

# **TMA CERTIFICATION REVIEW STATE-OF-THE-PRACTICE REVIEW REPORT: 2016**

**Final Report  
February 2017**

Prepared for:  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty  
Federal Highway Administration



**U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
Federal Highway  
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<b>13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)</b> The 2016 TMA Certification Review State-of-the-Practice Review Report documents the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) review of Division Office oversight processes relating to TMA Certification Reviews. This is the sixth review of Division Offices, and the second review on this topic. Resulting from a review of four Division Offices in 2016, this report provides a summary of the current state-of-the-practice, descriptions of effective practices, and specific recommendations to support improved FHWA oversight. The 2016 Review resulted in 24 recommendations and 14 effective practices for FHWA to use to enhance the TMA Certification Review process.				
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## Executive Summary

This report documents findings from the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review, a program initiated by Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Office of Planning as a means of assessing consistency in Division Office-led planning oversight processes. The 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review is the second year with a focus on the Transportation Management Area (TMA) Certification Review process, which is a joint responsibility of FHWA Division Offices and FTA Regional Offices to assess and confirm that TMA planning partners are meeting the Federal requirements in conducting the metropolitan transportation planning process. The State-of-the-Practice Review is an FHWA-led effort. FHWA invited the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to participate due to the joint responsibilities that the agencies share for conducting TMA Certification Reviews. However, the specific recommendations stemming from this review are aimed at FHWA.

This review builds upon 2015 findings, resulting in a number of key recommendations for FHWA planning staff and field leadership, while also recognizing some effective practices that can be shared across the field. Many of these recommendations apply to all aspects of the TMA Certification Review process; others pertain specifically to preparing for a review, conducting the on-site review, and developing and delivering the Final Report. Overall, the 2016 Review resulted in 24 Recommendations for FHWA staff to consider that could improve the agency's risk based stewardship and oversight of the TMA Certification Review process. Additionally, 14 Effective Practices were noted.

## 2016 Effective Practices and Recommendations

### Preparing for the TMA Certification Review

#### *Effective Practices*

##### Assembling the Federal Team

- Engagement with Division Staff Concerning Certification Review Process and Results
- Including Other Division Staff, and Headquarters and Resource Center Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) on the Federal Team

##### Early Planning and Scheduling

- Useful On-Boarding Practices for New Staff Working on Certification Reviews
- Flexible and Creative Approach to Scheduling Site Visits

##### Use of Tools and Agency Resources for Strategic Planning

- Utilization of Templates and Tracking Tools for Effective Organization and Collaboration
- Use of Availability Matrix to Schedule Federal Team Meetings

##### Leadership Engagement

- Increasing Engagement with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Policy Board
- Involvement of Division Leadership Throughout the Certification Review Process

##### Coordination with TMA Planning Partners

- Organizing Mock Certification Reviews

- Bi-monthly Meetings with FHWA Division Office, FTA Regional Office, and State Department of Transportation (DOT)

#### **Coordination with FTA Region Staff**

- Updated FHWA/FTA Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) Details Roles and Responsibilities for Conducting Certification Reviews

### ***Recommendations***

#### **Assembling the Federal Team**

1. Involve FHWA and FTA SMEs on the Federal Review Team to Support the Certification Review
2. Engage Additional Federal Partners, as Appropriate (e.g., Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD])
3. Distribute Certification Review Responsibilities Among Federal Team Members

#### **Early Planning and Scheduling**

4. Foster Early and Ongoing Conversations with the TMA Planning Partners
5. Conduct Early and Ongoing Coordination with Federal Review Team Members
6. Plan, Schedule, and Initiate TMA Certification Review Process Early

#### **Internal Process Documentation**

7. Document the Certification Review Process

#### **Use of Tools and Agency Resources for Strategic Planning**

8. Develop a TMA Certification Review *SharePoint* Site to More Easily Collaborate with FTA
9. Utilize Updated TMA Certification Process Field Handbook and Division/Region Templates to Enhance Review Process
10. Implement Recommendations and Effective Practices from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Reports

#### **Leadership Engagement**

11. Enhance Senior Leadership Awareness and Engagement Throughout the Certification Review Process, Including Taking an Active Role in Presenting the Final Report to the MPO Policy Board.
12. Provide Opportunities for MPO Policy Board Participation

#### **Coordination with TMA Planning Partners**

13. Clarify TMA Partner Roles and Participation in Certification Review Process
14. Implement Mock or Pre-Certification Reviews When Appropriate

#### **Coordination with FTA Region Staff**

15. Update Joint FHWA/FTA MOAs and Ensure They Support Current Process and Roles and Responsibilities
16. Engage FTA as Partners in the Certification Review Process, with Shared Roles and Responsibilities



## Conducting the TMA Certification Review

### *Effective Practices*

#### Conducting the Desk Review

- Risk-Based Desk Review

#### Certification Review Site Visit: Agenda

- Targeted Agenda Development

### *Recommendations*

#### Conducting the Desk Review

17. Follow Agency Guidance on Conducting a Desk Review as Outlined in the TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook

#### Certification Review Site Visit: Agenda

18. Use Risk Based Approach to Develop Focused Certification Review Agenda

#### Certification Review Site Visit: Public Involvement

19. Provide Opportunities for Active Public Involvement in the TMA Certification Review Process

## Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report

### *Effective Practices*

#### Draft Report: Report Structure

- Develop Consistent Report Structure Based on Previously Published Reports

### *Recommendations*

#### Draft Report: Report Structure

20. Use the TMA Certification Review Template to Develop the TMA Certification Report

#### Final Report: Transmittal

21. Follow Agency Protocol for Transmitting the Certification Report to FHWA Headquarters
22. Use Agency Protocols to Address a Potential Certification Lapse
23. Use Integrated National Planning and Updating Tool (INPUT) to Track Federal Actions

#### Federal Action Follow-Up

24. Develop a Follow-Up Action Plan to Monitor TMA Resolution of Corrective Actions

In addition to being documented throughout the body of the report, Appendix F includes a full list of recommendations with detailed rationales, the identification of potential strategies, and the lead unit to address the recommendations. Appendix G includes a full list of effective practice examples that Division Offices can use to enhance the TMA Certification Review Process.

## Introduction

In support of FHWA's Risk Based Stewardship and Oversight (RBSO) program, FHWA's Office of Planning established the State-of-the-Practice Review Program as a means of assessing consistency in Division Office-led planning oversight processes. The State-of-the-Practice Review is designed as an ongoing assessment to document Federal oversight in support of consistency and effective practices.

This report documents the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review, which focused on Division Office processes for conducting Transportation Management Area (TMA) Planning Certification Reviews. Four FHWA Division Offices (one for each Director of Field Services [DFS] geographic area) were reviewed: Arizona, New York, Tennessee, and Texas.

This is the second review of Division Offices on the topic of TMA Planning Certification Reviews. For the years 2011 to 2014, the program's focus was on the Federal Planning Finding and fiscal constraint. The 2001-2015 State-of-the-Practice Review reports are available on the Office of Planning's [StaffNet site](#).

## Report Structure

Beyond framing the purpose and background of the State-of-the-Practice Review, this report documents the current state-of-the-practice, descriptions of effective practices, and recommendations to support improved FHWA oversight.

This Final Report is organized as follows:

1. **Executive Summary:** This section describes the purpose of the State-of-the-Practice Review and provides a summary of findings, recommendations, and effective practices as a result of four Division Office site visits.
2. **Introduction:** This section outlines the background, goals, methodology, process, and focus areas for the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Program.
3. **Detailed Discussion of Current Practice, Effective Practices, and Recommendations:** This section organizes findings from the State-of-the-Practice Review into the three main segments of the TMA Certification Review Process:
  - Preparing for the TMA Certification Review;
  - Conducting the TMA Certification Review; and
  - Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report

These three segments are further divided into sub-sections that represent findings from the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review, and are supported by contextual information that describes the agency's guidance and regulations and the current practice as found in the four Divisions Offices reviewed in 2016. Each sub-section concludes with specific effective practices and recommendations for Headquarters, the Resource Center, and the Division Offices.

4. **Next Steps:** This section describes how the State-of-the-Practice Review findings are being used, the status of implementing recommendations, and the future of the State-of-the-Practice Review program.
5. **Appendices:** This section includes additional information and supporting documentation from the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review, including supporting legislation and resources, Review Team members, a list of discussion topics, a list of documents requested during the Desk Review, and the status of 2015 State-of-the-Practice Review recommendations.

## Background

The catalyst for the Transportation Planning State-of-the-Practice Review Program was a 2009 DFS Consistency Review where FHWA Division Offices' oversight of transportation planning requirements was examined. This review revealed a number of variances and inconsistencies nationally. In response, the FHWA Office of Planning established the State-of-the-Practice Review Program, with the first series of reviews focusing on the Federal Planning Finding, and fiscal constraint.

In 2014, the State-of-the-Practice Review Program was included in the agency's Strategic Implementation Plan (SIP) and RBSO framework. In 2015, TMA Certification Reviews were selected as the program topic, examining how Division Offices plan, conduct, and document TMA Certification Reviews. The 2016 review continued to explore that topic.

## TMA Certification Reviews

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) included provisions to help ensure implementation of Federal regulations by requiring a joint FHWA- Federal Transit Agency (FTA) Certification of the transportation process in each TMA (urbanized areas with populations over 200,000).<sup>1</sup>

FHWA Division Offices, in coordination with FTA Regional Offices, are responsible for conducting TMA Certification Reviews, as required under 23 U.S. Code (U.S.C.) § 134(k)(5) and 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.336(b)<sup>2</sup>. To support field planners with these responsibilities, FHWA and FTA developed an internal guide, the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#). This handbook, first developed in 2000 and updated periodically, provides specific guidance on how to conduct effective Certification Reviews.

The purpose of a Certification Review is to review and evaluate the TMA's transportation planning process for compliance with Federal requirements. FHWA and FTA are required to complete a Certification of the planning process in TMAs at least every four years. The Certification Review process is designed to build upon regular and ongoing FHWA/FTA interactions with TMA planning staff and

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<sup>1</sup> This proactive Federal Certification requirement was continued in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 2002, the Safe, Accountable, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21) of 2012, and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) of 2015.

<sup>2</sup> For more information about the applicable laws and regulations and related guidance, see Appendix A: Legislation, Regulations, and Resources.

officials (Metropolitan Planning Organizations [MPO], State DOTs, and public transportation operators). Through Certification Reviews, Federal staff formally review a TMA's planning process and document their findings.

Certification Reviews can also give FHWA/FTA valuable opportunities for:

- Providing advice and guidance to a TMA for enhancing the planning process and improving the quality of transportation investment decisions;
- Suggesting specific technical assistance and training for TMA staff and their member entities;
- Discussing improvements in the planning process to address major issues facing a metropolitan area; and
- Identifying noteworthy practices that can be shared nationally.

## Goals

In support of the agency's RBSO framework, the State-of-the-Practice Review Program has three main goals:

1. Assess current oversight practices<sup>3</sup> for conducting TMA Certification Reviews in selected FHWA Division Offices;
2. Identify effective practices<sup>4</sup> in preparing for, conducting, and documenting TMA Certification Reviews; and
3. Recommend improvements to current oversight practices and processes to support enhanced consistency in the conduct of TMA Certification Reviews.

## Methodology and Approach

The State-of-the-Practice Review is implemented with a cross-unit team of FHWA staff, including representatives from the FHWA Office of Planning, Resource Center, and Division Offices, as well as with support from the Volpe Center.<sup>5</sup> Since FHWA and FTA are jointly responsible for conducting Certification Reviews, FTA Headquarters and Regional staff also participated in the 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review. The cross-unit team approach helps to ensure that different perspectives are part of the State-of-the-Practice Review Program. The diverse experiences and backgrounds of each team member contributed to the development of a stronger State-of-the-Practice Review Program and review outcomes.

As part of their roles, team members had five responsibilities for the State-of-the-Practice Review Program:

- Developing review questions;<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Identifying current Certification Review practices is critical to understanding the level of consistency in oversight processes nationally.

<sup>4</sup> Effective practices serve as models for other Division Offices and help support ideas and concepts that foster consistency throughout FHWA.

<sup>5</sup> 2016 State of the Practice Review Team members are listed in Appendix B.

<sup>6</sup> A list of these questions, organized by topic, is provided in Appendix C: Discussion Topics.

- Reviewing relevant documents;
- Participating in one or more of the on-site reviews;
- Documenting review observations and findings; and
- Developing the annual State-of-the-Practice Review Report.

One of the Review Team's key assignments was to develop a general set of questions to ask the Division Offices about their oversight processes for conducting their TMA Certification Reviews. Prior to the on-site reviews, the team also reviewed background documents and supporting materials from each Division Office. Based on these assessments, site-specific questions were added to the general set of discussion questions for each Division Office. The Review Team designed the site-specific questions to help them fully understand how the Division Offices plan, conduct, and document TMA Certification Reviews.

During the on-site reviews, Review Team members met with FHWA Division Office and FTA Regional Office staffs to explore the process for conducting TMA Certification Reviews. Team members also met with one TMA in each State (two in New York) to understand how the TMA Certification Review process worked from their perspective. At the conclusion of each on-site review, the Review Team developed a set of initial observations and shared these with Division Office staff. Following each site visit, the team shared a memo with each Division Office outlining specific observations, including examples of effective practices and areas the Division Office might consider for enhancement as they conduct TMA Certification Reviews.

# Detailed Discussion of Current Practice, Effective Practices, and Recommendations

## Section 1. Preparing for the TMA Certification Review

This section addresses how Federal Teams prepare for TMA Certification Reviews, and includes the following subsections:

- [Assembling the Federal Team](#)
- [Early Planning and Scheduling](#)
- [Internal Process Documentation](#)
- [Use of Tools and Agency Resources for Strategic Planning](#)
- [Leadership Engagement](#)
- [Coordination with TMA Planning Partners](#)
- [Coordination with FTA Region Staff](#)

### Assembling the Federal Team

One of the initial steps in the TMA Certification Review process is selecting the members of the Federal Team. The Federal Team is made up of FHWA and FTA field planners assigned to lead the Certification Review process. The Federal Team can also include other SMEs within the FHWA Divisions or FTA Regions (e.g., Civil Rights Specialists, Environmental Protection Specialists, Safety Specialists, and Operations Specialists) or from FHWA Resource Center, USDOT Headquarters, USDOT Volpe Center, or other partner agencies (e.g., EPA). Requesting support from SMEs will depend on the expected focus areas and/or needs for the Certification Review. At a minimum, a representative from the respective FHWA Division and FTA Regional Office is required to participate on the Federal Team.

Federal Team members should be chosen strategically to match the intended focus areas outlined in the agenda, thereby ensuring that the appropriate individuals are available to provide valuable insight during the on-site review and in the development of Federal actions. Federal Teams should decide on roles and responsibilities, including participation at the site visit to ensure that each discussion topic is led by the appropriate individual. While all Federal Team members share the responsibility to fully participate in the Desk Review and throughout site visit discussions, assigning agenda items provides an opportunity for Federal Team members to focus their attention on specific interview questions and background materials needed for their assigned topics.

From start to finish, the Certification Review process should take around six to nine months, depending on the size and complexity of the TMA. Therefore, selecting Federal Team members should be based on their ability to commit to the time required to complete the Certification Review process. Establishing a site visit date and general timetable for the overall Certification Review process will be useful to complete this step. Additionally, identifying focus areas early in the process will help guide the selection of FHWA/FTA staff or other SMEs to participate.

For more information, see *Section 1-2.4: Establishing the Certification Review Team* of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

### *State of the Practice*

As in 2015, the Review Team found that most FHWA Division Offices take the lead in administering the TMA Certification Review, including the role of assembling the Federal Team. Division Offices have an understanding with FTA Regions concerning this organizational structure, because FTA Regions have limited staffing capacity and are typically less accessible geographically and financially to take a lead role.

Beyond this core group, some Federal Teams recruit additional SMEs from across the Division Office or other partner agencies (e.g., EPA) to participate. In some cases, staff is selected to match discussion topics identified for the review. Divisions also choose to recruit an interdisciplinary team to provide a fresh eye into the TMA's transportation planning process, and to distribute the responsibility of the Certification Review process. Conversely, some Divisions did not take advantage of these resources and found themselves overburdened and behind schedule.

### *Effective Practices:*

#### **Engagement with Division Staff Concerning Certification Review Process and Results**

The New York and Tennessee Division Offices include staff specialists from other disciplines/topic areas in the on-site review to address specific subject matters (e.g., Area Engineer, Civil Rights Specialist, Intelligent Transportation Systems [ITS] Specialist). In addition, Tennessee Division Office planners discuss Certification Reviews in the monthly staff meetings, which is effective at keeping Division staff informed about the process and to engage staff from other disciplines in the review.

#### **Including Other Division Staff, and Headquarters and Resource Center SMEs on the Federal Team**

Each of the four Divisions included Division SMEs (e.g., engineers, safety specialists, financial specialists, and civil rights specialists) to participate on the Review Team for the Desk Review and/or the on-site review. In addition, the Arizona Division requested participation from the FHWA Headquarters Office of Planning and Resource Center for guidance and expertise in particular topics (e.g., travel demand modeling) during the last two Certification Reviews. Moreover, the New York Division invites Headquarters to participate on Certification Reviews when issues arise that require expertise, particularly on emerging topics or potentially contentious issues.

### *Recommendations:*

#### **1. Involve FHWA and FTA SMEs on the Federal Review Team to Support the Certification Review**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Announce upcoming Certification Reviews at Division All-Employee Meetings to help identify key issues and topics and to identify Division SMEs to participate on the Federal Team.
- At the Desk Review, bring in SMEs to discuss key issues and assign roles and throughout the Certification Review responsibilities (e.g., review materials, share in the discussion at the on-site review, and write that section of the Certification Report).

**FHWA Headquarters:**

- Increase SMEs' understanding of their joint role and responsibility for the TMA Certification Review process.
- As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SMEs in the Certification Review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.
- Publish program area assignments for Headquarters and Resource Center staffs on [StaffNet](#) to assist Division Office staffs with their selection of SMEs and establish standard process for requesting SME assistance.
- Enhance current language in [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) about how and when to include SMEs in the Certification Review process.
- Develop a one-stop process for requesting SME assistance that would include the Volpe Center, Resource Center, and FHWA Headquarters.

**Resource Center:**

- When participating on a Review Team, support the integration of Division SMEs in the Certification Review process and encourage Divisions to assign responsibilities to the SMEs throughout the review process.
- Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) topics and disseminate to field staff.

**2. Engage Additional Federal Partners, as Appropriate (e.g., EPA, HUD)****Division Offices:**

- Reach out to Federal partners to identify issues, and as appropriate, interest in participating in the Certification Review including their focused role and responsibility.

**Headquarters:**

- Enhance language in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) about involving additional Federal partners in the Certification Review process as appropriate.

**Resource Center:**

- Support Headquarters to enhance language in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) about involving additional Federal partners in the Certification Review process as appropriate.

**3. Distribute Certification Review Responsibilities Among Federal Team Members****Division Offices:**

- Work with FTA to ensure they are leading discussion beyond transit issues so that responsibilities are equitably dispersed throughout the on-site review.
- Within the MOA, delegate FTA review and lead responsibilities in CORE activities (e.g., review the Unified Planning Work Program [UPWP], Transportation Improvement Program [TIP], and Metropolitan Transportation Plan [MTP]), and assign them the responsibility for leading these topics as needed during the Certification Review process.

**Headquarters:**

- Increase FTA's awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews (e.g., include FTA in the State-of-the-Practice



Reviews; discuss during the annual FTA Planner's Meeting; include FTA staff in [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) update teams).

- Increase other SMEs' awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint roles and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews.
- As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SMEs in the review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.
- Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to illustrate the value of shared roles and responsibilities among Federal Team members.
- Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series being offered by the Resource Center.
- Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) topics and disseminate to field staff.

### **Early Planning and Scheduling**

As mentioned earlier, the entire Certification Review process, from start to finish, should average six to nine months. For each Certification Review, there are numerous stakeholders and competing schedules that need to be accommodated in the planning process. Therefore, it is critical for Federal Teams to begin the planning process as early as possible to ensure that the Certification deadline is met. This is especially true when Divisions or Regions need to train new staff on the Certification Review process, or when working with a new TMA or one with a history of corrective actions. To help stay on schedule, Divisions should consider implementing annual work plan meetings and reserving time to discuss upcoming Certification Reviews.

Once a date has been coordinated, an official Certification Review notification letter is drafted, signed, and disseminated to the appropriate TMA planning partners. This letter outlines the dates of the on-site review, provides background on the purpose and potential focus areas of the review, and communicates roles and expectations of each TMA planning partner throughout the process. A Certification Review notification letter template is available on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

Federal Teams should create a timeline of Certification Review tasks and milestones in order to keep on track of the entire process. The [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) provides a downloadable template that Federal Teams can customize to fit their own schedule. The template is provided in Figure 3 and illustrates a schedule that Federal Teams can consider. When developing a schedule, it is good practice for Federal Teams to incorporate additional time throughout the process in case elements of the review take longer than planned. This includes training opportunities for new staff.

### **State of the Practice**

Federal Teams allowed themselves an appropriate amount of time to coordinate with their TMA planning partners in order to plan and complete the Certification Review. In fact, most of the Divisions use a tracking chart or tool (Figure 3) to organize the elements of the Certification Review process. All of the Divisions met their schedule through the conclusion of the on-site review. However, several

Divisions experienced protracted delays in completing the report and in delivering the Certification letter to the TMA before the four-year expiration date (see *Final Report: Transmittal* for more information).

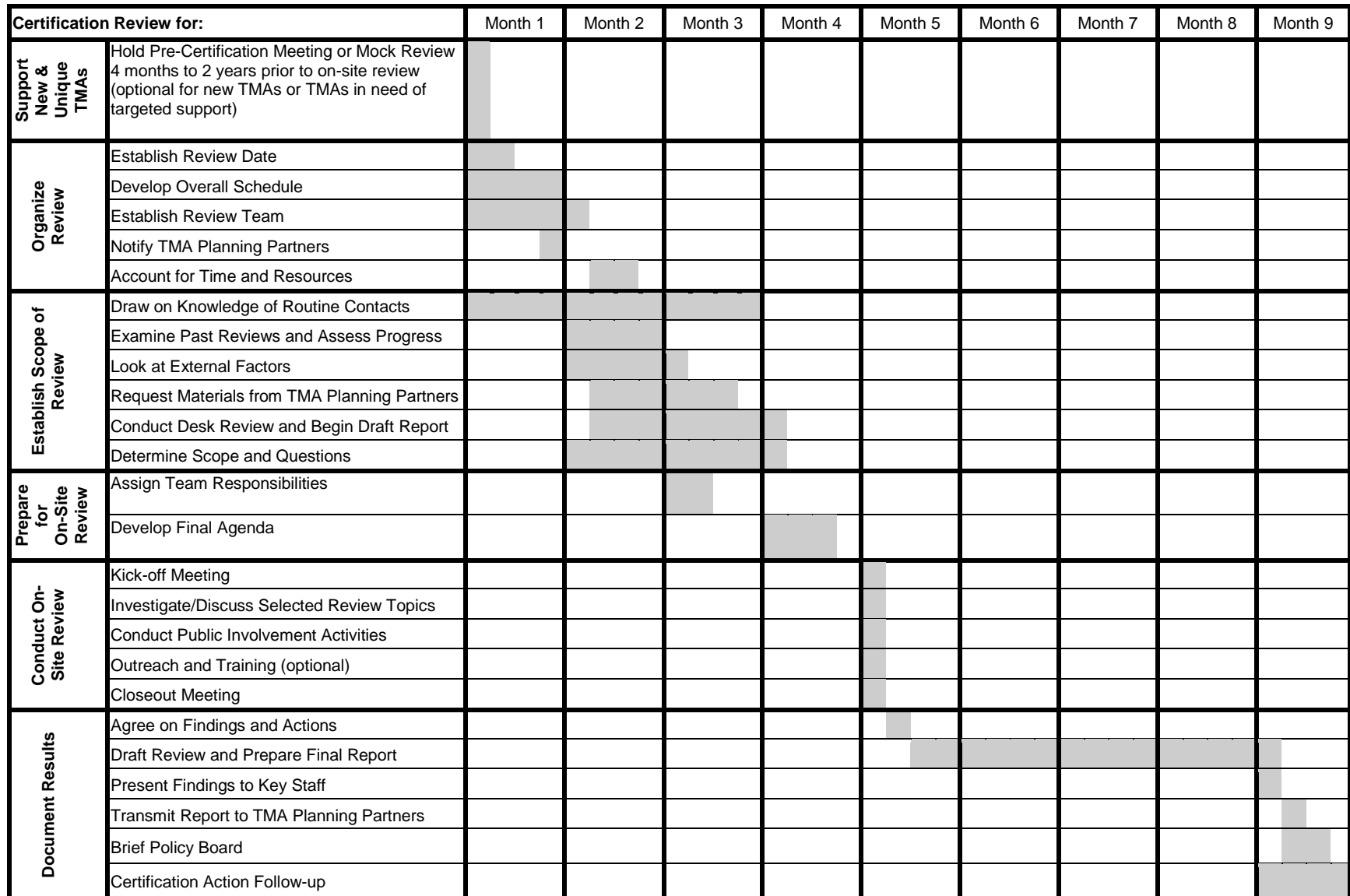
The early planning done by the Divisions enabled them to find dates for the on-site review that worked for all the TMA planning partners and coordinated with FTA's schedule and any existing travel plans. Early coordination also enabled some Divisions to coordinate with existing MPO Policy Board Meetings, which provided more engagement with MPO officials during the Certification Review on-site review.

While scheduling was successful, some Federal Teams did not provide specific instructions about roles and responsibilities, which led to some confusion among the TMA planning partners during the on-site review. It also led to the TMA staff spending unnecessary time preparing materials for the on-site review that were not needed by the Federal Team.

In advance of the on-site review, some Federal Teams rarely met or communicated with one another. These Divisions often experienced delays early in the review process because of the lack of understanding of team members' roles, responsibilities, and other key elements of the review, including the status of past Federal actions and risk areas, both of which are necessary for agenda development. Some Federal Teams met regularly in advance of the on-site review to collaborate on a targeted agenda and to discuss their working knowledge of the TMA, risk areas derived from the Desk Review, and FHWA Headquarters or Division priorities. When possible, some Federal Teams also took time to train new staff by having them shadow a TMA Certification Review and/or facilitate a Mock Review prior to leading a real Certification Review. This provided staff an understanding of the expectations as well as the opportunity to practice their role within the Certification Review process.

Some Federal Team members are regularly engaged with the MPO and other TMA planning partners between Certification Reviews, and therefore felt prepared for the on-site review discussion. In some Divisions, this institutional knowledge among veteran planners helped to pinpoint areas of concern. However, in several Divisions where team members relied on their past experiences with the TMA, there was minimal formal preparation in advance of the on-site review. This was not helpful to less experienced Federal Team members who participated in the TMA Certification Review for the first time. In addition, one Division assigns roles to the Federal Team members the morning of the on-site review, and another revealed that they didn't feel it was necessary to identify issue or questions in advance of the discussion at the on-site review.

Figure 1: Activities and Timeline for Certification Review



### *Effective Practice:*

#### **Useful On-Boarding Practices for New Staff Working on Certification Reviews**

The Texas Division Office trains its new planners to conduct Certification Reviews by having them participate in Certification Reviews led by other experienced staff. In addition, the Division has new planners lead discussions in Certification Reviews. This gives new staff the opportunity to learn from their colleagues before leading their own Certification Reviews. Additionally, the Division Office has initiated planning reviews for non-TMA MPOs. This provides additional opportunities for new staff to participate in and lead MPO planning reviews prior to leading a Certification Review.

#### **Flexible and Creative Approach to Scheduling Site Visits**

Due to the New York City TMA's unique issues and needs, the Division Office held five separate meetings over several months for its on-site review as opposed to holding one long meeting over several days. The TMA staff appreciated the flexible approach to conducting the site visit, which better accommodated staff resources and time and allowed the Federal Team to focus on key issues in order to confirm compliance to Federal regulations.

### *Recommendations:*

#### **4. Foster Early and Ongoing Conversations with the TMA Planning Partners**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Outline the TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the course of the review in the Certification Review notification letter, and send a copy to each TMA partner agency.
- Share the [Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review Primer](#) with the TMA planning partners.
- Ensure partners are engaged with the TMA in an ongoing basis; this can be through such activities as TMA related planning reviews and interactions, including the UPWP, TIP, MTP, and other meetings or discussions.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Update the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to include roles and responsibilities of TMA planning partners.
- Use [Transportation Planning Information Exchange](#) (TPIE) to outline the TMA Certification Review process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.
- Append the sample Certification Review notification letter to include TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the Certification Review process

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.
- Develop a *Federal-Aid Essential* video outlining TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the TMA Certification Review process.

#### **5. Conduct Early and Ongoing Coordination with Federal Review Team Members**

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Increase SMEs' understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Review process.

- As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SME's in the review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.
- Enhance current language in [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) about how and when to include SMEs in the Certification Review process.

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.
- Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series offered by the Resource Center.
- Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) topics and disseminate to field staff.
- Research, identify, and disseminate to the field how Divisions are using their Federal Team and how they are engaging them early and throughout the Certification Review process.
- Research and identify timelines for TMA Certification Reviews and disseminate to the field.

**Division Offices:**

- Develop a schedule with the Federal Team members that outlines key tasks, deliverables, and due dates. Key elements of the review to include in the schedule are:
  - Before the Desk Review: Discuss team member schedules, materials needed, and the review timeline;
  - During the Desk Review: Team meeting dates to check in with the Certification Review process;
  - Following the Desk Review: Identify key issues and questions to include during the on-site review;
  - Developing the Agenda: Focus on key issues for discussion;
  - Preparing the On-Site Review: Assign lead roles during the discussion;
  - Preparing the Final Report: Gather information to include in the report and identify recommendations, corrective actions, and commendations; and
  - Reviewing the Final Report: Provide comments on the final report and to send the Certification letter to the TMA.

## 6. Plan, Schedule, and Initiate TMA Certification Review Process Early

**FHWA Headquarters:**

- On a quarterly basis, share the TMA Certification Review tracking spreadsheet with field planners, DA/Assistant Division Administrator (ADA), and DFS that provides information on expected, scheduled, and completed TMA Certification Reviews and Final Reports. The reminder should also provide links to resources and websites that provide guidance for completing TMA Certification Reviews.

**Resource Center:**

- Research, identify, and disseminate to the field sample timelines for completing TMA Certification Reviews.
- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include the timeline and recommended planning techniques for the TMA Certification Review.

#### **Division Offices:**

- Establish annual work plan meeting ([see New York MOA](#)) to identify upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, begin the discussion of coordination issues and schedules, and to assign roles and responsibilities to initiate the Certification Review process.

#### **Internal Process Documentation**

While FHWA Division and FTA Region staff should be familiar with the work of their TMAs prior to conducting a Certification Review, including their strengths and weaknesses, the Certification Review is the time for the Federal Team to comprehensively assess the planning process in the TMA to ensure that they are meeting Federal requirements. Due to the length and complexity of the Certification Review process, and taking into account the unique characteristics and relationships existing among and between planning partners (e.g., FTA Regions, FHWA Divisions, State DOTs, public transportation operators, and MPOs) within each metropolitan area, the steps taken to complete a Certification Review will vary. For TMAs that include more than one State, FTA Region, and/or MPO, the Certification Review process can be more complicated. Therefore, it is important for Divisions and Regions to document their processes, and make the process easily accessible to all Federal partners. This will ensure consistency in conducting TMA Certification Reviews even when there is turnover in staffing.

The [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) emphasizes the importance for TMA planning partners to document their planning practices. The FHWA/FTA MOA between FHWA Divisions and FTA Regions is designed to clarify basic roles and responsibilities of FHWA and FTA staff for Certification Reviews and other oversight activities (see Coordination with Federal Partners for more information). The Division's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) is an extension of the FHWA/FTA MOA and documents the nuanced step-by-step practices to necessary to complete the TMA Certification Review process. Both of these documents should be updated periodically as the planning process evolves. See *Section 1-2.1: Documenting the Certification Process* of the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook for more information.

#### **State of the Practice**

Consistent with findings in 2015, Federal Teams generally reported that the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) is a valuable resource when preparing for and conducting a TMA Certification Review; this is particularly the case when preparing questions during the Desk Review and in preparation for the on-site review. One Division communicated that they do not use the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) at any point, but rather rely on previous Certification Reports and institutional knowledge to complete the necessary steps of the Certification Review process; all Divisions leveraged these same resources to varying degrees as well.

Unlike in 2015, some Divisions do have documented procedures for the Certification Review process. For example, Tennessee prepared an SOP in 2007 that lists the specific actions at each step of the TMA Certification Review process, from initiation to Federal action follow-up. While it needs to be updated to capture all the current practices, it is still a useful document for the Division. New York Division's FHWA/FTA MOA provides the same step-by-step level of details that would normally be found in an SOP for the Certification Review process.

### *Recommendation:*

#### **7. Document the Certification Review Process**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Develop an SOP for the TMA Certification Review process that supports procedures consistent with the FHWA/FTA MOA and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Create an SOP template that outlines the key steps necessary to complete a TMA Certification Review and share examples of existing SOPs that Divisions can use to develop or update their SOP.

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to emphasize the importance and best methods for documenting the Certification Review process and how to use templates.

### **Use of Tools and Agency Resources for Strategic Planning**

Over the years, FHWA and FTA have developed resources to support field planners in completing Certification Reviews successfully. Federal Team members should take advantage of such resources as the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), [FHWA StaffNet](#), and [Planning Discipline Support Site](#) in order to fully and efficiently gather information needed to understand the level to which the TMA is in compliance with Federal regulations. Federal Teams should utilize the knowledge they have from their routine contact and meetings with TMA planning partners, examine past Certification Review reports, and assess the progress made by the TMA to resolve corrective actions or implement recommendations.

Additionally, there are a variety of tools and resources available to Federal Teams that will help guide the Certification Review process. The [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#) includes a number of templates for field planners to download and adapt to meet their needs. For instance, a checklist is available (see Figure 1) to track progress toward completing all the necessary steps in the Certification Review Process, while a worksheet (see Figure 2) can be used to establish the scope of the Review, including specific discussion topics. The [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#) also provides a database of Certification Review reports and Federal actions that field planners may use to consider different approaches taken by peer staff in drafting Certification Reports and Federal actions. Similarly, the [INPUT](#) provides a record Final Reports and transmittal letters, as well as tracks progress toward resolving corrective actions.

FHWA's Planning Discipline offers series of a [Boot Camp Training Modules](#) that provide an overview of how to conduct a TMA Certification Review, including the roles and responsibilities of Division staff throughout the process. Similarly, Federal Teams should also take advantage of tools like *SharePoint* to create Federal Team workspaces to share and collaborate on Desk Review documents and to assist with the preparation for the site visit. *SharePoint* is particularly useful as a virtual collaboration option for Review Team members that are unable to meet in-person prior to the site visit.

### **State of the Practice**

Divisions reviewed in 2016 demonstrated varying strategies to support the completion of the TMA Certification Review process. While some Divisions are developing a *SharePoint* site to make it easier to

collaborate with FTA, no Division involved in the review this year had yet fully implemented this strategy. Some Divisions do not take advantage of the [TMA Certification Report Database](#), [INPUT](#), nor the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to plan for the on-site review. Divisions have relied on email correspondence to work with FTA and shared network drives to organize documents and collaborate internally. Other successful tools identified by the Divisions include:

- An availability matrix to find ideal dates to hold planning meetings and the on-site review;
- A Gantt chart to help the Review Team stay on track to complete the review;
- A multi-year Certification Review tracking spreadsheet to help avoid potential lapses; and
- The use of templates throughout the Certification Review process that results in improved consistency across time and saves staff time and resources.



**Figure 2: Certification Task List<sup>7</sup>**

	<b>Task</b>	<b>Target Date</b>	<b>Completion Date</b>
<b>1</b>	Hold Pre-Certification Meeting or Mock Review four months to two years prior to on-site review (optional for new TMAs or TMAs in need of targeted support)		
<b>2</b>	Identify and secure commitment from Federal Review Team members		
<b>3</b>	Negotiate and agree on date for on-site review with Review Team, MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s)		
<b>4</b>	Send formal on-site review notification to MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s)		
<b>5</b>	Preliminary review of past certification actions and planning products		
<b>6</b>	Assemble appropriate background material and send to Review Team		
<b>7</b>	Conduct Desk Review of past Certification findings and planning products. Assess compliance status and risk for certification topics and identify approach for each (see Table 1-3.1)		
<b>8</b>	Begin draft report based on Desk Review		
<b>9</b>	Review Team agrees on scope of review and preliminary agenda for on-site review		
<b>10</b>	Review Team assignments made for each review topic		
<b>11</b>	Review questions to be asked on site are developed and agreed upon		
<b>12</b>	Arrange time and location for public involvement		
<b>13</b>	Send out public involvement notice		
<b>14</b>	Develop final agenda and send to Review Team, MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s)		
<b>15</b>	Conduct public involvement		
<b>16</b>	Conduct on-site review		
<b>17</b>	Review Team caucus to assess outcome and preliminary discussion of Commendations, Recommendations, and Corrective Actions		
<b>18</b>	Review Team agrees on writing assignments and due date(s)		
<b>19</b>	Continue preparing initial draft report based on on-site review findings		
<b>20</b>	Distribute initial draft report to Review Team for comment		
<b>21</b>	Prepare final draft report and resubmit for review if necessary		
<b>22</b>	Share final draft report with MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s) for technical comment		
<b>23</b>	Prepare Final Report		
<b>24</b>	Prepare transmittal letter to MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s)		
<b>25</b>	Brief FHWA DA(s) and FTA RA(s) on Certification findings and get signatures for transmittal letter		
<b>26</b>	Send Final Report and transmittal letter to MPO(s), State DOT(s), and public transportation operator(s), and FHWA/FTA Headquarters		
<b>27</b>	Coordinate time for Certification briefing with MPO Policy Board(s)		
<b>28</b>	Present Certification findings at MPO Policy Board meeting(s)		

<sup>7</sup> The Certification Task List is under Section 1-2.3 and Appendix M of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), or in the list of [Downloadable Certification Resources](#) on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

**Figure 3: Certification Worksheet for Establishing Review Scope<sup>8</sup>**

Certification Topic	Status			Proposal for Current Review – Place a check in the appropriate column and list specific focus if any		
	Included in Previous Certification Review (Y/N) (Date) (Non/Compliance)	Addressed in Recent Federal Action (Y/N) (Date) (Non/Compliance)	Past Issues/Potential Risk (H) (M) (L)	Include in Future Certification Review	Rely on Desk Review and/or Recent Actions	Cover During On-Site Review
1. Organizational Structure and Policy Board Involvement						
2. TMA/MPA Boundaries						
3. Agreements and Contracts						
4. UPWP Development						
5. Transportation Planning Process						
6. MTP Development						
7. Financial Planning						
8. AQ and Transportation Conformity						
9. TIP Development, Approval, Amendment, and Project Selection						
10. Public Involvement						
11. Self-Certifications						
12. Title VI and Nondiscrimination, EJ, and LEP						
13. CMP						
14. List of Obligated Projects						
15. Environmental Mitigation						
16. Consultation and Coordination						
17. Management and Operations Considerations						
18. Transportation Safety Planning						
19. Security in the Planning Process						
20. Integrating Freight in the Transportation Planning Process						
21. Visualization Techniques						
22. Land Use and Livability						
23. PBPP						
24. RMOC						
25. PEL						
26. Documentation of Planning Process						
27. Travel Demand and Forecasting Models						
28. ITS						

<sup>8</sup> The Certification Worksheet for Establishing Review Scope is under Section 1-3.5 and Appendix H of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), or in the list of [Downloadable Certification Resources](#) on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

### Effective Practice:

#### Utilization of Templates and Tracking Tools for Effective Organization and Collaboration

The New York and Tennessee Divisions developed timelines for Certification Reviews that helps them stay on-schedule to ensure that the site visits and Final Report are completed on-time. The timelines include all key steps in the process and help the Divisions avoid having things fall through the cracks. For the New York Division, this is two-fold. First, the Division establishes a work plan for each Certification Review that it conducts, including a breakdown of milestone dates from the initiation letter through the delivery of the Final Report. Included here are names of staff responsibilities for each item during the Certification Review process, including topics for discussion during the on-site review. Additionally, the New York Division uses an annual work plan template to organize responsibilities with FTA Region partners, as well as its counterparts in the FHWA/FTA New York City Metropolitan Office. This tool has proved helpful to FHWA/FTA planners, particularly in States and regions with multiple TMAs, who are responsible for numerous TMA Certification Reviews.

#### Use of Availability Matrix to Schedule Federal Team Meetings

The Tennessee Division has a simple but effective approach to scheduling Federal Team meetings. The Division prepares an availability matrix (see Figure 4) and emails it out to all team members. Each Federal Team member reviews the matrix and their schedules and responds in an email with which times work for them and which times do not work. The Division eliminates confusion from different time zones by having two times listed for each time slot, one for each time zone. Once all team members have filled in their availability, the Division reviews the matrix and selects the meeting date and time that works for the most people.

Figure 4: FHWA Tennessee Division Schedule Availability Matrix

TMA Certification Review Kickoff Meeting -- November 2014									
	CENTRAL TIME	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3	Name 4	Name 5	EASTERN TIME	Name 6	Name 7
Mon. 11/03	8:00am–10:00am	YES					9:00am – 11:00am		
	1:00pm–3:00pm	YES					2:00pm – 4:00pm		
Tue. 11/04	8:00am–10:00am	YES					9:00am – 11:00am		
	1:00pm–3:00pm	NO					2:00pm – 4:00pm		
Wed. 11/05	8:00am–10:00am	YES					9:00am – 11:00am		
	1:00pm–3:00pm	NO					2:00pm – 4:00pm		
Fri. 11/07	8:00am–10:00am	NO					9:00am – 11:00am		
	1:00pm–3:00pm	YES					2:00pm – 4:00pm		

## *Recommendations:*

### **8. Develop a TMA Certification Review *SharePoint* Site to More Easily Collaborate with FTA**

#### **Division Offices:**

- Develop a TMA Certification Review *SharePoint* site to share SOPs, other internal process documentation, and Certification Review materials.

#### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Create a TMA Certification Review *SharePoint* site template and identify functioning *SharePoint* sites that Divisions can use as models for sharing SOPs and other templates.
- Include instructions on how to develop a *SharePoint* site in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

#### **Resource Center:**

- Support Headquarters by researching and identifying examples of SOPs and *SharePoint* sites that can be shared with the field.
- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to focus on the value of developing a TMA Certification Review *SharePoint* site.

### **9. Utilize Updated TMA Certification Process Field Handbook and Division/Region Templates to Enhance Review Process**

#### **Division Offices:**

- Bookmark the website for the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), and post the link on the Division's *SharePoint* site.

#### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Post the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) on the Planning Discipline Support *SharePoint* site.
- When sending the annual message to the field planners, DA/ADA, and DFS concerning upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, include the link to the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

#### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include an overview of the TMA Certification Review process.
- Develop a section on the *SharePoint* site dedicated to TMA Certification Reviews and online training modules.

### **10. Implement Recommendations and Effective Practices from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Reports**

#### **Division Offices:**

- Implement recommendations and effective practices from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Reviews Reports.

#### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Provide information on TMA Certification reviews to the Planning, Environment and Realty Division Administrator Working Group (HEPDAWG), Division Administrator Council (DAC), and at the Spring/Fall Business Meetings about TMA Certification Reviews. This should include an overview of

the corporate importance, leadership role, responsibilities and opportunities, the process, and resources.

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners and highlight the Recommendations from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Reports.

### **Leadership Engagement**

The TMA Certification Review is the formal opportunity for FHWA and FTA to come together and ensure that a region is carrying-out its planning responsibilities in accordance with the Federal regulations. Since TMA Certification is such a critical part of FHWA/FTA oversight, senior management at the FHWA Division Office and FTA Regional Office, including the FHWA Division Administrator (DA) and FTA Regional Administrator (RA), should be engaged early and throughout the Certification Review process. At a minimum, leadership should be provided advance notice of TMA Certification Reviews.

Leadership participation will vary among FHWA Division Offices and FTA Regional Offices depending on staff capacity, as well as the number and location of the TMAs. However, FHWA DAs and FTA RAs should be given the opportunity to participate at a realistic level based upon their availability and interest, as well as on any previously identified risks within a TMA. At a minimum, FHWA DAs and/or FTA RAs are expected to sign both the TMA Certification Review initiation letter and transmittal letter, and should be available to present the findings of the TMA Certification to the MPO Policy Board. In the event that a DA or RA is not available, another leadership representative could be delegated to present the findings. It is also a good practice for FHWA Divisions and FTA Regions to add TMA Certification Reviews to their Unit Plans in order to highlight their importance and recognize the anticipated schedule of Certification Review-related activities.

The [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) includes guidance to Federal Teams on FHWA Division and FTA Regional leadership engagement in the TMA Certification process. Please see Section 1-1.2: Engaging with Federal Leadership and “Briefing the Policy Board” under Section 1-6.4: Presentation of Findings for more information.

### **State of the Practice**

As in 2015, FHWA Division Office and FTA Regional Office leadership engagement in the TMA Certification Review process varied. In general, FHWA DAs and FTA RAs are kept informed of upcoming TMA Certification Reviews and are provided updates on findings throughout the review process. Beyond updates, there is limited leadership involvement with many FHWA DAs and FTA RAs delegating most (if not full) responsibility of the TMA Certification Review to their planning staffs, which includes participating at kick-off or close-out meetings, and in some cases, signing the TMA Certification Review notification letter, and signing the Certification Review transmittal letter to the TMA planning partners. FTA RA participation during the process is particularly weak because of geographic limitations. Some FHWA DAs have shown more active engagement than their FTA counterparts, which includes, in some cases, formally representing both agencies when providing the close-out briefing to the MPO Policy Board.

The level of participation by MPO Policy Board members during the Certification Review process also varied. While there have been instances of full Policy Board participation during on-site reviews in the past, this has not happened consistently among the Divisions reviewed. Participation can depend on whether or not the on-site review coincides with a regularly scheduled MPO Policy Board meeting, which some Divisions have tried to arrange. Some Divisions schedule private meetings outside of the on-site review to gather valuable feedback from the MPO decision-makers. Most Federal Teams encourage active participation by Policy Board members during the on-site review and public involvement sessions, but oftentimes the Policy Board members do not attend, opting instead to participate during the briefing on the Final Report.

That said, the Review Team found that some FHWA Divisions and FTA Regions have elected not to hold review close-out briefings with the MPO Policy Board. In some cases, MPO staff has provided the briefing without Federal staff present.

### *Effective Practice*

#### **Increasing Engagement with the MPO Policy Board**

In addition to the presentation of Certification Review findings, the New York Division coordinates with the MPO Director to extend an invitation to the Policy Board members to attend the site visit kick-off meeting. In Tennessee, rather than scheduling a separate meeting concerning the Certification, Division planning staff presents the findings of the Certification Review to the Policy Board at regularly-scheduled MPO meetings to get direct feedback. Both of these methods illustrate the Division's proactive efforts to engage with the MPO Policy Board, and elevate their involvement with the Certification Review process.

#### **Involvement of Division Leadership Throughout the Certification Review Process**

The Arizona Division has demonstrated its value of the TMA Certification Review by engaging with its Division Administrator throughout the entire review process. While the DA trusts its planners to prepare for and conduct the Certification Review, the DA makes a point to represent the Division by attending both the kick-off and close-out meetings during the on-site review, takes a lead role in reviewing the Final Report before its dissemination to the TMA planning partners, and is the point-of-contact for the public to submit comments on the planning process. Further, the DA requests updates at regularly scheduled Division staff meetings in order to stay informed on how the review is proceeding, including being made aware of any issues of concern.

### *Recommendations:*

#### **11. Enhance Senior Leadership Awareness and Engagement Throughout the Certification Review Process, Including Taking an Active Role in Presenting the Final Report to the MPO Policy Board**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Include Certification Reviews in Division unit plans, including those objectives reported to the DFS.
- Include a discussion at the All Employee Meeting and with leadership throughout the TMA Certification process.

- Discuss and, if possible, assign roles to the DA/ADA and RA during the TMA Certification process (e.g., introduce the Certification Review purpose during kick-off meeting, and summarize findings at close-out meetings).
- As needed, request the DA/ADA to assign other Division leaders to assist with the TMA Certification Review.
- Work with the DA/ADA and/or RA to schedule their time to present the final TMA Certification Report to the MPO Policy Board.

**FHWA Headquarters:**

- Provide information on TMA Certification Reviews to the HEPDAWG, DAC, and at the Spring/Fall business meetings, including an overview of the corporate importance, leadership role, responsibilities and opportunities, the recommended process, and resources available to support field staff.
- Highlight TMA Certification Review risk areas and effective practices in DFS Reports.

**Resource Center:**

- Support Headquarters through participation on joint oversight committees to develop content for the DFS reports on risk areas and effective practices.
- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to emphasize the importance and best methods to engage senior leadership throughout the TMA Certification Review process.

## 12. Provide Opportunities for MPO Policy Board Participation

**Division Offices:**

- Schedule time on the on-site review agenda for time with the MPO Policy Board. This can be accomplished by:
  - Scheduling the TMA Certification Review during the same week as a regularly scheduled MPO Policy Board meeting;
  - Combining public involvement with a discussion with the MPO Policy Board;
  - Offering MPO Policy Board members a private meeting with the Federal Team; and
  - Inviting MPO Policy Board members to participate throughout the site visit

**FHWA Headquarters:**

- Update the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to include roles and responsibilities for partner agencies; include examples of successful Policy Board engagement.
- Use TPIE to outline the TMA Certification Review process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-On-line training series to include how and when to involve MPO Policy Board members.
- Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for involving MPO Policy Board members.

## Coordination with TMA Planning Partners

The Federal Team is responsible for ensuring the TMA planning partners are properly prepared for the Certification Review, which includes clarifying the TMA partners' roles. For new TMAs, Division Offices may wish to hold mock reviews or pre-certification meetings leading up to the site visit to educate the MPO about TMA Certification review processes, to clarify expectations, and address any questions or concerns in advance of the Certification Review. While useful for new TMAs, this method can also be used with long-standing TMAs as well, particularly those with a history of challenging issues. Proactive TMAs may also request to participate in such an activity to gauge their level of compliance and adjust as needed in advance of the official Certification Review.

Staff from the TMA, State DOT, and public transportation providers will be the key individuals to answer most of the questions posed by the Federal Team during the site visit. The Federal Team should invite and encourage the MPO Policy Board to participate throughout the Certification Review process. Often, Federal Teams provide time on the on-site review agenda for a discussion with MPO Policy Board members. This time is generally used to listen to MPO Policy Board member perspectives on the overall planning process and to answer their questions.

The [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) outlines the tools of mock reviews and pre-certification meetings. See *Section 1-1.5: New TMA Pre-Certification Meetings and Mock Reviews* for more information. Additionally, Appendix P provides a summary of how Review Teams use mock reviews and pre-certification meetings to assist their new TMAs in preparation of their Certification Reviews.

## State of the Practice

Overall, participation by the TMA planning partners within the latest Certification Reviews has been admirable. Federal Teams make an effort to coordinate early with the State DOTs, public transportation providers, and MPO leadership to ensure they all have the opportunity to participate throughout the Certification Review process.

Several Division Offices reviewed in 2016, however, identified frustration that some TMA planning partners do not seem to understand their roles in the Certification Review process. For instance, some State DOTs and public transportation operators assume they are part of the Federal Team and ask to take on segments of the on-site interview process. Some TMAs noted a lack of participation in the on-site review by the TMA planning partners, which may illustrate a lack of understanding the importance of TMA Certification. Conversely, some Divisions organize monthly or bi-monthly teleconferences with the TMA planning partners, including FTA, and may cover coordination on the upcoming TMA Certification Review. Others use mock reviews as training opportunities for new TMA staff.

## Effective Practice:

### Organizing Mock Certification Reviews

The Texas Division Office conducts mock Certification Reviews for newly designated TMAs. This helps prepare the new TMAs for their first official Certification Review by walking them through the process and providing feedback on their plans and programs. Additionally, the Division Office encourages staff from new TMAs to attend Certification Reviews for existing TMAs to become familiar with the certification review process.



### **Bi-monthly Meetings with FHWA Division Office, FTA Regional Office, and State DOT**

The Tennessee Division and the FTA Region 4 have a long-standing practice of meeting every other month with the Tennessee DOT. During the meetings, the partners discuss various planning topics with representatives from various divisions within the DOT. The meeting agendas are framed around a dashboard that the Tennessee Division uses to track its progress in various programs and initiatives. The Division has found that the bi-monthly meetings are a good way to keep everyone informed about recent and upcoming Certification Reviews.

### ***Recommendations:***

#### **13. Clarify TMA Partner Roles and Participation in Certification Review Process**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Outline the TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities and attach it to the [Certification Review notification letter](#).
- Send a copy of the notification letter and role and responsibility outline to each TMA partner agency.
- Share the Primer with the TMA planning partners.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Update the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to include roles and responsibilities for partner agencies.
- Use TPIE to outline the TMA Certification process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.
- Append to the sample Certification Review notification letter a summary of TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the Certification Review process.

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.
- Develop a Federal-Aid Essential video outlining TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the TMA Certification Review process.

#### **14. Implement Mock or Pre-Certification Reviews When Appropriate**

##### **Division Offices:**

- For any new TMA, schedule a mock review to outline the TMA Certification Review process.
- For TMA planning partner agencies with new staff, offer a pre-certification meeting to discuss the process and key issues in preparation for the Certification Review.
- Meet with the MPO Policy Board (particularly those with new members) to discuss and educate them about the Certification Review process.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- None

##### **Resource Center:**

- Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SMEs by [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) topics and disseminate to field staff.

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include how and when to engage mock review and pre-certification meetings.
- Research and identify templates, effective practices, and peer group Point of Contact (e.g., field staff that have initiated mock reviews) for mock review and pre-certification review meetings.

### **Coordination with FTA Region Staff**

FHWA and FTA have joint responsibility to conduct Certification Reviews and are mutually responsible for organizing and conducting the reviews. However, it is up to the discretion of the individual Regions and Divisions to decide how to organize roles throughout the process, including the lead convener.

In order to conduct a successful TMA Certification Review, it is important that FHWA and FTA work together to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to collectively assess whether TMAs are meeting the planning process requirements. Depending on the State and region, there are various factors that could impact and complicate the process (e.g., staff capacity, multiple TMAs, and multiple States). The joint FHWA/FTA MOA between the FHWA Division Office(s) and FTA Regional Office should be reviewed and revised as necessary to define and reflect each agency's role and responsibilities for conducting Certification Reviews, as well as document a conflict resolution process that provides clear strategies to address issues that could arise between agencies.

In October 2013, the FHWA and FTA Headquarters Offices of Planning issued a [memorandum](#) providing tools to assist with updating the FHWA/FTA MOAs. These tools include several templates to help the FHWA Division Offices and FTA Regional Offices develop a comprehensive MOA that details the roles and responsibilities of each agency in the planning process.<sup>9</sup> The latest FHWA/FTA MOAs can be found on [FHWA StaffNet](#).

For more information about how to work effectively with FTA, see the [Coordinating with the Federal Transit Administration Planning Boot Camp Module](#). For more information on planning across jurisdictions, see Section 1-1.7: TMAs with Multiple States and/or MPOs of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

### ***State of the Practice***

As with the Division Offices reviewed in 2015, all Divisions show evidence of having good working relationships with their FTA Regional Office counterparts. This includes implementing annual work plan meetings to review and confirm joint responsibilities, and coordinating on key issues, such as a follow-up protocol for Federal actions. Some FTA Region planners are committed to participating in person for the on-site review, demonstrating their value of and partnership in conducting the TMA Certification Review process. However, few Divisions have updated their [joint MOAs with FTA](#). Most Divisions that have not yet updated their FHWA/FTA MOA have worked to complete an update but efforts over the last few years have been unsuccessful. Division staff expressed frustration, as their role and responsibilities for completing the TMA Certification Review has expanded. Limited resources often

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<sup>9</sup> While the template for the MOA remains the same, the TMA Certification Review Report Template has been updated and is included in Appendix J of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), or in the list of [Downloadable Certification Resources](#) on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

minimize FTA's ability to manage an equal level of tasks to assist with the Certification Review. Most Divisions recognized this limitation and worked cooperatively with FTA to maximize their participation and involvement whenever possible.

### *Effective Practices:*

#### **Updated FHWA/FTA MOA Details Roles and Responsibilities for Conducting Certification Reviews**

In 2015, the New York Division Office and FTA Region 2 updated its [MOA](#) to include detailed roles and responsibilities for all aspects of joint oversight, including TMA Certification Reviews. The MOA spells out the timeframe for conducting Certification Reviews and the roles and responsibilities of both the Division and Regional Offices. The Division noted that coordination with the FTA Region 2 Office on Certification Reviews has improved since updating the MOA. The Division and Regional Offices have agreed to revisit the MOA every two years and update it, as necessary.

### *Recommendations:*

#### **15. Update Joint FHWA/FTA MOAs and Ensure They Support Current Process and Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Review, and as needed, revise existing joint FHWA/FTA MOAs to ensure they support current processes and roles and responsibilities, and that they are consistent with the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- As needed, maintain and update the [FHWA StaffNet](#) website with new or revised MOAs.
- Facilitate discussions with FTA to continue updating the MOAs.

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and lead Advanced Planning – Live and On-line training illustrating how an MOA supports the TMA Certification Review process.
- Share noteworthy MOAs through various outreach opportunities (e.g., National Highway Institute [NHI] training courses, webinars, meetings, discipline seminars, etc.).

#### **16. Engage FTA as Partners in the Certification Review Process, with Shared Roles and Responsibilities**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Establish an annual work plan meeting ([see New York MOA](#)) to identify upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, begin the discussion of coordination issues and schedules, and to assign roles and responsibilities to initiate the Certification Review process.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Increase FTA's awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews (e.g., continue to include FTA in the State-of-the-Practice Reviews; discuss during the annual FTA Planner's Meeting; continue to include FTA staff in [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) update teams).

##### **Resource Center:**

- Coordinate with FTA to identify training opportunities at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series being offered by the Resource Center.

- Work with FTA to ensure they are leading discussion beyond transit issues so that responsibilities are equitably dispersed throughout the on-site review.
- Within the MOA, delegate FTA review and lead responsibilities in CORE activities (e.g., review the UPWP, TIP, and MTP) and assign them the responsibility for leading these topics as needed during the Certification Review process.

## Section 2. Conducting the TMA Certification Review

This section addresses how Federal Teams conduct TMA Certification Reviews, and includes the following subsections:

- [Conducting the Desk Review](#)
- [Certification Review Site Visit: Agenda](#)
- [Certification Review Public Involvement](#)

### Conducting the Desk Review

The Desk Review is an opportunity for the Federal Team to request and review products of the TMA's planning process and to determine which elements of the planning process should be topics during the on-site review. If the Federal Team determines that further discussion is necessary about a planning process, the Review Team can develop questions to ask the TMA during the on-site review. Organized by topic, Part 2 of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) provides a list of sample questions that Federal Teams can use during the on-site review.

Federal Teams perform the Desk Review based on information gathered from the TMA's website, through FHWA/FTA's oversight activities and working knowledge of the TMA, and based on products provided by the TMA in advance of the on-site review.<sup>10</sup> Federal Teams may not request or require TMAs to submit answers to any questions provided to the TMA. Doing so is burdensome to the TMA and contradicts agency policy and guidance.

There are numerous planning topics that could be covered during a TMA Certification Review, many of which are listed in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#). There is no limitation or prescription for the number of topics to include during the on-site review. Federal Teams may conduct an exhaustive Desk Review and then narrow down a list of discussion topics for the on-site review based on the findings of the desk review. Another option is for Federal Teams to take a risk-based approach to decide which topics to cover during the Desk Review. The risk-based approach can help focus the Desk Review, giving more time and resources needed to dig in-depth into each topic.

For more information on the Desk Review process, see the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook, Section 1-3.4: Desk Review](#).

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<sup>10</sup> The Federal Team should only request documentation from the TMA planning partners when they cannot access readily on their own. This should not be a request for a "data dump" of everything the TMA has produced in the past four years; rather, this should only be specific material that is needed to complete a thorough Desk Review. Any information that is still unclear can always be brought up during the on-site review.

### *State of the Practice*

Consistent with findings in 2015, most Federal Teams do not follow agency guidance for conducting Desk Reviews. Many Divisions require the region to respond to an exhaustive list of questions in advance of the on-site review, or they require the TMA to compile and submit large binders of planning materials, most of which are available on the TMA website. TMA planning partners complained that the 2-3 month process of documenting hundreds of pages of information was burdensome. In fact, one TMA had to hire a contractor to prepare 50-60 binders, holding hundreds of pages each, per the Division's request and long-standing practice. Further, the extended Desk Review timeline resulted in some Federal Teams having limited time to prepare of the on-site discussion.

Most of the Federal Teams disclosed that they do not rely on the materials submitted by the TMAs to develop the Certification Review on-site review agenda nor do they use much of the information to develop questions for the on-site review. Rather, the questionnaire and binders of materials were used primarily to draft the Final Report or to keep as a record of the Certification Review process.

Another approach to the Desk Review focused on risk. A risk-based approach allows the FHWA Division and FTA Regional Office to limit the number of topics to cover during the Desk Review based on planning processes that the Federal Team believes to be troublesome, or those processes that address agency priorities or Division risk areas. These FHWA Division and FTA Regional Offices then use the results of the Desk Review to develop the on-site review agenda and the discussion questions.

### *Effective Practice:*

#### **Risk-Based Desk Review**

The New York Division Office takes a risk-based approach to conducting its Desk Reviews. The Division delves into topics that staff thinks the TMA may have the most critical issues and reduces the amount of time spent reviewing known compliant planning practices. This helps to streamline the overall Certification Review, specifically the Desk Review, and helps to focus the on-site review on conversations to address the most critical issues.

### *Recommendation:*

#### **17. Follow Agency Guidance on Conducting a Desk Review as Outlined in the TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Follow agency guidance on conducting Desk Reviews, as described in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).
- Engage other Divisions, or Resource Center and Headquarters staff to assist with the Desk Review.
- Review the Division risk assessment to identify areas to focus on in the Desk Review.
- Talk with other Division offices to find new streamlining techniques.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- When assisting with TMA Certification Reviews, reinforce the appropriate execution of a Desk Review.

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include how to conduct a Desk Review.
- Reinforce the appropriate execution of a Desk Review when assisting with TMA Certification Reviews.

**Certification Review Site Visit: Agenda**

The TMA Certification Review on-site review agenda is based on the findings of the Desk Review. There are many potential topics that could be discussed during the on-site review. However, a typical two-day on-site review does not provide enough time to effectively discuss all the possible topics. For example, it would not be necessary to reevaluate a recently-updated and Federally-reviewed MTP. Using the findings from the Desk Review, Federal Teams can focus on those topics where there are questions or issues that need a fuller discussion and use that to determine the final agenda. Findings for topics with a history of compliance could also rely on information from routine contacts and/or the Desk Review. To avoid redundancy, Review Teams could cover topics with a low risk in every other review or some other review cycle.

The Federal Team should share the agenda with the TMA planning partners in advance of the site visit, which would give them the opportunity to provide feedback and prepare for the discussion. The MPO or its planning partners may want to include agenda items if there are specific issues that they want to highlight or seek guidance on. However, the Federal Team should maintain control of the agenda to ensure that the on-site review will result in an understanding of how the region is meeting Federal requirements for topics included.

**State of the Practice**

Many Federal Teams spoken with do not use the results of the Desk Review to inform the on-site review agenda. Instead, they develop agendas that address all possible planning process topics during the two-day on-site review. For the most part, these agendas are developed prior to the Desk Review. Some Federal Teams have TMA staff deliver presentations on every topic listed in the agenda to initiate discussion. In some cases, these presentations replace open discussion between the Federal Team and the TMA partners.

Divisions that implement a targeted approach to the Desk Review also use risk, agency priorities, and emerging issues to aid in the development of a targeted agenda for the on-site review. This practice provides time for the Federal Team and TMA partners to have in-depth discussions on the priority topics that yield the answers needed to verify compliance with Federal requirements.

In all cases, the TMA is provided the agenda in advance and is given an opportunity to provide input.

**Effective Practice:****Targeted Agenda Development**

The New York Division Office uses the results of its risk-based Desk Review to feed into the development of a targeted agenda for the on-site review. This agenda includes both emerging topic areas that are important to FHWA Headquarters and Division staff, but also the issues of concern that stemmed from

the Desk Review or topics that the region specifically requested to cover during the on-site review. By focusing on these topic areas of highest concern, this provides the TMA partners a chance to dive deeply into the most pressing topics, while acknowledging the other required planning topics during the Desk Review.

### *Recommendation:*

#### **18. Use Risk Based Approach to Develop Focused Certification Review Agenda**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Using the findings from the Desk Review, focus on those topics where there are questions or issues that need a fuller discussion and use that to determine the final agenda.
- Engage Division leadership, the Resource Center, and Headquarters to identify key issues, risk areas, and agency priorities to include on the on-site review agenda.
- Use the Division risk assessment to identify key risks.
- Review past Certification Reviews for the TMA to identify key issues, corrective actions, and recommendations to follow-up on during the on-site review.

##### **Headquarters:**

- When sending the annual message to the field planners, DA/ADA, and DFS concerning upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, highlight risk areas and key national planning priorities.
- Use the TMA Certification Database/Oversight website to identify national risk areas for TMAs and disseminate to the field.

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-On-line Training series to include risk-based review and agency/national priorities.

### **Certification Review Public Involvement**

23 U.S.C. 134(k)(5)(D) and 49 U.S.C. 5303 (k)(5)(D) require that the TMA Certification Review process include an opportunity for public involvement. The purpose of this opportunity is two-fold: (1) for FHWA and FTA to inform the public about the Federal transportation planning requirements and TMA Certification Review process and (2) to gain further insight on public engagement at the TMA and to hear about any issues or thoughts they have concerning the TMA's planning process.

While public meetings are the most common form of involvement activity, a public meeting is not mandated to meet the public involvement requirement. Attendance at public meetings for Certification Reviews is consistently low. As a result, Federal Teams are encouraged to think creatively about how to engage with the public in the TMA Certification Review process. Public involvement could include activities such as engaging with TMA stakeholder groups (e.g., Citizens Advisory Committee, Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee), or through web-based communication technologies (e.g., social media, websites, and E-Mail).

Because public meetings are common in Certification Review processes, most guidance focuses on this public involvement option. Public meeting guidance describes how to coordinate with TMA for scheduling the event, choosing a place and time that is convenient and accessible to the public, communicating widely and strategically, designing a room that is accessible and that encourages active



participation. There is also guidance on how to use the numerous tools and templates available to facilitate a fair and open public forum that welcomes and considers all public comments.

Sometimes, the Federal Team is solicited by members of the public or representatives of various interest groups to be included in the Certification Review site visit, either as active listeners or as a way to call attention to particular concerns or issues. While the Federal Team can decide to invite the public to the Certification Review site visit, they are certainly not required to do so. The Federal Team should consult with the TMA planning partners to make a decision on the best approach.

Please see *Section 1-5.5: Public Involvement for Certification Reviews* of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) for more information.

### *State of the Practice*

As was found in 2015, all Federal Teams engage with the public regarding the performance of the TMA and its transportation planning process. However, they all raised concern that attendance at public meetings is a challenge, with the assumption that it can be more difficult to engage with the public concerning the planning process versus a specific project. Some Federal Teams fared better than others in regards to attracting the public to meetings. The most successful Federal Teams held multiple meetings spread throughout the region, and they coordinated with the TMA planning partners to choose locations that were diverse yet familiar to the public (e.g., public libraries and schools).

Even with some minor successes, for the most part the Federal Teams are frustrated by the fact that they continually attract a low number of participants, but believe they must satisfy this requirement. This experience triggered discussion on new guidance to consider more innovative, non-traditional practices to engage with the public.

### *Recommendation:*

#### **19. Provide Opportunities for Active Public Involvement in the TMA Certification Review Process**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Begin the on-site review with public involvement to ensure key topics and issues of concern are included in the agenda.
- Initiate a multi-pronged approach for public involvement, including the ability to submit comments electronically, creating more traditional in-person opportunities, and providing opportunities to submit written comments.
- Schedule the site visits around regularly-scheduled TMA/MPO Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings to leverage an engaged group of people.
- Utilize the TMA's unique mechanisms for reaching out to public participants (e.g., E-Mail, blogs, Twitter, and Facebook).

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Capture good examples and techniques for public involvement and document these in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) and the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).
- Update the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to include information about public involvement opportunities during the TMA Certification Review process.



**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include effective public involvement techniques for TMA Certification Reviews.
- Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for public involvement.

### Section 3. Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report

This section addresses how Federal Teams document and present findings from the TMA Certification Review, and includes the following subsections:

- [Draft Report: Report Structure](#)
- [Final Report: Transmittal](#)
- [Federal Action Follow-Up](#)

#### Draft Report: Report Structure

Communication of findings is a foundational part of the oversight process for Certification Reviews. FHWA and FTA developed the [Certification Report Template](#) to aid Federal Teams in organizing findings and drafting clear, timely, and consistent TMA Certification Review Report. The template is designed to provide guidance and encourage consistency across Divisions.

The Final Report should provide detail on the topics that were covered during the on-site review, including key findings and details that support the report's Federal actions. This is to provide context to the TMA who will be addressing the actions, but also for the FHWA and FTA planners who might be reviewing these actions within the [TMA Certification Review Database](#); the contextual information is key to understanding the basis for the action. While it is not necessary to cover all 24 planning topics within the report, the report should state that the TMA is in compliance with all Federal regulations. The [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) includes a list of the 24 planning topics included in the TMA Certification Review, as well as templates and examples from published reports that Federal Teams can reference when writing their own Final Reports. See Figure 4 for a sample report preface.

#### State of the Practice

In 2016, the Review Team found that most Divisions are using their own past reports as templates for new TMA Certification Review reports. This practice helps improve consistency within the Division Office, but not necessarily between Division Offices. However, while the level of detail varies greatly between the reports reviewed, each report clearly documents Federal actions and is generally written in a format that is easy to follow. Further, reports are written in a style that can be understood by those outside of the transportation planning field.

#### Effective Practice:

##### Develop Consistent Report Structure Based on Previously Published Reports

The New York Division Office developed a template for Certification Review reports that makes the reports consistent with one another, even reports for different TMAs in the State. The Division reported that the templates make it easier to write the reports.

*Recommendation:*

**20. Use the TMA Certification Review Template to Develop the TMA Certification Report**

**Division Offices:**

- Use the FHWA/FTA joint [Certification Report Template](#).


**FHWA Headquarters:**

- Encourage Divisions to use a consistent report structure to document Certification Review findings and Federal actions.
- Continue to enhance the TMA Certification Review Template to include all the planning topics listed in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include the development of a Certification Report.
- Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for Certification Review Reports.

Figure 5: Certification Report Template Cover Page




U.S. Department  
of Transportation

# Transportation Management Area Planning Certification Review

Federal Highway  
Administration

Federal Transit  
Administration

## Transportation Management Area



Month Day, Year

Summary Report

## Final Report: Transmittal

Once the Certification Report is finalized, the Federal Team sends it to the MPO Policy Board. The Final Report is accompanied by a transmittal letter on joint FHWA/FTA letterhead, signed by both the FTA RA and FHWA DA. The transmittal letter is addressed to the MPO Policy Board Chair, with copies transmitted to the MPO Director, State DOT Secretary, and public transportation operator directors. The transmittal letter outlines the purpose of the Certification Review, key dates and process milestones, as well as summarizes Federal actions resulting from the Certification Review. Since it is common for TMAs to begin addressing issues based on the initial presentation of findings, the transmittal letter should acknowledge and commend the TMA for any progress made by the TMA to address issues outlined in the report. The transmittal letter serves as the FHWA/FTA Certification of the TMA's planning process, and the date on the transmittal letter initiates the four-year period between TMA Certification Reviews required under 23 CFR 450.336(b)(3). The date of the Final Report should be the same as the date of the Certification Letter. A sample Certification Letter is available in *Appendix L* of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#); a downloadable version is also available in *Appendix R* or on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

The Review Team must certify the TMA within the 4-year period. There are circumstances, however, when the Federal Team may not be able to complete the Final Report prior to the end of the 4-year cycle. While this should be avoided, FHWA and FTA must jointly deliver a letter to the TMA providing FHWA/FTA Certification pending the completion and transmittal of the final report. The delivery of the Final Report should provide confirmation of the FHWA/FTA Certification and/or any conditions finalized in the final report. Sample language to include in the TMA Certification letter, which is included under *Section 1-6.4: Presentation of Findings* of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), is as follows:

*Based on the review conducted and ongoing oversight by FHWA and FTA, the XXX metropolitan transportation planning process is certified as meeting the Federal transportation planning requirements. The final Certification Review Report is forthcoming, and will document the evaluation of the region's planning practices and include specific findings and recommendations based on the Federal requirements.*

Once the Final Report has been transmitted, the Federal Team should send the transmittal letter and Final Report to FTA and FHWA Headquarters for entry into the [TMA Certification Review Database](#). Additionally, it is the responsibility of the Division Office to upload the Certification Review Report, Corrective Actions, and transmittal letter to [INPUT](#). In order to resolve Corrective Actions, attention, encouragement, and stewardship from FHWA and FTA is almost always needed. [INPUT](#) is a tool for Divisions to better track progress and accomplishments. Further, documentation of progress can be a key input for the next Certification Review and documented by the FHWA Division in [INPUT](#).

Current FHWA/FTA guidance suggests that the FHWA DA and FTA RA present the Final Report findings to the MPO Policy Board. If the FHWA DA or FTA RA is not available, field staff should work to ensure the

DA's or RA's responsibilities are delegated to another senior Division and/or Regional leader to present findings and Federal actions to the MPO Policy Board(s).

### *State of the Practice*

As in 2015, Division use of FHWA's [INPUT](#) database to upload Final Reports, transmittal letters, and track corrective actions, is low. While some Divisions are actively using [INPUT](#) to monitor progress on Federal actions, it is far from commonplace for all Division Offices.

Most Divisions reviewed in 2016 did not deliver the FHWA/FTA Certification letter before the four-year TMA Certification deadline, causing the TMA Certification to technically lapse. In most cases, this lapse was over one year. In addition, most Divisions were not aware of the option to conditionally certify the TMA prior to delivery of the Final Report.

Most Federal Teams took longer than the recommended 60-90 days to complete the Final Report after coming off of the on-site review. There can be various reasons for this (e.g., staff capacity, late initiation of the Certification Review process, lack of Federal partner support, etc.). One solution developed by a Division was to draft segments of the Certification Report that rarely change from one review to another in advance of the on-site review. This type of approach should help the Federal Team save time during the report writing phase of the process. Additionally, Federal Teams can give themselves a larger buffer of time near the end of the process to accommodate unforeseen delays or start the process earlier if the team historically runs out of time at the end.

### *Recommendations:*

#### **21. Follow Agency Protocol for Transmitting the Certification Report to FHWA Headquarters**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Ensure that Certification Review Reports and transmittal letters are delivered to FHWA Headquarters so that they can be included in the [TMA Certification Review Database](#).
- Upload Certification Reports, transmittal letters, and corrective actions into FHWA's [INPUT](#) database.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Consider sending notification letters to Divisions with TMAs that are within three months of Certification lapse.

##### **Resource Center:**

- None.

#### **22. Use Agency Protocols to Address a Potential Certification Lapse**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Transmit the Certification Report within the four-year window in regulation and within the recommended 60-90 day time frame from the conclusion of the site visit. If needed, send a joint FHWA/FTA letter providing Certification prior to the 4-year lapse without the completed Final Report.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Emphasize to the Divisions the options available to them if a TMA Certification lapse is imminent.

**Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to focus on solutions and effective practices for staying on schedule and avoiding Certification lapses.

**23. Use INPUT to Track Federal Actions****Division Offices:**

- Adopt the practice of uploading and monitoring Federal actions in [INPUT](#). Follow updated guidance in the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#).

**FHWA Headquarters:**

- Update the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) to include guidance on how to upload and monitor Federal actions in [INPUT](#)

**Resource Center:**

- Support FHWA Headquarters by developing and delivering the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series with instructions for how to use and track Federal Actions in [INPUT](#).

**Federal Action Follow-Up**

Once the Certification Report is complete and delivered to FHWA Headquarters and the TMA planning partners, it is important for Federal Teams to develop a strategy for monitoring progress toward Federal action resolutions, and particularly non-compliant planning processes. Typically, if there are Corrective Actions, milestone dates are documented in the Final Report. The follow-up process may include an action plan to monitor progress, and support TMAs in overcoming issues of non-compliance in a timely manner. Another option is for the Federal Team to adopt a checklist, as seen in Figure 5, to record all Corrective Actions and Recommendations, milestone and completion dates, as well as the specific approach to monitor or improve the planning process of interest.

**Figure 6: Certification Follow-Up Checklist**

<u>TMA Name</u>		<u>Review Year</u>	
<i>Corrective Action/ Recommendation</i>	<i>Established Milestone Dates</i>	<i>Requested Completion Date</i>	<i>Approach/Status</i>

A sample Certification Follow-Up Checklist is available in *Appendix N* of the [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#), or can be downloaded directly from a list of resources in *Appendix R* or on the [TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website](#).

When developing an approach to resolve Federal actions, Federal Teams should first discuss the issue with the TMA planning partners and work to find a solution and schedule that meets the goal of addressing the issue and respects the unique circumstances of the TMA. If Federal Teams are struggling to find an appropriate and realistic resolution, they should seek assistance from FHWA Resource Center, FHWA and FTA Headquarters, or other FHWA Divisions or FTA Regions.

### *State of the Practice*

To varying degrees, Divisions are working with TMAs to develop plans to resolve Corrective Actions or other risk areas. Some Divisions have implemented more proactive practices by addressing risk areas before they become problematic. This prevents a number of issues from rising to the level of Corrective Actions during the Certification Review. Other Divisions address Corrective Actions when they arise by implementing an action plan to resolve the issue as quickly as possible. The action plan includes roles and responsibilities of the different planning partners, as well as milestone dates. In these instances, there is a great amount of communication between the Division Office and the TMA planning partners to make sure the issue is resolved properly. Once the action has been resolved, a letter is issued to the TMA verifying the resolution of the Corrective Action.

Not all Divisions follow-up on Corrective Actions. Likewise, not all Divisions assign Corrective Actions to compliance issues, which is required. In some cases, the TMA may resolve issues identified during the on-site review prior to the completion of the Certification Report, but decide not to document this in the Final Report as a Corrective Action.

### *Recommendation:*

#### **24. Develop a Follow-Up Action Plan to Monitor TMA Resolution of Corrective Actions**

##### **Division Offices:**

- Follow the guidance developed by FHWA Headquarters and Resource Center regarding Corrective Actions and the development of Follow-Up Action Plans.
- Work cooperatively with the TMA planning partners to develop a realistic process for resolving challenges in the TMA's planning process.

##### **FHWA Headquarters:**

- Review language in the Primer and [TMA Certification Process Field Handbook](#) regarding the Follow-Up Action Plan and update guidance about the use of Corrective Actions as needed.

##### **Resource Center:**

- Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series with instructions on how to develop Corrective Actions and implement a Follow-Up Action Plan in collaboration with the TMA planning partners.

## Next Steps

The 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review built off of the 2015 Review, which examined the practices of four Division Offices relating to how each conducts its TMA Certification Reviews. As all 52 Division Offices are different, the Review Team will continue to monitor how the different Divisions partner with their FTA Regional Office counterparts in conducting TMA Certification Reviews. This annual evaluation helps identify future resources to support overall consistency of oversight and stewardship relative to planning, conducting, and documenting TMA Certification Reviews. With support from the FHWA Office of Planning, FHWA Resource Center, and the FHWA Division Offices, the various Recommendations from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Reviews are being addressed. The Review Team will share this report across FHWA and will submit the Division Office recommendations for 2016.

In 2017, the State-of-the-Practice Review Team is slated to meet with four additional Division Offices to continue seeking additional information on how the FHWA Division Offices and FTA Regional Offices conduct TMA Certification Reviews.



## Appendix A: Legislation, Regulations, and Resources

### *Legislation:*

- 23 U.S.C. § 134 (k)(5): <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2011-title23/html/USCODE-2011-title23-chap1-sec134.htm>
- 49 U.S.C. § 5303 (k)(5): <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2007-title49/pdf/USCODE-2007-title49-subtitleIII-chap53-sec5303.pdf>

### *Regulations:*

- 23 CFR Part 450.336(b): [http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=feec73fb239a334e1662c0e8fa2f0b43&mc=true&node=se23.1.450\\_1336&rgn=div8](http://www.ecfr.gov/cgi-bin/text-idx?SID=feec73fb239a334e1662c0e8fa2f0b43&mc=true&node=se23.1.450_1336&rgn=div8)

### *Resources:*

- TMA Certification Process Field Handbook: [https://www.oversight.volpe.dot.gov/CertificationDB/Handbook\\_09-17-2015.pdf](https://www.oversight.volpe.dot.gov/CertificationDB/Handbook_09-17-2015.pdf)
- TMA Certification Review Boot Camp Module: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/boottma/>
- TMA Certification Review CORE Function: [http://our.dot.gov/office/fhwa.dss/planning/Page%20Library/CORE\\_Functions\\_Template.aspx?CFID=118&FLID=TMA Certification Review and Report](http://our.dot.gov/office/fhwa.dss/planning/Page%20Library/CORE_Functions_Template.aspx?CFID=118&FLID=TMA%20Certification%20Review%20and%20Report)
- Engaging Leadership in Planning Issues Boot Camp Module: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/leadership-module/>
- Coordinating with the Federal Transit Administration Boot Camp Module: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/fta2015/>
- Identifying and Managing Planning Risk: <https://connectdot.connectsolutions.com/risk2015/>

## Appendix B: Review Team Members

Larry Anderson	FHWA Resource Center
Brian Betlyon	FHWA Resource Center
Steven Call	FHWA Utah Division
Jared Fijalkowski	U.S. DOT Volpe Center
Theresa Hutchins	FHWA Office of Planning
Randal Jansen	FHWA Mississippi Division
Tameka Macon	FHWA Office of Planning
Elissa McDade	FTA Office of Planning
Dominique Paukowits	FTA Region 9
Lisa Randall	FHWA Resource Center
Spencer Stevens	FHWA Office of Planning
Christopher Timmel	U.S. DOT Volpe Center

## Appendix C: Discussion Topics

During the on-site discussions, the Review Team addressed the following topics:

### **Preparing for the TMA Certification Review**

#### *Assembling the Federal Team*

- Team members
- Internal process for identifying participants

#### *Preparing for the Review*

- Internal process documentation
- Coordination with FTA
- Task-sharing

### **Conducting the Review**

#### *Conducting the Desk Review*

- Materials requested
- Use of materials to prepare for site visit
- Questions for TMA

#### *Certification Review Site Visit*

- Agenda
- Participation
- Federal Team Roles
- TMA Roles
- Closeout

#### *Public Meeting*

- Public meeting notice
- Process for conducting meeting
- Federal Team and TMA roles
- Addressing comments

### **Review Report Development and Delivery**

#### *Draft Report*

- Roles and responsibilities
- Identifying findings, recommendations, corrective actions, and commendations
- Sharing with TMA

#### *Final Report*

- Transmittal
- Upload to INPUT/Review Tracker
- Other Questions

### **Field Staff Feedback on the TMA Certification Review Process**

- What works well
- What could be improved
- Needs – Resources, Technical Assistance, Training
- Other

### **MPO Perspective on TMA Certification Review**

#### *Goals for review*

- Understanding Federal, DOT, and TMA roles and technical processes
- TMA comments on TMA Certification Review process

#### *Site Visit Preparation and Execution*

- Communication from Federal Team
- TMA involvement

#### *Public Involvement*

#### *Follow-up*

- Follow-up on Federal Actions
- Draft report

#### *Feedback on the TMA Certification Review Process*

- What works well
- What could be improved
- Needs – Resources, Technical Assistance, Training
- Other

## Appendix D: Requested Desk Review Documents

The Review Team requested that the Division Offices participating in the CY 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review send the following documents for review:

- The latest Certification Review Report for one TMA.
- The Division Office's SOPs for planning, conducting, and documenting TMA Certification Reviews.
- Other documented Division Office processes for planning, conducting, and documenting TMA Certification Reviews (e.g., checklists, agenda templates).
- Agendas related to the most recent review of one TMA.
- FTA Region/FHWA Division Office MOA.
- Communications among the Certification Review Team and/or with the TMA relevant to the process for conducting the most recent review for one TMA.

## Appendix E: Status of 2015 Recommendations

**Table 1: Status of 2015 Recommendations – Cross-Cutting Themes for TMA Certification Reviews**

Enhance Leadership Awareness of and Engagement in Certification Reviews			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Develop risk-based messaging and guidance on the role and importance of TMA Certification Reviews. Communicate this through a variety agency leadership forums (including but not limited to the FHWA Office of Planning, Environment, and Realty (HEP) DA advisory group; the DA Council and the Directors of Field Services (DFSs).	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – A revision to the TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook (Anticipated Winter 2016/2017) will address this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Develop training and resources to assist Headquarters with outreach education and awareness building for agency leadership.	<b>Status</b>	To Be Determined
Document the Division's Certification Review Process			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Develop and provide an internal SOP template and include this in an update to the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Highlight example Division SOPs already in use. Provide training and technical assistance to Divisions on the benefits of and actual development of an internal SOP.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Researching Divisions with an SOP to serve as a best practice.
Develop Conflict Resolution Strategy/Plan			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide guidance and interpretation on policy issues that may cause conflict between members of the Federal Team and with partner agencies.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Identify available resources on conflict resolution. Provide training and technical assistance to mitigate conflicts within the Federal Team and with the Federal Team and partners (as needed).	<b>Status</b>	To Be Determined

Develop and/or Update a Joint FHWA/FTA MOA			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Remind Divisions of the recommended development of FHWA/FTA field MOAs that define agency roles and responsibilities in conducting TMA Certification Reviews. Make these accessible on the Planning <a href="#">StaffNet</a> .	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – A <a href="#">Planning on the Web (POW)</a> was offered that outlined the findings of this State-of-the-Practice Report and outlined the MOA StaffNet website. All completed MOA's and templates are accessible on the <a href="#">FHWA StaffNet</a> website.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide training and technical assistance to FHWA Division Offices on FHWA/FTA MOAs in order to reinforce the guidance provided within the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled "Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program" <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
Engage FTA as Equal Partners			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Advise Divisions to incorporate effective FHWA/FTA collaborative practices for conducting TMA Certification Reviews in the joint MOA.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – A <a href="#">POW</a> was offered that outlined the findings of this State-of-the-Practice Report and outlined the MOA StaffNet website. All completed MOA's and templates are accessible on the <a href="#">FHWA StaffNet</a> website.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Identify notable collaborative practices between FHWA and FTA in the oversight of Certification Reviews. Disseminate these throughout training and technical assistance venues and resources.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled "Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program" <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
Improve Coordination and Collaboration for Bi-State Reviews			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Develop additional guidance on how to conduct Certification Reviews with bi-State TMAs. Guidance should encourage that FHWA/FTA MOAs and unit SOPs include specific references to bi-state TMAs, if applicable.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.

<b>Resource Center</b>	Identify notable practices on federal oversight for bi-state TMAs. Work with Headquarters to include these in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> - The updated <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> now has <i>Section 1-1.7: TMAs with Multiple States and/or MPOs</i> .
<b>Enhance Leadership Awareness of and Engagement in Certification Reviews</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Promote the use of FHWA planning discipline materials and resources (e.g., webinars, training modules, TMA Certification Process Field Handbook). Identify additional needs and determine strategies and opportunities to meet these through the FHWA corporate planning program and the FHWA Planning Discipline.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – A <a href="#">POW</a> was offered that outlined the findings of this State-of-the-Practice Report and outlined the MOA StaffNet website. All completed MOA's and templates are accessible on the <a href="#">FHWA StaffNet</a> website.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Promote the use of FHWA planning discipline materials and resources (e.g., webinars, training modules, TMA Certification Process Field Handbook). Identify additional needs and determine strategies and opportunities to meet these through the FHWA corporate planning program and the FHWA Planning Discipline.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Implement Mock or Pre-Certification Reviews When Appropriate</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide guidance and training/technical assistance to Division Offices seeking to conduct mock Certification Reviews and pre-Certification Review discussions. Encourage field units to include these in the development of their FHWA/FTA MOA and unit SOP.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – On February 16, 2016, a <a href="#">POW</a> session was offered that outlined the findings of this State-of-the-Practice Report and outlined the MOA StaffNet website. All completed MOA's and templates are accessible on the <a href="#">FHWA StaffNet</a> website. The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide guidance and training/technical assistance to Division Offices seeking to conduct mock Certification Reviews and pre-Certification Review discussions. Encourage field units to include these in the development of their FHWA/FTA MOA and unit SOP.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.



**Table 2: Status of 2015 Recommendations – Preparing for the TMA Certification Review**

<b>Continue to Foster Early and Ongoing Conversations with the TMA</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Document notable practices on early and ongoing engagement in support of Certification Reviews and communicate these notable practices to field staff.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – A revision to the <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> (anticipated winter 2016/2017) will address this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Document notable practices on early and ongoing engagement in support of Certification Reviews and communicate these notable practices to field staff.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Strategically Form Federal Review Team</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide Divisions with listings of Headquarters/Resource Center staff expertise, guidance on when and how to request Headquarters and Resource Center assistance during TMA Certification Reviews, and example "risk triggers" to consider in assessing Headquarters/Resource Center involvement.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – FHWA Headquarters and Resource Center Planning Program Area Assignments listing is being updated and will be posted on Planning Discipline <i>SharePoint</i> site.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide Divisions with listings of Headquarters/Resource Center staff expertise, guidance on when and how to request Headquarters and Resource Center assistance during TMA Certification Reviews, and example "risk triggers" to consider in assessing Headquarters/Resource Center involvement.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Provide RC Planning SME by topic list during bi-annual Regional Planning Network Meetings <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Plan and Schedule Review Process Early</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Remind each Division Office to utilize the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook (Table 1-2.1: Timetable for Scheduling a Certification Review). Highlight agency risk if FHWA and FTA fail to adhere to Certification Review timelines and schedules.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.

<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide training and technical assistance to reinforce the timeline and schedule information included in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
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**Table 3: Status of 2015 Recommendations – Conducting the TMA Certification Review**

<b>Use Desk Review Questions Appropriately</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide/enhance guidance in in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook on the proper use of the Certification Review questions to prepare for the site visit.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Develop and deliver training and technical resources that review Certification Review best practices and agency policies, including desk review processes.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Collaborate on Site Review Agenda Development</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide/enhance guidance on the development of on-site agendas. Identify notable examples of approaches to the development of site visit agendas and provide training/technical assistance, as needed.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.

<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide/enhance guidance on the development of on-site agendas. Identify notable examples of approaches to the development of site visit agendas and provide training/technical assistance, as needed.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Encourage MPO Policy Board Participation</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide/enhance guidance on the importance of MPO Policy Board participation in the Certification Review. Provide training/technical assistance, as needed.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – A revision to the <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> (anticipated winter 2016/2017) will address this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide/enhance guidance on the importance of MPO Policy Board participation in the Certification Review. Provide training/technical assistance, as needed.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Ensure Participation from the Appropriate Partner Agencies</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide clearer guidance on the different external partners and parties that should be invited to the site visit, as well as their role under certain topic areas. Update the TMA Certification Review Handbook to reflect this new guidance.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide training on the updated guidance on the different partners and parties that should be invited to the Certification Review site visit.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Maximize Involvement at Public Meetings</b>			

<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide/enhance guidance on the Federal role in scheduling, planning, and conducting the public meeting during the Certification Review process. Guidance should also discuss the requirements on the Federal Team for responding to public comments raised during the Certification Review process. Update the Handbook to reflect this new guidance.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Identify notable practices for public meetings and develop and provide training and technical assistance on how to conduct effective public meetings during Certification Reviews.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.

**Table 4: Status of 2015 Recommendations – Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report**

<b>Develop Consistent Report Structure</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Revise the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook to provide clearer guidance on using the Report Template or the FTA/FHWA Certification Review Report Template. Enhance the template as needed.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide training and technical assistance for how to develop and structure a TMA Certification Review report following the template outline in the Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.

Develop Appropriate Federal Actions			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Reinforce and highlight the guidance in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook on specific Federal actions. Clarify the distinctions between recommendations versus corrective actions. Provide guidance and communications on the Federal actions to field planning staff and field leadership.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Develop and provide <a href="#">training materials</a> to complement the existing TMA Certification Process Field Handbook guidance around identifying key findings, recommendations and corrective actions, and how to best document these in the TMA Certification Report.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
Share Draft Report with TMA Partners			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Highlight language within the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook that discusses the options for seeking TMA planning partner feedback on the draft Certification Review report.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Develop and provide training on best practices for collaborating on the development of the Certification Review report and communication of findings.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program” <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
Format Transmittal Letter Correctly			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Reinforce agency guidance on developing and delivering transmittal letters for Certification Reviews.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.

<b>Resource Center</b>	Provide training on examples of an appropriately formatted transmittal letter that Federal Teams can use to ensure all the necessary components are included.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Follow Protocol for Final Report Delivery within DOT</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Provide clear guidance to FHWA staff and leadership regarding the expectations for and process of transmitting final Certification Review reports to Headquarters. Update the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook to include how and when to use FHWA's INPUT database during the transmittal process.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.
<b>Resource Center</b>	Include discussion of internal DOT report transmittal in appropriate training and technical assistance resources on Certification Reviews.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program”  <u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.
<b>Avoid Delayed Final Report Delivery</b>			
<b>Headquarters</b>	Reiterate and enhance guidance to clarify expectations for final report delivery. This should address: inclusion of letter with the final report indicating the TMA's Certification status; the timeline for final report delivery; and procedures to follow when a final formal report cannot be completed within the four-year window in regulation. Provide enhanced guidance in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.	<b>Status</b>	<u>Completed</u> – The <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</a> has been updated to support this recommendation.

<b>Resource Center</b>	Develop and deliver training and technical assistance resources to complement the enhanced guidance in the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook reinforcing the process the Federal Team should take to deliver a final Certification Review report.	<b>Status</b>	<p><u>Completed</u> – Led development and delivery of February 2016 <a href="#">POW</a> entitled “Mitigating Planning Program Risk: Findings and Recommendations from the 2015 State-of-the-Practice Program”</p> <p><u>Under Development</u> – Advanced Live-and-Online Training: TMA Certification Review Seminar will be an intermediate level training for 20-25 Division specialists. The first seminar is tentatively scheduled for Summer 2017 and will cover all topics of the TMA Certification Review process.</p>
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## Appendix F: 2016 State-of-the-Practice Recommendations

Table 5: Recommendations – Preparing for the TMA Certification Review

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
<b>1. Involve FHWA and FTA SMEs on the Federal Review Team to Support the Certification Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announce upcoming Certification Reviews at Division All-Employee Meetings to help identify key issues and topics and to identify Division SMEs to participate on the Federal Team.</li> <li>At the Desk Review, bring in SMEs to discuss key issues and assign roles and throughout the Certification Review responsibilities (e.g., review materials, share in the discussion at the on-site review, and write that section of the Certification Report).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase SMEs' understanding of their joint role and responsibility for the TMA Certification Review process.</li> <li>As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SMEs in the Certification Review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.</li> <li>Publish program area assignments for Headquarters and Resource Center staffs on <a href="#">StaffNet</a> to assist Division Office staffs with their selection of SMEs and establish standard process for requesting SME assistance.</li> <li>Enhance current language in <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> about how and when to include SMEs in the Certification Review process.</li> <li>Develop a one-stop process for requesting SME assistance that would include the Volpe Center, Resource Center, and FHWA Headquarters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>When participating on a Review Team, support the integration of Division SMEs in the Certification Review process and encourage Divisions to assign responsibilities to the SMEs throughout the review process.</li> <li>Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by TMA Certification Process Field Handbook topics and disseminate to field staff.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Engage Additional Federal Partners, as Appropriate (e.g., EPA, HUD)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reach out to Federal partners to identify issues, and as appropriate, interest in participating in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Headquarters to enhance language in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> about</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enhance language in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> about involving additional Federal</li> </ul>



Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	Certification Review including their focused role and responsibility.	involving additional Federal partners in the Certification Review process as appropriate.	partners in the Certification Review process as appropriate.
<b>3. Distribute Certification Review Responsibilities Among Federal Team Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with FTA to ensure they are leading discussion beyond transit issues so that responsibilities are equitably dispersed throughout the on-site review.</li> <li>• Within the MOA, delegate FTA review and lead responsibilities in CORE activities (e.g., review the UPWP, TIP, and MTP), and assign them the responsibility for leading these topics as needed during the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase FTA's awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews (e.g., include FTA in the State-of-the-Practice Reviews; discuss during the annual FTA Planner's Meeting; include FTA staff in <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> update teams).</li> <li>• Increase other SMEs' awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint roles and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews.</li> <li>• As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SMEs in the review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.</li> <li>• Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to illustrate the value of shared roles and responsibilities among Federal Team members.</li> <li>• Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series being offered by the Resource Center.</li> <li>• Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> topics and disseminate to field staff.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Foster Early and Ongoing Conversations with the TMA Planning Partners</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outline the TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the course of the review in the Certification Review notification letter, and send a copy to each TMA partner agency.</li> <li>• Share the <a href="#">Transportation Management Area Planning</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> to include roles and responsibilities of TMA planning partners.</li> <li>• Use <a href="#">TPIE</a> to outline the TMA Certification Review process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.</li> <li>• Develop a <i>Federal-Aid Essential</i> video outlining TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	<p><a href="#">Certification Review Primer</a> with the TMA planning partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure partners are engaged with the TMA in an ongoing basis; this can be through such activities as TMA related planning reviews and interactions, including the UPWP, TIP, MTP, and other meetings or discussions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Append the sample Certification Review notification letter to include TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the Certification Review process</li> </ul>	<p>throughout the TMA Certification Review process.</p>
<p><b>5. Conduct Early and Ongoing Coordination with Federal Review Team Members</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a schedule with the Federal Team members that outlines key tasks, deliverables, and due dates. Key elements of the review to include in the schedule are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Before the Desk Review: Discuss team member schedules, materials needed, and the review timeline;</li> <li>During the Desk Review: Team meeting dates to check in with the Certification Review process;</li> <li>Following the Desk Review: Identify key issues and questions to include during the on-site review;</li> <li>Developing the Agenda: Focus on key issues for discussion;</li> <li>Preparing the On-Site Review: Assign lead roles during the discussion;</li> <li>Preparing the Final Report: Gather information to include in the report and identify recommendations, corrective</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase SMEs' understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Review process.</li> <li>As Headquarters staff participates in TMA Certification Reviews, support the integration of Division SME's in the review process, including assigning them responsibilities throughout the process.</li> <li>Enhance current language in <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> about how and when to include SMEs in the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.</li> <li>Coordinate with FTA for training at their annual FTA Planner's Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series offered by the Resource Center.</li> <li>Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SME by <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> topics and disseminate to field staff.</li> <li>Research, identify, and disseminate to the field how Divisions are using their Federal Team and how they are engaging them early and throughout the Certification Review process.</li> <li>Research and identify timelines for TMA Certification Reviews and disseminate to the field.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	<p>actions, and commendations; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Reviewing the Final Report: Provide comments on the final report and to send the Certification letter to the TMA.</li> </ul>		
<b>6. Plan, Schedule, and Initiate TMA Certification Review Process Early</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish annual work plan meeting (<a href="#">see New York MOA</a>) to identify upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, begin the discussion of coordination issues and schedules, and to assign roles and responsibilities to initiate the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On a quarterly basis, share the TMA Certification Review tracking spreadsheet with field planners, DA/ADA, and DFS that provides information on expected, scheduled, and completed TMA Certification Reviews and Final Reports. The reminder should also provide links to resources and websites that provide guidance for completing TMA Certification Reviews.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research, identify, and disseminate to the field sample timelines for completing TMA Certification Reviews.</li> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include the timeline and recommended planning techniques for the TMA Certification Review.</li> </ul>
<b>7. Document the Certification Review Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop an SOP for the TMA Certification Review process that supports procedures consistent with the FHWA/FTA MOA and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an SOP template that outlines the key steps necessary to complete a TMA Certification Review and share examples of existing SOPs that Divisions can use to develop or update their SOP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to emphasize the importance and best methods for documenting the Certification Review process and how to use templates.</li> </ul>
<b>8. Develop a TMA Certification Review SharePoint Site to More Easily Collaborate with FTA</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a TMA Certification Review <i>SharePoint</i> site to share SOPs, other internal process documentation, and Certification Review materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a TMA Certification Review <i>SharePoint</i> site template and identify functioning <i>SharePoint</i> sites that Divisions can use as models for sharing SOPs and other templates.</li> <li>• Include instructions on how to develop a <i>SharePoint</i> site in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support Headquarters by researching and identifying examples of SOPs and <i>SharePoint</i> sites that can be shared with the field.</li> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to focus on the value of developing a TMA Certification Review <i>SharePoint</i> site.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
<b>9. Utilize Updated TMA Certification Process Field Handbook and Division/Region Templates to Enhance Review Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bookmark the website for the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>, and post the link on the Division's <i>SharePoint</i> site.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> on the <a href="#">Planning Discipline Support SharePoint</a> site.</li> <li>When sending the annual message to the field planners, DA/ADA, and DFS concerning upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, include the link to the TMA Certification Process Field Handbook.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include an overview of the TMA Certification Review process.</li> <li>Develop a section on the <i>SharePoint</i> site dedicated to TMA Certification Reviews and online training modules.</li> </ul>
<b>10. Implement Recommendations and Effective Practices from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Reports</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement recommendations and effective practices from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Reviews Reports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information on TMA Certification reviews to the HEPDAWG, DAC, and at the Spring/Fall Business Meetings about TMA Certification Reviews. This should include an overview of the corporate importance, leadership role, responsibilities and opportunities, the process, and resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners and highlight the Recommendations from the 2015 and 2016 State-of-the-Practice Review Reports.</li> </ul>
<b>11. Enhance Senior Leadership Awareness and Engagement Throughout the Certification Review Process, Including Taking an Active Role in Presenting the Final Report to the MPO Policy Board.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Include Certification Reviews in Division unit plans, including those objectives reported to the DFS.</li> <li>Include a discussion at the All Employee Meeting and with leadership throughout the TMA Certification process.</li> <li>Discuss and, if possible, assign roles to the DA/ADA and RA during the TMA Certification process (e.g., introduce the Certification Review purpose during kick-off meeting, and summarize findings at close-out meetings).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information on TMA Certification Reviews to the HEPDAWG, DAC, and at the Spring/Fall business meetings, including an overview of the corporate importance, leadership role, responsibilities and opportunities, the recommended process, and resources available to support field staff.</li> <li>Highlight TMA Certification Review risk areas and effective practices in DFS Reports.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support Headquarters through participation on joint oversight committees to develop content for the DFS reports on risk areas and effective practices.</li> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to emphasize the importance and best methods to engage senior leadership throughout the TMA Certification Review process.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As needed, request the DA/ADA to assign other Division leaders to assist with the TMA Certification Review.</li> <li>Work with the DA/ADA and/or RA to schedule their time to present the final TMA Certification Report to the MPO Policy Board.</li> </ul>		
<b>12. Provide Opportunities for MPO Policy Board Participation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schedule time on the on-site review agenda for time with the MPO Policy Board. This can be accomplished by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scheduling the TMA Certification Review during the same week as a regularly scheduled MPO Policy Board meeting;</li> <li>Combining public involvement with a discussion with the MPO Policy Board;</li> <li>Offering MPO Policy Board members a private meeting with the Federal Team; and</li> <li>Inviting MPO Policy Board members to participate throughout the site visit.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> to include roles and responsibilities for partner agencies; include examples of successful Policy Board engagement.</li> <li>Use TPIE to outline the TMA Certification Review process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-On-line training series to include how and when to involve MPO Policy Board members.</li> <li>Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for involving MPO Policy Board members.</li> </ul>
<b>13. Clarify TMA Partner Roles and Participation in Certification Review Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outline the TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities and attach it to the Certification Review notification letter.</li> <li>Send a copy of the notification letter and role and responsibility outline to each TMA partner agency.</li> <li>Share the Primer with the TMA planning partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> to include roles and responsibilities for partner agencies.</li> <li>Use TPIE to outline the TMA Certification process, including TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities.</li> <li>Append to the sample <a href="#">Certification Review notification letter</a> a summary of TMA planning partner roles and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include roles and responsibilities for TMA planning partners.</li> <li>Develop a <i>Federal-Aid Essential</i> video outlining TMA planning partner roles and responsibilities throughout the TMA Certification Review process.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
		responsibilities throughout the Certification Review process.	
<b>14. Implement Mock or Pre-Certification Reviews When Appropriate</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For any new TMA, schedule a mock review to outline the TMA Certification Review process.</li> <li>For TMA planning partner agencies with new staff, offer a pre-certification meeting to discuss the process and key issues in preparation for the Certification Review.</li> <li>Meet with the MPO Policy Board (particularly those with new members) to discuss and educate them about the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide a listing of Resource Center staff SMEs by <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> topics and disseminate to field staff.</li> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include how and when to engage mock review and pre-certification meetings.</li> <li>Research and identify templates, effective practices, and peer group Point of Contact (e.g., field staff that have initiated mock reviews) for mock review and pre-certification review meetings.</li> </ul>
<b>15. Update Joint FHWA/FTA MOAs and Ensure They Support Current Process and Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review, and as needed, revise existing joint FHWA/FTA MOAs to ensure they support current processes and roles and responsibilities, and that they are consistent with the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As needed, maintain and update the <a href="#">FHWA StaffNet</a> website with new or revised MOAs.</li> <li>Facilitate discussions with FTA to continue updating the MOAs.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and lead Advanced Planning – Live and On-line training illustrating how an MOA supports the TMA Certification Review process.</li> <li>Share noteworthy MOAs through various outreach opportunities (e.g., NHI training courses, webinars, meetings, discipline seminars, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>16. Engage FTA as Partners in the Certification Review Process, with Shared Roles and Responsibilities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish an annual work plan meeting (<a href="#">see New York MOA</a>) to identify upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, begin the discussion of coordination issues and schedules, and to assign roles and responsibilities to initiate the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase FTA’s awareness and involvement to support improved understanding of their joint role and responsibility for TMA Certification Reviews (e.g., continue to include FTA in the State-of-the-Practice Reviews; discuss during the annual FTA Planner’s Meeting; continue to include FTA staff in <a href="#">TMA Certification</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordinate with FTA to identify training opportunities at their annual FTA Planner’s Meeting, based on the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series being offered by the Resource Center.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with FTA to ensure they are leading discussion beyond transit issues so that responsibilities are equitably dispersed throughout the on-site review.</li> <li>• Within the MOA, delegate FTA review and lead responsibilities in CORE activities (e.g., review the UPWP, TIP, and MTP) and assign them the responsibility for leading these topics as needed during the Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Process Field Handbook</a> update teams).	

**Table 6: Recommendations – Conducting the TMA Certification Review**

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
<b>17. Follow Agency Guidance on Conducting a Desk Review as Outlined in the TMA Certification Review Process Field Handbook</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Follow agency guidance on conducting Desk Reviews, as described in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> <li>• Engage other Divisions, or Resource Center and Headquarters staff to assist with the Desk Review.</li> <li>• Review the Division risk assessment to identify areas to focus on in the Desk Review.</li> <li>• Talk with other Division offices to find new streamlining techniques.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When assisting with TMA Certification Reviews, reinforce the appropriate execution of a Desk Review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include how to conduct a Desk Review.</li> <li>• Reinforce the appropriate execution of a Desk Review when assisting with TMA Certification Reviews.</li> </ul>
<b>18. Use Risk Based Approach to Develop Focused Certification Review Agenda</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using the findings from the Desk Review, focus on those topics where there are questions or issues that need a fuller discussion and use that to determine the final agenda.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When sending the annual message to the field planners, DA/ADA, and DFS concerning upcoming TMA Certification Reviews, highlight risk areas and key national planning priorities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-On-line Training series to include risk-based review and agency/national priorities.</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage Division leadership, the Resource Center, and Headquarters to identify key issues, risk areas, and agency priorities to include on the on-site review agenda.</li> <li>Use the Division risk assessment to identify key risks.</li> <li>Review past Certification Reviews for the TMA to identify key issues, corrective actions, and recommendations to follow-up on during the on-site review.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the TMA Certification Database/Oversight website to identify national risk areas for TMAs and disseminate to the field.</li> </ul>	
<b>19. Provide Opportunities for Active Public Involvement in the TMA Certification Review Process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin the on-site review with public involvement to ensure key topics and issues of concern are included in the agenda.</li> <li>Initiate a multi-pronged approach for public involvement, including the ability to submit comments electronically, creating more traditional in-person opportunities, and providing opportunities to submit written comments.</li> <li>Schedule the site visits around regularly-scheduled TMA/MPO Citizen Advisory Committee Meetings to leverage an engaged group of people.</li> <li>Utilize the TMA's unique mechanisms for reaching out to public participants (e.g., E-Mail, blogs, Twitter, and Facebook).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capture good examples and techniques for public involvement and document these in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> and the <a href="#">TMA Oversight and Certification Process Website</a>.</li> <li>Update the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> to include information about public involvement opportunities during the TMA Certification Review process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include effective public involvement techniques for TMA Certification Reviews.</li> <li>Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for public involvement.</li> </ul>



**Table 7: Recommendations – Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report**

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
<b>20. Use the TMA Certification Review Template to Develop the TMA Certification Report</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use the FHWA/FTA joint <a href="#">Certification Report Template</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage Divisions to use a consistent report structure to document Certification Review findings and Federal actions.</li> <li>Continue to enhance the TMA Certification Review Template to include all the planning topics listed in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to include the development of a Certification Report.</li> <li>Research, identify, and disseminate effective practices for Certification Review Reports.</li> </ul>
<b>21. Follow Agency Protocol for Transmitting the Certification Report to FHWA Headquarters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that Certification Review Reports and transmittal letters are delivered to FHWA Headquarters so that they can be included in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Review Database</a>.</li> <li>Upload Certification Reports, transmittal letters, and corrective actions into FHWA's <a href="#">INPUT</a> database.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider sending notification letters to Divisions with TMAs that are within three months of Certification lapse.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>None</li> </ul>
<b>22. Use Agency Protocols to Address a Potential Certification Lapse</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transmit the Certification Report within the four-year window in regulation and within the recommended 60-90 day time frame from the conclusion of the site visit. If needed, send a joint FHWA/FTA letter providing Certification prior to the 4-year lapse without the completed Final Report.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emphasize to the Divisions the options available to them if a TMA Certification lapse is imminent.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series to focus on solutions and effective practices for staying on schedule and avoiding Certification lapses.</li> </ul>
<b>23. Use INPUT to Track Federal Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt the practice of uploading and monitoring Federal actions in <a href="#">INPUT</a>. Follow updated guidance in the <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> to include guidance on how to upload and monitor Federal actions in <a href="#">INPUT</a>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support FHWA Headquarters by developing and delivering the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series with instructions for</li> </ul>

Recommendation	Division Office	FHWA Headquarters	Resource Center
			how to use and track Federal Actions in <a href="#">INPUT</a> .
<b>24. Develop a Follow-Up Action Plan to Monitor TMA Resolution of Corrective Actions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Follow the guidance developed by FHWA Headquarters and Resource Center regarding Corrective Actions and the development of Follow-Up Action Plans.</li> <li>Work cooperatively with the TMA planning partners to develop a realistic process for resolving challenges in the TMA's planning process.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review language in the Primer and <a href="#">TMA Certification Process Field Handbook</a> regarding the Follow-Up Action Plan and update guidance about the use of Corrective Actions as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and deliver the Planning Advanced Live-and-Online Training series with instructions on how to develop Corrective Actions and implement a Follow-Up Action Plan in collaboration with the TMA planning partners.</li> </ul>

## Appendix G: 2016 State-of-the-Practice Effective Practices

**Table 8: Effective Practices – Preparing for the TMA Certification Review**

Effective Practice	Description
<b>Engagement with Division Staff Concerning Certification Review Process and Results</b>	The New York and Tennessee Division Offices include staff specialists from other disciplines/topic areas in the on-site review to address specific subject matters (e.g., Area Engineer, Civil Rights Specialist, ITS Specialist). In addition, Tennessee Division Office planners discuss Certification Reviews in the monthly staff meetings, which is effective at keeping Division staff informed about the process and to engage staff from other disciplines in the review.
<b>Including Other Division Staff, and Headquarters and Resource Center SMEs on the Federal Team</b>	Each of the four Divisions included Division SMEs (e.g., engineers, safety specialists, financial specialists, and civil rights specialists) to participate on the Review Team for the Desk Review and/or the on-site review. In addition, the Arizona Division engaged Resource Center staff to address a particular topic (e.g., travel demand modeling) in a Certification Review. Moreover, the New York Division invites Headquarters to participate on Certification Reviews when issues arise that require expertise, particularly on emerging topics or potentially contentious issues.
<b>Useful On-Boarding Practices for New Staff Working on Certification Reviews</b>	The Texas Division Office trains its new planners to conduct Certification Reviews by having them participate in Certification Reviews led by other experienced staff. In addition, the Division has new planners lead discussions in Certification Reviews. This gives new staff the opportunity to learn from their colleagues before leading their own Certification Reviews. Additionally, the Division Office has initiated planning reviews for non-TMA MPOs. This provides additional opportunities for new staff to participate in and lead MPO planning reviews prior to leading a Certification Review.
<b>Flexible and Creative Approach to Scheduling Site Visits</b>	Due to the New York City TMA's unique issues and needs, the Division Office held five separate meetings over several months for its on-site review as opposed to holding one long meeting over several days. The TMA staff appreciated the flexible approach to conducting the site visit, which better accommodated staff resources and time and allowed the Federal Team to focus on key issues in order to confirm compliance to Federal regulations.
<b>Utilization of Templates and Tracking Tools for Effective Organization and Collaboration</b>	The New York and Tennessee Divisions developed timelines for Certification Reviews that helps them stay on-schedule to ensure that the site visits and Final Report are completed on-time. The timelines include all key steps in the process and help the Divisions avoid having things fall through the cracks. For the New York Division, this is two-fold. First, the Division establishes a work plan for each Certification Review that it conducts, including a breakdown of milestone dates from the initiation letter through the delivery of the Final Report. Included here are names of staff responsibilities for each item during the Certification Review process, including topics for discussion during the on-site review. Additionally, the New York Division uses an annual work plan template to organize responsibilities with FTA Region partners, as well as its counterparts in the FHWA/FTA New York City Metropolitan Office. This tool has

Effective Practice	Description
	proved helpful to FHWA/FTA planners, particularly in States and regions with multiple TMAs, who are responsible for numerous TMA Certification Reviews.
<b>Use of Availability Matrix to Schedule Federal Team Meetings</b>	The Tennessee Division has a simple but effective approach to scheduling Federal Team meetings. The Division prepares an availability matrix (see Figure 4) and emails it out to all team members. Each Federal Team member reviews the matrix and their schedules and responds in an email with which times work for them and which times do not work. The Division eliminates confusion from different time zones by having two times listed for each time slot, one for each time zone. Once all team members have filled in their availability, the Division reviews the matrix and selects the meeting date and time that works for the most people.
<b>Increasing Engagement with the MPO Policy Board</b>	In addition to the presentation of Certification Review findings, the New York Division coordinates with the MPO Director to extend an invitation to the Policy Board members to attend the site visit kick-off meeting. In Tennessee, rather than scheduling a separate meeting concerning the Certification, Division planning staff presents the findings of the Certification Review to the Policy Board at regularly-scheduled MPO meetings to get direct feedback. Both of these methods illustrate the Division's proactive efforts to engage with the MPO Policy Board, and elevate their involvement with the Certification Review process.
<b>Involvement of Division Leadership Throughout the Certification Review Process</b>	The Arizona Division has demonstrated its value of the TMA Certification Review by engaging with its Division Administrator throughout the entire review process. While the DA trusts its planners to prepare for and conduct the Certification Review, the DA makes a point to represent the Division by attending both the kick-off and close-out meetings during the on-site review, takes a lead role in reviewing the Final Report before its disseminated to the TMA planning partners, and is the point-of-contact for the public to submit comments on the planning process. Further, the DA requests updates at regularly scheduled Division staff meetings in order to stay informed on how the review is proceeding, including being made aware of any issues of concern.
<b>Organizing Mock Certification Reviews</b>	The Texas Division Office conducts mock Certification Reviews for newly designated TMAs. This helps prepare the new TMAs for their first official Certification Review by walking them through the process and providing feedback on their plans and programs. Additionally, the Division Office encourages staff from new TMAs to attend Certification Reviews for existing TMAs to become familiar with the certification review process.
<b>Bi-monthly Meetings with FHWA Division Office, FTA Regional Office, and State DOT</b>	The Tennessee Division and the FTA Region 4 have a long-standing practice of meeting every other month with the Tennessee DOT. During the meetings, the partners discuss various planning topics with representatives from various divisions within the DOT. The meeting agendas are framed around a dashboard that Tennessee DOT uses to track its progress in various programs and initiatives. The Division has found that the bi-monthly meetings are a good way to keep everyone informed about recent and upcoming certification reviews

Effective Practice	Description
<b>Updated FHWA/FTA MOA Details Roles and Responsibilities for Conducting Certification Reviews</b>	In 2015, the New York Division Office and FTA Region 2 updated its <a href="#">MOA</a> to include detailed roles and responsibilities for all aspects of joint oversight, including TMA Certification Reviews. The MOA spells out the timeframe for conducting Certification Reviews and the roles and responsibilities of both the Division and Regional Offices. The Division noted that coordination with the FTA Region 2 Office on Certification Reviews has improved since updating the MOA. The Division and Regional Offices have agreed to revisit the MOA every two years and update it, as necessary.

**Table 9: Effective Practices – Conducting the TMA Certification Review**

Effective Practice	Description
<b>Risk-Based Desk Review</b>	The New York Division Office takes a risk-based approach to conducting its Desk Reviews. The Division delves into topics that staff thinks the TMA may have the most critical issues and reduces the amount of time spent reviewing known compliant planning practices. This helps to streamline the overall Certification Review, specifically the Desk Review, and helps to focus the on-site review on conversations to address the most critical issues.
<b>Targeted Agenda Development</b>	The New York Division Office uses the results of its risk-based Desk Review to feed into the development of a targeted agenda for the on-site review. This agenda includes both emerging topic areas that are important to FHWA Headquarters and Division staff, but also the issues of concern that stemmed from the Desk Review or topics that the region specifically requested to cover during the on-site review. By focusing on these topic areas of highest concern, this provides the TMA partners a chance to dive deeply into the most pressing topics, while acknowledging the other required planning topics during the Desk Review.

**Table 10: Effective Practices – Developing and Delivering the TMA Certification Review Report**

Effective Practice	Description
<b>Develop Consistent Report Structure Based on Previously Published Reports</b>	The New York Division Office developed a template for Certification Review reports that makes the reports consistent with one another, even reports for different TMAs in the State. The Division reported that the templates make it easier to write the reports.

## Appendix H: Acronyms

ADA	FHWA Assistant Division Administrator
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CMP	Congestion Management Process
DA	FHWA Division Administrator
DAC	FHWA Division Administrator Council
DFS	FHWA Director of Field Services
DOT	Department of Transportation
EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HEP	FHWA Office of Planning, Environment and Realty
HEPDAWG	FHWA Planning, Environment and Realty Division Administrator Working Group
HUD	United States Department of Housing and Urban Development
INPUT	Integrated National Planning and Updating Tool
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century Act
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NHI	National Highway Institute
POW	FHWA Planning on the Web
RA	FTA Regional Administrator

RBSO	Risk Based Stewardship and Oversight
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TPIE	Transportation Planning Information Exchange
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
U.S.C.	United States Code
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation