



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

*Prepared by the:
Tyler Area Metropolitan Planning Organization*

*In Cooperation with:
Texas Department of Transportation, Federal highway
Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration*

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

GENERAL

The City of Tyler currently serves as the fiscal agent for the Tyler Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which represents the Tyler Metropolitan Study Area. The purpose of the MPO is to provide continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for the area. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act and subsequent passage of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act emphasize the importance of a proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing participation of the public.

This policy for public participation conforms to requirements addressed under 23 CFR 450.316 which states that the MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), 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.

It is the intent of this Public Participation Plan to describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

- Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
- Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP; and
- Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

- Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes; and
- Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

The MPO's public participation involvement procedures associated with TIP development will be used to satisfy the program-of-projects requirements of the Section 5307 Urban Formula Funded Program.

Public Participation Plan procedures will be reviewed periodically by the Texas Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to assure that full and open access is provided to MPO decision-making processes. It is the intent of the Tyler Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to fully comply with the procedures outlined in this policy.

Guiding Regulations

MAP-21

On July 6, 2012, President Barack Obama signed into law the transportation bill, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) Act. With guaranteed funding for highways, highway safety, and public transportation totaling \$244.1 billion, MAP-21 represented the largest surface transportation investment in our nation's history. The bill authorized transportation programs and projects for the two year period of 2012-2014. Prior to MAP- 21, the three landmark bills that brought surface transportation into the 21st century – the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) shaped the highway program to meet the nation's changing transportation needs.

MAP-21 addressed the many challenges facing our transportation system today – challenges such as improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment – as well as laying the groundwork for addressing future challenges.

FAST Act

On December 4th, 2015, President Barack Obama signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) Act into law. The FAST Act provides long-term funding certainty for surface transportation investment as it authorizes \$305 billion for fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology, and statistics programs. The FAST Act requires the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to consider planning strategies that will serve to advance ten (10) transportation-planning factors identified under the FAST Act:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;

7. Promote efficient system management and operation;
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
9. Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation and reduce or mitigate storm water impacts of surface transportation; and
10. Enhance travel and tourism

MAP-21 and SAFETEA-LU Public Participation Plan regulations are maintained under the FAST Act, however, public ports and private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs, are explicitly added to the list of interested parties that an MPO must provide with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. In addition, the FAST Act adds officials responsible for tourism and natural disaster risk reduction to the list of agencies and officials that a MPO should consult with in developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs. The Public Participation Plan is developed in compliance with MAP-21 and FAST Act regulations.

DEFINITIONS

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): An organization designated by the Governor's Office of the State of Texas to conduct the metropolitan transportation planning process within urbanized areas with populations over 50,000.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): A long-range plan (20 years or more) to deal with major transportation needs in the Tyler Metropolitan Area. The metropolitan transportation plan must be reviewed and updated within five years from adoption.

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process: A special intergovernmental planning process that considers the transportation needs of the Tyler Metropolitan Area as a whole. The metropolitan transportation plan and transportation improvement program are principal products of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): A committee consisting of appointed representatives for local, regional and state governments, transit providers, and other entities involved in transportation planning and development. The Technical Advisory Committee is responsible for reviewing and providing feedback for the Transportation Policy Committee to consider when approving the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Unified Planning Work Program.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A three-year schedule of projects to improve or maintain the quality of public surface transportation. The TIP is normally updated yearly and must be updated at least once every two years. Any projects or programs which use money from the Federal Highway Administration or Federal Transit Administration must be contained in the TIP. The TIP referred to herein is the TIP for the Tyler Metropolitan Area.

Transportation Policy Committee (TPC): A committee consisting of elected and appointed representatives for local, regional and state governments, and other entities involved in transportation planning or transportation development. The Transportation Policy Committee oversees the metropolitan transportation planning process and is responsible for approving or disapproving the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and Unified Planning Work Program.

Tyler Metropolitan Area: The area in and near Tyler, Texas, which is considered urbanized or is expected to become urbanized within twenty years. The Tyler Metropolitan Area is located in

Smith County and includes the City of Tyler; the Cities of Lindale, New Chapel Hill, Noonday, Whitehouse, Hideaway, and the communities of East Texas Center, Flint, and Gresham.

STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

The MPO shall maintain a distribution list of interested groups and individuals, including state, county, and local government officials, Chambers of Commerce, community groups, special interest groups, transportation providers, freight companies, etc. These individual stakeholders and groups shall also receive notices or flyers via regular mail or email notification at least 72 hours prior to any public meeting, public review period, or public comment period. The federal transportation legislation expands the listing of interested parties to be engaged during the development of the Public Participation Plan, the short-term and long-term transportation plans. These interested parties shall have reasonable opportunities to comment on projects of the short-term and long-term transportation plans.

- Affected public agencies
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation services
- Private providers of transportation (intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool or vanpool program, transit benefits program, parking cash-out program, shuttle or telework program)
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- Representatives of the disabled
- Other interested parties

Federal regulations require expanded consultation and cooperation with agencies and officials responsible for other planning related activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The MPO shall consult with agencies and officials that are affected by transportation in the development of the short- and long-term transportation plans. The following is a list of those agencies and officials with whom the MPO may consult:

- Bicycle interest groups
- Bureau of Land Management
- Business and civic groups
- Disabled persons interest groups
- Elected officials & legislators
- Forest Service (U.S. Department of Agriculture)
- General Land Office
- Gregg County Emergency Operations Center
- Gregg, Harrison and Upshur Counties
- Homeland Security
- Local colleges & universities
- Local governments (cities, counties, council of governments)
- Local historic preservation agencies
- Local land use plans (City and County)
- Local media (print, television and radio)
- Local Parks and Recreation Departments
- Local school districts
- Local Chambers of Commerce
- Local Convention & Visitors Bureaus
- Local Economic Development Corporations
- Major employers
- National Marine Fisheries
- Native American Tribal Councils
- Other interested citizens
- Pedestrian interest groups
- Planning & Zoning Commission
- Private freight shippers
- Private transportation providers (taxi)
- Providers of private freight transportation

- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Social service organizations
- Special interest groups
- Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
- Texas Division of Emergency Management
- Texas Historical Commission
- Texas Parks and Wildlife
- Transit interest groups
- Transportation agencies (Longview Transit, GoBus, rail, airport)
- Tribal Agencies
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Services
- U.S. Geological Survey

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION PROCESS

Notice of public meetings, open houses, and public comment and solicitation opportunities will be advertised at least 72 hours in advance on the MPO website and in *or* at the:

- *Tyler Morning Telegraph*
- Tyler City Hall
- Smith County Courthouse
- Community Minority-Focused Papers, including Spanish language papers (when feasible)
- Press releases will be sent to all local media

A copy of newspaper publications shall be obtained and retained in the MPO files for a period of three years. In absence of a copy of newspaper or newspaper certification, where efforts are made according to the policies of the publisher to place announcements, there shall be determined that the MPO has met requirements for public notification.

The MPO shall also distribute press releases to all local media at least 72 hours in advance and email interested individuals and organizations listed on a correspondence roster for MTP and TIP public hearings which shall be maintained by the MPO.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

Committee Meetings

All meetings of the MPO Transportation Policy Committee and other public meetings will be held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act. The public will be given an opportunity to participate at every public meeting. Those attending public meetings will be asked to sign a roster. The roster will be retained by the MPO for a period of three years. The MPO shall prepare minutes for public meetings containing a summary of the comments, speakers and other information. Minutes shall be accessible through the MPO's website and retained by for a period of three years.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

Two or more public meetings shall be held to present new or major updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan prior to its adoption. At least one of these meetings shall be held a minimum of 30 days prior to adoption.

Transportation Improvement Program

One public meeting shall be held to present the Transportation Improvement Program. The meeting shall be held a minimum of 10 days prior to adoption.

PUBLIC REVIEW

In order to allow the public an opportunity to review major plans in detail, a public comment and review period shall be announced before the adoption of Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and/or the Public Participation Plan (PPP). During the public review period, the MPO shall make available the document(s) proposed for adoption online on the MPO's webpage and in the MPO's office. The public may review the documents at the MPO office during working hours. If possible, staff will be available to discuss the document or answer questions. The public review period may run concurrently with the public comment period.

PUBLIC COMMENT

To solicit public opinion, a public comment period shall be held for the period required by federal and state regulations or the number of days listed below, whichever is greater, prior to the adoption of the following documents:

Transportation Improvement Program	10 days
Metropolitan Transportation Plan	30 days
Public Participation Plan	45 days

When significant oral or written comments are received on the draft Metropolitan Transportation Plan or the draft Transportation Improvement Program during the public review and comment period, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plans or programs.

AMENDMENTS

If the final plan or program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public participation efforts, an additional 10 day public review and comment period shall be afforded prior to the adoption of the revised Metropolitan Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program.

In cases where time may be of the essence in terms of applications and funding, the TAC's recommendation to the TPC may be secured via e-mail and forwarded to the TPC Chair for consideration and approval.

Amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program updating or adjusting amounts of listed projects, let dates, project numbers and similar amendments will not require approval by the MPO Transportation Policy Committee following concurrence by TxDOT.

PROJECT SOLICITATION AND SUPPORT

At least six months prior to the adoption of a required update to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the MPO shall solicit from the public ideas for improvements to the transportation system to be considered as part of the new or updated Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Solicitation may be in the form of a survey, questionnaire, public meeting or other means. These ideas shall be reviewed by the MPO staff and MPO Technical Committee and will be considered for

incorporation into the Plan.

Requests for project support and/or endorsement shall be submitted at least five working days before a scheduled TAC meeting. All such requests must be in writing, detailed, and specific. All such requests must be in writing, detailed, and specific. Project support is restricted to those projects currently in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

OPEN RECORDS REQUESTS

Requests for public records or information will be handled in accordance with the Texas Public Information Act and the federal law, through the Freedom of Information Act and related acts. The procedure for responding to records requests shall follow the policy outlined by the City of Tyler.

PUBLIC APPEARANCES

The MPO shall make every effort to comply with requests from civic or professional groups, organizations or committees to present or discuss information related to the responsibilities of the MPO. The organization should contact the MPO in advance to allow ample time for the MPO to make arrangements-for a public appearance.

In the same manner, the MPO may schedule appearances at meetings of groups such as neighborhood organizations to gather input from residents or serve as members of other transportation-related committees (i.e., Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee). Interaction with these groups shall be an avenue through which the MPO shall seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to the elderly, disabled, low-income and minority households.

INTERNET

It is the goal of the MPO to make public information available in electronically accessible format to afford reasonable opportunities for consideration of public comment and opinion. The official website of the MPO shall be utilized to post public notices for public meetings and to post various planning documents. The MPO's website will have these documents available for public access:

- Public Participation Plan (PPP);
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP);
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Annual Project Listing (APL);
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); and
- Special Studies conducted by the MPO.

The MPO will provide a user-friendly website containing other pertinent transportation information such as latest news, agendas, meeting minutes, and links to outside agencies. The website will provide an opportunity for citizen feedback.

VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

In order to better communicate transportation plans with the general public, federal regulations also emphasize the use of visualization techniques to depict transportation plans. Examples of visualization techniques may include charts and graphs, tables, Geographic Information System (GIS) maps overlaid with data, interactive GIS maps, GIS-based scenario planning tools, photo renditions, artist renderings, and static maps. The intent for this technique is to better depict the

programs and their impact on the public. The MPO will utilize visualization techniques during the development of the short-term and long-term transportation plans.

OPTION TO USE ADDITIONAL PROCEDURES

Procedures and activities which may be used for public information or public participation are not limited to the procedures described above. Additional public information and public participation activities may be conducted without revision to the above procedures.