

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS GASTON URBAN AREA

### *Study Area Profile and the Planning Process*

Gaston County is within the Piedmont crescent of North Carolina and is part of the Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord MSA. The county is rural in character but has a large sprawling urban center that includes seventy-five percent of the persons living in the county. One of the unique features of this urban area is the number of incorporated municipalities. Including Gastonia, which is the largest, there are 11 governing boards in addition to the Board of County Commissioners.

The United States Department of Transportation, through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requires:

"...each urbanized area, as a condition to the receipt of Federal capital or operating assistance, have a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process that results in plans and programs consistent with the comprehensive planned development of the urbanized area"

These federal regulations require that a single agency responsible for the implementation of the urban transportation planning process in each urban area. This agency is designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urban area. In the Gaston Urbanized Area this function is filled by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and is advised by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TAC members are elected officials appointed by their board or council to serve as the town's representative. The TCC are members of the individual cities' staffs that review the technical aspects of planning - particularly highway planning.

Among its various functions the TAC ensures that a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3C) planning process exists in the urban area. The element most closely associated with this process is the highway planning process. The Federal Register states that: "The urban transportation planning process shall include the development of a transportation plan consisting of a transportation systems element and a long range element. The transportation plan shall be reviewed annually to confirm its validity and its consistency with current transportation and land use conditions."

For the Gaston Urban Area, the North Carolina Department of Transportation has historically conducted most of the technical work of the Thoroughfare Plan. However, the Gastonia Engineering Department is performing a larger amount of technical work for the MPO. This involves computer models which can take months to calibrate. These models are used to evaluate the various alternatives proposed during the planning process. The local planners provide demographic information and alternatives needed for the modeling. However, for this 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan revision, the Charlotte Department of Transportation is handling the lion's share of technical modeling work for the entire region. The decision to have

one agency, CDOT, to perform this work is to better provide the uniform and consistent data collection and output analysis necessary for regional compliance for the 8-Hour Conformity Report for Ozone Non-Attainment as established by USEPA.

The State Transportation Engineer brings the proposed alternatives for the MPO to review. After additional comments from the MPO, the recommended plan continues to the final and formal public hearings.

There is no known federal law or regulation stipulating how the general public should be involved. There is also no known state or local policy guiding public input or hearings except the Open Meetings Law. This law requires 48 hour public notice if there is going to be a public meeting. The Transportation Planning Branch of NCDOT strongly encourages local hearings before the adoption of the Thoroughfare Plan, but has no regulation requiring such a hearing.

Since the TAC is a Board of Elected Officials making public policy, it follows that public input is appropriate. Lacking regulations or laws to guide staff, there appears to be great latitude for the local area to develop a meaningful method for involving the citizenry.

### Transportation Agency & Citizen Involvement

The best interest of the community as a whole should be the ultimate goal of transportation planning. In a democracy, the citizens have a right to know what government is doing, especially if it effects them directly. Planners may have the technical expertise to decide possible corridors for future roadways, but the citizens have the right to say if a proposed roadway is what they want. However, private and public transit agencies and citizens have an obligation to make an informed decision on road planning. The highway system of an area is an intricate web. When one section is affected there are repercussions throughout the community. Road planning is not just a matter of whether a road will go near one neighborhood. Economic development could be negatively affected by a poor road system. It can also have far reaching impacts on travel among neighborhoods in a city.

In Gastonia there is a highway project that has been proposed by state and local staffs for 20 years. The neighborhood it would go through is very vocal and has kept this project from being approved. The roadway would ease traffic at several major intersections, preventing the widening of several roads impacting other neighborhoods. Because the average citizen does not understand the impact of his or her silence, the elected officials have yielded to public pressure, and this highly important road has never been constructed.

The planner cannot properly plan without the active cooperation of the community. As trained professionals, it is their duty to instruct the public why they, as planners, are making a particular recommendation. This educational process should treat the citizen as an equal partner in the development of the community. Grassroots support is critical if the plan is going to be a success. When the plan goes before the policy boards it should have already gathered community support. After all, the thoroughfare plan is the community's plan, not the planners. The planner acts as the interpreter of data and gives this information to the public. The final decision always belongs to the people. The planners often blame angry citizens for the defeat of a plan. If the planners would do more homework, involving the community earlier it would reduce the chances of a

project failing. At a minimum, planners would at least reduce the risk of being surprised at a public hearing.

There are those who say the public's consent is not necessary. The average citizen cannot really make an informed decision on such a complicated process. It is true the entire community cannot be trained in transportation planning, but they can be taught at least the basics. Most people can understand patterns of change in a community - they see it every day. They usually do not want to know how to arrive at the detailed figures that are shown to them. But they generally know whether the patterns of development make sense, particularly in the areas that they live.

### **Orienting the Planning Process**

At the beginning of the report, the federally mandated 3C planning process was described. The TAC plays an important role in ensuring the involvement of the citizens in the planning process. The federal government looks to these officials to ensure citizen involvement in the process. The redirecting of the planning process must begin with this board. They are the community leaders most involved with transportation planning. They must also be the guiding force in the involvement of the citizens.

The task of educating the public is ongoing. It is the responsibility of the MPO and the local planning staff to educate the community. General information concerning road projects, demographic changes, new or proposed thoroughfares must be given to the community on a routine basis so that it is not a surprise later. The local policy boards must involve the area planners on a more frequent basis so a professional relationship is maintained.

Along with this general education a new review process for proposed thoroughfares should be considered. A three-tiered process involving the MPO and the general public on three levels should be created. The three tiers can be summarized as:

1. The area study group is made up of private and public transportation providers, members of the municipal planning boards, and their TAC and TCC representatives;
2. A series of walk-in public hearings centering around the area's six high schools; and
3. Formal public hearings before each affected municipal planning board and city council.

This aims to build grassroots support for the Thoroughfare Plan as it is developed. The first tier would be the creation of study groups made up of planning board members from the area. The groups would be made of about 12 individuals appointed by the TAC representatives for that particular township. The study group would be made up of one or two representatives from each of the existing Planning Commissions.

Careful development of the makeup of the committees is important to maintain a broad cross section of the community. The TAC members would appoint board members with a good knowledge of the area and an interest in the project at hand. Elected officials and the public

would be encouraged to participate with meetings advertised by newspaper. A monthly newsletter to each study group member would keep them informed of the activities of the other study groups.

The study group would become the center point in reviewing and recommending Thoroughfare Plan amendments. The study group members would remain on the study committee as long as they are members of a planning board or at the pleasure of their respective policy boards. However, TAC members should try to keep re-appointments to a minimum due to the large amount of training involved and the need for continuity in the program. Meetings would be held regularly and would be attended by the TCC and TAC from the area being reviewed. The staff would take steps to educate these groups in the more complex areas of transportation planning. Each study committee would appoint a chairperson who would speak for the group. The chairpersons would make the recommendations to the MPO. Disputes between the various study committees would be settled by the TAC. Minor changes to the thoroughfare plan could be handled through the study group. This group would also make the decision whether additional public hearings are necessary.

### Public Hearing Process - Final Phases

After a consensus has been reached by the study groups, the chairperson of each group would forward the recommendations to the TCC for review and comment. After the TCC review, each study group would present their recommendations to the TAC. If approved at this level the next phase of the hearing process would begin. This would consist of a series of walk-in public hearings where people could come and make informal comments. This would be chaired by the study group for the township with staff present for technical assistance. Recommendations would then go to the MPO for final approval.

The final phase of the process would be the formal public hearing process. This would be a series of hearings held with each individual municipality following the procedure set down by that particular city. At each hearing the study group members appointed by the municipality would present the study assisted by staff. Individual changes would go back to the study group and the MPO.

### Minor Updates to the Long Range Transportation Plan (amended November 2001)

For updates to the Long Range Transportation Plan which do not include a change to the horizon year nor significant changes to thoroughfare cross-sections or alignments, the following opportunities for public comment should be offered:

1. The revised input data be made available to the public in the MPO offices at Gastonia City Hall for a period no less than 30 days;
2. A website will be utilized to make input data available to the public;
3. At least one public hearing will be held.

Any comments received through this process will be addressed and incorporated as appropriate.

## **Summary**

The ultimate goal of transportation planning is to promote the best interest of the people. Planning, to be effective, must involve people early in the process. The proposed method of involving more citizens in the decision making process is three-tiered. Early involvement in each municipality at a study group level would be established through the existing planning boards. Responsibility for the presentation and promotion of recommendations would shift from the staff to the study group, though there would be, by necessity, active participation by the staff. This proposal would allow active participation at a local level while educating the study group in the process. Grassroots support could be developed early in the process with meetings involving the public as the alternatives are being considered.

The advantages of using the existing planning board members are several, the principle one being that there is less lead time in educating the study groups since they will already be familiar with the planning issues in their community. The disadvantage to this process is the increased staff time needed to work with the study groups and the slow down of the process because of the increased citizen involvement. However, if we are to take the active participation of the public seriously these problems are unavoidable. Furthermore, since there were often delays in projects because of lack of public consultation early-on, the difference in the amount of time should be negligible.

Overall the new public involvement policy would have the support of both the staff and the community. By effectively using the process, citizens would have frequent, full use of the process with a minimum amount of delays in projects.

# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS CABARRUS-ROWAN MPO**

## **Introduction**

The Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization's (CRMPO's) Public Involvement Policy is an umbrella policy, encompassing the plans and programs of the Urban Area's transportation planning process. Public involvement is an integral part of the CRMPO's planning efforts and is intended to offer opportunities for the general public and particularly, historically disadvantaged populations to provide meaningful input into the transportation planning and decision-making process. The Public Involvement Policy is comprised of the public involvement programs for all the major planning activities, including the Transportation Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), Major Investment Studies (MIS), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The CRMPO will seek public input through a menu of techniques, including but not limited to, public notices, comment periods, workshops, charrettes, public hearings, newsletters, surveys, and media relations. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning task. The MPO will hold a forty-five (45) day public comment period for amendments to the Policy. The CRMPO's Public

Involvement Policy will be consistent with the requirements of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of the CRMPO Public Involvement Policy is to create an open decision making process whereby citizens have the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the transportation planning process. This Policy is designed to ensure that transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.

### **Objectives**

1. Bring a broad cross-section of the public into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.
2. Maintain public involvement from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
3. Use different combinations of public involvement techniques to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
4. Determine the public's knowledge of the metropolitan transportation system and the public's values and attitudes concerning transportation.
5. Make technical and other information available to the public.
6. Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.
7. Evaluate the public involvement process and procedures to assess their success at meeting requirements specified in the SAFETEA-LU, NEPA and the FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

### **Policy Elements**

The CRMPO's Public Involvement Policy is comprised of a number of sub-policies. All planning programs and activities are required to go through the Transportation Advisory Committee's public process. In addition, the MPO has initiated public involvement programs for the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), the Major Investment Study (MIS), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the annual lists of Federal Project Authorizations.

## **Transportation Committees**

*Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)* - The Transportation Advisory Committee is the policy and decision-making body for the Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The TAC is comprised of elected and appointed officials from the City of Concord, the City of Kannapolis, City of Salisbury, the Town of Landis, the Town of China Grove, the Town of Harrisburg, the Town of Spencer, the Town of Granite Quarry, the Town of Rockwell, the Town of Mount Pleasant, the Town of Cleveland, Cabarrus County, Rowan County, Town of Midland, Town of Faith, Town of East Spencer, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The TAC is responsible for providing opportunities for citizen participation in the transportation planning process.

*Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)* – The Technical Coordinating Committee is the technical advisory body for the Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Planning Organization. The TCC is comprised of professional planning and engineering staff from the City of Concord, the City of Kannapolis, City of Salisbury, the Town of Landis, the Town of China Grove, the Town of Harrisburg, the Town of Spencer, the Town of Granite Quarry, the Town of Rockwell, the Town of Mount Pleasant, the Town of Cleveland, Cabarrus County, Rowan County, Town of Midland, Town of Faith, Town of East Spencer, and the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The TCC is also responsible for providing opportunities for citizen participation in the transportation planning process.

### **Regular Public Involvement Opportunities**

The TCC holds regular monthly meetings on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month and the TAC holds regular monthly meetings on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month. All of these meetings are open to members of the public and media. The local news media will receive notification of all TCC and TAC meetings. At the beginning of each regular meeting, the TCC and TAC provide time to receive public comments.

### **Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items**

For particular planning issues (i.e. plan development & updates, studies, amendments to planning documents, etc.), the TAC will open a public comment period (3-6 weeks depending on the item) and may hold a public hearing. The notice for the public comment period and the public hearing are advertised in the *Salisbury Post*, *Neighbors of the North*, *Independent Tribune*, CR MPO website, as well as any available local cable access channel. The notices will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions as requested). Both written and oral comments received are compiled by the planning staff and reviewed by the TCC and TAC.

### **Specific Requirements**

The Cabarrus-Rowan MPO's Public Involvement Policy is designed to be consistent with the requirements of SAFETEA-LU, NEPA and the FTA/FHWA Guidance of Public Participation.

### **Response to Public Comment**

The TCC and TAC acknowledge public comments in two ways. The TCC and TAC may incorporate public comments and the MPO's response into the specific planning document as an appendix. Depending on the number of comments, the TCC and TAC may instruct the planning staff to respond directly by letter, with a copy included in the appendix. Acknowledging public comments is a way to let the public know that its comments are being addressed and is part of the public involvement feedback process.

### **Periodic Review and Evaluation of the Public Involvement Policy**

An important step in public involvement is evaluating the effectiveness of the policy and outreach activities in order to ensure a full and open involvement process. The CRMPO shall periodically review the overall effectiveness of the public involvement process in order to ensure that the process is providing meaningful citizen input. The public involvement policy is a work in progress and strives to improve CR MPO's efforts toward increasing public awareness and involvement in transportation planning. The CR MPO initially used a Public Involvement Survey, which was distributed in the fall of 2007, to gauge the public's satisfaction with the public involvement process. Results of the initial survey were used in this update to the Public Involvement Policy. (The Public Involvement Survey and results are included as an Appendix to this Plan.) This survey will be an ongoing tool for measuring how the MPO addresses and involves the public in making decisions about transportation plans and projects. The CR MPO public involvement policy will be evaluated on a short and long term basis.

#### **Short Term**

At every event, participants will be asked to evaluate the public involvement activity or opportunity. MPO staff will ask how the public found out about this opportunity and solicit feedback on the effectiveness of it or any suggestions for improvement. The MPO will develop public involvement objectives or strategies for evaluating the improvement of the public involvement policy.

#### **Long Term**

The Public Involvement Policy must be reviewed at least every 4 years.

Both short and long term evaluations ensure that the appropriate revisions to the MPO's public involvement approach are being recognized and addressed by the CR MPO. Following these evaluations, it is possible that some public involvement activities will be refined, revisited, or discontinued. It is the philosophy of the CR MPO to strengthen the relationship with the public through these periodic evaluations.

## **1. Long Range Transportation Plan**

### **Introduction**

The multi-modal Long Range Transportation Plan public review and participation process is designed to provide early and adequate opportunities for citizens and public officials (including elected officials) to be involved in the Cabarrus-Rowan (CR) Long Range Transportation Plan development. This public participation program is designed to involve all parties in the early

stages of plan development and the subsequent update process. It is also designed to provide gradual progression from the general information (vision setting and formulation of goals, objectives and policies) pertaining to the plan to very specific information regarding alternatives and plan selection.

### **Elements of the Public Involvement Procedure**

The Public Involvement Process for the Long Range Transportation Plan consists of a series of innovative public participation techniques, including: public service announcements, public meetings, surveys, and the mass media. These techniques will be employed at various stages of the plan development.

### **Public Involvement Process**

1. The Cabarrus-Rowan (CR) Metropolitan Planning Organization will provide opportunity for early and meaningful public involvement in the development and update of the Long Range Transportation Plan.
2. Proactive participation techniques will be employed to involve citizens and provide full access to information and technical data. The technique will generally include, but not be limited to: public meetings/hearings, surveys, charrettes, mass media, etc. Visualization techniques shall be utilized to enhance the public's understanding of MPO plans and programs. The techniques will be utilized in an appropriate manner when presenting and describing MPO plans and programs.
3. Information dissemination, notification of meeting, publication of proposed plans will be integral elements of the public involvement process.
4. The MPO will initiate the Long Range Transportation Plan update process as required by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) and subsequent federal regulations. Elements of the Transportation Plan, and/or amendments will meet all current Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) requirements.
5. The public comment period for all elements of the Long Range Transportation Plan will be for a minimum 30 day public comment period, effective from the date of the public notice publication. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the MPO. The contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice.
6. Public meeting(s) will be held to: formulate a vision for the Long Range Transportation Plan development; provide the public background information on the metropolitan transportation system and other issues as well as the proposed framework of the Transportation Plan update process; and to receive citizen input.

7. All public meetings (forums) designed to solicit public comment will be held at various locations and times of day around the metropolitan area to encourage the greatest public participation. Public meetings will be held at a location which is accessible to persons with disabilities. Outreach activities will be conducted to inform minority and low-income groups and limited English-speaking groups of the opportunity for public comment. At least one-quarter of these meeting shall be held in minority and/or low income areas and within ¼ mile walk of a transit route in an easily accessible area.
8. The Cabarrus-Rowan MPO will maintain a website which shall include information on the Long Range Transportation Plan, meetings, other programs and appropriate information. The MPO staff shall post on the CR MPO website draft documents that are subject to the MPO's public review process for review and comment. Staff will also use the website to distribute information to the MPO membership.
9. The MPO shall assess the distribution of impacts on low-income and minority groups for investments identified in the Long Range Transportation Plan and publicize these findings on the MPO website.
10. The TCC will assemble all comments and forward comments to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC may choose to hold a public hearing before adopting the Long Range Transportation Plan.
11. Any significant revision and amendment to the Long Range Transportation Plan will be subject to the public review process as outlined above.
12. The public participation component of the Long Range Transportation Plan will generally follow the same citizen input and review as outlined in this policy. Public input will be solicited to review and comment on any major Long Range Transportation Plan amendment proposal as well as analyses conducted as part of the amendment request. Adequate opportunity will be provided for public involvement in the amendment of the Long Range Transportation Plan, and any significant revisions to the Long Range Transportation Plan will also be subject to public comment period as described in # 5 of this policy.
13. The CRMPO will endeavor to involve the public at key decision points of the Long Range Transportation Plan development. Decision points are those stages where the TAC will be required to endorse or take action on particular work elements. These include, but are not limited to:
  - Formulation of vision, goals and objectives
  - Policy development
  - Review and approval of socio-economic and demographic projections

- Review of land use information and scenarios
- Review and determination of transportation deficiencies
- Identification of transportation (facility) needs
- Evaluation of alternatives and selection of preferred option
- Development of a Congestion Management Plan
- Development of a Freight Plan
- Development of the Financial Plan
- Plan recommendation and adoption

## **2. Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program**

### **Overview**

The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is the document that describes the funding and scheduling of transportation improvement projects (highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit capital and operating assistance) using Federal, State, local and public-private funds. The MTIP serves as the project selection document for transportation projects and, therefore, is the implementation mechanism by which the objectives of the Transportation Plan are reached. The Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) mandates an opportunity for public review of the MTIP. The following is the proposed public involvement procedure for the Cabarrus-Rowan Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program.

### **Introduction**

The Cabarrus-Rowan (CR) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) will prepare a Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program, which is consistent with the requirements of the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), and any implementing federal regulations. The MTIP will be developed based on 1) revenue estimates provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) and 2) the CR Regional Priority List. The public input element of the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program is presented as follows:

### **Public Involvement Process**

1. The CR Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will develop a draft Regional Multi-Modal Priority List from the Local Project Priorities of the MPO jurisdictions.

2. The Regional Priority List will be published for a minimum three week (21-day) public comment period and the notice will be published by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) in:

*Independent Tribune*

*Salisbury Post*

*Neighbors of the North*

The notices for the public comment period will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. The Regional Priority List will be on file in the Cabarrus-Rowan MPO office, Cabarrus County Planning Department, Rowan County Planning Department, and the CR MPO website.

3. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) will solicit public comment from interested parties on the draft Regional Priority List. The TAC will approve a final Regional Priority List after considering the public comments received.
4. The CRMPO Technical Coordinating Committee will develop a draft MTIP from the approved Regional Priority List and from revenue estimates provided by the North Carolina Department of Transportation. The TCC will forward the draft MTIP to the Transportation Advisory Committee. The Transportation Advisory Committee will publish the draft MTIP for public review and comment.
5. Copies of a draft MTIP will be distributed to TAC members and via the CRMPO website. Each jurisdiction will also have copies, available for public review. The draft MTIP will follow the same notification procedures as outlined above for the Regional Priority List. The TAC will solicit public comment from interested parties on the draft MTIP. Public comments will be addressed and considered in the adoption of the MTIP.
6. The public comments will be assembled and presented to the Cabarrus-Rowan TAC.
7. Amendments to MTIP will be available for public review and comment, if they make a major or substantial change to the MTIP. A major change is classified as the addition or deletion of a project that is regionally significant and in the first 4 years of the TIP or can affect fiscal constraint in the STIP or LRTP. Public comment on project additions or deletions that do not meet any of these 3 criteria may be sought at the discretion of the TAC by majority vote. As long as a project's description, scope, or expected environmental impact has not materially changed, the TAC may approve changes to project funding without a separate public meeting.
8. Written public comments and their responses will be published as an appendix to the final MTIP.

### **3. Major Investment Study**

#### **Introduction**

The major investment study (MIS) is a planning tool mandated by the Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). It supports decisions on significant federally funded transportation investments along a corridor or sub area level of the metropolitan area. The MIS identifies all reasonable strategies for the study area in order to meet its transportation demands and relieve any transportation problems. It is a detailed analysis designed to provide local decision-makers with more comprehensive corridor level technical analysis early in the transportation planning process.

#### **Public Involvement Process**

The scope of a major investment study for the Cabarrus-Rowan will be determined on a project-by-project basis. Therefore, the MPO will choose the appropriate public involvement initiatives to meet the goals of the MIS. The public involvement techniques that may be used are public informational meetings, newsletters, and media relations.

### **4. Unified Planning Work Program**

#### **Introduction**

The Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that each Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) prepare an annual work program known as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP must identify the MPO planning tasks to be undertaken with the use of federal transportation funds, including highway and transit.

#### **Public Involvement Process**

1. The draft Unified Planning Work Program is reviewed by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC meetings are open to the public. The TCC then endorses a draft UPWP and forwards the document to the TAC.
2. The draft UPWP is then reviewed by the TAC. Public comments may be provided at this time. The draft is sent to the Public Transportation Division for comments.
3. The final UPWP comes back again to the TAC for approval. Upon TAC approval, the UPWP is then forwarded on to the State and FHWA/FTA.

### **5. Annual List of Federal Project Authorizations**

## Public Involvement Process

The NCDOT provides the CR MPO with an annual list of Federal Project Authorizations. This list of authorizations is made available to the public for their review and comment on the MPO website and at the MPO office located at 135 Cabarrus Avenue East, Concord, NC 28025. The public may view this list anytime as it remains in the public domain continuously.

# Mecklenburg - Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO)

Original PIP Approved by the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization  
on June 8, 2005

*Revised March 18, 2009*

## I. Overview

The Mecklenburg - Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO) is the Federally designated regional transportation planning entity for all of Mecklenburg County and the western and central, urbanized portions of Union County. It is committed to meaningful public involvement in the regional transportation planning process. MUMPO believes public participation is not a simple “add on” or “after thought”, but a method that guarantees high quality transportation planning. It maintains that successful public involvement ensures effective transportation planning by including those whose everyday lives are critically affected by how they get to work, home, school, stores, and services.

MUMPO maintains that educating the public about the transportation planning process is key to real participation, as is including all segments of the population in that process. In order to obtain successful public involvement, MUMPO is dedicated to achieving the following goals:

- Actively soliciting participation, not just waiting for it;
- Creating meaningful access to decision-making information, not just generating data;
- Respecting and seriously considering input that is received, not just collecting it;
- Demonstrating that input is incorporated, not just filing it away; and,
- Providing meaningful opportunities for input, not just fulfilling regulations.

MUMPO is dedicated to transportation planning with the entire public’s full involvement. While Federal laws and regulations set a framework for public involvement in transportation planning,

MUMPO seeks to go beyond the letter of these laws to fulfill the true spirit of full public participation.

## A. MUMPO

MUMPO is responsible for coordinating transportation planning activities, providing long range transportation policy and overseeing the Federal transportation planning process including full and fair public participation. It is governed by a Policy Board that consists of elected officials representing Charlotte, Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mecklenburg County, Mint Hill, and Pineville in Mecklenburg County. Monroe, Indian Trail, Waxhaw, Stallings, Wesley Chapel, Wingate, Union County, and Weddington are represented by their elected officials from Union County. A member of the North Carolina Department of Transportation is also a voting member. The Policy Board also includes non-voting members from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission, Union County Planning Board, North Carolina Turnpike Authority and the Federal Highway Administration. In addition, the Charlotte Department of Transportation and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission provide staff support to MUMPO.

MUMPO's mission is to develop, promote, and ensure implementation of a transportation planning process and to support the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) planning process by:

- Supporting the economic vitality of the MUMPO region;
- Increasing the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increasing the accessibility and mobility options available for people and freight;
- Protecting the environment, promoting energy conservation, and improving quality of life;
- Enhancing the integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes of people and freight;
- Promoting efficient transportation system management and operation;
- Emphasizing the preservation of the existing transportation system; and,
- Promoting an efficient relationship between land use and transportation that maximizes the use of existing and future public programs and infrastructure.

Activities MUMPO performs include the following:

- Overseeing and managing the planning process in a manner that complies with current Federal requirements; and,
- Providing policy direction and oversight to meet Federal and State environmental requirements for attaining applicable air and water quality standards.

The Public Involvement Plan will assist MUMPO in carrying out its mission in an open process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and support for early and continued involvement.

## B. Federal Requirements

The Federal laws and processes covering public participation in transportation planning include the following:

*Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* ;  
*Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*;  
*Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994)*  
*Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (2000)*;  
*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 (Section 508)*; and,  
*The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990.*

### 1. *SAFETEA-LU*

As mandated in *SAFETEA-LU* and other supporting Federal regulations, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) must establish, periodic review, and update public involvement processes. These processes should assure early and continued public awareness of and access to the transportation decision-making process. The planning regulations contain a number of performance standards for public involvement, including:

- Providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs);
- Requiring adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points; and,
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes; and
- The use of visualization techniques; and
- Ensuring that all documents are available in an electronic format.

### 2. *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*

*Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* states that “no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

### 3. *Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994)*

The basis of *Executive Order 12898* lies in *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*. It directs that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or

environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

*Executive Order 12898* defines minority populations as belonging to any of the following groups:

- Black – a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa;
- Hispanic – a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race;
- Asian American – a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands; and,
- American Indian and Alaskan Native – a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

It defines low-income populations as those whose household incomes (or in the case of a community or group, whose median household income) is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.

The three fundamental environmental justice principles include:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations;
- To ensure that full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and,
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

4. *Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (2000)*

The basis of *Executive Order 13166* lies in *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*. It requires that Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide “meaningful access” to their limited English proficiency applicants and beneficiaries.

5. *The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 (Section 508)*

*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* mandates that public facilities be made accessible to people with disabilities and has been the basis for requiring that transit buses and street curbs be retrofitted or reconstructed with appropriate equipment and design details. *The Rehabilitation Act of 1973* (Section 504) states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance. *The Rehabilitation Act*

*Amendments of 1998* (Section 508) states that Federal agencies must ensure that electronic and information technology is accessible to employees and members of the public with disabilities to the extent it does not pose an “undue burden.”

## 6. *The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990*

*The Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990* establishes a timetable and program to improve the nation’s air quality, emphasize mobile source emissions, and requires the Environmental Protection Agency to invoke penalties if states failed to submit adequate plans to attain standards. The *Amendments’* rating system categorizes the MUMPO region as a “non-attainment” area for the eight-hour ozone standard (and as maintenance for carbon monoxide). MUMPO is part of the eight-county, Metrolina non-attainment region, which has until the end of the 2009 ozone season to meet the air quality standard for this pollutant. In non-attainment areas, the air quality conformity documentation for the Transportation Improvement Program and long range transportation plan must be available for public review and comment before any formal action is taken.

## The Strategy & Policy Guide

The following is a list of strategies that can be used to enhance and support public outreach and education in the regional transportation planning and decision-making process. Not all strategies are necessarily used every year and not all of these strategies will necessarily be implemented. As MUMPO forms new relationships and bolsters existing relationships with its different constituencies, new strategies may also be adopted.

### Identify and Build Relationships with Stakeholders

A stakeholder is defined as any person or group that is affected by a transportation plan, program, or project, including those who may not be aware they are affected. In accordance with SAFETEA-LU, stakeholders will include “citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns) (CFR 450.316 B ii).” Citizens will include the general public; environmental, health, neighborhood, citizen, and civic organizations; and, traditionally underserved communities such as people with disabilities, and/or low-income, minority, and elderly.

Individual stakeholders and representatives of stakeholder groups will be included in MUMPO’s database. MUMPO will continually work to identify new stakeholders interested in or affected by the transportation planning process. With their prior consent, the names and addresses of all those attending MUMPO functions or meetings; and, emailing, telephoning, faxing and writing MUMPO will be added to the database.

Ongoing meetings with stakeholders will be conducted to share information on a one-to-one basis about MUMPO’s public involvement process. These meetings will also give stakeholders an opportunity to provide individualized feedback to MUMPO’s public involvement staff.

### B. Develop and Implement a Plan to Reach Non-participating Minority and Low-Income Populations

Particular emphasis will be put on reaching people who have traditionally not been participants in the transportation planning process. Traditional non-participants include persons who are low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled; have no vehicles; are low literate or have limited English proficiency.

Staff will identify and meet with organizations and community leaders who represent these populations. The purpose of these meetings will be to build relationships with the groups and leaders as well as identify strategies for bringing traditional non-participants into the transportation planning process. The identified strategies will be implemented in cooperation

with the organizations and community leaders. Detailed plans for identifying and meeting with groups and leaders and implementing strategies will be developed.

Strategies may incorporate the following:

- having meetings in transit accessible locations or in the community for those who do not have personal transportation;
- holding meetings at times of the day or night that reflect the public's work schedule and the elderly's safety concerns;
- holding meetings on days of the week or weekend when it is convenient for the public to attend;
- piggy-backing on existing events to reduce time away from family and work;
- conducting meetings and providing materials in a language that can be understood by the community;

### C. Develop an Outreach and Education Program

The outreach and education program will be designed to educate the public about the regional transportation planning process and its relevance to all stakeholders. English and Spanish materials produced as part of this program will include such tools as pamphlets and brochures. These brochures can be used in various presentations and for distribution. It will be necessary to periodically review and update the program and accompanying materials.

Special considerations and arrangements will be made to design a program that is tailored for non-participants such as minority, low-income, those who have no vehicles, those with limited English proficiency, and disabled communities. These considerations will include developing materials specifically targeted to those communities.

### D. Publicize MUMPO Activities

Media coverage will be actively cultivated to ensure that mainstream and ethnic radio, television and newspaper outlets understand the importance of providing information on transportation planning activities. In addition, articles, news releases and/or media alerts will be disseminated to announce public review and comment periods for MUMPO's Long Range Transportation Plan, the Long Range Transportation Plan amendments, Transportation Involvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, Public Involvement Plans and other major activities. In order to do so, a current list of media outlets such as mainstream and ethnic television, radio, and cable stations, and newspapers, including small community-based publications will be established and maintained.

### E. Partner with Outreach Professionals

Establishing partnerships with member jurisdictions and agency outreach professionals will help MUMPO reach a greater number of affected communities and help to promote best practices.

Such professionals are often aware of local issues, have a good understanding of the various communities and community networks within their jurisdictions, and can provide interpretation and translation services. In addition, utilizing their resources to publicize activities and events will help MUMPO reach a broader audience.

## F. Establish a Speaker's Bureau

The Speaker's Bureau will consist of MUMPO members, staff, and other volunteers who can speak to civic groups, professional organizations, neighborhood associations, and other groups about the regional transportation planning process. Members of the speaker's bureau will present information in order to educate the public about the MPO process. In addition, the public will be given opportunities to educate MUMPO about local issues and needs. In addition, the availability of speakers will be marketed to interested groups. The public and organizations involved in the transportation planning process will be asked to identify speaker topics that would be useful to them.

## G. Maintain a Website

MUMPO's website provides information about MUMPO and its activities, as well as the transportation planning activities of its member jurisdictions. The website will allow for access to public documents such as, but not limited to, the Transportation Improvement Program, Long-Range Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, Public Involvement Plan, as well as meeting agendas and minutes. MUMPO's website should provide an opportunity for the public to provide input and formal comments on an ongoing basis through email links. In addition, a "frequently asked questions" section will be provided. The website will be maintained in compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998.

## H. Produce and Distribute Brochure

MUMPO has developed a brochure in English and Spanish dedicated to explaining MUMPO and its roles and responsibilities, and should be periodically reviewed to ensure that it is presenting accurate information. If requested, the brochure should be provided in a large print format. The brochure will be available online and distributed to all identified stakeholders and made available at libraries, government buildings and MUMPO's offices, and other locations. Specialized brochures may be needed to provide timely information on targeted topics.

## I. Produce and Distribute Newsletters

### ***NOT FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION.***

MUMPO should produce a quarterly newsletter in English and Spanish dedicated to MUMPO activities including the Long Range Transportation Planning process. If requested, the newsletter should be provided in a large print format. The newsletter should include information about technical issues written in layman's terms for the general public. In addition, the newsletter should provide the public with periodic updates of MUMPO's activities. The newsletter should be available online and distributed to all identified stakeholders, made

available at libraries, government buildings and MUMPO's offices and other locations. Additionally, specialized newsletters may be needed to provide timely information on targeted topics.

## J. Conduct Information Workshops

Information workshops should be conducted on topics associated with the transportation planning process. Such workshops should be designed to educate participants on specific topics, e.g., transportation modeling, intelligent transportation systems, elderly travel, air quality, etc. Information workshops provide a means for allowing participants to express their ideas and concerns in an informal setting. Information workshops will be conducted on an as needed basis.

## J. Hold Open Houses

Open houses provide an informal setting for the public to access general information on the transportation planning process. Open houses have no fixed agendas and no formal presentations. MPO technical staff will be on hand to answer questions and provide details on a one-on-one basis. Open houses may precede public meetings.

## M. Public Input at MUMPO Board Meetings

The MUMPO board holds regular meetings in which all formal business is conducted. At each meeting, the public is provided with an opportunity to address MUMPO on any issue related to the transportation planning process. Anyone wishing to speak can sign up at the beginning of the meeting or contact MUMPO's secretary prior to the meeting. The public may engage in the discussion of action and information items on the agenda at the discretion of the Chair.

## N. Public Input at MUMPO Committee Meetings

The public may attend MUMPO committee and subcommittee meetings and may contribute to the discussion at the discretion of the chair. Those interested in attending and participating may request being placed on any and all committee and subcommittee mailing lists.

## P. Conduct Surveys

Surveys may be used to gather information on people's perceptions, preferences, and practices. In areas where low literacy exists; surveys may be conducted in person. Major surveys will be done on an as-needed basis. In areas where the public is literate, surveys may be mailed, e-mailed and/or distributed by using MUMPO's website. Surveys may require Spanish translation services.

## General Guidelines

These guidelines provide the overall structure in which public involvement strategies can be implemented:

- Open meetings;
- Access by persons with disabilities;
- Subcommittee meetings;
- Adequate notice;
- Public participation opportunities at MUMPO meetings;
- MUMPO agenda items;
- MUMPO action items;
- Public participation in agenda items;
- Public comments;
- Time period for public comments; and,
- Format of public meetings.

## Open Meetings

All MUMPO meetings will be open to the public and subject to the *North Carolina Open Meetings Law*. The minutes and all materials presented at these meetings will be public record and will be available for review at MUMPO offices and on the website. The availability of these records will be stated on MUMPO's website and can be distributed on request.

## Access by Persons with Disabilities

All MUMPO meetings will be held in facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities. MUMPO's website will be in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 (Section 508). Where it is permitted, clear directional signs will be posted at outdoor entrances of buildings.

## Adequate Notice

MUMPO will provide adequate notice of all meetings. Meeting notices will be posted on MUMPO's website and provided to mainstream and ethnic newspapers, radio, and television. If requested, a reading service for the blind will be enlisted to broadcast this information.

## Public Comments

Public comments may be provided in the following ways:

- Verbally at a public meeting (if applicable);
- During the public participation opportunity of a regularly scheduled MUMPO meeting occurring within the review and comment period;
- In writing;
- By fax;
- With TTY (teletypewriter) and/or TDD (telecommunications device for the deaf); and,
- Through email.

## Time Period for Public Comments

Public comments will be accepted no later than the close of business of the final day of the public review and comment period, unless otherwise specified.

## Format of Public Meetings

Public meetings will provide for open discussions between MUMPO members and/or staff and the public. All meetings will be on the record. The format of public meetings will generally be as follows:

- Presentation by MUMPO staff and/or their consultant(s);
- Question and answer period, and discussion period;
- Summary and wrap up by MUMPO staff and/or their consultant staff and information about the next steps, if applicable;
- MUMPO will accept written comments following public meetings; and,
- MUMPO will occasionally survey meeting attendees to gauge effectiveness of the public involvement process.

Public meetings with an “open house” or “drop-in” format will not include a formal presentation.

## MUMPO Board Meeting Agenda Items

Items on the MUMPO Board Meeting agenda that require action by the board will be placed on the agenda prior to informational items. It will be at the discretion of the Chair to alter the order of agenda items in order to accommodate special circumstances.

## IMPLEMENTATION GUIDELINES

MUMPO’s implementation guidelines are an integral part of all of MUMPO’s transportation efforts. It will be reviewed systematically and its effectiveness evaluated on an annual basis.

## A. The Long Range Transportation Plan

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) defines the policies, programs and projects to be implemented during within the next twenty years in order to provide mobility choices to residents and visitors in MUMPO's planning area. The LRTP contains recommendations for the following types of surface transportation: streets and roads; transit routes and guideways; and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The LRTP also contains descriptions and assessments of conditions or factors affecting the surface transportation of persons and/or movement of freight within MUMPO's planning area.

**Public Involvement Opportunities** - The development of the LRTP will be accomplished in the following way:

- An Open House will be held to kick off the LRTP development and will serve as an opportunity for the public to provide input on its vision, goals and objectives.
- MUMPO will make presentations at community meetings on the LRTP and the upcoming opportunity to weigh in on the results of prioritization.
- The public will review the results of project prioritization and provide comments. The results will be presented to the public through mail, email, fax, telephone, and MUMPO's website.
- The public will review the preferred list of projects selected by MUMPO after considering the impact of funding different combinations of projects. The preferred alternative will be reviewed to see how it meets the goals of the LRTP, to determine what beneficial and adverse impacts the projects will have on minority and low-income populations, and to ensure that these projects do not conflict with air quality goals. MUMPO will hold another series of public meetings to present these findings.
- After all factors have been considered, the final draft list of selected projects will be made available for public review and comment. The document will be available on MUMPO's website, at libraries, government buildings and MUMPO's offices. In addition, an executive summary will be available on MUMPO's website in Spanish. A public meeting will be held during the public comment period. Public comments are reviewed and the final list of projects will be selected.
- The complete final draft of the LRTP will be available for public review and comment for a 30-day period. At least one public meeting will be held during the 30-day period.

Consideration should be given to the following points when holding presentations:

- MUMPO presentations will be incorporated into part of an organization's regularly scheduled meeting where possible;
- These organizations will include a presentation on the LRTP as an item on their agenda;
- The organizations that host these meetings will be responsible for providing a space large enough to accommodate the expected audience. These organizations and MUMPO will be responsible for publicizing these events;
- All oral and visual presentations on the LRTP at these meetings will be done in clear, simple language with as few acronyms as possible. Presenters will provide basic

introductory information on the topics being presented. If requested, an interpreter and/or signer will be provided; and,

- MUMPO will create clear and easy-to-read information throughout the process and will be distributed through MUMPO presentations at organizations, in newsletter inserts of these organizations, on MUMPO's website and by mail.

## B. Amendments to the Long Range Transportation Plan

Amendments to the LRTP can occur when funding sources change, priorities change, project scope and termini changes and purpose and need changes, etc.

**Public Involvement Opportunities** - Opportunities to comment on proposed amendments to the LRTP will be publicized by sending out a notice of the proposed amendments to the public. At the same time, a 30-day comment period will be announced. At least one public meeting will be held during the 30-day period.

## C. The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program

The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) is a, short-range plan of transportation improvements based on the LRTP listing the region's anticipated transportation investments over a seven-year period. The MTIP is updated every two years.

**Public Involvement Opportunities** - Opportunities will be available to comment on the proposed Transportation Improvement Program. Notice will be given that the project descriptions from the first draft will be available online for review for a 30-day period prior to the release of the entire document. Comments can be submitted during this time period by email or regular mail. A public meeting on the first draft Transportation Improvement Program will take place at the end of this comment period.

Notice will be given that the final draft MTIP will be available in hard copy at various libraries, local government planning offices, MUMPO's office and online for a 30-day period. Comments can be submitted during this time period by email or regular mail. A public meeting on the MTIP will take place during the comment period.

## D. Air Quality Conformity Determinations

Federal regulations require that MUMPO demonstrate that its LRTP and TIP conform to air quality standards. When a conformity determination is required, a 30-day public comment period will be conducted, with at least one public meeting held during that time period. When possible, the required public involvement for the conformity determination will be held in conjunction with public outreach efforts associated with the LRTP and TIP.

## E. The Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program is adopted annually by MUMPO and identifies the major transportation planning activities to be undertaken for the coming year. An important element of the Unified Planning Work Program is the continual update and maintenance of land use, demographic and travel data needed to apply the computer model, which projects travel demands based on the population and employment projections and the transportation facilities and services.

**Public Involvement Opportunities** - The proposed Unified Planning Work Program and an opportunity to comment will be made available to the public. Copies may be requested by telephone, fax, mail and email, and in person.

## **F. Comprehensive Transportation (Thoroughfare) Plan**

Additions or changes to the thoroughfare plan can significantly impact citizens and neighborhoods. This policy is intended to establish guidelines for citizen involvement in the thoroughfare planning process that will inform citizens and allow their comments to be appropriately considered. The types of public notification listed below are not intended to be interpreted as rigid rules that cannot be modified. Because each change to the Thoroughfare Plan involves a unique set of circumstances, staff will work with the affected municipality(s) to develop a public involvement plan suitable for each project. Special attention will be made to determine if a proposed change will have a disproportionate impact on low-income and minority populations as noted in Executive Order 12898 (see Chapter I, Section B).

### **1. Level 1 (formerly identified as Level 4-A and Level 4-B)**

*Level 4-A and Level 4-B are similar in that they deal with minor changes to the Thoroughfare Plan; however, Level 4-B notification occurs after the revision has been made. Also, Level 4-A is for upgrades in classification, with the example provided in the current PIP being from major thoroughfare status to commercial arterial. The proposed change will result in*

- *Combining 4-A and 4-B*
- *The public being notified before a revision occurs*
- *Classification upgrades will not be handled with the minimal level of public involvement*

The impact of this type of change to the Thoroughfare Plan to citizens, property owners and business owners is minor, thus the degree of public involvement is limited

### **Typical Changes**

- a. Deletion of a **proposed** thoroughfare from the plan
- b. Downgrade in thoroughfare classification (e.g.. major thoroughfare to minor thoroughfare)
- c. Revision of an alignment to reflect the dedication/reservation of right-of-way through the development process

### **Public Notification**

#### *Media notification*

Media outlets will be notified that a change has been proposed, and that the TCC and MPO are scheduled to act on the change at specific dates and times.

*Land development organizations notification*

Agencies responsible for land development decisions will be notified. This will include the municipal or county clerk as well as those responsible for planning and zoning in the affected community. The dates and times of scheduled TCC and MPO action will be included on the notification.

*Property owner notification*

Affected property owners will be notified of the proposed action. Notification may be limited to those properties with direct access to the affected roadway. The dates and times of scheduled TCC and MPO action will be included on the notification.

**2. Level 2 (formerly identified as Level 3)**

The impact of this type of change to the Thoroughfare Plan affects few citizens.

**Typical Changes**

- a. Revision of an alignment to reflect the dedication/reservation of right-of-way through the development process
- b. Changes affecting only a few citizens

**Public Notification**

Staff will consult with the affected municipality(s) to determine if the change requires a formal public meeting. If it is determined that a formal public meeting is not required, public outreach will consist of a meeting(s) with the affected citizens. The following additional steps will also be taken:

*Media notification*

Media outlets will be notified that a change has been proposed, and that the TCC and MPO are scheduled to act on the change at specific dates and times.

*Land development organizations notification*

Agencies responsible for land development decisions will be notified. This will include the municipal or county clerk as well as those responsible for planning and zoning in the affected community. The dates and times of scheduled TCC and MPO action will be included on the notification.

If it is determined that a public meeting is required, notification and format will be similar to that which is noted below for a Level 3 meeting.

**3. Level 3 (formerly identified as Level 1 and Level 2)**

*Level 1 is currently described as being used for minor changes to the Thoroughfare Plan, but requires that each property owner be notified. Level 2 is currently described as being used in situations where new thoroughfares are being added to the Plan, revisions to the Plan are being made after a planning study or an interchange is being added or deleted from an expressway/freeway facility; however, Level 2 does **not** require notification of individual property owners.*

*For at least the past four years, MUMPO has not undertaken the type of Thoroughfare Plan amendment noted in Level 2 without notifying individual property owners. This suggests that MUMPO policy has shifted away from the type of public involvement noted in Level 2, thereby making it obsolete.*

This type of change will impact a significant number of citizens and will require at least one public meeting.

#### **Typical Changes**

- a. Addition of a new thoroughfare alignment to the approved plan
- b. Revision of a proposed alignment
- c. Addition or deletion of an interchange to an expressway/freeway

#### **Public Notification**

##### *Media notification*

Media outlets will be notified of the location, date and time of the public meeting.

##### *Property owner notification*

A study area boundary will be established in consultation with the affected municipality(s). All property owners within the study area boundary will receive a postcard or letter notifying them of the date, time and location of the public meeting. To the greatest degree feasible, the notification will contain details about the proposed action. At a minimum, the notification will contain a link to MUMPO's website as well as a telephone number and e-mail address where additional information can be obtained. Invitations may also be sent to neighborhood associations, known local leaders and other citizens and stakeholders who may have an interest in the alignment.

If a project sponsored by another agency is proposed for inclusion on the Thoroughfare Plan, and has been the subject of a public involvement effort, the public notification requirements may be waived if the Technical Coordinating Committee determines that the public involvement process was adequate and met the intent of the PIP.

In all cases of changes to the Thoroughfare Plan, MUMPO's website will be updated to include information pertinent to the project. The information to be provided will include the following:

- a. A written description of what is being proposed, and why the proposal has been made.
- b. A map depicting the proposed change. If the change involves a shift to a proposed alignment, both the existing and proposed alignment will be shown.

#### **4. Comprehensive Transportation Plan Adoption**

MUMPO is currently in the process of transitioning from its Thoroughfare Plan to a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP). The transition will require the preparation of a distinct public outreach effort.

## F. Public Involvement Plan

The public will be given an opportunity to comment on updates to the Public Involvement Plan. A public review and comment period will take place for 45 days. During that time, the draft Public Involvement Plan will be available online and by hard copy at various libraries, local government planning offices and MUMPO's offices.

## G. Annual Performance and Evaluation Report on Public Involvement

A report describing and evaluating public involvement efforts will be developed by MUMPO staff within three months after the end of each fiscal year. The report will be made available to MUMPO board members and the Technical Coordinating Committee and will be posted on MUMPO's website.

## SPECIAL ACCOMMODATIONS FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

*The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990* is landmark civil rights legislation ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications. MUMPO and its subcommittees are fully committed to the spirit and intent of *the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990*. In order to facilitate participation by people with disabilities, the following guidelines and activities will apply:

- All public meetings and MUMPO formal events will be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities;
- All public notices of MUMPO meetings will state that accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. One-week notice is required for provisions of appropriate auxiliary aids and services;
- All documents available to the public will be provided in alternative formats for qualified individuals with disabilities, upon request;
- The website will be in compliance with Section 508 of *the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998*.
- The telephone number, email, mailing address, fax number, and website address will be included on all MUMPO publications; and,
- A list of resources for auxiliary aids and services will be developed and maintained.