

Memorandum

To: GWRC Board Members and Alternates  
FAMPO Policy Committee Members and Alternates

From: GWRC Management Team (Dr. Linda Struyk Millsaps, Kate Gibson, Adam Hager, and Michele Dooling)

Date: June 11, 2020

Subj.: Proposed FAMPO staffing model

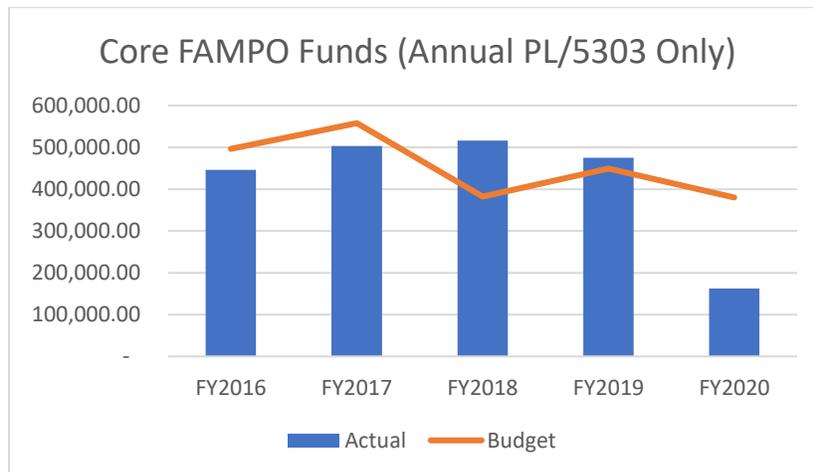
On May 18, 2020, the GWRC management team presented to the GWRC Board a FAMPO staffing plan that was designed to 1) align staffing to work requirements, 2) stabilize the staffing and financial needs of the organization, and 3) maximize funds available to the FAMPO Policy Committee for road projects. As a result of the discussion at that board meeting and the subsequent FAMPO Policy Committee meeting, we added 4) target of better aligning FAMPO related expenditures and recurring funding streams.

What follows is an analysis of FAMPO related funding and staffing over time, an explanation of our proposal, consideration of the advantages and possible disadvantages of the plan, and our overall recommendation to the boards.

**Historic Funding**

The most basic and core funding sources of any MPO are the two categories known as PL and 5303 funding. These are available to MPOs across the country and do not depend on the designation as a Transportation Management Area (TMA). PL funds are Federal Highway Administration funds for planning activities in the MPO region. They require a 10% match from both the Commonwealth and the localities. Federal Transit Administration 5303 funds are federal dollars for transportation planning and technical studies related to urban public transportation. This funding also requires a 10% match from both the Commonwealth and the local jurisdictions in the MPO.

As the graph below indicates, FAMPO’s core funding has hovered between approximately \$400,000 and \$500,000.

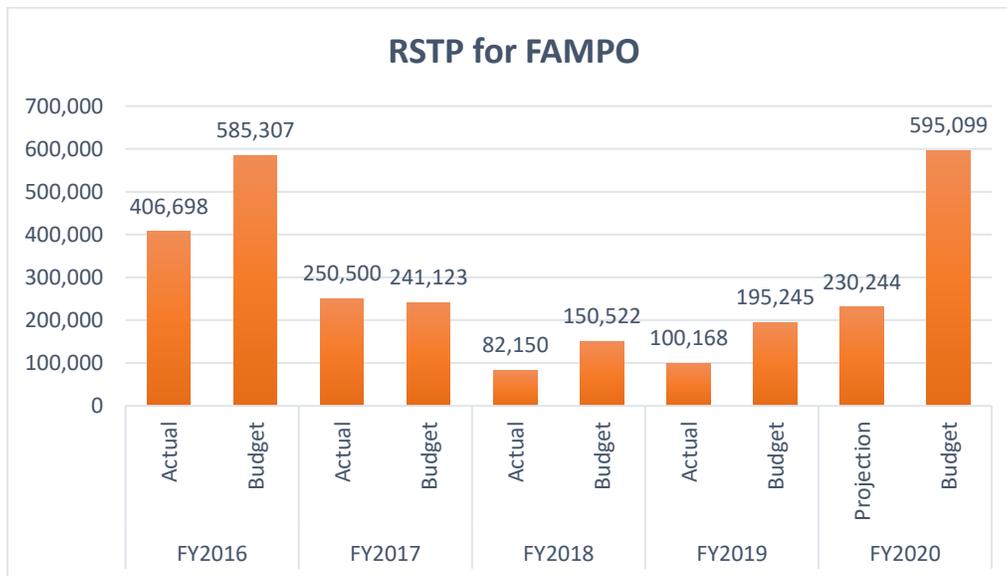


In some years FAMPO has not used all of the allocated PL and 5303 funds. In these cases, Federal Highways and the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) allow the MPO to carry over excess funds. 5303 funds carry over directly to the next fiscal year while PL funds skip a year before they can be used. In addition, occasionally a local jurisdiction will contract with FAMPO to work on a particular project. For example, the City of Fredericksburg recently contracted with FAMPO to study Lafayette Blvd. For an MPO without a special TMA, these are all the funds available to the organization for planning and studies.

|                                      | FY2016         |                | FY2017         |                | FY2018         |                | FY2019         |                | FY2020         |                |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|                                      | Actual         | Budget         | Actual         | Budget         | Actual         | Budget         | Actual         | Budget         | Projection     | Budget         |
| Core FAMPO Funds (PL/5303)           | 445,938        | 496,245        | 503,208        | 557,816        | 516,051        | 382,435        | 474,757        | 449,407        | 162,121        | 380,080        |
| 5303 Carry Over                      | 40,958         | 40,334         | 27,112         | 23,452         | 25,976         | 29,543         | 26,868         | 18,079         | 30,403         | 23,659         |
| Special Contract Project (Lafayette) | -              | -              | -              | -              | -              | -              | 31,420         | -              | 30,741         | 35,760         |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                         | <b>486,897</b> | <b>536,579</b> | <b>530,320</b> | <b>581,268</b> | <b>542,027</b> | <b>411,978</b> | <b>533,045</b> | <b>467,486</b> | <b>223,266</b> | <b>439,499</b> |

The trend related to all of the funding available to all MPOs – core plus carry over and special projects – can be seen above. You will note that the addition of these funds increases dollars available to the MPO for staffing between \$26,000 and \$60,000 per year.

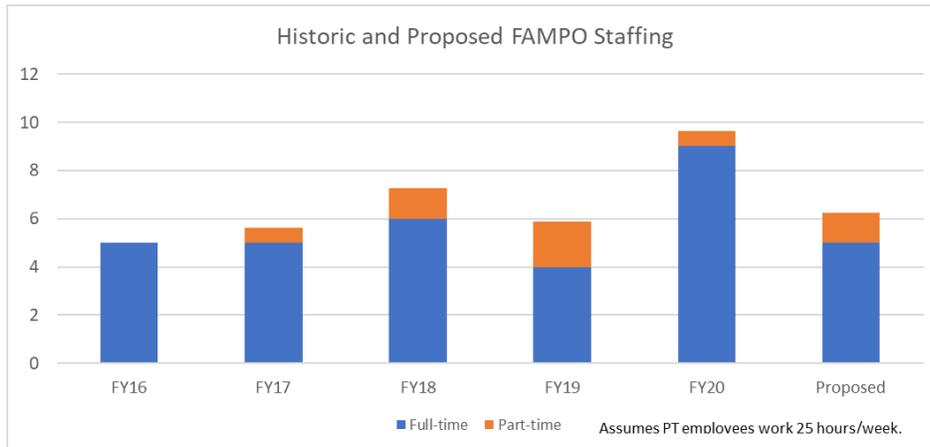
Additional buckets of funding are available to larger MPOs and those that have an associated TMA. These include Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG, previously known as RSTP) funds and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) dollars. These funds can be used for MPO staffing, but are primarily used for particular projects, programs or planning efforts.



As the graph above indicates, in four of the last five years the budgeted amount of RSTP/STBG funds budgeted for FAMPO staffing far exceeded actual expenditures. (NOTE: this analysis refers only to FAMPO funding and does not address GWRideConnect historic allocations). It also makes it clear that FAMPO has been using a significant amount of RSTP funding to support staff activities. In FY20 alone the approved FAMPO budget included \$595,099 in RSTP funds being allocated to staffing.

## Staffing

GWRC budget files indicate that FAMPO has been working with a variable number of full-time and part-time staff. Between FY16 and FY19, the number of full-time positions budgeted for FAMPO varied from four to six, with part-time positions varying from none to three. In FY20 the FAMPO Policy Committee approved nine (9) full-time positions and one part-time. The full-time equivalent for each of these years is shown below.



The new positions budgeted in FY20 included a modeler, a full-time public involvement coordinator, a full-time administrative assistant, as well as a deputy administrator. It should be noted that while nine (9) full-time positions were approved, the previous Administrator determined early on in the fiscal year that there was not a need for a modeler and also proposed using part-time employees for several roles.

## Carry Forward

This year the amount expended to support staff assigned to FAMPO was substantially below what was budgeted. Reasons for this include, 1) loss of an Administrator and Deputy in December and November, respectively, 2) over-estimates of staffing needed to complete the work required, and 3) a staff focus on efficiency and effectiveness.

To maximize the usefulness of the funds and in light of COVID-19 and its likely impact on local budgets, we requested that FAMPO/GWRC be able to carry forward the projected leftover balances to FY21. The amount carried forward in PL funds is \$126,748.89, while \$128,826.99 is being carried forward in 5303 funds. (This includes both the Commonwealth and Federal dollars.)

## Proposal

To meet the FAMPO funding related goals of aligning staffing to work requirements, stabilizing the staffing and financial needs of the organization, maximizing funds available to the FAMPO Policy Committee for road projects, and better alignment of FAMPO related expenditures to recurring funding streams, the management team suggests the following multi-year strategy:

**1). Set target for FAMPO assigned staff to five full-time professional planners (including an Administrator), one permanent part-time role, and an intern.** This staffing plan places greater emphasis on ensuring that the

organization can meet the requirements of the UPWP and is based on a review of daily and weekly activity reports from existing employees and a careful analysis of staffing needs.

**2). Use carry-over and current year PL and 5303 funds to the maximum extent possible to fund FY21 and FY22 FAMPO staffing.** If the staffing model set out above is utilized, we will be able to fund *all* FAMPO assigned positions with current and carry over PL and 5303 funds for two years.

**3). Release all STBG/RSTP funding currently allocated for FAMPO staffing for FY21 and FY22.** This will free up significant funds that are currently committed to planning staff for use on road projects in the FAMPO region.

**4). FAMPO commits to funding FAMPO planning staff to the level noted above (Five full-time professionals, one part-time, and one intern) with staffing set aside from STBG/RSTP funding in the out years.** This would be a recurring expenditure, committed by resolution. Current data suggests that this would be no more than \$170,000 a year, or approximately 13% of anticipated STBG/RSTP funding, starting with FY23. It should be noted that this is substantially less than has been set aside historically from STBG/RSTP for FAMPO staffing under particular projects or activities. Also, if PL and 5303 funds increase in the out years as expected, due to the census and a new transportation bill, the contribution could be substantially less.

**5). GWRC/FAMPO will prepare an annual list of duties, which will be included in the UPWP, and focus on ensuring that the dollars committed from STBG/RSTP funds are aligned with the work done because of the TMA, as well as other responsibilities.**

## Discussion

Generally speaking, FAMPO currently expends a far greater proportion of the area's STBG/RSTP funds on staffing than other MPOs. This lessens the amount of funding available for road projects in the region. Because many of these funds are tied to particular projects with a finite life, they do not provide longer-term financial and employment stability. This makes it more challenging to attract and keep the professional staff. Indeed, in speaking to possible FAMPO Administrator candidates, one of the most recurring concerns noted was the lack of funding stability for the MPO. In addition, funding volatility makes it difficult to budget and plan as an organization.

In terms of the mix of staff proposed, we believe that returning to a stronger emphasis on full-time transportation planners, with less dependence on part-time employees, will lead to more focus on longer-term plans and opportunities. Keeping to professional staff, and eliminating the administrative assistant position, will improve our efficiency and allow us to make the best use of scarce local resources over time.

We recognize that asking for a set amount of STBG/RSTP funds in future years may be challenging to some who desire to maximize road project funding. However, staffing must be available to cover the core functions of the MPO to meet federal certification standards. In addition, the funding requested is only in the out-years and is significantly less than the amount most recently approved by the FAMPO Policy Committee.

This year the FAMPO assigned staff has been able to do extraordinary work with a very limited number of employees. They have worked very hard. However, the current level of staffing is not sustainable over the long term. As such we ask for your consideration.