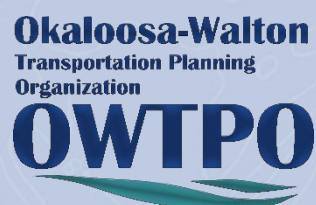


Metropolitan Planning Area **Boundary and Reapportionment Plan**



Based On The 2020 Census | Adopted August 17, 2023

Prepared for the Florida Department of Transportation by the
Emerald Coast Regional Council, staff to the Okaloosa-Walton TPO



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Introduction

Federal laws and regulations require metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) also known as transportation planning organizations (TPOs) to be designated for each urban area with a population greater than 50,000 people [23 CFR 450.310(a), 23 USC 134(d)]. This designation is accomplished by agreement between the Governor and the affected units of local government. The federal rules allow the states and units of local government to largely determine the specific composition of the TPOs. In Florida, Section 339.175, Florida Statutes, provides the requirements for TPO membership composition and apportionment of the voting membership. Pursuant to these state and federal rules, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO was established by designation of the governor of Florida and an interlocal agreement in 1981, following the 1980 Census. The current interlocal agreement was approved on February 19, 2015 (Resolution O-W 15-03). Apportionment of membership was approved by the TPO on September 19, 2013, submitted to and approved by the governor in April of 2014, and was used to revise the Interlocal Agreement for the Creation of the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization in 2015. This was the result of the 2010 Census and from a request from Walton County to include a Freeport as a representative. The Okaloosa-Walton TPO is in northwest Florida with the southern border being the Gulf of Mexico. All TPOs must submit their Apportionment Plans by November 14, 2023.

Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary

The boundaries of the MPA are determined by agreement between the TPO and the Governor and, at minimum, encompass the entire existing urban area (as defined by the Census Bureau) plus the contiguous area expected to become urban within a 20-year forecast period (23 CFR 450.312). The Navarre-Miramar Beach-Destin Urban Area, as defined by the 2020 Census, has continued to grow into the unincorporated area of southern Santa Rosa County. As a result, the Navarre representative on the Santa Rosa County Commission is still recommended to be a non-voting member of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO. The MPA Boundary still encompasses the southern portions of Okaloosa and Walton Counties (See Figure 1). The Okaloosa-Walton MPA Boundary is 1,1262.06 square miles.

Okaloosa County

The total 2020 Census population estimate for Okaloosa County is 211,668. The total population in the MPA portion of the county is 198,093. The southern area includes the incorporated areas of Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Destin, Cinco Bayou, Shalimar, Valparaiso, and Niceville. This area also includes the primary activity centers for Eglin Air Force Base and Hurlburt Field. A large portion of Okaloosa County is contained within the boundaries of the Eglin Air Force Base. Eglin Air Force Base separates the southern portion of the MPA from the northern portion. The boundaries of Eglin Air Force Base are Choctawhatchee Bay and Santa Rosa Sound to the South, East Bay on West, Okaloosa/Walton County Line on the East, and the Yellow River and US 90 to the North. The highest growth areas in Okaloosa County are the Crestview area, Destin area and Niceville/Bluewater Bay area.

Major trip attractors in Okaloosa County include Eglin Air Force Base, Hurlburt Field, state and local governmental offices and numerous private employers and tourist attractions along the coast. SR85, which runs the entire length of Okaloosa County from Fort Walton Beach north to the Alabama Line, is the only north-south road connection between the southern and northern portions of the MPA in Okaloosa County. SR85, SR123 and SR285 are the north-south emergency evacuation routes in Okaloosa County, with connections to I-10 in Crestview and US331 in Alabama. Principal east-west arterials include I-10 and US90 in the Crestview area, SR20 in the Niceville/Valparaiso area and US98 traversing the coastal area through Mary Esther, Fort Walton Beach and Destin. The other major mode of travel in Okaloosa County is the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport on Eglin Air Force Base. The Okaloosa County Board of County Commissioners serves as both the Airport and Transit Authority and has budget approval authority over the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority.

Walton County

The total 2020 Census population estimate for Walton County is 75,305. The portion of the county population in the MPA is 65,704. The MPA includes the southern portion of Walton County. The City of Freeport and unincorporated areas along SR20 north of Choctawhatchee Bay and the Sandestin area and beach communities (ie: Seaside and Grayton Beach) south of the bay

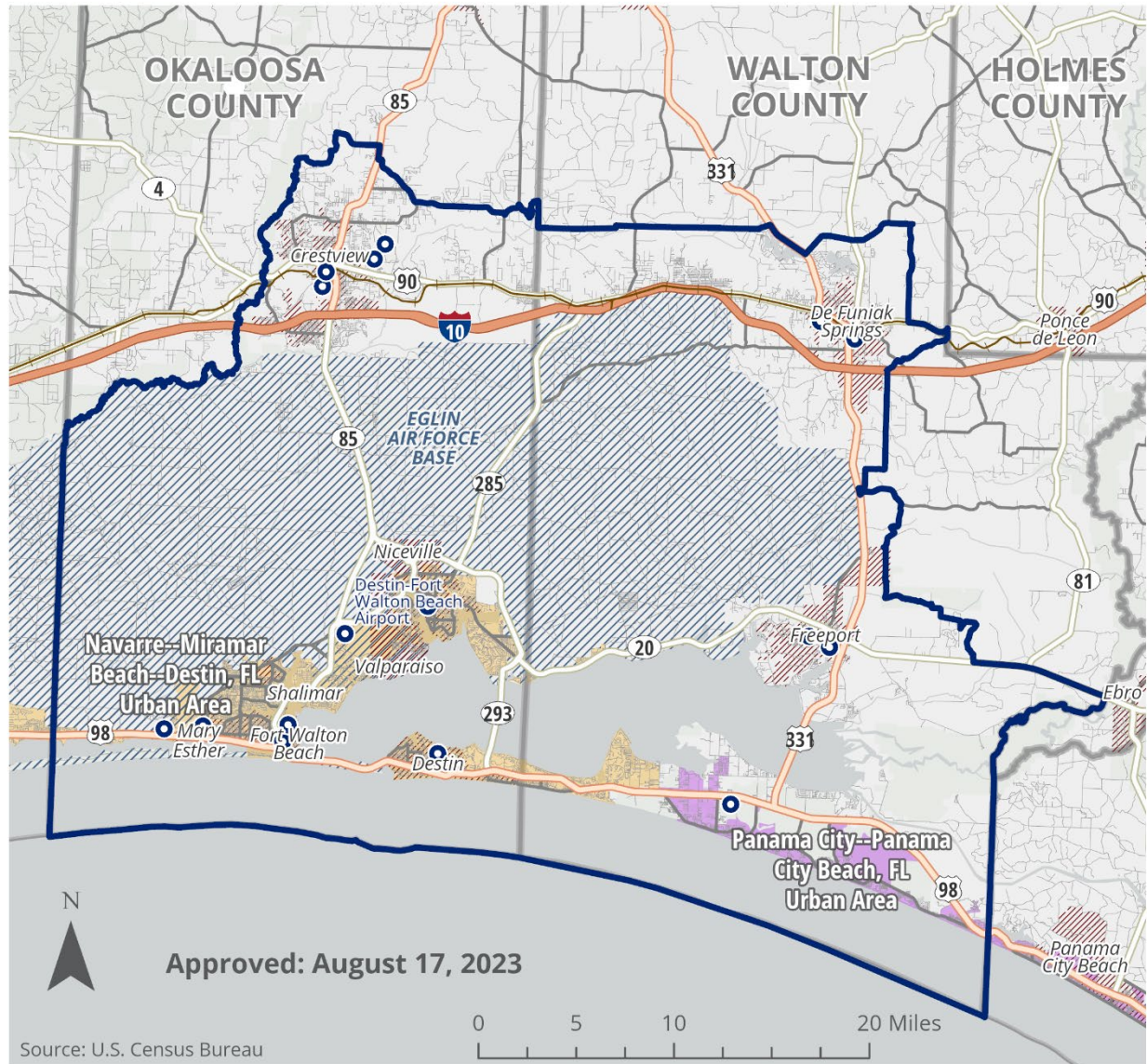
are included in the MPA. The City of DeFuniak Springs, north of Eglin Air Force Base, is also included in the MPA.

The highest growth areas in Walton County are the coastal areas along US98 and CR30A. Also St. Joe has extensive landholdings in the southeast part of the county which has resulted in significant growth potential for the area. Major trip attractors in Walton County are the private employers and tourist attractions along the coast. US331 is the major north-south arterial. This facility runs the entire length of Walton County from US98 to the Alabama Line. US331 is the primary emergency evacuation route providing connections to I-10 in DeFuniak Springs and points to the north in Alabama. The principal east-west arterials in the MPA are US98 south of Choctawhatchee Bay, SR20 north of the bay, and I-10 and US90 north of the Eglin Reservation. CR30A provides access to coastal beach communities.

Municipalities

There are ten (10) municipalities within the Okaloosa-Walton TPO MPA including: Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Destin, Cinco Bayou, Shalimar, Valparaiso, Niceville and Crestview in Okaloosa County, and DeFuniak Springs and Freeport in Walton County. The municipalities and their 2020 population numbers are Fort Walton Beach 20,922, Mary Esther 3,982, Destin 13,931, Cinco Bayou 457, Shalimar 737, Valparaiso 4,752, Niceville 15,772, Crestview 27,134, DeFuniak Springs 5,919, and Freeport 5,861.

Figure 1: Okaloosa-Walton Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary Map



MPO Population

Table 1 below shows the changes in population in the Okaloosa-Walton TPO area between the 2010 Census and the 2020 Census.

Table 1: Okaloosa-Walton TPO MPA Population

MPA Area	2010 Population	2020 Population
Total	214,967	263,797

Methodology for Evaluation of Membership

The TPO voting membership, as reflected in the Membership Apportionment Plan, must consist of between 5 and 25 apportioned members; the exact number is to be determined on an equitable geographic-population ratio basis by the Governor, based on an agreement among the affected units of general-purpose local government, as required by state regulations. [s.339.175(3)(a), F.S.].

A virtual meeting with some of the Board members occurred on March 20, 2023 to review the Urban Areas from the 2000, 2010, and 2020 census to show the growth and the changes in the area. An internal meeting with staff and the Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council Consultant and Staff Director occurred on April 13, 2023 to review and comment on proposed scenarios. A Hybrid Census Working Group Meeting in Crestview occurred on April 18, 2023 to hear discussion on various scenarios: A combination of having the boundaries separate by TPO and continue to have regional discussions was the preferred scenario.

The following minor adjustments were made to the MPA Boundary for 2020:

- In Okaloosa County, the boundary was adjusted very slightly along Caveman Road to follow the 2020 Census Blocks.
- In Walton County, the boundary was adjusted very slightly near along Sunrise Road near Oak Ridge Road to follow the 2020 Census Blocks.
- In Walton County, the boundary was adjusted slightly near Magnolia Creek, south of Rock Hill and east of US 331, to follow the 2020 Census Blocks.

The proposed membership of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO is based on an equitable population and geographic representation basis. The 2020 U.S. Census population and land area estimates shown in Tables 2 and 3 are used for this purpose. Table 2 contains the general population and land area estimates that are used in Table 3 for the reapportionment analysis. Table 2 provides an analysis of the existing and approved TPO membership. The principal indicator developed in this table is the average indicator. The average indicator is an average of the ratios of local government population to total population and local government land area to total land area in the MPA. The purpose of averaging the population and land area ratios is to develop information that supports an equitable population and geographic representation for the TPO membership. The formula is shown below.

$$\text{Average Indicator} = \frac{\text{Local Government Population}}{\text{Total MPA Population}} + \frac{\text{Local Government Land Area}}{\text{Total MPA Land Area}} \div 2$$

The calculations for the counties are for the unincorporated population and land area only. This is done to avoid overlap of the percentages in the development of the average indicators. However, it is important to remember that the county commissioners represent all areas (incorporated and unincorporated) that fall within their jurisdiction.

Table 2: Okaloosa-Walton Metropolitan Planning Area Population and Land Area Review

Local Government	2020 Population in TPO MPA	Land Area in SQ. MI. in TPO MPA
Okaloosa County	198,093	554.57
Unincorporated	110,406	495.82
Fort Walton Beach	20,922	7.65
Mary Esther	3,982	1.46
Destin	13,931	7.71
Valparaiso	4,752	11.84
Niceville	15,772	13.06
Crestview	27,134	16.58
Walton County	65,704	571.49
Unincorporated	53,924	18.94
DeFuniak Springs	5,919	13.95
Freeport	5,861	18.94

Notes:

1. Source of city population is 2020 U.S. Census
2. Source of county population in MPA is TPO Staff from 2020 U.S. Census
3. Source of county and city land area estimates is TPO Staff from 2020 U.S Census

Table 3: Okaloosa-Walton TPO Voting Membership Review for Reapportionment

Local Government	2020 Population in TPO MPA	Percent of Population in TPO MPA	Land Area in SQ. MI. in TPO MPA	Percent of Land Area in SQ. MI. in TPO MPA	Population and Land Area Average Indicator	Existing TPO Members	Percent of Existing TPO Members	Approved TPO Members	Percent of Approved TPO Members
Okaloosa County Unincorporated	110,406	41.9%	495.82	44.0%	42.9%	4	21.05%	4	21.05%
Fort Walton Beach	20,922	7.9%	7.65	0.7%	4.3%	2	10.53%	2	10.53%
Mary Esther	3,982	1.5%	1.46	0.1%	0.8%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
Destin	13,931	5.3%	7.71	0.7%	3.0%	2	10.53%	2	10.53%
Valparaiso	4,752	1.8%	11.84	1.1%	1.4%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
Niceville	15,772	6.0%	13.06	1.2%	3.6%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
Crestview	27,134	10.3%	16.58	1.5%	5.9%	3	15.79%	3	15.79%
Walton County Unincorporated	53,924	20.4%	538.6	47.8%	34.1%	3	15.79%	3	15.79%
DeFuniak Springs	5,919	2.2%	13.95	1.2%	1.7%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
Freeport	5,861	2.2%	18.94	1.7%	2.0%	1	5.26%	1	5.26%
Total	263,797	100%	1,1262.06	100.0%	100%	19	100.0%	19	100.0%

Current & Approved TPO Membership

Currently, the Okaloosa-Walton TPO board is comprised of 19 members, as shown in Table 4, representing 2 County Governments, 8 municipal governments, and the Florida Department of Transportation, Santa Rosa County, Okaloosa County School Board, Walton County School Board, and the Mid-Bay Bridge Authority as non-voting members. The composition of the board was agreed to by the TPO members in a membership apportionment plan approved by the Governor on April 3, 2014. The approved Okaloosa-Walton TPO Board has 19 voting members and 6 non-voting members which indicates no change from the 2010 Census (See Table 4).

Please note the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport is an individual department under the Okaloosa County government structure. Four (4) Okaloosa County Commissioners serve as voting members on the Okaloosa-Walton TPO. In addition, the Destin-Fort Walton Beach Airport Director is a voting member of the Okaloosa-Walton TPO's Technical Coordinating Committee. In addition, the Okaloosa County Commission provides public transportation service as Emerald Coast (EC) Rider.

The membership of the TPO is comprised of elected officials representing (10) of the local governments within the MPA. County Commissioners comprise 36.84% of the voting membership of the TPO.

The TPO requests the Governor of the State of Florida to approve the Okaloosa-Walton TPO Membership Reapportionment Plan for the Okaloosa-Walton TPO Metropolitan Planning Area. (The approval letter from the Governor of Florida is attached to this report).

Table 4: Current & Approved Okaloosa-Walton TPO Membership

Jurisdiction/Agency/ Entity	Current Membership			Approved Membership		
	Number of Voting Members	Number of Non- Voting Members	Percent of Total Votes	Number of Voting Members	Number of Non- Voting Members	Percent of Total Votes
Okaloosa County Unincorporated	4		21.1%	4		21.1%
Walton County Unincorporated	3		15.8%	3		15.8%
Fort Walton Beach	2		10.5%	2		10.5%
Mary Esther	1		5.3%	1		5.3%
Destin	2		10.5%	2		10.5%
Valparaiso	1		5.3%	1		5.3%
Niceville	1		5.3%	1		5.3%
Crestview	3		15.8%	3		15.8%
DeFuniak Springs	1		5.3%	1		5.3%
Freeport	1		5.3%	1		5.3%
FDOT		1			1	
Santa Rosa County		1			1	
Eglin Air Force Base		1			1	
Okaloosa County School Board		1			1	
Walton County School Board		1			1	
Mid-Bay Bridge Authority		1			1	
Total	19	6	100%	19	6	100%

Attachments

- *TPO Board Resolution*
- *State of Florida Governor Approval Letter*

RESOLUTION O-W 23-17

A RESOLUTION OF THE OKALOOSA-WALTON TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION SUPPORTING ADOPTION OF THE TPO METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA BOUNDARY AND MEMBERSHIP APPORTIONMENT REPORT

WHEREAS, the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is the organization designated by the governor of Florida as being responsible for carrying out the continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Okaloosa-Walton TPO Planning Area in Okaloosa County and Walton County and the cities of Fort Walton Beach, Mary Esther, Destin, Valparaiso, Niceville, Crestview, DeFuniak Springs, and Freeport; and

WHEREAS, Section 134 Title 23 of the United States Code requires the designation of MPOs in urban areas, as defined by the United Census Bureau of the Census; and

WHEREAS, Section 134 of Title 23 of the United State Code sets forth membership requirements for MPOs designated for transportation management areas with a population of 200,000 or more residents; and

WHEREAS, Section 339.175(2)(c), Florida Statutes, states the TPO's Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary must contain the existing urban boundary and the contiguous area expected to become urban within a 20-year forecast period; and

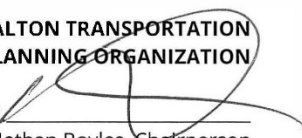
WHEREAS, Section 339.175(4)(a), Florida Statutes, requires the governor to review the composition of the Metropolitan Planning Organizations membership in conjunction with the decennial census;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE OKALOOSA-WALTON TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION THAT:

The TPO approves submittal of the Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary and Membership Apportionment Report to Governor's Office.

Passed and duly adopted by the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization on this 17th day of August 2023.

**OKALOOSA-WALTON TRANSPORTATION
PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

BY: 
Nathan Boyles, Chairperson

ATTEST: 

State of Florida Governor Approval Letter



RON DeSANTIS
GOVERNOR

August 8, 2024

Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization
418 East Gregory Street, Suite 100
Pensacola, FL 3250

To Whom It May Concern:

In accordance with s. 339.175, Florida Statutes, and Title 23 CFR Part 450, please consider this letter as formal concurrence with the Department of Transportation's recommendation that the Okaloosa-Walton Transportation Planning Organization's apportionment plan meets the requirements of s. 339.175, Florida Statutes and Title 23 CFR 450.312(a).

The TPO's continued adherence to the requirements of Florida Law are of utmost importance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron DeSantis".

Ron DeSantis, Governor

CC: Mr. Jared Perdue, P.E., Secretary, Florida Department of Transportation

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THE CAPITOL
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