



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

ROCKY MOUNT URBAN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Adopted by the Transportation Advisory Committee February 20, 2019

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INTRODUCTION

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) serves as a guide for seeking the involvement of the stakeholders in transportation planning for the Rocky Mount Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Established in 1992 the Rocky Mount MPO is the transportation planning agency for the area of eastern North Carolina including the City of Rocky Mount, Town of Nashville and portions of Nash and Edgecombe Counties.

The function of the MPO is accomplished through the work of two committees assisted by the City of Rocky Mount acting as the Lead Planning Agency for the Urban Area MPO. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) comprised of twenty members representing the four governing MPO bodies and the North Carolina Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration participates in transportation planning by making technical recommendations to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). As the policy arm of the MPO, the seven-member TAC includes elected officials from Rocky Mount, Nashville, Nash County and Edgecombe County and the area member on the North Carolina Board of Transportation.

Transportation planning is a complex task requiring the services of numerous individuals and various specialties represented on the TCC and TAC, but no source is more important than the users of the transportation system. For that reason the Rocky Mount Urban Area MPO will seek to have an early and continuing participation from the general public in the development of transportation plans for the multi-modal transportation network.

Based on the figures of the 2010 decennial census the population of the Rocky Mount, North Carolina urban area is approximately 75,000 people. Within this number are many sub-populations which the MPO will seek to involve in the transportation planning activities. For example, the ethnic ancestral groups, persons of low-income, minorities and limited English proficiency (LEP) subsets are categories of citizens who should be encouraged to participate in transportation planning.

The TCC and TAC typically meet quarterly, and the public is welcome at all meetings. Notices of the meetings are posted on the City of Rocky Mount events calendar and on the MPO website. Anyone with questions about the MPO schedule may call the City of Rocky Mount Engineering Department (252 972-1129) where the Transportation Planner is available. The email contact for the MPO is bob.league@rockymountnc.gov. The MPO website is <http://www.rockymountnc.gov/mpo/>. The MPO may be contacted via U.S. mail at:

Rocky Mount MPO
P.O. Box 1180
Rocky Mount, NC 27802

Minutes of the TCC and TAC meetings are posted on the MPO website. The MPO staff welcomes any contact from the general public at all times.

There are many ways to communicate with the public and some new means continue to emerge like the social media (e.g. Facebook, Twitter). There is no one right way to communicate with the public, and different audiences require different means. Different purposes like different projects may require different methods of communications. The MPO will employ various methods available at the time within the resources available to implore the public to become involved in transportation planning.

The MPO will produce a pamphlet describing the purpose and work of the MPO. The pamphlet will provide guidance for the citizen to engage in the transportation planning process.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The goals of the Public Participation Plan for the Rocky Mount Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization are as follows:

1. All citizens living or working within the MPO boundary will be afforded the opportunity to participate and contribute to the development of multi-modal transportation plans for the urban area.
2. The MPO will actively seek the early and continuing involvement of the general public in transportation planning.
3. The public will be provided timely and useful information to aide participation in the transportation planning process.
4. The MPO will consider and respond to the transportation planning input provided by the general public.
5. Various techniques will be implemented to obtain the participation of the different population subgroups within the MPO including the traditionally underserved, the elderly, disabled, low income households, minorities, and the limited English proficient.

To accomplish these goals, the MPO will establish objectives not limited to the following:

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1. Welcome citizens to participate at any and all times. Even though due dates and deadlines may exist, at all times encourage people to become involved and to remain active in transportation planning.
2. Provide ample notice and make convenient arrangements to make public participation as easy as possible.
3. Provide an explanation of the MPO structure and operation to the general public so that citizens will understand how to participate in transportation planning.
4. Special accommodations will be provided for citizens with hearing, sight and language difficulties.
5. Maintain and use a database of interested parties in the transportation planning process.

STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLIC GROUPS

The MPO will involve stakeholders and the public in the transportation planning process. Stakeholders may be an individual or organization involved or affected by the transportation planning process. The public includes residents, public agencies, and any persons involved with public transportation, freight, railroad, automobile, motorcycle, pedestrian, and bicycle operation.

The following list identifies the stakeholders and public targeted for participation, but the list is not meant to be exhaustive:

- MPO residents
- Neighborhood organizations
- Homeowner associations
- Government agencies
- Public agencies
- Chamber of Commerce
- Business affiliations
- Civic clubs
- Advocacy groups
- Minority groups
- Disabled groups
- Limited English Proficiency groups
- Traditionally underserved populations
- Employees in the MPO area
- Church organizations
- School groups
- Media organizations

Health groups
Public transit riders
Bicycle clubs
Emergency service agencies
Environment protection groups

OUTREACH TECHNIQUES

The MPO will use a variety of techniques to draw the public into participating in the transportation planning process. There is no one single right way to seek public participation. Normally more than one method of solicitation will be necessary to reach all members of the public. The effort to bring in stakeholders must be ongoing and creative. As new techniques and tools become available the MPO should use them to reach out to the public.

The following is a list of example outreach techniques:

Meeting Notices
Legal advertisements
MPO website
City / County websites
Brochure / Pamphlet / Flyer
Newsletter
Bulletin Board
Business Card
Mail
Email
Social media (Facebook, Twitter, You Tube, etc)
Television
Radio
Billboard
Telephone
Chamber of Commerce Business Expo
Speaker bureau
Public Hearing
Workshops
Open House
Electronic message boards
Planning Partners Database

SCHEDULE

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The TCC and TAC typically meet quarterly and the meetings are announced in December for the upcoming calendar year. A 30 day notice is provided by legal advertisement for public hearings conducted by the TAC. For the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Conformity Determination Report for Air Quality (CDR) a public hearing is conducted.

The MPO staff is available during normal office hours of 8:30 am to 5:00 pm Monday through Friday. Telephone messages may be left at anytime 24/7 at 252 972-1129.

Currently the TIP is developed on a two-year cycle and the Long Range Transportation Plan is created every four years. The Conformity Determination Report is developed as needed when the TIP and/or LRTP have significant changes or updates.

The public will be encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process at all times. It is never too early or too late to be involved. One must be aware that due dates need to be met but the involvement of the citizen can begin and continue at the pleasure of the individual.

EVALUATION AND REVISION

The MPO with public participation will periodically review the Public Participation Policy to determine if the goals of the PPP are being achieved. Revisions will be proposed for approval by the Transportation Advisory Committee.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Effective public involvement is a key element in addressing Title VI in decision-making. This **Public Participation Plan** describes how the Rocky Mount Urban Area MPO will disseminate vital agency information and engage the public. We will seek out and consider the input and needs of interested parties and groups traditionally underserved by transportation systems who may face challenges accessing our services, such as minority and limited English proficient (LEP) persons. Underlying these efforts is our commitment to determining the most effective outreach methods for a given project or population.

General public involvement practices will include:

- Expanding traditional outreach methods. Think outside the box: Go to hair salons, barbershops, street fairs, etc.
- Providing for early, frequent and continuous engagement by the public.
- Use of social media and other resources as a way to gain public involvement.
- Coordinating with community- and faith-based organizations such as the Hispanic Liaison, educational institutions, and other entities to implement public engagement strategies that reach out specifically to members of affected minority and/or LEP communities.
- Providing opportunities for public participation through means other than written communication, such as personal interviews or use of audio or video recording devices to capture oral comments.

- Considering radio, television, or newspaper ads on stations and in publications that serve LEP populations. Outreach to LEP persons could also include audio programming available on podcasts.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

We will inform people of their rights under Title VI and related authorities with regard to our program. The primary means of achieving this will be posting and disseminating the policy statement and notice. Additional measures may include verbally announcing our obligations and the public's rights at meetings, placing flyers at places frequented by targeted populations, and an equal opportunity tag-on at the end of radio announcements. The method of notification will be determined through an initial screening of the area.

DISSEMINATION OF INFORMATION

Information on Title VI and other programs will be crafted and disseminated to employees, contractors and subrecipients, stakeholders, and the general public. Public dissemination efforts may vary depending on factors present, but will generally include: posting public statements setting forth our nondiscrimination policy in eye-catching designs and locations; placing brochures in public places, such as government offices, transit facilities, and libraries; having nondiscrimination language within contracts; including nondiscrimination notices in meeting announcements and handouts; and displaying our Notice of Nondiscrimination at all our public meetings.

At a minimum, nondiscrimination information will be disseminated on our website and on posters in conspicuous areas at our office(s). Project-related information and our most current Title VI-related information will be maintained online.

MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to public involvement. A variety of comprehensive and targeted public participation methods will be used to facilitate meaningful public involvement. Methods for engaging stakeholders and target audiences, including traditionally underserved and excluded populations (i.e., minorities, youth, low-income, the disabled, etc.) will include the following:

Public Relations and Outreach

Public relations and outreach (PRO) strategies aim to conduct well-planned, inclusive and meaningful public participation events that foster good relations and mutual trust through shared decision-making with the communities we serve.

- We will seek out and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected.
- Public events will aim to be collaborative, fun, and educational for all, rather than confrontational and prescriptive.
- Media plans will typically involve multiple channels of communication like mailings, radio, TV, and newspaper ads.
- Abstract objectives will be avoided in meeting announcements. Specific “attention-grabbing” reasons to attend will be used, such as “Help us figure out how to relieve congestion on [corridor name]” or “How much should it cost to ride the bus? Let us know on [date].”
- Efforts will be made to show how the input of participants can, or did, influence final decisions.
- We will do our best to form decision-making committees that look like and relate to the populations we serve.
- We will seek out and identify community contacts and partner with local community- and faith-based organizations that can represent, and help us disseminate information to, target constituencies.
- Demographic data will be requested during public meetings, surveys, and from community contacts and committee members.

Public Meetings

“Public meeting” refers to any meeting open to the public, such as hearings, charrettes, open house and board meetings.

- Public meetings will be conducted at times, locations, and facilities that are convenient and accessible.
- Meeting materials will be available in a variety of predetermined formats to serve diverse audiences.
- An assortment of advertising means may be employed to inform the community of public meetings.
- Assistance to persons with disabilities or limited English proficiency will be provided, as required.

Small Group Meetings

A small group meeting is a targeted measure where a meeting is held with a specific group, usually at their request or consent. These are often closed meetings, as they will typically occur on private property at the owner’s request.

- If it is determined that a targeted group has not been afforded adequate opportunities to participate, the group will be contacted to inquire about possible participation methods, including a group meeting with them individually.
- Unless unusual circumstances or safety concerns exist, hold the meeting at a location of the target group’s choosing.
- Share facilitation duties or relinquish them to members of the target group.
- Small group discussion formats may be integrated into larger group public meetings and workshops. When this occurs, the smaller groups will be as diverse as the participants in the room.

Community Surveying

- Opinion surveys will occasionally be used to obtain input from targeted groups or the general public on their transportation needs, the quality or costs of our services, and feedback on our public outreach efforts.
- Surveys may be conducted via telephone, door-to-door canvassing, at community fairs, by placing drop boxes in ideal locations, or with assistance from other local agencies like social services.
- Surveys will be translated into languages other than English, when appropriate.