

Whither Regionalism: The Salience of Megaregional Geographies for Inter-Metropolitan Planning and Policy Making

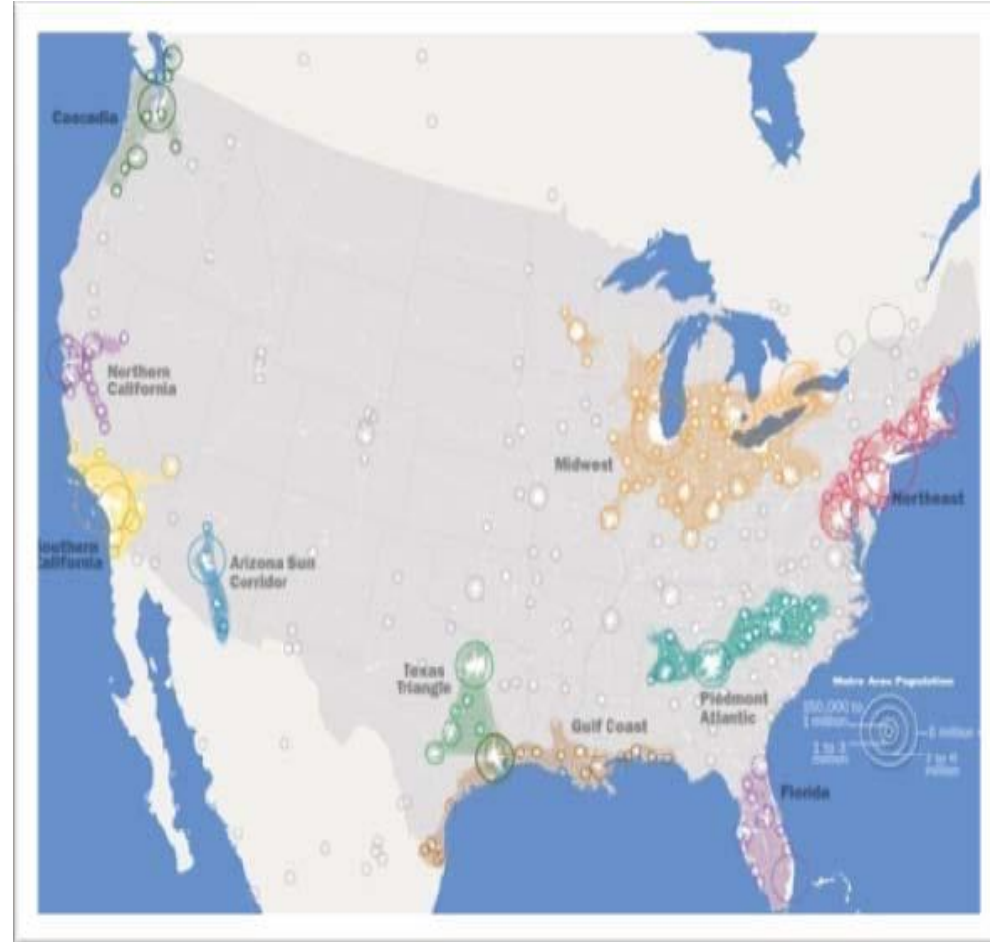
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Key Questions

- Is the megaregion a legible and compelling scale to address pressing environmental, social and infrastructural challenges now or in the future?
- Does the megaregional scale have meaning and salience for existing government and governance institutions addressing planning and policy problems spanning multiple metropolitan areas (U.S. MSAs)



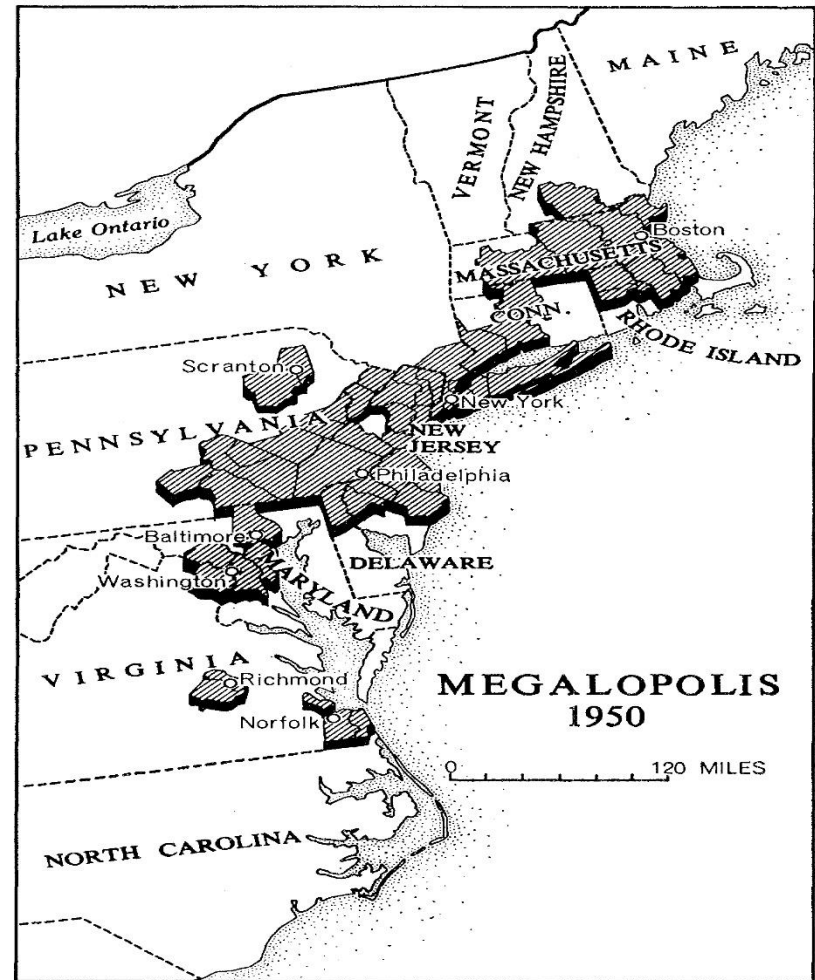
Components of the Study

1. Literature review and evaluation of cases of multi-metro, multi-jurisdictional planning and implementation in the U.S.
 - 19 cases
 - Close evaluation of six cases prominently profiled in the megaregional literature
2. Survey of directors and/or senior planners at 372 Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
 - Do MPO directors view collaboration and planning at the megaregional level as a meaningful framework and an important means to address interregional transportation and land use challenges?
 - In what ways do MPOs actively collaborate and/or cooperate with other MPOs across their state or at larger regional scales?
 - What are the legal, regulatory or institutional barriers to greater collaboration or joint project planning and implementation between MPOs at the state or megaregional scale?

Overview – The Megaregional Discourse - Where Did it Come From?

Analysis of larger clusters or agglomerations of metro regions has a long history

- RPAA and Mumford (1920s and 30s)
Pathological growth of U.S. urban centers called for top down interventions to balance and diffuse urban growth to regional hinterlands
- Gottmann (1957) characterized the agglomerated urban centers of the northeastern seaboard of the U.S. under the term “megapolis” -laboratory to forecast future urban growth and address possible obstacles and fetters.
- More contemporary roots in the work of the European Spatial Development Perspective in the 1990s as well as work depicting the rapid development of connected urban agglomerations and related “mega-infrastructure” initiatives in China



Contemporary Delineations of the Megaregional Concept

“The emerging megaregions of the United States are defined by layers of relationships that together define a common area that can be used to organize policy decisions” [these relationships are] “**environmental systems and topography, infrastructure systems, economic linkages, settlement patterns and land use, and shared culture and history**” (America 2050 2006, p.8.. and from Dewar and Epstein 2007. p. 113).

- Environmental systems, topography and “cultural” regions don’t map cleanly to connected urban networks or agglomerations
- So megaregional analysts homed-in on relationships and scales tied to population settlement patterns and economic linkages, namely the “**infrastructure systems, economic linkages, settlement patterns and land use**” from above

Rationales for Planning and Policy at the Megaregional Scale

- The megaregion represents the most relevant spatial scale shaping economic growth and competitiveness for both urban regions and national economies (Florida et al 2008; UN-Habitat, 2010).
- But underlying global competitiveness rationales are long-lived rationales for fitting spatial institutional structures and policies to the spatial scales most strongly influencing functional processes and systems.
 - efficiency gains from economies of scale
 - more effective scale to address network frictions
 - more effective scale to manage spillovers/externalities

What Megaregions? – The Problem of Delineating Boundaries

Authors	Methods of Megaregional Specification	Number of U.S. Megaregions
Hagler. 2009. “Defining U.S Megaregions,” America 2050, November.	Two step process: 1. Created and index of five equally weighted criteria- A county was assigned one point for each of the following conditions met: It was part of a core based statistical area; Its population density exceeded 200 people per square mile in the 2000 census; The projected population growth rate was expected to be greater than 15 percent and total increased population was expected to exceed 1,000 people by 2025; The population density was expected to increase by 50 or more people per square mile between 2000 -2025; and The projected employment growth rate was expected to be greater than 15 percent and total growth in jobs was expected to exceed 20,000 by 2025. 2. Based on the County maps, a Delphi Method using an expert panel to draw on their personal and professional knowledge of the geography of the United States and their professional experience visiting and studying metropolitan regions around the country to determine expanded catchment areas for the megaregional geography.	11 Megaregions
Lang and Dhavale. 2005	Specified contiguous U.S. metropolitan and micropolitan counties, uninterrupted by nonmetropolitan counties. Then adjusted based upon linkages between metro areas based upon headquarters and branches of large producer service firms in six sectors - law, accounting, management consulting, insurance, media, and advertising. Made select qualitative adjustments based upon ecological and cultural differences and topography	10 “Megapolitan” regions
Florida et al., 2008	Contiguously (or very nearly contiguously) lighted areas as seen from space at night with data from the Earth Observation Program of NOAA’s National Geophysical Data Center	12 Megaregions
Ross et al. 2009	Four step process: 1. Core urban areas identified based on multi-variate factor analysis; 2. Areas of influence of the identified core urban areas specified by commute shed data; 3. Clustering and linkages of metro regions specified by origin and destination flows of commodities; 4. Boundary conditions based on adjacency to metro counties and interstate highway connectivity	10 Megaregions

Megaregions – Multiple Delineations

America 2050

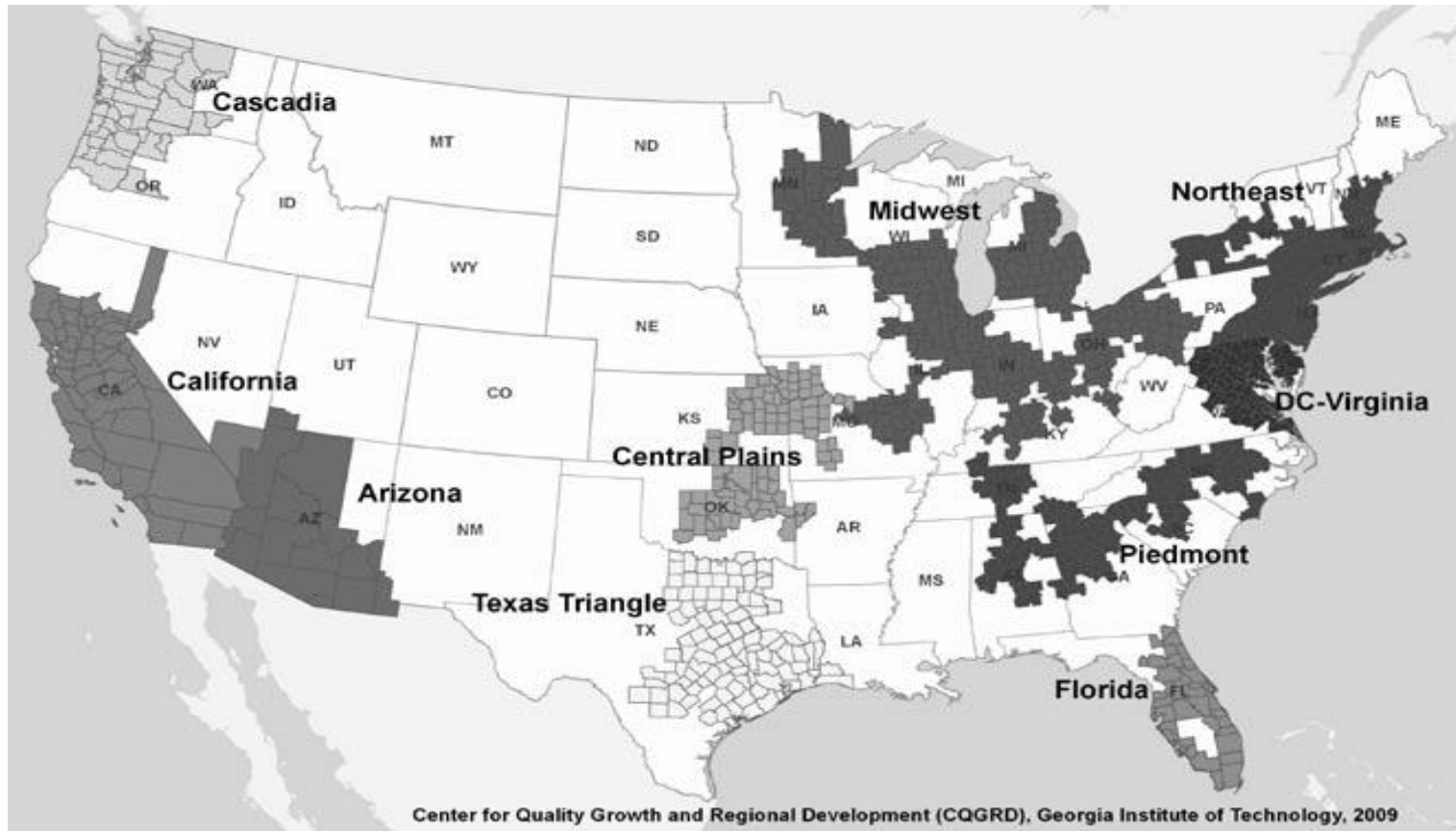


Lang and Dhavale. 2005

- Florida et al., 2008



Ross et al., 2009



‘to govern [or plan] it is necessary to render the visible space over which government [and/or governance] is to be exercised’ (Thrift, 2002, p. 205)

Illegible Space for Planners and Policy Makers?

- Megaregional spaces (in various configurations) do not map cleanly to any jurisdictional element in the U.S. system of fiscal federalism or to current multi-jurisdictional governance institutions.
- Megaregional spaces do not obviously map to larger scale functional problems related to built or natural systems.

Government Jurisdictions

Federal Government*

State Governments*

County Level
Governments

Municipal
Governments

Local Special
District
Governments (e.g.
School Districts)

Governance Institutions (examples)

River and Water Authorities and
Compacts

Metropolitan Planning
Organizations;
Port Authorities;
Councils of Government;
Water Management Districts;
Cross Jurisdictional Special
Districts (functional purpose)

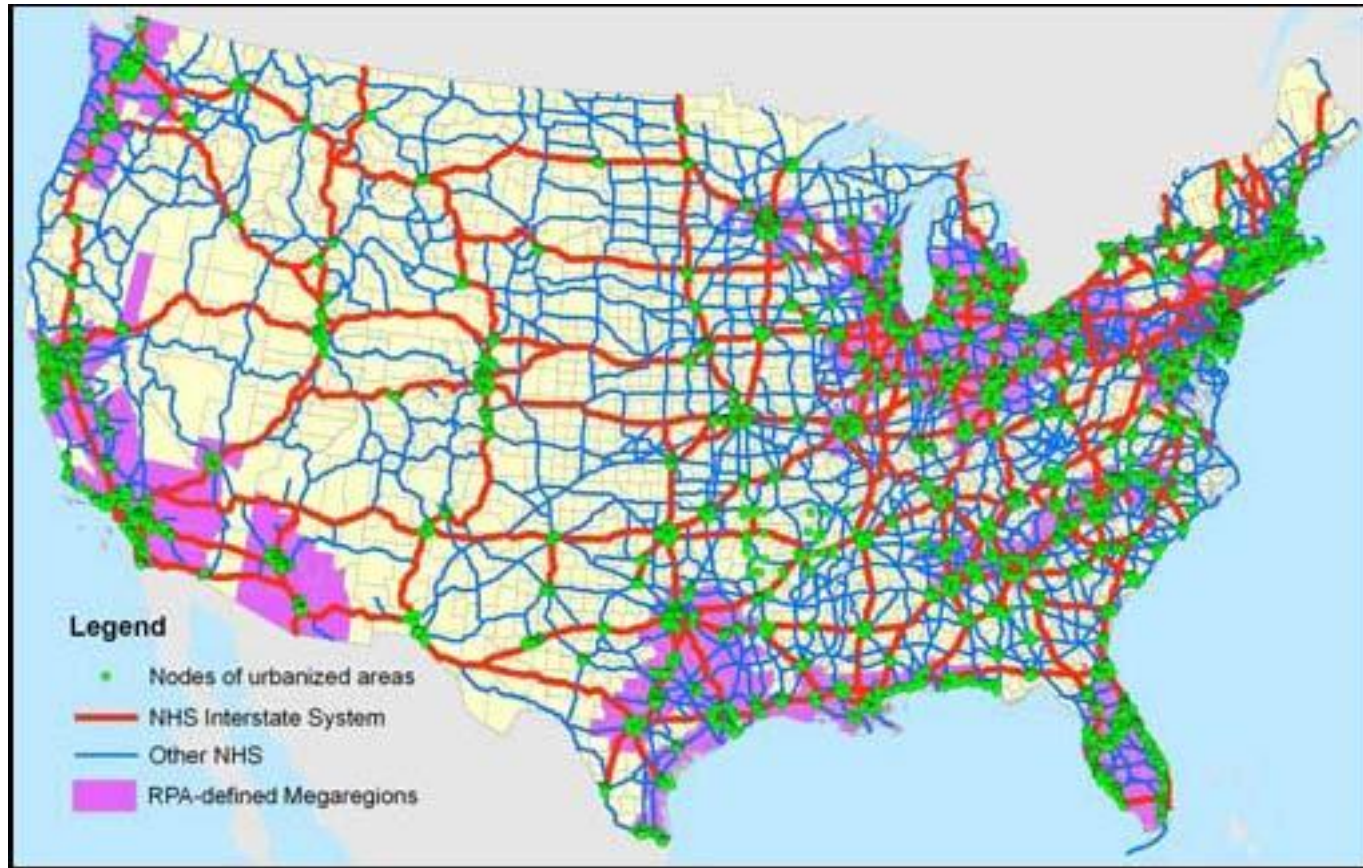


Figure 8. The National Highway System (ESRI, 2006; Bureau of Transportation Statistics (BTS), 2007)

Analysis of Existing Inter-Metropolitan, Multi-Jurisdictional Collaborations

- Is current inter-metro, multi-jurisdictional planning and project work happening at the scale defined as a megaregion?
 - Is the megaregional scale something that participating institutions and actors in active inter-metro, multi-jurisdictional initiatives recognize as an important framework or focus?
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- 19 larger scale multi-jurisdictional initiatives involving multiple metro regions (i.e. at scales larger than an MSA).
 - In depth analysis of six collaborative initiatives drawn directly from the megaregional literature that were profiled as case studies of megaregional planning.
 - Reviewed scholarly literature referencing the initiatives and reviewed publically available reports and documents, and websites profiling the initiatives and reviewed texts using work searches.

Multi-Jurisdictional Activity	Key Participants	Federal Government Leadership	State Government Leadership	Megaregional Scale	Megaregional Language
Florida MPO Regional Alliances	Multiple MPOs in Florida Urban areas and State Department of Transportation	Weak/Indirect	Strong	No	No
Great Lakes Interagency Task Force/ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative	U.S. and Canadian Federal Agencies with task forces involving state, provincial, and local jurisdictions	Strong	Strong	No	No
I-95 Corridor Coalition	State DOTs, transportation and port authorities, and federal transportation agencies. MPOs on the corridor participate as affiliate members.	Strong	Strong	No	No
Arizona Sun Corridor Projects	State government agencies, local governments, MPOs and Arizona –based NGOs	None	Strong	Yes	Yes
Buffalo-Toronto-Niagara Joint Planning Initiatives	U.S. and Canadian Federal Agencies with working growth involving state, provincial, and local jurisdictions in the regions	Strong	Strong	No	Yes
Southern California Transportation Planning	Local MPOs and Councils of Governments and State Agency (Caltrans)	No	Strong	Yes (for two of the four megaregions specifications)	No

Multi-Jurisdictional Activity	Functional Foci	Information exchange and discussion of issues of mutual interest	Collaboration to produce joint studies or recommendations about common issues or projects	Adopted memoranda of understanding (MOUs) between participating government institutions.	Proposed joint projects and investments with other participating government institutions
Florida MPO Regional Alliances	Transportation Planning and Project Development	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Great Lakes Interagency Task Force/ Great Lakes Restoration Initiative	Water quality and environmental restoration	Yes	Yes	No	Yes –largely related to federal funding of local government and NGOs for proposed projects
I-95 Corridor Coalition	Transportation issues related to Interstate-95 corridor	Yes	Yes	No	No
Arizona Sun Corridor Projects	Freight and highway transportation planning – evolved into border and economic development issues	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Buffalo-Toronto Niagara Joint Planning Initiatives	Transportation corridor and border crossing issues	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Southern California Transportation Planning Collaboration	Freight Transportation and border crossing issues	No	Yes	No	No

Key Findings

- In two of the six collaborations reviewed did participants and produced texts use the megaregion as a frame for the initiative and its activities (Arizona Sun Corridor)
- The spatial scope of the inter-metro collaboration mapped to a defined megaregional space in only two of the six collaborations (and spilled outside a defined megaregion in both cases as the initiatives evolved)
- All of the collaborations had strong leadership and support from higher level governments (federal and state).
- In five of the cases of larger scale inter-metro collaborations, the focus was on information exchange, studies and working groups. Explicit coordination among the parties related to plans or project investments was only evidenced in the Florida MPO case.

Modest evidence that megaregional scales have significant resonance or salience with government or governance institutions or actors

Forgetting Megaregions?

- Did the megaregional discourse emerge simply as a refreshing “respite from gridlocked politics and often ineffective institutions at other levels” (Wheeler, 2017, p.97)?
- The discourse had significant value
 - Drew attention to the importance of maintaining larger, highly connected functional systems in an era of federal and state underinvestment.
 - Suggested that devolving responsibilities and fiscal burdens to local scales risked network ruptures and negative externalities that had wide ranging costs at larger scales.
 - May have helped prepare the ground for deeper discussions of national infrastructure, environmental crises and problematic patterns of human settlement

Ways Forward?

- More research, organizing and advocacy for higher scale collaborations should direct more attention to hard wired government institutions at the federal and state levels.
 - Many functional systems operate at a national scale
 - Other systems operate at larger scales that do not map to megaregions.
- State governments can allow, encourage and fund multijurisdictional initiatives at the metro level and at larger scales within the state
- Federal and state governments can facilitate and fund existing inter-metro and interstate initiatives to address problems at the most effective scale.

Survey of MPOs (April and May 2018)

- 214 responses, 211 completed - 56.7% response rate

#	Answer	%	Count
1	200,000 or less	48.34%	102
2	200,000 – 1 million	40.28%	85
3	Over 1 million	11.37%	24
	Total	100%	211

Collaboration with Other MPOs - What forms of collaboration have you had with other MPOs and/or international transit-related org?

#	Question	Other MPOs in Our State	Other MPOs in Adjacent State(s)	Other MPOs in Non- Adjacent States	Transit Related Planning Organizations in Other Countries
1	Met with leadership and staff of other MPOs to exchange information and discuss issues of mutual interest.	92.99%	44.86%	20.56%	9.35%
2	Collaborated with other MPOs to identify joint challenges, strategies and priorities.	84.11%	32.71%	14.95%	7.01%
3	Collaborated with other MPOs to produce joint studies and/or recommendations about common issues or projects.	62.62%	18.69%	18.69%	3.27%
4	Have adopted memorandum of understanding (MOUs) between our MPO and other MPOs .	44.86%	18.22%	2.34%	1.40%
5	Integrated goals identified through collaboration with other MPOs into our Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).	45.79%	13.55%	0.93%	2.34%
6	Worked with other MPOs to propose joint projects and investments in our Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP).	37.38%	12.62%	1.87%	2.34%
7	Included projects identified through collaboration with other MPOs into our Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).	38.79%	7.94%	3.67%	4.59%

What topics and/or project areas have been a focus of your collaborations with other MPOs or international transit-related organizations?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Congestion Management Issues	41.12%	88
2	Major Transportation Corridor Issues	69.16%	148
3	Intelligent Transportation Systems/Operations	35.51%	76
4	Intercity Passenger Rail Service	30.37%	65
5	Intercity High Speed Rail Service	15.89%	34
6	Intercity Bus Service	43.46%	93
7	Multi-modal Freight Issues and Services	52.34%	112
8	Planning for Potential Future Growth in Driverless Vehicles	22.43%	48
9	Air Quality Issues	37.38%	80
10	Other Environmental Issues	14.95%	32
11	Coordination of Transportation and Land Use Planning Issues	50.00%	107
13	International Border Transit and Crossing Issues	3.27%	7
12	Economic Development Issues	35.98%	77

- In light of the other planning and implementation priorities of your MPO, how would you rank the importance of your collaborations with other MPOs or international transit-related organizations?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Not very important	6.25%	13
2	Somewhat important	20.67%	43
3	Important	42.79%	89
4	Very Important	30.29%	63
	Total	100%	208

- Is your MPO area within, or adjacent to, one of the nine U.S. mega-regions designated in the above map?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Yes	74.06%	157
2	No	25.94%	55
	Total	100%	212

What forms of collaboration has your MPO been involved in that addressed issues at the mega-regional scale

#	Question	Other MPOs in Our State	Other MPOs in Adjacent State(s)	Other MPOs in Non-Adjacent States	Planning Organizations in Other Countries	Total
1	Met with leadership and staff of other MPOs and/or organizations in our mega-region to exchange information and discuss issues of mutual interest.	47.77%	28.03%	12.10%	22.93%	157
2	Collaborated with other MPOs and/or organizations to identify joint challenges, strategies and priorities in our mega-region.	38.22%	20.38%	10.19%	17.83%	157
3	Collaborated with other MPOs and/or organizations to produce joint studies or recommendations about common issues or projects in our mega-region.	25.48%	7.64%	1.27%	10.19%	157
4	Have adopted memorandum of understanding (MOUs) with other MPOs and/or organizations in our mega-region.	22.29%	8.28%	1.91%	10.19%	157
5	Worked with other MPOs and/or organizations in our mega-region to propose joint projects and investments advancing mega-regional goals in our Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP).	16.56%	6.37%	1.27%	6.37%	157
7	Included projects identified through collaboration with other MPOs and/or organizations in our mega-region into our Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP).	14.65%	2.55%	0.64%	7.64%	157

What topics and/or project areas at the mega-regional scale have been a focus of your collaborations with other MPOs and/or other organizations in your mega-region?

#	Answer	%	
1	Congestion Management Issues	17.83%	157
2	Major Transportation Corridor Issues	43.31%	157
3	Intelligent Transportation Systems/Operations	16.56%	157
4	Intercity Passenger Rail Service	24.84%	157
5	Intercity High Speed Rail Service	21.02%	157
6	Intercity Passenger Bus Service	14.65%	157
7	Multi-modal Freight Issues and Services	43.95%	157
8	Planning for Potential Future Growth in Driverless Vehicles	12.74%	157
9	International Border Transit and Crossing Issues	5.10%	157
10	Air Quality Issues	21.02%	157
11	Other Environmental Issues	5.73%	157
12	Coordination of Transportation and Land Use Planning Issues	18.47%	157
13	Economic Development Issues	26.11%	157

In light of the other planning and implementation priorities of your MPO, how would you rank the importance of your collaborations with other MPOs and/or other organizations to address transportation and related planning issues at the mega-regional scale?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Not very important	26.77%	34
2	Somewhat important	33.07%	42
3	Important	27.56%	35
4	Very Important	12.60%	16
	Total	100%	127

- In your view, what are the major barriers to more extensive collaboration with other MPOs and/or other organizations to address transportation and related planning issues at the mega-regional scale?

#	Answer	%	Count
1	Working with other MPOs and/or other organizations on issues at the mega-regional scale is not a major priority given other demands on our time and resources	47.13%	74
2	Working with other MPOs and/or other organizations on issues at the mega-regional scale is not facilitated by the planning frameworks and requirements of our State Department of Transportation	16.77%	52
3	Working with other MPOs and/or other organizations on issues at the mega-regional scale is not facilitated by the planning frameworks and requirements of the Federal transportation agencies	22.93%	36
4	There are not sufficient financial resources for staff to engage in more extensive collaborations on mega-regional issues	50.32%	79
5	There are not specific funding sources to support joint projects at the mega-regional level with other MPOs and/or other organizations	43.95%	69