Purpose
In their long-range transportation plans, MPOs aim to address a variety of problems: congestion, air quality, sprawl, safety, equity. To do so, MPOs turn to a variety of potential solutions, from traditional approaches such as road building to more innovative approaches such as congestion pricing. The challenge for MPOs is to find solutions that effectively address each problem without aggravating the others. Examples of strategies include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pricing</th>
<th>Transit</th>
<th>Facility operations</th>
<th>Non-motorized</th>
<th>Land use</th>
<th>Other demand management</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• HO/T lanes</td>
<td>• Light-Rail Transit</td>
<td>• Freeway management systems</td>
<td>• Pedestrian infrastructure and programs</td>
<td>• Transit-oriented development</td>
<td>• Voluntary trip reduction programs</td>
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<td>• Congestion pricing</td>
<td>• Commuter Rail</td>
<td>• Signal timing strategies</td>
<td>• Bicycle infrastructure and programs</td>
<td>• New Urbanism</td>
<td>• Social marketing programs</td>
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<td>• Parking pricing</td>
<td>• Bus-Rapid Transit</td>
<td>• Truck-lanes, other freight</td>
<td>• Bike-sharing programs</td>
<td>• Smart Growth</td>
<td>• E-activities</td>
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<td>• Transit fare strategies</td>
<td>• Paratransit</td>
<td>strategies</td>
<td>• Traffic calming</td>
<td>• Safe-Routes-to-School</td>
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<td>• Car-sharing programs</td>
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<td>• Complete Streets policies</td>
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<td>• Uber et al.</td>
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<td>• Green streets</td>
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<td>• ITS applications</td>
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<td>• First-mile/last-mile</td>
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Although MPOs rely on modeling to forecast the implications of the projects and policies in their plans, the models are limited in their ability to represent non-traditional projects and policies and do a poor job of accounting for secondary effects. Empirical evidence can also be useful in evaluating the potential effectiveness of proposed projects and policies, though not all of them have yet been studied. Assessments of the empirical evidence are thus useful in the decision-making process. The purpose of this assignment is to prepare a “research brief” on one of these strategies, by which we mean an informative 2-page document that provides an overview of a policy issue and evidence on its effectiveness, and assesses the available evidence to produce a useful guide to decision makers.

Products
In this assignment, you will prepare a paper of no more than 2 pages single-spaced (with 12-point font and 1-inch margins) on your selected strategy. This paper should be in the style of a “research brief.” You will also be giving a 7-minute Powerpoint presentation in class. The brief will be worth 20% of your
final grade, and the presentation worth 10%. I will grade your briefs and presentations based on the quality of your research, the clarity and conciseness with which you lay out the evidence, the thoughtfulness of your conclusions, and the quality of your written and oral presentation.

Task 1: Research
First, you will need to do a fair bit of research. You are looking for four things:

- Identification of the specific transportation problems the strategy is intended to address, and credible evidence on the effectiveness of the strategy in addressing these problems. Most credible are academic articles from peer-review journals. Also credible are reports from research institutes or government agencies, such as reports of best practices or agency sponsored project/program evaluations. I expect you to use 5 really good sources of evidence on the effectiveness of your strategy in your brief. If you find more, then narrow it down to the five most relevant and most credible.
- Identification of likely “co-benefits” – additional, indirect benefits of the strategy. (If we had more time, I would have you look for evidence on these, too.)
- Identification of possible “downsides” – indirect negative effects of the strategy. (If we had more time, I would have you look for evidence on these, too.)

Probably the best place to search for relevant material is the TRID database, available via the BTS website. Another good place to look is the Victoria Transport Policy Institute website. GoogleScholar can be very helpful. You might also try a Google search to find examples of arguments for and against the policies that will give you ideas about co-benefits and downsides – but remember to look at these arguments critically. I can also give you tips on where to look for information and help you think about the different effects for your specific topic. Be sure to check the tips I gave you for the first assignment, and be sure to include sufficient citations using an accepted citation format.

Task 2: Presentation
You have 7 minutes and a maximum of 10 slides for your presentation. Your presentation should follow this outline, more or less:

1. Describe and define the strategy, including its variations. Include examples where different versions of the strategy have been adopted, if any. You may need to narrow your strategy down to a manageable number of important approaches for the next step. Point out who is involved in implementing the strategy – what agency and/or what public sector entity. Use images to help illustrate the strategy.

2. Outline the primary benefits of the strategy, i.e. the specific problems the strategy is designed to address. Summarize and assess the available evidence as to the effectiveness of the strategy in producing these benefits. For each benefit, cite key studies, or note the lack of available evidence. Tables are a good way to present this information.

3. Outline the potential co-benefits of the strategy, i.e. the indirect effects that the strategy isn’t intended to produce but that would be a good thing for the community. If you have evidence
on these benefits, summarize it. If not, provide some assessment of likelihood and/or significance. Tables are a good way to present this information.

4. Outline the potential downsides of the strategy, i.e. the indirect effects that the strategy isn’t intended to produce but that could be a bad thing for the community. If you have evidence on these benefits, summarize it. If not, provide some assessment of likelihood and/or significance. Tables are a good way to present this information.

5. Summarize your analysis of the effects – direct and indirect – of the strategy. Identify key questions for which inadequate evidence exists. Offer your expert opinion as to whether the evidence supports the adoption of the strategy, and if so, with what caveats.

In preparing your slides, think about how much information to provide to the audience. You probably do not want to include as detailed a table as you will include in your paper. Make sure the font is large enough that the audience can read it! Include citations for the evidence you present.

Task 3: Writing
Your presentation should provide a good starting point for actually writing your brief. Follow the same outline, and focus on the key points for each section. If you felt like there were holes in your presentation, or classmates raised important issues, go back and do additional research. If there were places in the presentation where you weren’t sure what you wanted to say, think through the logic of your argument again. Be sure to use specifics as much as possible and be rigorous in your use of citations. Include figures if they are helpful in presenting the evidence or summarizing your points. Use the five best sources of evidence on the effectiveness of the strategy; you should use additional references for other parts of the brief. The brief can be no more than 2-pages of single-spaced text, including references and figures.

Task 4: Review
Force yourself to get a complete draft finished by June 2nd. Then leave the brief alone for at least a day and let it simmer in your mind for awhile. In the meantime, give your brief to a friend and have him or her look not just for typos and grammatical errors but also for passages that just don’t make sense, discontinuities in your logic flow, or gaps in your evidence. Tell your friend to be brutal! For this task, it would be good to pick a friend who is not in the transportation field and will not know all the jargon and acronyms. Do the same critique yourself, after you have let the brief sit for at least a day.

Task 5: Polishing
Take your friend’s comments and your own comments and make final edits to your brief. Read it through one more final time to see if there are any spots that still need polishing. Check formatting to make sure it looks nice. Print, look it over, fix and print again if need be.

Task 6: Submit
Bring a hard-copy of your brief to my office by 5pm on Friday, June 6. Upload an electronic copy of your brief on the course SmartSite.
[STRATEGY]

Description
[Describe the strategy and provide some examples of its implementation. Explain different variations, if appropriate. Include photos or figures if they help.]

Evidence on Effectiveness
[Outline primary benefits. Summarize of evidence on its effectiveness. Use your 5 best sources. Include a table or figure, if it helps.]

Co-Benefits
[Outline possible co-benefits of strategy. Include any evidence you have that the co-benefits actually occur, or give some indication of how likely they are.]

Downsides
[Outline possible negative side-effects of strategy. Include any evidence you have that the side-effects actually occur, or give some indication of how likely they are.]

Summary
[Give your overall assessment based on the evidence and arguments. Is it promising, proven, untested? Does it have benefits but also downsides that will need to be managed? What questions still need to be addressed? Give some guidance to decision makers as to what they should think about this strategy]

References
[Use a numbered system of references and citations, to minimize space required. That is, list and number the references in the order in which they are cited in the text; in the text, put the number in brackets at the end of the appropriate sentence or clause, like this [1]. Got it?]