

Alexandria/Pineville Urbanized Area

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Prepared by



Alexandria/Pineville Urbanized Area
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Prepared in Cooperation with

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee

And

The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

August 18, 2011

Introduction

The Rapides Area Planning Commission (RAPC) serves as the Alexandria/Pineville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and is the agency responsible for conducting continuing transportation planning. The Transportation Public Participation Plan is designed to provide guidance relating to the development of Alexandria/Pineville Metropolitan Area plans and policy documents.

This plan has been developed in response to the federal planning regulation, 23 CFR 450.316, which begins in Section (a) with “The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.”

Agencies for consultation are defined as groups or agencies that would be interested in reviewing and making comment on the MPO’s planning documents and programs and may be referred to as resource agencies. The purpose of this document is to comply with the provisions of the current federal transportation regulations promulgated to implement the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), (Pub. L. 109-59, 119 Stat. 1144).

The plan supports strategies for achieving the goals of environmental justice for the special populations within the region. As a goal of environmental justice, the MPO has the responsibility to consider the distribution of the benefits and burdens of the transportation investments across these groups and to promote equity in the provision of transportation services and projects.

In summary, the Alexandria/Pineville MPO’s goal for its participation and consultation activities is to ensure that the transportation plans for this region reflect the needs of their population and provide benefit to all communities within the planning area equally. To attain this goal the MPO has developed a proactive public participation and consultation process to provide complete and understandable information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and to support early and continuing participation of the public and to consult with the resource agencies in developing MPO documents and plans that meet the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316, including but not limited to various state and federal resource agencies, local agencies and the Native American Indian Tribes.

The plan has been developed in consultation with local, state and federal officials and with input from the public. It will be made available for a public review through various measures, including advertisement of the plan and notice of availability at various locations, presentation at MPO committee meetings and by posting on the MPO website for public to review and print ([www.http://www.rapc.info/Transportation/Transportation.aspx](http://www.rapc.info/Transportation/Transportation.aspx)).

Intent of the Transportation Public Participation Plan

The Transportation Public Participation Plan (TPPP) is a transportation planning process that is accessible, inclusive, and proactive. The plan encourages and provides for the greatest level of education on transportation issues. It provides opportunities for citizens to contribute their ideas and voice their opinions. It seeks to establish trust and credibility among the citizenry for the transportation planning process by resolving conflicts and seeking consensus between citizens and professionals for policies and projects. This document is designed to provide a framework for the public participation process that will be applied to the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Work Program, transportation related air quality plans, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.

Public Participation Planning Goals

The following are the goals of the Transportation Public Participation Plan:

Education

- To develop informational materials supporting a cooperative planning process and explaining the MPO's transportation plans and activities in a concise and straightforward manner.

Outreach

- To increase awareness of, and interest in transportation plans and the transportation planning process using innovative approaches.

Participation

- To provide frequent opportunities for interested parties from the private business community, public officials, neighborhood organizations, the physically challenged and other groups impacted by transportation plans to participate in the development of RAPC transportation plans.
- To encourage public participation in transportation planning activities at every level.

Public Participation Policy

The MPO Transportation Policy Committee will pursue active participation of key individuals and groups with an interest in transportation planning projects in the review, design, and development of its plans. It will develop transportation plans that reflect the needs of the region while meeting federal air quality standards. Groups targeted for participation include private alternative transportation providers, transportation enforcement agencies, local port authorities, local toll authorities, community and neighborhood organizations, the Native American Indian Tribes, local elected officials, transportation and environmental interest groups and representatives of the elderly and disabled.

To these ends, the MPO will undertake the following responsibilities:

- To conduct public meetings for the development and review of the Transportation Improvement Program, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Unified Work Program and any other significant transportation plans developed through the MPO.
- To provide a forum for the review and discussion of significant amendments to adopted plans and actively solicit input from the public in the design and the development of its plans.
- To provide adequate notice and publicity of public meetings that will develop and amend its transportation and related air quality plans.
- To involve key individuals and groups with an interest in transportation and related air quality issues in the development and review of its plans.
- To solicit the participation of and establish a dialogue with groups which have traditionally had limited participation, such as tribal, civic and neighborhood organizations.
- To increase availability of and access to planning documents and informational materials.
- To periodically evaluate the transportation needs of the community through scoping meetings or surveys.
- To continue to develop educational materials for the general public regarding transportation planning and related air quality, energy conservation, environmental mitigation, transportation security and transportation safety (esp. bike and pedestrian) issues.
- To support Smart Growth policies and practices through integration of land use and transportation plans at the regional and local level.

Public Outreach Activities

The MPO utilizes a variety of mechanisms selected as appropriate for the scope, needs and allocated resources of the various plans to be created. Examples of primary public participation efforts include:

- Placing notices on RAPC website (www.rapc.info) at least **five days** prior to public meetings to review plans.
- Presentations to neighborhood groups, civic organizations, governmental meetings, and other special interest groups will be made on an as requested basis to discuss transportation activities within the Alexandria/Pineville Urbanized Area. Interested organizations should contact the Metropolitan Planning Organization located in Rapides Area Planning Commission offices and allow ample time for the staff to make arrangements to attend.

- Providing Official copies of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to the Rapides Parish public libraries for easy public access and information. These documents shall also be available on the RAPC website.
- Issuing news releases to newspapers, the electronic media, public housing, and community newsletters and magazines interested in health, energy conservation and air quality issues in the MPO region regarding regional planning activities, meeting dates and the Transportation Improvement Program.
- Maintaining a record of written public comments received in response to publication of the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Work Program, and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan by including such responses as appendices to these documents.
- Establishing and maintaining mailing/email lists for civic organizations, transportation providers, the business community, the Native American Indian Tribes, advocacy groups, neighborhood associations, the news media, and public libraries. The listing will include: citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of tribal groups, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties. The list will be utilized to notify interested parties of any upcoming events or actions supporting the transportation planning process.
- Establishing and maintaining mailing/email list for resource agencies. At a minimum such listing will include those agencies identified by the LADOTD Environmental Section in its current Solicitation of Views (SOV) distribution list for Rapides Parish, as well as the SOV listings State agencies and Federal agencies. The list will be utilized to notify interested parties of any upcoming events or actions supporting the transportation planning process.

Public Meetings

Public meetings to receive public comments are held prior to the adoption of any major plan or Transportation Improvement Program. Where feasible, public meetings of similar issues, plans and programs will be coordinated with the statewide public participation process to reduce redundancies.

- A legal notice is published in regional newspapers at least **five days** prior to the public meetings for adoption or amendments of regional plans, the Unified Work Program and the Transportation Improvement Program.
- A **14-day** public comment period is observed prior to the adoption or amendments of the Transportation Improvement Program, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Unified Work Program and any other significant regional transportation plans. If the final plan differs

significantly from the draft, an additional **10-day** comment period is advertised for additional comments and review.

- All public meetings are held in locations accessible to the disabled and near bus routes.

Public Participation Procedures and Notice of Non-Discrimination

The public participation procedures are reviewed and amended periodically. A 45-day public comment period will be observed prior to the adoption of amendments to this plan. A public meeting will be advertised and held during the public comment period to solicit input on the public participation procedures.

The procedural review will ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits or, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program operated and maintained by the MPO.

Administrative Modifications and Amendments to MPO Plan Documents

An **Administrative Modification** is a minor revision to the MPO metropolitan transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. An administrative modification is a revision that does not require public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

Administrative Modification thresholds include:

1. Revisions to a project description without changing the project scope or which do not conflict with the pertinent environmental document;
2. Minor changes to project/project phase cost applying to R/W, UTIL, ENG, CONST:
 - Funding changes are limited to \$600,000 for projects for < \$3,000,000.
 - For projects ≥ \$3,000,000, an administrative modification is limited to budget changes of less than 20% in funding
3. Minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects that do not affect fiscal constraint of the STIP or the ability to complete the project as initially described.
4. Minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates as long as the project stays within the approved STIP timeframe and does not affect fiscal constraint of the STIP or the ability to complete the project as initially described. 23 CFR 450.330 (a).
5. A change in the project implementing agency;

6. A split or combination of individually listed projects; as long as cost, schedule, and scope remain unchanged;
7. The addition or deletion of projects from grouped project (line item) listings as long as the line item total funding amounts stay within the guidelines in number two above.

Administrative modifications can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided that:

1. It does not affect the air quality conformity determination, including timely implementation of Transportation Control Measures (TCMs), and
2. It does not impact financial constraint of the TIP or the ability to complete the project as described.

MPO approved administrative modification will be published online separately from TIP amendments. The MPO staff will summarize administrative modifications as an information item to the MPO Committee members each month. The MPO Board may delegate approval of administrative modifications to the MPO's Executive Director. If the MPO board delegates approval of administrative modifications to the Executive Director, the MPO will provide copies of the delegation to LADOTD, FHWA, and FTA. Any administrative modifications will be forwarded to LADOTD Transportation Planning Section and Public Transportation Section for approval on behalf of the Governor.

An **Amendment** is a revision to a long-range transportation plan or TIP, that involves a major change to a project, including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes). An amendment is a revision that requires public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, and/or a conformity determination.

Once approved by LADOTD, on behalf of the Governor, the amendment will be incorporated into Louisiana's STIP. LADOTD will immediately notify the MPO, FHWA, and FTA of any approved amendment(s).