; in some instances the State may be required to print hard-copy maps for the Division to review/approve. We stress that the approved (either signed or e-signed) boundaries files and maps must be retained and retrievable as part of the State's and FHWA's system file, until the next adjustment update.

The area likely to become urbanized within 20 years should be determined by the area's existing MPO(s) and State DOT. If nearby UCs are likely to become urbanized within 20 years than they should be included. The MPA may include the entire MSA or CSA as defined by the Census Bureau. The MPA boundaries for MPOs representing UZAs designated as non-attainment areas for ozone and carbon

monoxide pollution may be further adjusted to include the entire non-attainment area identified under the Clean Air Act (42 USC 7401 et seq.).

After the boundaries are approved, the State DOT(s) or the FHWA Division Office(s) should provide the boundary files electronically to the FHWA Office of Planning (HEPP-30) for inclusion into the FHWA Office of Planning Executive Geographic Information System ([HEPGIS](#)) database. The preferred submission formats are ArcGIS or TransCAD GIS file formats - the GIS software packages most commonly used by State DOTs and MPOs. E-mail or File Transfer Protocol (FTP) submissions are strongly encouraged. Submitting a CD or DVD via United States Postal Service (USPS) mail is also acceptable. Please contact Supin Yoder (Supin.Yoder@dot.gov) for detailed mailing and FTP submission instructions.

If an existing MPO expands its MPA to include a new UZA, what changes need to be made to its governing board?

The MPO should take into account changes in its MPA in reviewing representation on its governing board. Current MPO bylaws would be the basis for determination of any board changes (23 CFR 450.310). The FHWA and FTA will not define, require or approve any specific changes, other than those affecting TMAs.

If there are 5 transit agencies in my area, should each transit operator have a seat on the MPO Policy Board? <New 06/25/12>

23 CFR Part 450 requires the MPO for a TMA to include "officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation," if the MPO has been designated or redesignated since TMA designation. In most cases, the actions necessary to reflect Census 2010 UZA delineations will not require a formal MPO redesignation. 23 CFR 450.310(l)(3) allows MPOs to add members to satisfy the specific membership requirements for an MPO that serves a TMA without undertaking formal re-designation, provided this does not trigger any of the significant changes noted elsewhere in the regulation.

Statutory and regulatory provisions do not require voting membership on the MPO policy board for every transit agency operating in the MPA. Typically, voting membership will be extended to the "designated recipient" of 49 USC 5307 funding, who will involve and seek to represent other operators through on-going consultation and coordination.

Will the MTP and TIP need to be modified immediately to assure that projects located in the new UZA boundary are eligible for advancement in existing MPO areas?

Following the Census 2000 UZA definitions, the MPA should have been expanded (if necessary) to include the 2000 Census-defined UZA, plus any additional area anticipated to be urbanized within the next 20 years. Therefore, it is likely that no immediate changes to the MTP or TIP will be needed. However, in cases where the UZA boundary has increased significantly beyond what was expected to become urbanized, the MPO should review and adjust the MPA boundary by the next MTP update occurring after October 1st, 2012, or within four (4) years of the Census definition of 2010 UZAs (whichever is sooner), to incorporate new UZAs outside the current MPA, as well as additional areas expected to become urbanized in the next 20 years.

New MPA boundaries must be approved by the MPO and the Governor and submitted to the FHWA and the FTA. Once the expanded MPA boundary has been submitted, projects in the expanded MPA can be added to the MTP and TIP.

We are in the middle of an update to our MTP, but don't expect to be done by October 2012. By what date must we complete modifications to our MPA boundary?<New 06/25/12>

FHWA has called for the next MTP update occurring after October 1st, 2012 to reflect revised MPA boundaries based on the Census 2010 UZA delineation. We understand that some MPOs began their MTP updates before the Census 2010 population figures and boundaries were released. That work can be finished on your regular update schedule. However, the MPA should be revised to cover all of the Census 2010 UZAs (and additional areas forecasted to become urbanized within the next 20 years) as soon as possible.

What happens to an MPO if the UZA population fell below 50,000 in the 2010 Census?<New 06/25/12>

There are three areas in this situation: Danville, VA; Sandusky, OH and Galveston, TX. FTA HQ and the FHWA Office of Planning are working directly with the FHWA Division Offices and FTA Regional Offices to provide the affected MPOs with guidance.

FAQ Topic 5: New TMAs

- When will new TMAs be designated? <Updated 7/23/12>
- Which population number is used to determine which areas will be designated as TMAs? <New 06/25/12>
- What happens when an area is designated as a TMA?
- Does an existing MPO in an area that is newly-designated as a TMA have to modify its policy board?
- When must an area that is designated as a TMA establish a CMP? <Updated 06/25/12>

When will new TMAs be designated? <Updated 07/23/12>

The list was [posted in the Federal Register on July 18, 2012](#). Please refer to the [schedule](#) for more important dates.

Which population number is used to determine which areas will be designated as TMAs? <New 06/25/12>

The Secretary of Transportation will designate new TMAs based on the official Census Bureau 2010 urbanized area population. The population of the adjusted UZA boundary is not used during the TMA designation process.

What happens when an area is designated as a TMA?

An area designated as a TMA enjoys certain benefits and incurs additional requirements beyond those of smaller urbanized areas (23 USC 134 (k)).

- Transportation plans and programs within a TMA must be based on a continuing, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process carried out by the MPO in cooperation with the State and transit operators.
- The transportation planning process must include a [Congestion Management Process \(CMP\)](#).
- The FHWA and the FTA must [certify](#) the transportation planning process no less often than once every four years.

Does an existing MPO in an area that is newly-designated as a TMA have to modify its policy board?

At a minimum, the policy board of an MPO that serves a newly-designated TMA must include local elected officials, appropriate State officials, and officials of public agencies that administer or operate major modes of transportation in the metropolitan area. The MPO should review its policy board membership to determine if all of these groups are represented and add new members as appropriate (23 CFR 450.310(d)).

When must an area that is designated as a TMA establish a CMP? <Updated 06/25/12>

Newly-designated TMAs need to implement a CMP within 18 months of their designation by the Secretary of Transportation. It is expected that the new list of TMAs will be released in July of 2012. If this is the case, new TMAs must establish a CMP by January, 2014. Please refer to the [schedule](#) for more important dates and milestones.

FAQ Topic 6: Funding

- Which population number is used for PL and 49 USC 5305(d) funding allocation among States? <New 06/25/12>
- Do adjusted UZA boundaries have any implications for funding? <New 06/25/12>
- When will the distribution of FHWA and FTA Metropolitan Planning (MP and PL) funds have to change to account for new UZAs?
- How will the new UZA populations impact the apportionment of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds?
- How will STP funds be sub-allocated between two or more MPOs that cover the same TMA that includes a UZA with over 200,000 residents?
- Does each TMA receive its own CMAQ, STP, and 49 USC 5307 funding allocations? Are these funds eligible to be used for projects outside the designated TMA area, but within the MPA? <New 06/25/12>
- The local match requirement for CMAQ is 13.5% for FHWA, and 20% for FTA. Our transit agency had to scramble to find 6.5% more in local match at the last minute. How can this discrepancy be avoided? <New 06/25/12>
- Can FY2012 FHWA metropolitan planning (PL) funds be set aside for areas expected to be designated as UZAs in the spring of 2012?
- Can a new UZA receive FY 2013 FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds if an MPO has not yet been designated?
- How is the “designated recipient” selected for the 49 USC 5307 funding program? <New 06/25/12>
- When will FTA begin using new UZAs for annual funding apportionment? How do changes to UZA population affect apportionment and eligible activities? <New 06/25/12>

Which population number is used for PL and 49 USC 5305(d) funding allocation among States? <New 06/25/12>

Population is a minor factor in determining PL funding apportionment. The Census Bureau population for the UZA is used for all funding formulas, not the population of UCs or the adjusted UZA.

The PL funding distribution formula is: 1.25 percent deduction from amounts authorized for the Interstate Maintenance (IM), National Highway System (NHS), STP, Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement (CMAQ), and Bridge programs is apportioned to the States based on a ratio of UZA population in individual States to the total nationwide UZA population. The minimum apportionment per State is 0.5 percent of the total nationwide PL funding apportionment.

49 USC 5305(d) fund authorization levels are not determined as a “take-down” from another program, but are set explicitly in law.

Do adjusted UZA boundaries have any implications for funding? <New 06/25/12>

The adjusted UZA boundary is not used for funding allocation formulas, it may be used to determine eligibility for certain Title 23 funding categories (e.g., STP funding) and will impact Functional Classification (urban vs. rural).

When will the distribution of FHWA and FTA Metropolitan Planning (MP and PL) funds have to change to account for new UZAs?

The apportionment of metropolitan planning (MP and PL) funds to the States based on new UZAs will begin with FY2013 funds, apportioned on or after October 1st, 2012. States need to evaluate and revise their intra-state formula immediately (if necessary), using the population figures released by the Census Bureau in the spring of 2012. FHWA and FTA will request that States and their MPOs reaffirm the existing formula, or agree on a new intra-State formula. Each State should work cooperatively with the existing MPOs (and elected local officials in newly-defined UZAs) to review and revise the formula, then submit it for approval to the appropriate office (FHWA Division Office for PL funds; FTA Regional Office for MP funds). Current and prior-year FTA apportionments of MP funds can be found here. States should reference this information when reaffirming or revising their intra-State MP funding distribution formulas.

By fall 2012 FHWA will complete a national study of PL funding distribution approaches and formulas used by State DOTs. This study will be posted on the FHWA Census Issues website when it becomes available.

How will the new UZA populations impact the apportionment of Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds?

STP funds are sub-allocated within each State between UZAs with a population over 200,000 and the rest of the State, in proportion to their relative share of the total State population. Each UZA with a population over 200,000 receives a share of the funds sub-allocated for such areas, based on the area's share of the total population in all areas with over 200,000 residents in the State. This sub-allocation formula will use population totals from the 2010 Census beginning with FY2013.

In some instances where an existing UZA has been split, or if other UZAs in the State have grown at a faster rate, a UZA's population share, and therefore the UZA's share of STP funds, may decrease.

How will STP funds be sub-allocated between two or more MPOs that cover the same TMA that includes a UZA with over 200,000 residents?

There is no specific provision in Federal transportation legislation for allocation of STP funds among multiple MPOs serving the same TMA that includes a UZA with over 200,000 residents.

Does each TMA receive its own CMAQ, STP, and 49 USC 5307 funding allocations? Are these funds eligible to be used for projects outside the designated TMA area, but within the MPA? <New 06/25/12>

CMAQ funds are distributed to the States, but must be spent in air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas designated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Many States then allocate CMAQ funds to nonattainment/maintenance areas (usually located within MPO planning areas)

and allow MPOs to decide how to spend the funds. However, some States retain control of all or part of apportioned CMAQ funding and have various ways of deciding how and when to distribute CMAQ funds and which projects to support. In such cases, the States must work with the MPO(s) covering the nonattainment/maintenance area to determine how to use the apportioned CMAQ funds.

In general, CMAQ funds can only be used for projects located within EPA-designated air quality nonattainment or maintenance areas for carbon monoxide (CO), ozone (O³), or particulate matter (PM). Projects may also qualify if they are located in proximity to, and will provide air quality benefits to a nonattainment or maintenance area. In CMAQ minimum apportionment States and in other States that meet certain criteria, all or a portion of CMAQ funds are considered to be “flexible” and can be used in any area that meets the eligibility requirements of either CMAQ or STP.

Please refer to the CMAQ funding program guidance for more details on the program:

http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/air_quality/cmaq/policy_and_guidance/cmaq08gd.pdf

Each TMA receives STP “attributable” and direct 49 USC 5307 funds based on UZA population (see 23 USC 133 for STP) and authorization level. Funds from these programs can be spent on projects located anywhere within the MPA.

The local match requirement for CMAQ is 13.5% for FHWA, and 20% for FTA. Our transit agency had to scramble to find 6.5% more in local match at the last minute. How can this discrepancy be avoided?

<New 06/25/12>

The match ratios for FHWA and FTA funds are set by law. All agencies anticipating using Federal funds need to be aware of the matching requirements to avoid the situation referred to above. In this case, it appears the State receiving the CMAQ funds is a “sliding scale” State, whereby the non-Federal match for FHWA funds is reduced based on the proportion of Federal land in the State. Otherwise, the match for FHWA would be the same as FTA (20%). Sliding scale match ratios do not apply to FTA funding programs.

Can FY2012 FHWA metropolitan planning (PL) funds be set aside for areas expected to be designated as UZAs in the spring of 2012?

No, the new UZA definitions will be used to allocate FY2013 PL funds. However, a State may provide State Planning and Research (SPR), NHS, STP, and Minimum Guarantee (MG) funds to support "start-up" planning activities in anticipation of a new MPO designation.

Can a new UZA receive FHWA or FTA metropolitan planning (PL or MP) funds (FY2013) if an MPO has not yet been designated?

No, a new UZA cannot receive PL or MP funds until its intra-State formulae have been approved by the FHWA Division Office or FTA Regional Office (respectively) and an MPO has been designated. FY2013 funds allocated by the adopted intra-State formulae to the proposed MPO should be reserved by the State and allocated upon MPO designation.

How is the "designated recipient" selected for the 49 USC 5307 funding program? <New 06/25/12>

In UZAs of 200,000 in population or greater, the designated recipient of Section 5307 funds must be designated jointly by the Governor(s), publicly owned operators of mass transportation services, and responsible local officials acting through the MPO.

When will FTA begin using new UZAs for annual funding apportionment? How do changes to UZA population affect apportionment and eligible activities? How does this affect National Transit Database (NTD) reporting? <New 06/25/12>

FTA is required by law to use the Census-designated 2010 UZAs for the Fiscal Year 2013 apportionment, which will be based on National Transit Database (NTD) Report Year 2011 data. For more information on the implications of 2010 Census UZAs for FTA formula grant annual apportionment and eligible activities, please visit http://www.fta.dot.gov/grants/12853_12408.html.

New NTD UZA reporting numbers can be found on the [NTD website](#) under "Census 2010 Updates." Each transit system must identify which UZA(s) it serves. In addition, operators must identify any rural or non-urbanized areas served. An area is served by a transit system if the system picks up passengers in that area.

Note: Some demand response systems allow passengers to travel to a particular location, but do not allow trip originations in that area. In these cases, do not list these destinations as "served" by the transit system. All areas served by the system must be identified, regardless of whether or not the system plans to allocate service data to those areas.

FAQ Topic 7: Making Adjustments to UZA Boundaries and Implications for Federal Transportation Programs

- What Federal transportation programs are impacted by adjustments to UZA boundaries?
- I thought the Urban/Rural designations were removed from the highway functional classification system. Is this true? <New 06/25/12>
- Do I need to adjust the Census-designated UZA boundaries?
- Can I adjust UZA boundaries to include less area than the Census-designated boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>
- Does the MPA need to contain the entire adjusted UZA? <New 06/25/12>
- How often can I make adjustments to UZA boundaries?
- What is the process for preparing and submitting adjusted UZA boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>
- Where can I find our current adjusted UZA boundary? <New 06/25/12>
- What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting?
- What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Functional Classification?
- What impacts do adjustments in urban area boundaries have on Outdoor Advertising Control?
- How will the 2010 UZAs and UCs impact other data reporting?

What Federal transportation programs are impacted by adjustments to UZA boundaries?

The following FHWA Programs distinguish between urban and rural areas:

- **Highway Functional Classification:** The highway functional classification system distinguishes both by type of roadway facility and whether the facility is located in an urban or rural area. A specific type of roadway facility may have different design criteria depending on whether it is in a rural or urban area, but highway design criteria are not applied strictly according to an urban versus rural boundary designation.
- **HPMS Reporting:** FHWA's [Highway Performance Monitoring System](#) (HPMS) requests States to report annual highway statistics (i.e., lane and centerline miles, VMT) by highway functional classification, including urban versus rural. Several tables in FHWA's annual [Highway Statistics](#) Report also summarize information by urban versus rural classifications.
- **Distribution of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds:** 23 USC 133(d)(3)(B) guarantees that a minimum of 110% of the amount of funds apportioned to the State in FY 1991 for the Federal-aid secondary system must be spent in rural areas. A rural area is defined as any area of the State that is outside of the Adjusted UZA (sometimes called the Federal-Aid Urban Area - FAUA) boundaries. This provision only affects where funds may be spent within a State, not how much money the State receives.
- **STP Apportionment Formula:** 23 USC 104(b)(3) includes, as part of the apportionment formula for STP funding, lane-miles and VMT on Federal-Aid highways within the state. Federal-Aid highways include all highway functional classifications except local roads and rural minor collectors. Expanding the boundary of urban areas within the state may change some rural

minor collectors to urban collectors, making them eligible as Federal-Aid highways. However, the impact on apportionment of federal aid funding is insignificant.

- **Control of Outdoor Advertising:** The Outdoor Advertising Control Program (23 USC 131) uses the UZA definition in 23 USC 101(a)(36) to specify the boundary between locations where signage can be placed beyond 660 feet and be intended to be read from the highway. For further information concerning outdoor advertising control, contact Mary Jane Daluge, FHWA Office of Real Estate Services (MaryJane.Daluge@dot.gov).

I thought the Urban/Rural designations were removed from the highway functional classification system. Is this true? <New 06/25/12>

No. Urban/rural designations are still critical elements of highway functional classification. What you are referring to are the functional classification data codes used in the new Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) which have been normalized so that they only have one meaning (i.e., they indicate the functional classification of the roadway). A separate “urban/rural” field in HPMS delineates between Urban and Rural. When these two fields are combined, urban and rural functional classifications can be derived as they were in the past. For functional classification guidance see the FHWA Functional Classification Guidebook at <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/fctoc.htm>.

Do I need to adjust the Census-designated UZA boundaries?

No. Federal transportation legislation allows adjustments to the Census-designated UZA boundaries (Adjusted UZAs); however, there is no Federal requirement to do so. States and MPOs may choose to use the Census-designated UZA boundaries without adjustment.

Adjustments to UZA boundaries had significant funding implications when Federal-Aid highway funding included separate apportionments for Federal-Aid Urban and Federal-Aid Rural Systems. These funding classifications were eliminated in 1992 under the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA).

Currently, the Federal requirements for urban versus rural classifications are limited mostly to highway statistical reporting, highway functional classification, and regulation of outdoor advertising. These requirements are described [above](#). However, a number of States have included urban versus rural classifications in their intra-State apportionment formulae. These State requirements should be reviewed before deciding whether or not to adjust the Census-defined UZA boundaries.

Can I adjust UZA boundaries to include less area than the Census-designated boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>

No. Federal transportation legislation specifically requires that any adjustments to UZA boundaries must include, at a minimum the entire UZA designated by the Census Bureau.

Does the MPA need to contain the entire adjusted UZA? <New 06/25/12>

No. The MPA must contain the Census Bureau-defined UZA, not the adjusted UZA. However, Federal law requires that the entire UZA be included within the MPA as well as the contiguous area expected to be urbanized in the next 20 years (23 CFR 450.312.). Therefore, it is most likely that the MPA would need to include the entire adjusted UZA.

How often can I make adjustments to UZA boundaries?

Although there is no specific FHWA policy on how often UZA boundaries can be adjusted, States are strongly encouraged to make such adjustments as infrequently as possible and only when deemed absolutely necessary. Maps showing proposed adjustments to UZA boundaries must be submitted to FHWA for approval accompanied by approval letters from the MPO(s) and Governor(s).

Please talk to your [FHWA Division Planner](#) to determine the best method for submitting the revised boundary map. Some Divisions can accept a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) .shp file, but others may require a paper map or .pdf file.

What is the process for preparing and submitting adjusted UZA boundaries? <Updated 06/25/12>

The determination of adjusted UZA boundaries is a State and local decision that should be made cooperatively between local MPO representatives, the State(s) Governor(s) and any adjacent MPOs. All boundary adjustments must be approved by the Governor(s) and FHWA Division Office(s), and are subject to the approval of the Secretary of Transportation (23 USC 101(a)(36) -(37) and 49 USC 5302(a)(16) - (17)). The adjusted UZA boundaries must include the entire UZA boundary identified in the 2010 decennial Census.

Note: Please keep in mind that not all FHWA Division Offices have GIS capabilities; in some instances the State may be required to print hard-copy maps for the Division to review/approve. We stress that the approved (either signed or e-signed) boundaries files and maps must be retained and retrievable as part of the State's and FHWA's system file, until the next adjustment update.

After the boundaries are approved, the State DOT(s) or the FHWA Division Office(s) should provide the boundary files electronically to the FHWA Office of Planning (HEPP-30) for inclusion into the FHWA Office of Planning Executive Geographic Information System ([HEPGIS](#)) database. The preferred submission formats are ArcGIS or TransCAD GIS file formats - the GIS software packages most commonly used by State DOTs and MPOs. E-mail or File Transfer Protocol (FTP) submissions are strongly encouraged. Submitting a CD or DVD via United States Postal Service (USPS) mail is also acceptable. Please contact Supin Yoder (Supin.Yoder@dot.gov) for detailed mailing and FTP submission instructions.

Where can I find our current adjusted UZA boundary? <New 06/25/12>

Adjusted UZA boundaries should be on file with your FHWA Division Office(s). FHWA Headquarters has not previously collected these in a digital format; therefore, HEPGIS does not currently include the current adjusted UZA boundary.

What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting?

Adjusted UZA boundaries adopted by the State and MPOs should be used for Highway Performance Monitoring System (HPMS) reporting at the earliest time possible (within 2 to 3 years maximum) after the adoption decision.

Any changes to the rural/urban roadway location and functional class that result from adjustments to UZA boundaries should be reported in HPMS Data Items 1 (Functional System Code) and 2 (Rural/Urban Designation) respectively.

The size of urban area is determined based on the latest decennial Census (or special inter-decennial census) designation, not on the population within the Adjusted UZA. Please refer to the [HPMS Field Manual](#), page 4-16 for guidance on reporting Urbanized Area codes for HPMS Data Items 1 and 2.

Please refer to the [HPMS Frequently Asked Questions](#), or contact Joe Hausman, FHWA Office of Highway Policy Information (Joseph.Hausman@dot.gov) for further information on HPMS reporting.

What impacts do adjustments in UZA boundaries have on Highway Functional Classification?

Once the adjustments to UZA boundaries are adopted, highways that are impacted by the new boundaries must be functionally reclassified. The guide on classifying highways continues to be [Highway Functional Classification: Concepts, Criteria and Procedures. Rev. March 1989](#). Please note that the [2008 Addendum](#) allows for greater flexibility for deciding on an appropriate place for changing the functional classification of rural routes when they cross an urban boundary.

Because the anticipated adjustments resulting from the 2010 Census are relatively minor (unlike the national reclassification required in the 1990's by ISTEA), FHWA is not planning any workshops or training in this area. It is the responsibility of the [FHWA Division Offices](#) to approve any changes in the classification of highways. If a State does propose major changes to their principal arterial system, those changes should be submitted to FHWA's Office of Planning for further review prior to Division action.

For further information on Highway Functional Classification, contact: Spencer Stevens, FHWA Office of Planning (Spencer.Stevens@dot.gov).

What impacts do adjustments in urban area boundaries have on Outdoor Advertising Control?

States will continue to use the Census Incorporated Place data to map and control signage as it relates to places of 5,000 or more in population, in the manner defined by 23 CFR 750.153(t) and 750.703(m). For further information concerning outdoor advertising control, contact Mary Jane Daluge, FHWA Office of Real Estate Services (Maryjane.Daluge@dot.gov).

How will the 2010 UZAs and UCs impact other data reporting?

There could be impacts on other data reporting like FHWA's Fiscal Management Information System (FMIS) and National Bridge Inventory (NBI). Please direct your questions to Dale Gray, FHWA Office of Financial Management (Dale.Gray@dot.gov) and Ann Shemaka, FHWA Office of Bridge Technology (Ann.Shemaka@dot.gov), respectively.