

Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) Case Study

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| 1990 Census Population | 62,418 |
| Central City | Holland, Michigan |
| Air Quality Status (1990) | Non-attainment for ozone |
| Governor Designation Date | October 1992 |
| Voting Policy Board Members | <u>Municipalities</u> City of Holland City of Zeeland Holland Charter Township Park Township Zeeland Charter Township Laketown Township Fillmore Township <u>County</u> Ottawa County Board of Commissioners Allegan County Board of Commissioners Ottawa County Road Commission Allegan County Road Commission <u>State</u> Michigan DOT <u>Original MACC</u> Transportation Sub-committee Housing/Quality of Life Sub-committee Land Use/Environmental Sub-committee |
| PL and 5303 Funding (Year of Designation) | \$125,740 (not including local match) |
| Initial Staff Size | 2.5 (director, part time secretary, transportation planner) |
| Initial Staff Location | City of Zeeland |
| Modeling Responsibility | MACC |
| GIS Responsibility | MACC |
| AQ Conformity Responsibility | Grand Rapids MPO |
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The Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Holland, Michigan urbanized area. The urbanized area spans two counties, consists of the cities of Holland and Zeeland and five townships in the southwestern region of the state. At the time of the 1990 Census, the Holland urbanized area’s population was 62,418. In the following decade the region grew to 91,765 residents. Portions of the area covered by MACC are also part of the Kent/Ottawa non-

attainment area. The Kent/Ottawa non-attainment area also extends into the larger Grand Rapids MPO.

Steps to Designation

After receiving notification of Holland's urbanized area designation, Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT) officials contacted the chief elected officials in the City of Holland. MDOT explained to the mayor and city manager of Holland the responsibilities of an MPO and the federal law requiring their formation. After these initial discussions, the Holland officials took the lead in coordinating local efforts to create the MPO. An MDOT official cites the mayor of Holland as being "instrumental in driving the other elected officials". In addition to being the central city in the urbanized area, the city was interested in being active in the MPO's formation because they were also the operators of the primary transit service in the region—Dial-a-Ride.

State and local officials quickly agreed on MACC assuming the role of the MPO for the Holland area. MACC had existed since the mid-1980s when it was created as part of the "2010 Convention," a regional strategic planning program convened by the city of Holland. In addition to transportation, MACC has since addressed many other regional issues including land use, housing, crime prevention and watersheds protection. The MDOT official described MACC's strength at the time as its name recognition with local officials. This regional familiarity made it a forum that the MPO designation could build upon, making it "the most logical vehicle for the MPO".

The package forwarded to the governor for his designation of MACC as the MPO included the planning area map, MPO bylaws, and a copy of MACC's intergovernmental agreement. Since all seven non-county units of government were already on the MACC board, officials were able to demonstrate the required approval of local governments representing 75% of the urbanized area population for MPO designation with the inclusion of the updated version of the signed agreement. About one year passed between the initial conversation between MDOT and City of Holland, and the governor's designation of MACC as the MPO in October 1992. This relatively long time before official designation was due more to the complicated arrangements that were required to put the multi-MPO air quality conformity process into place rather than to any significant disagreements in MPO responsibilities or makeup.

According to the MDOT official, FHWA and FTA staff were involved in providing assistance during the formation of Holland's MPO, but there wasn't the need for a lot of "hands on involvement". He believes that if MDOT or the local governments required more assistance, that the federal agencies would have provided it, but contends that the state or federal governments cannot "mandate local support". He views a "critical mass" of local support as a key factor in an MPO's formation, and in the Holland area there existed some familiarity with federal transportation programs to facilitate this local support. A City of Zeeland official involved in the formation of the MPO suggests that a considerable amount of support was forthcoming from MDOT. Without this support, the local governments would have had difficulty forming an MPO as quickly as they did.

ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

Policy Board Membership

The Zeeland official describes policy board membership as an issue that generated discussion, but did not result in any significant disagreement. The existence of MACC, which already included all of the non-county units of government, was one reason for the smooth transition. Another was the history of regional cooperation in the Lake Macatawa region. The cities of Holland and Zeeland, along with the Ottawa County Road Commission had worked together closely in programming the area's Federal Aid to Urban Systems funds. The City of Zeeland official describes strong regional ties and the area's shared history as resulting in an attitude where "what impacted one community impacted them all."

Since the MPO board evolved from the original MACC board (with the addition of MDOT and one representative each for both the Ottawa and Allegan County Commissions and one each for both the Ottawa and Allegan County Road Commissions) it inherited one of its unique features—the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee refers to three board members from the original MACC representing three original MACC subcommittees—Transportation, Housing/Quality of Life, and Land Use/Environmental. These subcommittees were formed as part the 2010 Convention to help shape policy in their respective focus areas. Although the three committee chairs are simply regular voting members and no longer perform an executive function on the new MACC board, their representation of civic organizations and business groups helps to make their input to the process a valuable one. According to the MPO director, the preservation of the Executive Committee has been one of MACC's strengths as an MPO because it does not include elected officials, thereby insulating it from politics. She says that as a result the Executive Committee has often functioned as a "think tank," with views that are typically more "regionally" based than those expressed by MACC board members representing a specific unit of local government. The Executive Committee has also worked closely with the MPO director on staffing decisions. In the opinion of the MDOT official involved in the formation of the MPO, the MACC policy board membership results in a broader range of views. There is citizen/business input as well as elected officials on the board, and there are transportation professionals on the technical advisory committee. An example of a private sector contribution to the MPO is the Herman Miller Corporation's (headquartered in Zeeland) 1995 \$40,000 contribution towards MACC's investment in GIS capabilities.

Financial Support and Staffing

Another issue to be resolved at the outset was the amount of dues to be paid by each local government to support the MPO's administrative budget. The result of these discussions was that local governments would not be responsible for supporting MACC administrative functions requiring more than a \$1 per resident contribution for each unit of government. All of the respondents agreed that the jurisdictions have been comfortable with the \$1 cap. The MPO director did point out, however, that the smaller units of government have to periodically be reminded that the reason there are not a lot of

projects in their jurisdictions in the long-range plan is a result of the regionally significant threshold that projects must meet, not because they contribute less to the MPO.

At the time MACC was designated as the MPO, the City of Zeeland was aware of the importance of a well-functioning MPO from staff experience in other metropolitan areas. When the city's police department moved into a new facility, Zeeland allowed MACC staff to move into the vacated space. The initial staff consisted of the director, who had been hired in August 1993. MACC used this space for less than a year until dues payments from MACC board members and federal funds became available. Although MACC members understood that MPO staff was independent of the City of Zeeland government, there was still a desire to see it move into a neutral location. This interest in the MPO's independent identity resulted in the rejection of office space that had become available in downtown Holland, because it could be perceived as too close to that city's government—the largest in the MPO. This reasoning led to MPO staff leasing office space in a location in the less-populous Holland Township. Shortly after this move the MPO staff grew to two as a planner was hired. The City of Holland also supported the MPO during its first year as well by providing the services of its accounting department and by loaning \$20,000 to the MPO before it began to receive funding. When MACC set up its own accounting system a year later, the MPO director highlighted the importance of the 3C Directors, an organization of MPO directors throughout Michigan that meets monthly in Lansing. She said the 3C Directors meetings provided her with a forum where she could discuss different methods for developing an MPO accounting system with her peers, in addition to making contacts with other MPO directors.

Air Quality Planning and Technical Support

When MACC was designated as the area's MPO, there were two adjacent non-attainment areas in the western portion of the state—Kent/Ottawa and Muskegon. The Muskegon non-attainment area is located within its own MPO area, but the Kent/Ottawa air basin spans the MACC region and the larger Grand Rapids MPO (MetroCouncil) area. With a population of roughly 500,000, Metro Council is also a Transportation Management Area (TMA). Although most of the Ottawa County non-attainment area lies within MACC's jurisdiction, a portion falls within a non-MPO area that falls under state jurisdiction.

Each of the three areas in the Kent/Ottawa air basin (Grand Rapids, MACC, and the non-urbanized portion of Ottawa County) were covered by different travel demand forecasting models, which were used as inputs to the air quality conformity analysis. This combining of products resulted in the MACC board having to work more closely with officials at MetroCouncil than it would have otherwise. And since there were some joint efforts between the Kent/Ottawa non-attainment area and Muskegon, MACC became accustomed to working with that MPO as well. Initially, air quality conformity analysis for Kent/Ottawa was performed by MDOT, but this work was transferred to MetroCouncil in the mid-1990s, with MDOT providing assistance as necessary. Although there have been some “bumps in the road” with this arrangement, the MACC director (who formerly worked for the predecessor to Grand Rapids' MPO) understands the rationale behind MetroCouncil doing the work, as they are a TMA and have a larger staff with more resources than the smaller MACC.

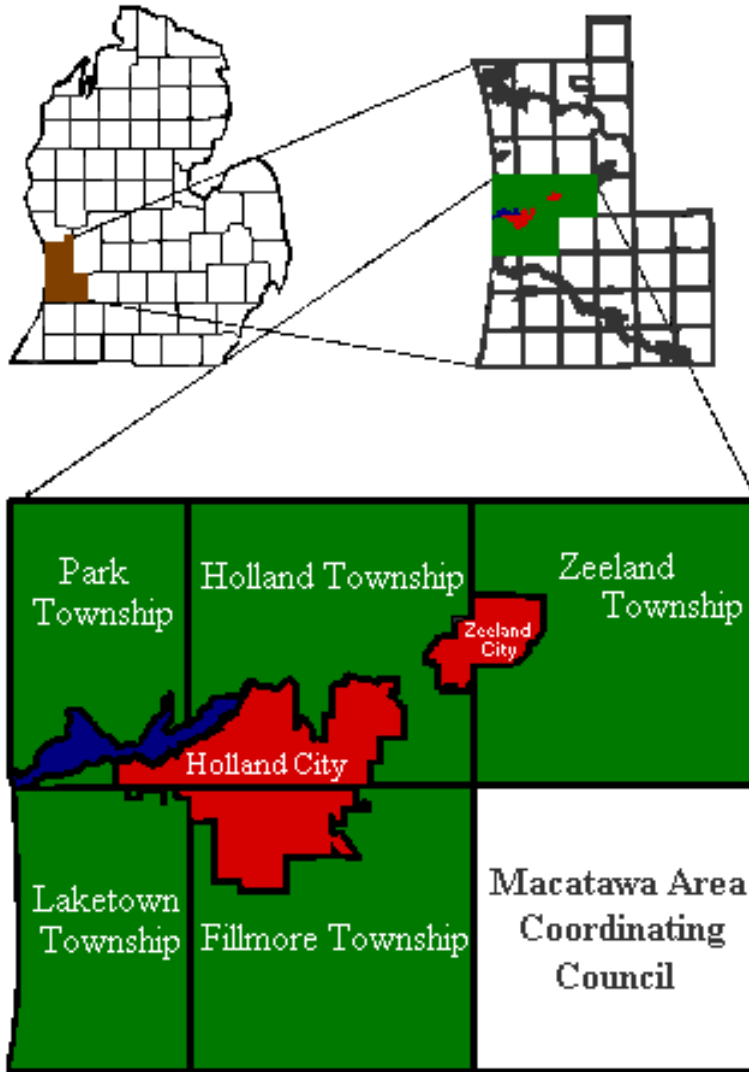
MPO Products and Transit's Role

The first self-certification documents produced after MACC's designation as the MPO were all completed within two months of the director's hiring in 1993. MDOT officials brought in examples of other Michigan MPOs' Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) that had been collected at 3C Directors meetings. The MACC director and MDOT, with the assistance of staff from the cities of Holland and Zeeland, did the work for the first TIP and long-range transportation plan, including air quality analysis. The MDOT official cited the support provided by FHWA with conformity issues during this "compressed time" available to develop the first certification documents as key. Concurrent with the preparation of the self-certification documents, extra committee meetings were being held to approve them before the federal deadline. The MPO director recalls that everyone realized that this was not the way it should be done, but that the process would improve before the next iteration of the self-certification process. According to the City of Zeeland official, there were no problems when MACC developed their second TIP. The members of the technical advisory committee were also very involved with the work of the policy board. As a result, their recommendations for programs tended to be approved by the board without lengthy delays.

The City of Holland is the primary transit operator in the MACC region. At the time of formation, its Dial-a-Ride service operated only within the city limits of Holland. The city's assistant city manager has been in charge of the transit system and he has been very active in technical advisory committee meetings and in making regular reports to the MACC board on the transit system. At the time of MPO designation, however, the service was viewed as being very localized and was not considered an important regional issue at the MACC table. The City of Zeeland official notes that there was an understanding by MACC members that over time the system would expand, but initially the city handled Dial-a-Ride's funding alone. More recently, the City has reached service agreements with two other local governments (City of Zeeland and Holland Township), expanded service, and changed the name to Macatawa Area Express (MAX). With this larger service area the transit system is beginning to become more of a focus of MACC.

Note: Three officials involved in the assumption of MPO responsibilities by MACC were contacted for this study. These officials were the MACC Director, an official from MDOT, and a second MDOT official who worked for the City of Zeeland at the time of designation.

Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) Planning Area



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