



AMPO Annual Award 2013 Nomination
South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) as Staff to the
Houma Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (HTMPO)
Overall Achievement for a non-TMA MPO
Planning for Safety and Connectivity in the Bayou Region

SUMMARY: The Transportation Division of the South Central Planning and Development Commission (SCPDC) serves as staff to the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization (HTMPO) and are the liaison between the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD) and local governments to implement projects in the region. The same staff assists in the coordination and implementation of regional safety, transit, coordinated human services, and active transportation projects. Despite being one of the smaller MPO's in Louisiana, the Houma-Thibodaux MPO doesn't limit itself from reaching greater heights. Primarily focused on transportation planning for the Bayou Region (Lafourche, Terrebonne and parts of Assumption Parish), the HTMPO has also influenced the implementation of history-breaking initiatives that expand the project scope to include the River Parishes of St. Charles, St. James and St. John the Baptist. **The development of the South Central Regional Transportation Safety Plan (SCRTSP) and the South Central Regional Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan has put the HTMPO and SCPDC at the forefront of regional planning and grassroots level advocacy.** The HTMPO Policy and Technical Advisory Committees consult with members of the multidisciplinary group, as well as the Regional Active Transportation and Regional Transit Subcommittees to ensure that highway safety initiatives, transportation alternatives and transit services are incorporated into the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan 2035.



Innovation: HTMPO, through the South Central Safety Community Partnership (SCSCP), took a unique approach in implementing the Louisiana Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) at the local and regional levels by developing the SCRTSP. **This plan is being used as a model by all MPO's and regional safety coalitions across Louisiana while the bicycle and pedestrian plan is the first comprehensive regional bicycle and pedestrian plan in the State** (similar plans are Parish or city-wide only). Both efforts have engaged multidisciplinary groups of stakeholders, from government to law enforcement, to business, to education and non-profit/community-based groups. Local citizens and advocates have also provided input in the development process. The SCRTSP outlines behavioral and infrastructure-related safety goals and proven countermeasures necessary to achieve them. Five regions in Louisiana are currently developing safety plans, but HTMPO and SCSCP are out ahead of the other regions. They adopted their Plan in 2011 and are already funding and implementing around 45% of the transportation safety priorities. **To date, very few MPOs develop stand-alone regional safety plans and even fewer address implementation of both behavioral and infrastructure safety strategies.** The SCRTSP has identified close to 40 different programs and projects that address not only safety engineering needs, but also enforcement, education, and emergency response priorities. In addition, a number of strategies from the SHSP, that are relevant to the South Central region, have been customized and adopted for inclusion in the SCRTSP. Because of this linkage, the SCPDC is eligible to apply for SHSP and HSIP funds. For the regional bicycle and pedestrian plan, the HTMPO initiated a tri-Parish plan for the urbanized areas of Lafourche, Terrebonne and Assumption. Due to the strong partnerships between safety coalition partners, the scope of work was extended to include the River Parishes of St. Charles, St. James and St. John the Baptist. **The process was collaborative, innovative and well mapped out by planners from each of the six Parishes.** Input from advocacy groups and the general public were sought through regional meetings, parish council discussions and annual forum.

Implementation: It is quite remarkable that within less than 3 years since adoption, portions of the HTMPO's safety action plans have already been completed because emphasis is placed on implementing these plans and securing funding to advance local and regional projects. **Over 20 safety programs have been implemented** (or lined up for completion within this year). One example is the effort to secure funding for the **region-wide DWI Breath Alcohol Testing (BAT) Mobile Unit**, which the coalition, identified as one of the 16 proven strategies to use in impaired driving prevention. The BAT Mobile Unit will increase the ability of officers to quickly process impaired drivers. The coalition was successful in getting approved for funding the BAT Mobile through the SHSP Implementation Team, and is awaiting contract to be in place. Another remarkable and ongoing success is the **Road Safety Assessment (RSA) initiative that stemmed up from a unified goal of improving the safety of high-crash local roads**. Within the first two years of this Plan, one RSA workshop was held and road safety audits have been conducted at 12 locations, with 6 more planned for 2013. Projects that came out of these RSA's are now in line for Local Road Safety Program (LRSP) funding. The coalition will continue to seek funding for programs and projects in the Safety Plan, with the goal of implementing 25% of the Plan per year.



To implement the bike-pedestrian plan, the HTMPO took advantage of opportunities provided by Safe Routes, Enhancement and Recreations Trail programs. Through these programs, sidewalks were built along Napoleonville Middle School while pedestrian walkways were completed in Nicholls State University, Peltier Park and Acadia Road. More sidewalks will soon be implemented in LaPlace Elementary, Raceland Upper

Elementary and Middle Schools in Lafourche Parish, and Royce Street to Marietta Place in Houma.

Coordination: The HTMPO, in partnership with the various transportation division regional subcommittees, has successfully developed two living documents that serve to enhance the region's roadway connectivity and safety. The recently adopted South Central Regional Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan has been tagged by The Center for Planning Excellence (CPEX) as the **first comprehensive "regional" bike and pedestrian plan in the state of Louisiana**. The South Central Regional Transportation Safety Plan (SCRTSP) is the first-ever regional version of Louisiana's Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP). This success is being modeled by other regional safety coalitions and planning commissions across the state. Both efforts have brought in participation from multidisciplinary group of stakeholders, from government to law enforcement, to business, to education and non-profit/community-based groups as well. **The local citizens have also provided input in the process.**

For any transportation plan to be a true representation of regional needs, it has to be developed with input from a variety of stakeholders who possess a mix of skills and backgrounds. The SCPDC's coalition SCSCP has grown to engage safety stakeholders from the **4 E's of safety – engineering, enforcement, education, and emergency response** since its inception in 1999. A subset of this Partnership constitutes the planning committee that developed the SCRTSP and meets quarterly to discuss results. However, all SCSCP member agencies from the Bayou and River Regions contributed their ideas to this Plan and provide input annually. Another subcommittee was created to particularly coordinate for the implementation of bicycle and pedestrian plan. This group works closely with the SCSCP in handling the education and enforcement aspect of plan. In **tracking the safety plan's progress, team members use a tracking tool** to indicate status and determine the direction of each program in the plan. If a program or project has not been started or is underachieving, the group discusses why and what changes need to occur to make the effort successful. This approach has helped keep stakeholders engaged in the planning process.