

Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Public Participation Plan

Adopted: July 12, 2007

Policy Statement

The Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), the regional forum for comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative transportation planning in the urban study area, is committed to engaging all area citizens in its planning and programming activities. The MPO will also include affected federal, state, regional, and local agencies as well as identified population groups in its planning process. This plan is developed in compliance with CFR23, Part 450.316 pursuant to SAFETEA-LU and its amendments. All federal and state statutes will be met.

Plan Implementation

The MPO shall carry out the following practices for effective communication with the public:

Public Participation in MPO Meetings

- All meetings of the Policy Board of the MPO will be open to the public and will be held in locations accessible to persons with handicaps and on public transit lines. Arrangements will be made for interpreters for hearing impaired individuals, and every effort will be made to ensure provision of interpreters for non-English speaking persons, provided a request is submitted at least two days before the meeting.
- All meeting agendas will include time for matters from the public.
- All meeting agendas will include meeting guidelines establishing time limits and procedures for public interaction with the Policy Board.
- The Policy Board will seek public comments on the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) as well as the annual update of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), no fewer than two times: at the beginning of the programming process and prior to adoption. If the final plan differs significantly from the one which received public comments, another comment period will be made available.
- Regular public forums will be held during any future updates and amendments to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).
- Public information sessions and/or interactive workshops will be held regarding specific studies affecting the region's transportation network as deemed necessary by the Policy Board.
- The Public Participation Plan will be reviewed every 3 years and revised or amended as needed.

Involvement with Organizations and Agencies

- The MPO will maintain a contact list of public and private organizations, agencies, and interested parties affected by the regional transportation network including environmental, housing, and economic development groups. The contact list will include representatives of such groups as the elderly, the disabled, low income, and users of bicycle and pedestrian facilities among others. All citizens and groups requesting inclusion on the contact list will be added.
- The MPO will identify and communicate with populations traditionally underserved by the transportation network, such as persons with disabilities and low-income persons, through organizations and media outlets known to serve these populations.

Public Access to MPO Information

- Copies of the annual TIP, the UPWP, the Public Participation Policy, the LRTP, and other major studies will be made available for public review through local planning offices, municipal offices, VDOT offices, the MPO office, and on the MPO website. Notification of availability will be included in notification regarding approval as outlined under "Communications with the Public".

Communications with the Public

- Meeting agendas will be sent to those on the MPO contact list and the media one week prior to the meeting.
- Notification of public hearings will be sent to those on the MPO mailing list and the media no less than two weeks prior to the hearing.
- Notification regarding the UPWP, TIP and the long range plan will be sent to those on the MPO contact list and the media no less than one week prior to the meeting at which approval is scheduled to take place.
- Notification regarding consideration of action on this Public Participation Plan will be advertised in public newspapers for the region. Notices will also be sent to those on the contact list and included on the MPO website. A minimum notification for public comment will be 45 days before the Public Participation Plan is initially adopted or revised.

Public Involvement in the Development of the UPWP update of the TIP and LRP, and other Transportation Studies

- In carrying out activities related to development of these planning documents, the MPO will: encourage and accept public comments in a variety of ways (i.e. by mail, in person, website and via email)
- A comprehensive transportation workshop will be scheduled periodically at a time and place convenient to the public.
- Utilize a variety of means and visualization techniques (e.g., maps, graphics, aerial photography) to enhance communication with the public.
- Schedule public meetings in the late afternoon/early evening so that more people have the opportunity to attend.

- Contact interested federal, state, regional, and local agencies and interest groups prior to adoption of the UPWP, update to the TIP, and update to the LRP.
- Send out notification to those included on the MPO contact list and request comment.

Documentation of Public Participation

- The MPO staff will maintain a record of public comments and records of public opinion acquired from a variety of sources. The record will be consulted regularly during the planning process and provided to the MPO Policy Board when appropriate for review. The review process will help the MPO staff evaluate its success at meeting environmental justice goals and Title VI regulations. Contents of the record will include the following:
 - Comments made under matters from the public as recorded in the minutes.
 - Records of any formal public hearings for the Long Range Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, and the TIP.
 - Relevant articles, editorials, letters to the editor, as printed in the “Roanoke Times” and “News Messenger”.
 - Meeting notes from the Transportation Workshop and discussions with community groups.
 - Staff summaries of comments offered over the phone, by email, or through neighborhood meetings or other community events.
 - A summary of comments received for the LRP, TIP, UPWP, and any specific studies will be distributed to the Policy Board and the TAC and will be considered during the development of the particular study or Plan. This information will be communicated to those on the MPO contact list as well.

Committees of the MPO

Following are descriptions of current MPO committees, including:

- MPO Policy Board
- MPO Technical Advisory Committee

Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area MPO Policy Board

The MPO Policy Board is the decision-making body for the purpose of carrying out the continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (“3-C”) transportation planning and programming process as defined in United States Code Title 23, Section 134 and Title 49 Section 1607; and in accordance with the constitution and statutes of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In carrying out its responsibility the MPO shall:

- a) Establish policy for the continuing, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process,
- b) Assure that all provisions of SAFETEA-LU are fulfilled,
- c) Review and update the LRTP for the study area at least every 5 years after adoption,
- d) Recommend action by other appropriate agencies,
- e) Revise the LRTP study area, defined by the "study area boundary", as required, and in conjunction with VDOT,
- f) Develop, in coordination with local governments and VDOT, socio-economic data for the regional traffic model,
- g) Develop and approve the annual transportation improvement programming (TIP) and other planning documents as required by the U.S. Department of Transportation Regulations, as amended, and
- h) Perform other reviews and evaluations that may be required.

The voting membership of the MPO shall be composed of two (2) voting members designated by and representing each local government within the Blacksburg Urbanized Area who will be vested with the authority to speak for and act on behalf of their respective local government on matters concerning area wide transportation planning activities. The MPO will also include one (1) voting member designated by and representing VDOT. The nonvoting membership of the MPO shall be composed of one (1) representative each representing the New River Valley Planning District Commission, the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg Transit, the MPO Executive Director, and the Virginia Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport Authority.

The MPO meets the first Thursday of each month at 2:00 p.m. at the Montgomery County Government Center. Members as of April 1, 2007 are:

Voting Members

Douglas Marrs, Montgomery County
Clay Goodman, Montgomery County
Ron Rordam, Town of Blacksburg
Adele Schirmer, Town of Blacksburg
Richard Ballengee, Town of Christiansburg
Lance Terpenney, Town of Christiansburg
Richard Caywood, VDOT

Nonvoting Members

Unwanna Dabney, FHWA
Tony Cho, FTA
Charles Badger, VDRPT
Abigail Convery, NRVPDC
Becky Martin, Blacksburg Transit
Michael St. Jean, VT/Montgomery Reg. Airport
Steve Mouras, Virginia Tech
Dan Brugh, MPO Executive Director

Blacksburg, Christiansburg, Montgomery Area MPO Technical Advisory Committee

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee, composed of individuals with technical knowledge in transportation and land use matters, will provide technical review, comment, and recommendations on transportation plans, programs, studies and other appropriate documents, and on regional transportation issues. The Committee shall integrate land use and environmental considerations into all of its activities in order to forge a stronger link between transportation, land use and the environment. The Committee will, (1) determine the influence of current data upon the Long Range Transportation Plan in relation to previous data and projected trends; (2) cooperate in the development of the procedures for the collection of traffic data and reassignment of traffic; (3) work with the staffs of the NRVPC and VDOT to review, comment, recommend, and assist VDOT, participating political jurisdictions, or the NRVPC on any proposal, alternatives, and work performed on the location and design of facilities in the Transportation Improvement Plan; and serve in an advisory capacity to the Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board.

The current membership of the Technical Advisory Committee is as follows:

Karen Drake, Town of Blacksburg
Jim Henagar, Town of Blacksburg
Randy Wingfield, Town of Christiansburg
Wayne Nelson, Town of Christiansburg
Joe Powers, Montgomery County
Brian Hamilton, Montgomery County
Michael St. Jean, Virginia Tech/Montgomery Regional Airport
David Clarke, VDOT Christiansburg
Michael Gray, VDOT Salem
Irene Shuman, VDOT Richmond
Debbie Freed, Virginia Tech
Becky Martin, Blacksburg Transit
Abigail Convery, NRVPC
Charles Badger, VDRPT
Unwanna Dabney, FHWA (nonvoting)
Tony Cho, FTA (nonvoting)

The Technical Advisory Committee meets the third Thursday of each month at 10:00 am in the Montgomery County Government Center.