

## **TTP289A Transportation Policy and Planning**

### **Assignment 2: Evaluating the State of the Region**

**Due: Monday, 5/3**

The usual first step in the planning process is to evaluate the current conditions in the region, both good and bad. This evaluation then becomes the basis for the steps in the planning process that follow. It serves as an assessment of “where we are today.”

In this assignment, you will produce a report of 10-12 double-spaced pages (plus tables and figures) that summarizes the current conditions in your region with respect to transportation and analyzes the priorities of the region in addressing the transportation problems they face. The report should be written for a general audience, including readers who do not know much about the region. This is the kind of report you might write if you were on the staff of the MPO as it set out to update its long range transportation plan or, perhaps, if you were working for a community group (such as an environmental organization) that was interested in participating in and monitoring the planning process.

Start by doing research on the following items using the sources suggested (links to the national sources can be found on the course web page) as well as any other helpful (and reliable) sources you find:

1. What kind of transportation system does the region currently have? How many miles of freeways and other kinds of roadways? What sort of transit service and how extensive is it? And so on. Potential sources: the MPO website, the long-range plan, the state DOT website.
2. What kind of demand for transportation does the region currently have? What is the population? How high are vehicle ownership rates? What share of the population is “transportation disadvantaged”? And so on. Potential sources: the U.S. Census, the MPO website, websites for advocacy groups in the region.
3. Where does the region stand on the issues we’re talking about in class, including congestion, air quality, other environmental impacts, and safety? How serious are these problems in this region, compared with other metropolitan areas? What steps, if any, are being taken to address these problems? Potential sources: the TTI Mobility Study, the EPA’s Office of Transportation and Air Quality, the National Center on Statistics and Analysis, the state DOT, websites for advocacy groups in the region, the MPO website, the long range plan.
4. How does the region itself prioritize these issues? What sort of priorities does the current long range plan establish, either implicitly or explicitly? What has the local newspaper had to say about transportation in the last year? What other

evidence can you find that gives you a sense of the region's priorities – or possible controversies over those priorities? Potential sources: the long range plan, Lexis-Nexis for searching the local paper, websites for advocacy groups in the region.

5. What is your overall assessment of the current state of the region, given everything you've learned?

This is a lot of ground to cover in just two weeks and ten pages, so you'll have to be efficient and do some of your own prioritization about what is especially interesting and important in your region. Spend time before each class on your research as you do the reading for that day's topic. Give yourself plenty of time to explore, and count on wasting time on dead ends.

In writing the paper, think about how to use tables and graphs to efficiently summarize and effectively present the data you've gathered. You might use the above structure to organize your paper, or you might develop your own way of organizing the material. Be sure to include references throughout, using one of the accepted citation styles (such as those listed in the Chicago Manual of Style). Include a title page with title, your name, date, course number and title, that sort of thing. Staples only please; no fancy covers or binding.

Equal weight will be given to each of the following in grades for this assignment:

1. Quality of the research
2. Quality of the presentation, including writing and tables and figures
3. Quality of the analysis and overall thoughtfulness of the paper

This assignment will be worth 25% of the final grade.