

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT
JUNE 1, 2007

PREPARED FOR:

**NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD**

SUBMITTED BY:



2029 K Street NW, Suite 300
Washington, DC 20006
Phone: (202) 659-1414; Fax: (202) 659-1313
www.circlepoint.com



Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates, Inc.
517 West 35th Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10001
Phone: (917) 339-0408; Fax: (917) 339-1068

CONTENTS

Overview	Page 3
Executive Summary	Page 4
Section 1: Public Involvement	Page 5
Section 2: Data Collection Summary	Page 6
Section 3: TPB Public Involvement Policy, Plan and Program	Page 8
Section 4: Communication and Messaging	Page 15
Section 5: Participation and Constituencies	Page 18
Section 6: Program Evaluation	Page 22
Section 7: Summary of Recommendations	Page 26
Section 8: Conclusion	Page 30
Appendices	
Appendix A: TransAction 2030 and the 2004 Maryland Transportation Plan Public Involvement	
Appendix B: Metropolitan Planning Organization Budget Detail	
Appendix C: Stakeholder Interview Participants	
Appendix D: Public Involvement Plan Example	
Appendix E: Metropolitan Planning Organization Approaches to Program Evaluation	

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

**In the modern world, the intelligence of public opinion
is the one indispensable condition of social progress.**
– *Charles William Eliot*

OVERVIEW

Purpose

In spring 2007, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) plans to update its public involvement process and policy. Passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005, which governs statewide and metropolitan planning, provides the TPB with an opportunity to take a fresh look at its public involvement policy. The TPB adopted its current policy in 1999.

SAFETEA-LU provides guidelines regarding the acceptable level of public involvement for state, regional and local government transportation planning. Governmental agencies must engage in an acceptable level of public involvement in their decision making to receive federal support for transportation planning and projects. However, the act does not limit a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), such as the TPB, from doing more. The information in this report is intended to assist the TPB in developing and implementing a new public involvement policy.

Evaluator

In August 2006, the TPB issued a request for proposals for prospective consultants to evaluate the public involvement activities carried out by the TPB and to recommend how the TPB might improve those activities. In November 2006, the TPB staff selected CirclePoint and Howard/Stein-Hudson Associates to conduct the evaluation. This document represents the findings of the evaluation.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation occurred between November 2006 and March 2007 and involved a review of the public involvement policies and practices of other MPOs, interviews with stakeholders in the metropolitan Washington, D.C., area and interviews with TPB staff and committee members. The primary data collection for this evaluation involved the review of public involvement activities of other MPOs and public agencies, including some in the Washington, D.C., region, as well as interviews with members of the TPB, the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee, and the TPB Access for All Committee and other stakeholders around the region.

Document Organization

The report is organized into eight sections, as follows:

- Section 1 discusses public involvement in general.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

- Section 2 summarizes the data collection.
- Section 3 explains public involvement policies and plans at the TPB.
- Section 4 addresses communication and messaging.
- Section 5 discusses participation and constituencies.
- Section 6 considers options for program evaluation.
- Section 7 summarizes the recommendations.
- Section 8 provides concluding comments.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ideally, decision making for transportation projects seeks to balance local impacts and benefits with regional needs. In the Washington, D.C., region, project-level decision making is typically conducted at the state and local levels. At each level, the type and degree of public involvement in regional planning and local transportation projects is different. In general, the stakeholders interviewed for this study did not articulate a distinction in approaches between the public involvement necessary for transportation planning, particularly long-range and regionally scaled plans, and that necessary for specific, locally focused transportation projects. The distinction is important because regional plans more often establish a framework for evaluating the benefits of individual projects with regard to air quality, economics and growth. Interviewees' suggestions often lacked insight into these differences. For example, some suggestions regarding public involvement at the regional level were actually more appropriate for local-level initiatives. While it is less important for stakeholders and the public to understand the different needs and focuses of public involvement activities at the local and regional levels, it is important for the TPB and other MPOs to develop policies that acknowledge these differences and programs that are tailored to the specific needs of each project and community.

It is difficult to accurately measure the effectiveness of the TPB's current public involvement policy because few quantitative measures exist. With those measures that can be documented (e.g., number of days for comment, time devoted to public comment on meeting agendas, frequency of meetings, number of members on a committee) the TPB does a good job. However, to achieve greater success in public involvement, the TPB must become more strategic in implementing its public involvement activities. In a region as large and complex as Washington, D.C., the challenge is to define the primary constituencies for each project or program and develop a public involvement plan to effectively incorporate these groups into the planning process.

General Recommendations

As it develops and implements its new public involvement policy, the TPB should engage in a series of strategic discussions with staff and current TPB leadership about the following:

- Aligning their respective expectations for public involvement with the actual decision-making process. Consider: What constitutes effective public involvement?
- Identifying core constituents of the TPB and what they need to know about transportation decision making and policy to effectively influence the decision-making

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

process. Consider: How can these constituencies be incorporated into common and periodic tasks?

- Tailoring outreach and education strategies to involve these constituencies. Consider: What information do they need to participate meaningfully?
- Determining how to assess progress, given the specificity of targets and strategies. Consider: What does successful public involvement look like, and how can that success be measured?
- Allocating and leveraging resources to achieve success.

It is not clear whether the current public involvement activities are intended for the benefit of everyone in the region or the informed people who are “insiders.” Perhaps they are intended for some other, unspecified constituency. – *Evaluators*

Another purpose of this report is to assess how the TPB might, in the future, evaluate its efforts. In addition to aligning public expectations with its public involvement activities, the TPB must create a strategically focused public involvement program. For example,

the current TPB policy lists a number of specific activities that occur on a periodic basis. Beyond a broad statement about inclusion, however, the policy does not clearly articulate expected outcomes or more meaningful benchmarks. A section of this report is devoted to developing such an evaluation.

An effective public involvement program must be relevant to the decision-making process and adaptable to the dynamic political and policy landscape. The program needs to balance flexibility with a focus on achieving a set of measurable, qualitative outcomes. Ultimately, the TPB needs to collaborate more closely with its constituencies to define its program and its approach to evaluating the program.

SECTION 1: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Although contemporary approaches to public involvement are not new, their use has gradually spread to a broad array of public policy issues. What began as experiments in the early 1970s, with the environmental movement and the advent of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), has grown to become a common governmental practice as an adjunct to traditional decision-making processes. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) emphasized the importance of transportation planning processes that are proactive, information rich, accessible and supportive of early and continued public involvement in decision making.

Subsequent transportation laws, most recently the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), have reinforced the mandate for public agencies to adapt their policies and practices to be more inclusive, particularly of persons who are unaware of or uninvolved in the transportation planning process. On February 14, 2007, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) issued its updated policy

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

related to statewide and metropolitan planning. The policy emphasizes the importance of early and frequent public involvement in transportation planning at all levels of government.

According to the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (AMPO), many MPOs around the country were waiting for the updated FHWA rule on statewide and metropolitan planning to clarify public participation requirements before finalizing any changes to their specific plans. None of the MPOs contacted for this evaluation were considering significant changes to their public participation efforts. Those few changes being considered include the following:

- Better documentation of public involvement activities
- Codifying the informal outreach activities in which MPOs currently engage
- Increasing coordination with a broader range of government agencies in areas such as land use, wildlife management, environmental mitigation and historical preservation (This could include conducting joint outreach meetings.)
- Increased use of visualization tools and technologies to help the public better understand what projects will look like and what their potential impacts might be

The TPB is already implementing many of these changes, including using this evaluation report to document its public involvement activities and exploring the use of technology as a tool for public engagement and decision making. The current TPB public involvement policy adheres to the spirit of the federal policy for public involvement. The FHWA final rule is not rigid. There is room to experiment, be creative and change course as necessary. Whenever possible the TPB should use that flexibility to try new things.

SECTION 2: DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY

Metropolitan Planning Organization Peers

The public involvement programs of ten primary (Tier 1) and six secondary (Tier 2) MPOs from around the country were investigated as part of the evaluation. The selection of MPOs was based on comparable regional populations—two million or more—and administrative coverage. Tier 1 MPOs are from major metropolitan areas and may have districts that include more than one state. Tier 2 MPOs are smaller but may also include districts within more than one state.

Tier 1 MPOs

1. **Atlanta** (Atlanta Regional Commission)
2. **Boston** (Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization)
3. **Chicago** (Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning)
4. **Dallas/Fort Worth** (North Central Texas Council of Governments)
5. **Denver** (Denver Regional Council of Governments)
6. **Los Angeles** (Southern California Association of Governments)
7. **Miami** (Miami/Dade County Metropolitan Planning Organization)

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

8. **Philadelphia** (Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission)*
9. **Seattle** (Puget Sound Regional Council)
10. **St. Louis** (East-West Gateway Council of Governments)*

Tier 2 MPOs

1. **Baltimore** (Baltimore Regional Council)
2. **Cleveland** (Northeast Ohio Area Coordinating Agency)
3. **Kansas City** (Mid-America Regional Council)*
4. **Louisville** (Kentuckiana Regional Planning and Development Agency)*
5. **Memphis** (Memphis and Shelby County Department of Regional Services)*
6. **Pittsburgh** (Southwest Pennsylvania Commission)

* Bistate MPOs

Information regarding Tier 1 MPOs was collected from Internet searches, as well as through requests for specific information from some MPOs. Supporting phone and in-person discussions were held with representatives of nine of the MPOs from Tier 1. Where it was possible, additional information from Tier 2 MPOs was also reviewed.

Peer Review and Other Related Findings

Overall, the TPB's public involvement activities are very similar to activities at other MPOs. A couple of MPOs showed strengths in the areas of strategic partnerships with community-based organizations and of engaging underrepresented or typically uninvolved segments of the community. The approaches that the MPOs use to evaluate their programs, which are detailed in Appendix E of this report, offer ideas that may help the TPB in its future efforts to benchmark its public involvement activities.

In terms of resources, the TPB's annual budget for public involvement is \$396,000, which ranks eighth among the ten Tier 1 MPO budgets. On average, the Tier 1 MPOs, with the TPB included in the calculation, devote 5.4 percent of their annual budgets to public involvement. The TPB devotes less than that average to its public involvement activities. Its investment is 3.2 percent. The budget expenses include dedicated staff, consultants, other staff resources and direct costs, such as publications. See Appendix B for additional details about budget expenditures.

In addition to the MPO peer review, this research documents public involvement activities performed in northern Virginia and suburban Maryland. Appendix A describes a wide range of public involvement techniques used by the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority, with its development of TransAction 2030, and the Maryland Department of Transportation, with the 2004 Maryland Transportation Plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

Selection of Interview Participants

Forty-four individuals participated in interviews. The goal of the selection process was to

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

create a representative sample of people from different levels of government, governments from across the region, and people in policy and advisory roles for the TPB, as well as elected officials, representatives of nongovernmental organizations and citizens. See Appendix C for the entire list.

Interview Participants Representation				
Region	Agency	Elected	Citizen/ Advocate	Total
Washington, D.C.	3	0	9	12
Maryland	4	6	5	15
Virginia	4	6	2	12
Regional/Other	2	1	2	5

Between December 19, 2006, and March 16, 2007, the consultant team conducted interviews mostly by telephone. Some of the interview participants spoke about public involvement as observers from outside the process; others offered the views of those who are active participants but not decision makers in the process. Another group added the perspective of how public input informed their decision making. The interviews provided nearly six hundred individual comments.

SECTION 3: TPB PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICY, PLAN AND PROGRAM

Nationally, the responsibility for regional planning rests with the 341 MPOs in urbanized areas that have fifty thousand or more people. The TPB, like many other MPOs, guides the operations of, management of and investment in a surface transportation system within a specified geographic region. The TPB provides a regional transportation policy framework and a forum for coordinating transportation decision making in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area.

Stakeholder Impressions

Without exception, every stakeholder interviewed for this evaluation offered a degree of support for the TPB's public involvement policy. However, some interviewees expressed less-than-enthusiastic support for how the TPB implements its policy. One reason cited was that the existing policy and specific activities do not articulate specific outcomes. Outcomes are particularly important given the intense competition for the limited resources that the TPB has available for all its

The TPB functions as a regional coordinating body that facilitates communication and planning among its members in ways that inform and honor local decision making. The expectations of some stakeholders regarding the TPB's public involvement in transportation projects are not in alignment with the reality of an MPO in the Washington, D.C., region. – Evaluators

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

programs, and specifying these outcomes would allow better measurement of the program's overall success.

Recommendations

1. The current public involvement policy cites eleven implementation activities. It is important for the TPB to make deliberate and strategic decisions about which activities to implement. It should base these decisions on the degree to which the activities require public input and whether that input needs to come from a specific constituency.
2. The TPB should develop a goal- and outcome-focused public involvement plan that includes a series of clearly interrelated activities. The TPB's current policy is unclear in this regard and implies that the TPB should continuously carry out all the activities listed. Instead, the series of activities should be viewed as a toolbox, with some activities requiring more frequent execution than others.
3. In the same light, the TPB should develop a strategic planning process that determines which activities will occur each year, and the TPB should provide adequate resources to get the job done. Following are some considerations for the TPB:
 - Define a specific subset(s) of the public that the TPB should target for presentations, public forums and workshops. Is the subset the same for each venue?
 - Establish specific outreach targets each year, including criteria for establishing the targets and priorities.
 - Set a goal for the number of people to reach within the region each year and a way to effectively measure progress toward this goal.

It is important to mention that the TPB's public—or, more appropriately, constituency—is not restricted to what is traditionally considered the public. The “public” also involves the TPB's member jurisdictions. A later section of this report elaborates on participation and constituencies.

Public Involvement Policy

The TPB's public involvement *policy* is the statement adopted by the TPB board that articulates the agency's commitment to a transparent interface with the public in order to support the agency's decision-making processes. The policy provides a framework for the public involvement plan and program. There are, however, important distinctions between public involvement policies, plans and programs. The existing TPB document that describes the public involvement policy does not make those distinctions, and it is too lengthy and provides too much detail to serve as a policy statement.

Recommendations

1. This report recommends that the TPB describe its public involvement in three separate documents that vary in purpose, length, level of detail and shelf life. They are the public involvement policy, plan and program. Below are descriptions of each, as well as recommendations about how each can be improved.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

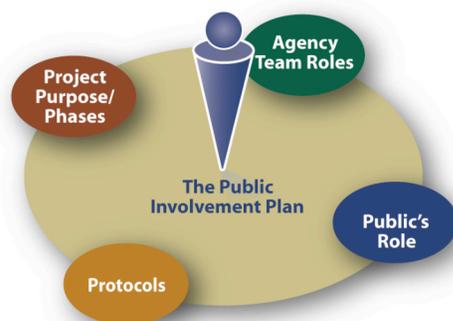
FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

2. At most, the policy statement should contain four to five sentences about its intent, its values and the *process* for its implementation. The policy should be made widely available to the public and should be periodically reviewed and updated by the TPB—for example, every four to five years.
3. The revised policy should consist of a version of the existing policy statement and, if necessary, the updated General Requirements and Criteria from the latest U.S. Department of Transportation regulations governing public involvement.
4. More importantly, the policy should discuss the process for developing a public involvement plan and how the board makes decisions about the level of programming necessary for implementing the plan (e.g., “Each year, the board shall consider in the budget the allocation of resources to support an approved public involvement plan to implement this policy.”).
5. The Specific Activities section of the current policy includes the type of information that is best suited to a public involvement plan. The revised policy should not include information at this level of detail.
6. Currently, the TPB bylaws codify the requirements for the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). There is no need for the revised policy to include the CAC’s mission and specific operating procedures. Instead, the policy should include a statement along the lines of “Formal participation of the public in the TPB deliberative and decision-making process is a priority. The bylaws specify that one way to accomplish this is for the TPB to convene the CAC and Access for All Committee. All TPB committees and task forces have charters, organizing documents and operating procedures that are supplements to this policy statement.”
7. The TPB could improve the policy by using a more collaborative approach in developing its policy. A thorough consultation process will help create buy-in and support for the policy.
8. The TPB should develop the next iteration of its public involvement policy in close collaboration with the current membership of its Technical Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee and Access for All Committee.
9. The TPB should reach out to all past members of its citizen committees and task forces through surveys, interviews and focus groups in order to solicit ideas for improving the draft public involvement policy.
10. To the degree that it has not already done so, the TPB should follow the lead of its peers and consider addressing the following in its policy or plan:
 - Better documentation of public involvement activities

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

- Codification of the informal outreach activities in which MPOs are currently engaged
- Increased coordination with a broader range of government agencies in areas such as land use, wildlife management, environmental mitigation and historical preservation (This could include conducting joint outreach meetings.)



- Increased use of visualization tools and technologies to help the public better understand what projects will look like and what their potential impacts might be

Public Involvement Plan

The public involvement *plan* is a set of outcome-based activities that are designed to facilitate two-way communication between the TPB and a specifically defined set of constituents. The plan is

developed in collaboration with a range of stakeholders and is adopted annually or biennially. It is important that the plan be flexible, iterative and relevant to the decision-making process. To address the needs of multiple constituents, the TPB should create multiple opportunities for public comment and establish a forward path—a clear road map of the decision-making process, milestones and key decisions. This includes the role of state and local governments. The intent is for the TPB to build greater trust and credibility with those who are invested in regional transportation planning.

Broadly, a public involvement *activity* is a discrete action designed to support the plan and facilitate communication between the agency and the public. There are several public information and public relations activities that typically feed-information forward and that, by design, do not facilitate two-way communication, which requires a feedback loop. For example, whereas the Access for All Committee provides a forum for dynamic two-way communication between the TPB and a defined constituency, the same cannot be said for the *The Region*, which serves as the TPB annual report and is intended to provide general information to a broad audience.

Recommendations for specific activities appear in Section 4, which addresses communication and messaging, and in Section 5, which discusses participation and constituencies. Program evaluation is addressed in Section 6.

Recommendations

1. The current TPB policy is a mix of public involvement, public information and public relations activities. The public involvement plan should note the distinctions between these elements and discuss the goals and expected outcomes of each.
2. The TPB should identify specific opportunities for coordinating and collaborating with member jurisdictions to set the direction for public involvement across the region. Once the TPB adopts the public involvement policy, it should engage in a comprehensive consultation process that includes the public involvement, planning and public

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

information staff from the TPB's member jurisdictions to develop its public involvement plan. The process should also include the media and the public information staff of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), as well as others in the agency who provide a public interface for the TPB and MWCOG. A collaborative approach to planning for public involvement has many benefits, including the opportunity to achieve the following:

- Complete what is currently an incomplete loop between local project decision making and regional planning
 - Establish and strengthen interagency and cross-jurisdictional relationships
 - Clarify roles
 - Identify and create joint activities
 - Leverage resources
 - Transfer knowledge
 - Coordinate activities
3. The TPB should convene an online public discussion, such as a Webinar, with panels of public involvement practitioners—inside and outside the region—to improve public involvement in the TPB's decision-making process. The Webinar should include a broad cross section of individuals who can share their thoughts and ideas on public involvement with each other and with the TPB. The participants should also discuss specific topics drawn from the TPB's newly adopted public involvement policy and its draft public involvement plan.

To maximize participation, the discussion should occur over the course of several days, including a Saturday and evenings. The goal is to obtain thoughts and ideas on how the TPB should implement the plan. Asking for input is a first, significant step toward more effective public involvement. The principle is that if people help define the plan, they will be more likely to participate in the regional transportation decision-making process.

Because this would be a Web-based discussion, participants could select the topics that are personally of interest to them and participate at their convenience.

A revolving panel of public involvement practitioners should be available to discuss the main aspects of the draft public involvement policy and plan with each other and with several hundred participants. Among the topics to discuss are the following:

- Defining the role of the TPB in public involvement
- Identifying and involving the public, including those individuals hardest to reach
- Providing information to the public
- Creating effective public involvement opportunities during the preparation of a financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for the Washington, D.C., metropolitan region and other public processes across the region

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

Regardless of the strategy, it is critical that a broad cross section of people be involved to help define the plan. A result of the discussion could be a narrowing of who is involved—the priorities in the plan may render some constituents a lesser priority, or familiarity with the plan may allow people to opt out of further involvement—but there should be a degree of transparency in how the TPB would make such a decision. For an example of a public involvement plan outline, refer to Appendix D.

Public Involvement Program

The TPB public involvement *program* represents the internal capacity and resources that are available for implementing the public involvement plan. The program grows and changes based on the specific levels of public involvement that the agency needs in

The TPB should use the development of the public involvement program as a strategy to increase knowledge of its regional planning efforts, as well as to build participation in its activities. – Evaluators

order to support its overall functions and priorities. The program size will often vary by budget and by the type of staff resources available. This evaluation concludes that the TPB faces a couple of fundamental challenges in the area of public involvement. Because the TPB cannot allocate unlimited resources to its public involvement program, the program's effectiveness and impact should be the important benchmarks. Beyond helping to establish a baseline budget, the achievement of benchmarks should have a direct connection to the level of financial support for the program. For example, suppose the TPB decides to create a public information publication in a given year. A decision-making process should define why the agency chose to create one publication over another and should determine, once it is disseminated, whether the agency made the best choice. Making that determination would require established evaluation criteria, objectives, milestones and guideposts. There is no evidence that these now exist.

The overall MPO functions should guide public involvement. Public involvement should reflect the coordination and facilitation role the MPO plays in the region. – Evaluators

The research did not reveal an emerging consensus for the TPB to change its core functions. Ultimately, this evaluation offers recommendations about how the TPB can more clearly define and carry out its job under its current structure.

Although it is true that the TPB facilitates communication among its member jurisdictions, it must also create specific transportation planning and programming documents, which have very specific and distinct purposes. Public involvement activities related to the TIP should be closely coordinated with state and local jurisdictions and regional entities in order to reach the subset of the public that is affected by specific projects. In fact, the TPB's TIP is largely a compilation of transportation projects on which the public has been consulted to varying degrees at the local and regional level. In this regard, projects are “recycled” in the public deliberative process.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

The scope, scale and process for developing the CLRP, which focuses on the Washington, D.C., region, are visionary, and have a multiyear horizon. It should address the information and involvement needs of the broad public, which is often *uninformed about or uninvolved in* regional transportation planning. Those who are affected by specific projects are typically *more involved in and educated about* public decision making. This is in contrast to the development of the air-quality conformity determination, which is a narrowly focused, technical, information-rich process that appeals to a constituency that is, or that needs to be, *quite informed*. These distinctions require the use of different strategies to promote effective public involvement.

Public Involvement Activities

Almost without exception, the stakeholders interviewed were aware of the TPB's core public involvement activities:

- Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study
- Community Leadership Institute
- Citizen Advisory Committee
- Access for All Committee
- TPB Web site
- TPB publications

The stakeholders also offered several ideas on how to improve these public involvement activities. In general, interviewees described many strengths of, and recent improvements to, the TPB public involvement activities. At the same time, however, the stakeholders described significant shortcomings. Upon close examination, these comments suggest that some of the shortcomings and unmet expectations are inevitable and largely unavoidable given the agency's mandate to serve as a *coordinating*—as opposed to a *decision-making*—body.

The current TPB public involvement policy provides an adequate framework within which the TPB could produce a comprehensive public involvement plan. However, the current activities do not amount to a comprehensive outcome-based plan explicitly directed toward one or more specific constituencies, and they appear unconnected and unfocused to many stakeholders.

If the TPB hopes to create a public involvement program that addresses the needs of both specific constituencies and itself, it is critical that priorities and milestones to assess progress and impact be established. The same is true of public involvement, public information and public relations activities.

SECTION 4: COMMUNICATION AND MESSAGING

As stated above, effective public involvement creates forums for two-way communication between an agency and its constituents. There are three aspects to this communication: (1) message, (2) method and (3) who is involved in the communication.

Its mission and goals are the most basic message for the TPB to communicate. Based on the interviews, the TPB's stakeholders are familiar with the mission and role of the agency. The interviewees indicated that all the necessary information about TPB's mission and role is available to the public, but that it is only accessible if the public seeks out this information.

Some interviewees believe that in addition to communicating its mission and goals, the TPB could do a better job of engaging and educating the public about large infrastructure projects with significant regional impact. Most interview participants understood that local and state jurisdictions typically lead public involvement in projects, but with large infrastructure projects some redundancy could help put projects into a regional context.

The interviewees did not report a similar level of awareness about the mission and goals of the TPB public involvement program. The TPB could do a much better job of developing and communicating to the public specific and measurable goals for public involvement.

Public Comments

Public comments—feedback—are most effective when they are part of an overall public involvement or communication process. Participant satisfaction with public involvement is an important indicator that the process is working effectively. Participants' satisfaction often comes from feeling that their participation is worthwhile and that their input is considered, or at least that regional problems they view as important are moving toward solutions. Public feedback is the critical ingredient for informed management of public involvement initiatives and, increasingly, the means by which agencies build constituencies and foster understanding, agreement and trust on the part of the public.



Interview participants offered varied views on the value of the public comment process, with 30 percent of interviewees commenting that the public comment process is somewhat effective and 30 percent rating it less than somewhat effective. Most stakeholders noted that public comments are not effectively linked to decision making and that public comments do not reflect the opinions of the region, but rather special interests or “inside-the-Beltway types” who tend to dominate the comment process.

Interview participants report that public comments at the regional level often do not play a

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

role in influencing project changes or improvements at the local level. That observation is not surprising given that decision making on projects occurs at the state and local level and, in general, people have a greater interest in projects than in transportation plans. However, participants did report that they understood that local and state jurisdictions typically lead public involvement in projects. Given that knowledge, it is not entirely clear why the expectations and realities of the decision-making process are not more closely aligned. Perhaps, some stakeholders suggested, the TPB should focus communications efforts on how the public can have an impact and explain what the public can do at all levels of decision making.

Throughout the stakeholder assessment, some of the interviewees did not express a high level of satisfaction with their personal role in the process or that of the broader public. Although everyone is committed to the goal of regional transportation planning, many stakeholders reported that member jurisdictions are primarily involved to protect their interests and to watch out for what others may do to threaten their projects or interests.

Information Sharing

The stakeholders had a good impression of the publications insofar as they served the TPB's technical constituents. They were generally less impressed by the range of publications that addressed the public's need for education.

A good portion of those who had an opinion found the TPB Web site a useful tool for their personal purposes, but had doubts that it was a useful resource for the public. Thirty-three percent had no opinion on the Web site. A complaint often cited by those who did offer an opinion is that the Web site is difficult to navigate and, surprisingly, contains too much information. The "too much information" comment may be a perception based on the architecture and navigation of the site.

Recommendations

1. The TPB could broaden its outreach efforts by using the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study as a primary outreach tool to engage and educate the public about regional transportation issues in order to strengthen the link between public input and decision making. The Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study is an accessible vehicle for the public to discuss region-wide priorities that are not represented in the CLRP priority selection. Producing a list of region-wide priorities before policy makers decide what the priorities are for the CLRP and TIP provides an opportunity for the public to participate in a meaningful way.
2. The TPB should create an e-newsletter to serve internal and external audiences and distribute it to interested citizens, the news media, public officials, legislators, agency staff, national transportation groups, environmental groups, business groups and libraries. In order to better serve external audiences, the content should be short, with pictures and color, and should solicit comments and advertise the public calendar of transportation planning events around the region. The e-newsletter should contain links

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

that direct the viewer back to pertinent information on the TPB Web site as well as the sites of other regional partners.

3. The TPB should assess program priorities and develop a list of key messages that will resonate with the public. After it establishes these messages, they can be incorporated into all external presentations and publications.
4. The TPB should increase the use of public opinion polls and online surveys to assess community perceptions and preferences about regional transportation issues and projects. The TPB can conduct a public opinion poll to identify transportation programs of greatest interest to voters and residents and to explore attitudes related to transportation and land use.
5. Before asking for public comments, the TPB should clarify how the input will be used. After a comment is provided, the TPB should send a response by mail or e-mail that acknowledges that the comment was received.
6. A growing segment of the population in the Washington region—across socioeconomic levels and geographic areas—owns or has access to a computer with an Internet connection. In Fairfax County, that figure is 80 percent. The TPB should explore alternative formats for public workshops and public forums that allow people to access information from an alternate location or on an alternate date if they are not able to attend meetings in person. For example, the TPB can provide a Webcast, a Web-based seminar or podcast access when a large number of comments are sought. On the Web, participants view the presentation through their Web browser and, depending on the technology used, can have the ability to give real-time feedback. A podcast is a prerecorded audio program that is posted to a Web site and made available for download so people can listen to it on a personal computer or mobile device. Perhaps the TPB should devote a year to thoroughly exploring how to use cyberspace, virtual meetings and technology to support its public involvement efforts.
7. The TPB has taken steps to improve the Web site; however, additional work will add a great deal to the overall outreach program. The content should be updated and simplified to appeal to the public. For example, the look and feel of TPB's *The Region* and *A Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region* should be used as guides for bold imagery and the presentation of a simplified story.
8. The Web site should be redesigned to provide an improved, more intuitive navigational structure for the efficient location of information and documents and to provide enhanced user interaction.
9. The public comment function should provide a more interesting, easy and inviting way for the public to provide comments, such as utilizing a structured comment tool or it could be converted to include a polling or survey tool.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

10. The TPB should focus resources on developing and driving a strong message platform and communication templates that more effectively convey the TPB mission to the public.
11. Before the public can adequately offer solutions, it needs to fully understand a particular problem and possible trade-offs. The TPB should ensure that its education materials are made available in time to support the solicitation of specific and fully informed comments that support key milestones in the decision-making process.
12. One strategy noticeably absent from the documentation of the TPB toolbox available to the evaluation team is a media relations effort to support messaging and to capture the public's attention. As it develops and hones its messages, the TPB should convene regular media forums to build interest in and knowledge of transportation issues; these forums should include public information and public involvement staff from the member jurisdictions.
13. TPB should increase its use of print media, public service announcements and radio and television (county cable channels). Using media to report more regularly on progress and key outstanding issues during the Regional Transportation Plan process will help focus public attention on the process and the plan. The specific recommendation is for the TPB to develop a plan to increase media outreach in order to reach a wider cross section of the public.

SECTION 5: PARTICIPATION AND CONSTITUENCIES

Stakeholders expressed both satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the diversity of participants involved in the planning process. Some stakeholders felt that the TPB was doing the best job it could,

Types of Constituencies



considering that most people are not interested in transportation planning issues. At the

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

same time, the “usual suspects” are overrepresented in the public process and, perhaps more significantly, do not necessarily represent the broader public. Some stakeholders said that the planning process works better if participants who are knowledgeable in transportation planning are the only ones who participate. They believe that the public does not fully understand the constraints and consequences and, therefore, should not involve itself in decision making. However, many other stakeholders stated that the process would benefit from involvement by and input from a more diverse group of participants that represent the region as a whole. Some of the groups that were mentioned as not currently participating include people with low incomes, communities of color, students, non-transportation interests, businesspersons, transit users and the public at large. The sentiment by stakeholders that some stakeholders are under-represented seems to contradict their stated satisfaction with and understanding of the AFA Committee, which does exist to include under-represented groups in the TPB advisory process.

One notable conclusion that was gleaned from the comments is the recognition that the TPB has multiple constituencies and a public involvement program that does not always meet the specific needs of those constituencies. The participants did not suggest that there are conscious decisions by the TPB to exclude anyone from involvement, but rather a failure to recognize that the various constituencies have different information needs and opportunities for involvement. For example, the experts need momentum and action, whereas the uninformed need more information and opportunities for leadership. However, the comments suggest that the issue is less about whether the “experts” or “usual suspects” are involved and more about the absence of those who know little or nothing about the TPB, regional transportation issues or the policy and funding process.

It is important to mention that the TPB’s public—or, more appropriately, constituency—is not restricted to what is traditionally considered the public. The “public” also involves the TPB’s member jurisdictions. Key constituent groups include generic categories such as the following:

- Residential or neighborhood interests
- Business and commercial associations
- Community interests
- Taxpayer interests
- Consumer interests
- Environmental interests
- Special-interest organizations
- Ethnic and cultural groups
- Groups with special accessibility requirements
- Elected and appointed officials
- Planning and regulatory agencies
- Media and public information coordinators

Regardless of what the TPB does, people ultimately choose for themselves whether to participate in public deliberative and decision-making processes. Generally, people will

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

choose to participate in a public consultation process if they believe that their views or interests are not already adequately represented and that their impact could be significant. It is important to communicate in outreach efforts whether this is true for a particular group. It may not be feasible to find someone who can represent certain constituencies, such as a business group or particular ethnic group. Nonetheless, constituent groups ultimately choosing not to participate must not be forgotten. The role of public information is important for these constituents.

Citizens Advisory Committee

Opinions of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) were not overwhelmingly supportive. An underlying theme of the comments was given voice by one stakeholder: “The CAC represents the ultimate insiders’ game, made up of technical experts, that serves as a citizen’s alternative to the TPB.” However, a few other comments acknowledged that the committee has been improving and that its role could be strengthened.

Members of the CAC, which ostensibly is a symbolic representation of the larger community, do not profess to and are not required to represent and be accountable to any specific constituency. For the most part, they self-select to serve; a TPB member recommends someone for membership on the committee or the committee perpetuates its membership. A CAC member does serve at the pleasure of his or her appointing authority but there are no term limits. A specific group or constituency does not anoint a representative for CAC membership. That is not necessarily a problem and is consistent with the charter for the CAC. Nonetheless, there is an opportunity for broader representation on the CAC. The problem is that no clear agreement exists among those interviewed, including the TPB staff, as to who else the TPB is supposed to involve or what criteria should be used in making a selection or recommendation. More important is where would they find such candidates.

Access for All Committee

The report card for the Access for All Committee (AFA) was well above passing. People indicated that the committee does represent the community differently than the CAC does. The Access for All Committee members tend to represent specific constituencies and have a level of accountability that members of the CAC do not have. A shortcoming mentioned by more than one person was that AFA's focus on inside-the-Beltway transit services precludes identification and discussion of "suburban" issues. Several people indicated a preference for advocacy on the details of regional transportation service but not necessarily regional transportation planning. Unfortunately, noted others, the advocacy is limited to one mode of transportation, and even then not to transit services throughout the region, which is another way of describing the urban-versus-suburban concern.

Community Leadership Institute

Recently, the TPB created a Community Leadership Institute (CLI) as a resource for local governments to build the leadership capacity of a select group of people. Overall, comments were very favorable regarding the CLI and its role in helping some people understand the regional transportation problem and the trade-offs in pursuing specific solutions. Many participants noted that the CLI is still a new tool and should be monitored to ensure its continued success. The TPB should more aggressively form partnerships to help cultivate those who, as the selection criteria for CLI participation require, are "recognized as forces for change."



Recommendations

1. The TPB should establish more specific selection criteria for who will serve on the CAC and AFA and different process for making the selections.
2. Those who serve should have term limits. If term limits are enacted, the terms should be staggered to ensure some continuity.
3. The TPB should design a mechanism to recruit dedicated people who are accountable to the public. A simple approach would be for the committee as a whole to first define the primary constituencies that should be represented and the type of person, in terms of desirable skills and/or knowledge, who can contribute his or her knowledge and perspective. Annually, a solicitation of applications (nominations or self-selection) should be issued. People should provide basic personal information about themselves and whom they represent or to whom they are willing to reach out. Staff and representatives of the committee can make the selections or provide a slate of recommendations to the committee or board. Upon appointment, all members should agree to: Make an honest effort to represent the views and concerns of their stakeholder groups in addition to their own personal views and

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

- concerns Provide timely comment and response to technical materials and information distributed, informed by input from their constituencies
- Distribute information, concepts and information on public meetings to neighbors, stakeholders and constituents to ensure open, inclusive and representative processes and products.
4. The scope of the CAC should be expanded to consistently engage the public. Currently, it does not have the capacity, communication structure or authority. The committee members more or less engage with themselves. If CAC members represent constituencies, they should share with the agency responsibility to ensure participation of those constituencies.
 5. Partnerships should be built with key community organizations and leaders and public agencies with no direct role in public infrastructure in order to involve groups that are traditionally uninvolved or underrepresented.
 6. Partner organizations, too, have specific needs for information and support to assist in the overall outreach effort to increase participation in the transportation planning process. Project partnerships are an effective strategy to help identify and build constituencies for planning projects.
 7. The partners, with support from the TPB public involvement team and financial support from the agency, will help with outreach and the education of their constituencies. Partners often include community-based organizations (CBOs), public agencies, schools, communities of faith, homeowner and civic associations, municipalities, businesses, local cable television and other media outlets.
 8. One response to the comments regarding the lack of TPB public interface in the outer Beltway communities would be for the TPB to convene more frequent regional transportation (or “mobility scenario”) forums at which stakeholders, decision-makers and the public could build their capacity to provide more informed comment at key milestones of the entire transportation decision-making process, including the TPB’s. As they are currently organized, the TPB board meetings are not the appropriate venue to meet this need.

SECTION 6: PROGRAM EVALUATION

In evaluating the TPB public involvement efforts, many issues must be considered. Chief among them is whether the public involvement program is meeting the needs of participating stakeholders. Ideally, an effective public participation program should exist to meet the following goals:

- Involve a broad yet reasonable representation of the area residents, as well as stakeholders such as employers, businesses and public institutions, that will potentially be

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

- affected by or that have an interest in the transportation system
- Provide these constituencies with an opportunity to have a say in decisions that will affect their lives, livelihoods and missions
- Recognize and respond to stakeholders' diverse needs for information and offer the information they need to participate meaningfully
- Recognize and respond to stakeholders' different levels of involvement
- Ensure that participants' contributions will demonstrably influence final decisions
- Communicate to the various publics regarding how their input was or was not used in the final decision.

Strategically, a genuine and effective public involvement program can lead to a number of useful outcomes, not the least of which are policies that have broad support and have the best likelihood of being implemented. Effective evaluation requires planning. Effective planning requires strategic analysis of how to invest resources to promote meaningful communication between the agency and the public.

How and What to Evaluate

It is relatively easy to measure activities in quantitative terms by documenting their recurrence, the number of people who participated or the number of comments that were received. Although this data is useful, a more effective measure of an agency's public involvement program is to evaluate outcomes, effectiveness and impact. Outcome-oriented evaluation of public involvement and participatory decision-making processes presents a challenge, however, because the qualitative aspects are not as easily collected and assessed.

Important qualitative factors for public involvement projects include the following:

**For evaluation purposes, the TPB should consider using surveys to gauge the effectiveness of the public involvement program. The survey could be done via the Web site using specific questions, such as:
How did you hear about the public involvement opportunity?
How would you rate the level and quality of information provided? – Evaluators**

- Transparency of, access to, and satisfaction with discrete public involvement activities and the overall public involvement program
- Effectiveness of communication and messaging with community leaders, institutional constituents and the general public
- Coordination with other public participation activities in the region
- Clarity with various stakeholders about the goals of the public involvement program
- The level of capacity among stakeholders to participate meaningfully in a public participation process.

This evaluation is limited because we are unaware of any qualitative measures against which to assess the implementation of the TPB's policy. At this point, it is unfair to measure the TPB's public involvement activities against benchmarks that we might impose after the fact. From this point forward, however, the TPB should establish benchmarks up front to make it easier to determine its success.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

An evaluation conducted after the fact is a summative model. A summative approach would be most effective if before the implementation of a public involvement plan the TPB were to determine what a successful public involvement program should include and accomplish. These metrics could then be used to evaluate the agency's efforts after the plan's implementation. This approach focuses on the past and lends itself to a pass/fail evaluation. This approach is not particularly useful in instances in which no outcome measures are in place before the evaluation. An after-the-fact evaluation is not perfect, but if done by a neutral evaluator it can introduce a fresh perspective on how things might be done in the *future*. This and a similarly framed evaluation in 1998 of the TPB's public involvement activities are examples of that approach.

Another approach to evaluation—which the evaluation team believes is a preferable model—is a real-time, iterative evaluation. This model involves self-evaluation that incorporates the feedback of stakeholders who are involved in the public involvement activities as they occur. The goal is for the program to achieve specific measurable outcomes. It is a collaborative, continuous approach—not undertaken after the fact. More than anything, the approach focuses on *current* activities. This collaborative approach is used to learn, plan and adjust strategies to do more of what works and less of what does not work. It is not necessary to wait until next year to do better. The agency is more likely to succeed if it is continuing to adjust and improve.

Recommendations

1. This evaluation has revealed that the TPB *cannot meet everyone's expectations* regarding the scale and scope of public involvement. Thus, the TPB must do a better job of defining and prioritizing key constituencies and must then create public involvement programs that effectively reach those constituencies. The targets might change from year to year, depending on the planning cycle and specific projects. Thus, an effective program must be relevant to the decision-making process and adaptable to the dynamic political and policy landscape.
2. The TPB should consider the following when evaluating its public involvement performance:
 - Have the Citizens Advisory Committee, Access for All Committee, and Community Leadership Institute participants help with the evaluation design.
 - Identify and target one or more constituencies that are stakeholders in the public decision-making process on which to focus public involvement activities.
 - Determine what the agency is asking the constituencies to do, how they should be involved, which decision(s) they are to inform and what information they are to process and understand.
 - Select a series of public involvement *activities* to create a public involvement *program* tailored to meet the needs of specific constituencies.
 - As they are identified, consult with stakeholders about how they would view success (or failure) if they were involved in the public process.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

- With stakeholders, establish benchmarks that help define the effectiveness of the public involvement activities. It is easy to find things to count; consider “if we were successful, then we would read or hear...”
- Decide on performance measures and standards for each outcome. For example, to determine the effectiveness of a media strategy, quantifying the number of stories or column inches provides some information, but determining the depth of coverage (e.g., topics, assumptions, accuracy, diversity of sources) is closer to an outcome.
- Develop indicators for each performance measure or standard. For example, the sources cited in a media story were representative of the region.
- Determine how to gather the necessary information, such as observations, interviews, surveys, comments, and document analyses. For example, engage a media clipping service to collect all articles in regional news outlets that relate to the Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Collect information continuously and from a variety of sources.
- Analyze the collected information and compare it with goals, indicators and benchmarks to determine whether expectations have been met.
- Disseminate findings to internal and external audiences.

Experiences of MPOs with Evaluation

MPOs agree that it is important to evaluate public involvement efforts. However, a significant open question for some MPOs is what are the best performance measures for evaluating public participation? Budgets, resources, numbers of meetings and attendees may not adequately or accurately reflect the value or success of public participation efforts. North Central Texas Council of Governments noted that low public turnout at meetings might indicate that the MPO has been successful at educating the public, addressing its needs and building trust. Conversely, a large turnout could mean that the MPO has not done enough work with local communities to address concerns.

All the MPOs surveyed conduct some form of evaluation of their public involvement activities. Informal self-evaluations often include answering such questions as

- How did a specific location or room setup serve us?
- Whom did we reach?
- Did the public understand what we presented?
- How effective were various information formats and communication tools?
- What was the success of specific strategies in attracting the public and associated comments?
- What level of public input was received for various planning products?
- Was the public satisfied with the process and the outcome?
- Was public input considered by decision makers, and what changes were made because of public comments?
- How were public concerns addressed?
- Should any new strategies or adjustments be considered for public involvement?

Evaluations that are more formal have involved surveying attendees of meetings and events to determine how to make those activities more engaging and meaningful for the average citizen. Tracking statistics—such as the number of newspaper articles written, the number of comments received, the number of hits on Web sites, the number of people on the mailing list, the number of presentations given, and the number of participants and their relevant demographic and geographic characteristics—have also proved valuable for MPOs to compare over time.

For many MPOs, evaluations are usually conducted at least annually. With the exception of the Boston Region MPO, where evaluations are conducted by the MPO's Public Participation Committee, evaluation is conducted by MPO staff. The matrix in Appendix E details how the MPOs surveyed for this peer review conduct evaluations of their public involvement programs and how they use the information from those evaluations.

SECTION 7: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

This section reiterates some key recommendations that were discussed above. The recommendations are abbreviated to preserve space. Additional details and the complete list are in the sections above.

General Recommendations

As it develops and implements its new public involvement policy, the TPB should engage in a series of strategic discussions with staff and current TPB leadership about the following:

- Aligning expectations for public involvement with the actual decision-making process. Consider: What constitutes effective public involvement?
- Identifying core constituents of the TPB and what they need to know about transportation decision making and policy to effectively impact the decision-making process. Consider: How can these constituencies be incorporated into common and periodic tasks?
- Tailoring outreach and education strategies to involve these constituencies. Consider: What information do they need to participate meaningfully?
- Determining how to assess progress, given the specificity of targets and strategies. Consider: What does successful public involvement look like, and how can that success be measured?
- Allocating and leveraging resources to achieve success.

Stakeholder Impressions

1. The TPB should make deliberate and strategic decisions about which activities to implement. It should base these decisions on the degree to which the activities require public input and whether that input needs to come from a specific constituency.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

2. The TPB should develop a goal- and outcome-focused public involvement plan that includes a series of clearly interrelated activities.
3. In the same light, the TPB should develop a strategic planning process that determines which activities will occur each year, and the TPB should provide adequate resources to get the job done. Following are some considerations for the TPB:
 - Define a specific subset(s) of the public that the TPB should target for presentations, public forums and workshops. Is the subset the same for each venue?
 - Establish specific outreach targets each year, including criteria for establishing the targets and priorities.
 - Set a goal for the number of people to reach within the region each year and a way to effectively measure progress toward this goal.

It is important to mention that the TPB's public—or, more appropriately, constituency—is not restricted to what is traditionally considered the public. The “public” also involves the TPB's member jurisdictions.

Public Involvement Policy

1. The TPB should describe its public involvement in three separate documents that vary in purpose, length, level of detail and shelf life. They are the public involvement policy, plan and program.
2. At most, the policy statement should contain four to five sentences about its intent, its values and the *process* for its implementation. The policy should be made widely available to the public and should be periodically reviewed and updated by the TPB—for example, every four to five years.
3. The revised policy should consist of a version of the existing policy statement and, if necessary, the updated General Requirements and Criteria from the latest U.S. Department of Transportation regulations governing public involvement.
4. More importantly, the policy should discuss the process for developing a public involvement plan and how the board makes decisions about the level of programming necessary for implementing the plan.
5. The Specific Activities section of the current policy includes the type of information that is best suited to a public involvement plan. The revised policy should not include information at this level of detail.
6. Currently, the TPB bylaws codify the requirements for the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC). There is no need for the revised policy to include the CAC's mission and specific operating procedures.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

7. The TPB could improve the policy by using a more collaborative approach in developing its policy. A thorough consultation process will help create buy-in and support for the policy.
8. The TPB should develop the next iteration of its public involvement policy in close collaboration with the current membership of its Technical Advisory Committee, Citizen Advisory Committee and Access for All Committee.
9. The TPB should reach out to all past members of its citizen committees and task forces through surveys, interviews and focus groups in order to solicit ideas for improving the draft public involvement policy.
10. To the degree that it has not already done so, the TPB should follow the lead of its peers in revising its policy as applicable.

Public Involvement Plan

1. The current TPB policy is a mix of public involvement, public information and public relations activities. The public involvement plan should note the distinctions between these elements and discuss the goals and expected outcomes of each.
2. The TPB should identify specific opportunities for coordinating and collaborating with member jurisdictions to set the direction for public involvement across the region.
3. The TPB should convene an online public discussion, such as a Webinar, with panels of public involvement practitioners—inside and outside the region—to improve public involvement in the TPB's decision-making process.

Information Sharing

1. The TPB could broaden its outreach efforts by using the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study as a primary outreach tool to engage and educate the public about regional transportation issues in order to strengthen the link between public input and decision making.
2. The TPB should create an e-newsletter to serve internal and external audiences and distribute it to interested citizens, the news media, public officials, legislators, agency staff, national transportation groups, environmental groups, business groups and libraries.
3. The TPB should assess program priorities and develop a list of key messages that will resonate with the public. After it establishes these messages, they can be incorporated into all external presentations and publications.
4. The TPB should increase the use of public opinion polls and online surveys to assess community perceptions and preferences about regional transportation issues and projects.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

5. Before asking for public comments, the TPB should clarify how the input will be used. After a comment is provided, the TPB should send a response by mail or e-mail that acknowledges that the comment was received.
6. The TPB should explore alternative formats for public workshops and public forums that allow people to access information from an alternate location or on an alternate date if they are not able to attend meetings in person.
7. The TPB has taken steps to improve the Web site; however, additional work will add a great deal to the overall outreach program. The content should be updated and simplified to appeal to the public.
8. The Web site should be redesigned to provide an improved, more intuitive navigational structure for the efficient location of information and documents and to provide enhanced user interaction.
9. The public comment function should provide a more interesting, easy and inviting way for the public to provide comments, such as utilizing a structured comment tool or it could be converted to include a polling or survey tool.
10. The TPB should focus resources on developing and driving a strong message platform and communication templates that more effectively convey the TPB mission to the public.
11. The TPB should ensure that its education materials are made available in time to support the solicitation of specific comments that support key milestones in the decision-making process.
12. The TPB should convene regular media forums to build interest in and knowledge of transportation issues; these forums should include public information and public involvement staff from the member jurisdictions.
13. TPB should increase its use of print media, public service announcements and radio and television (county cable channels).

Participation and Constituencies

1. The TPB should establish selection criteria for who will serve on the CAC and AFA.
2. Those who serve should have more specific term limits. If term limits are enacted, the terms should be staggered to ensure some continuity.
3. The TPB should design a mechanism to recruit dedicated people who are accountable to the public.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

4. The scope of the CAC should be expanded to consistently engage the constituencies represented by the CAC.
5. Partnerships should be built with key community organizations and leaders and public agencies with no direct role in public infrastructure in order to involve groups that are traditionally uninvolved or underrepresented.
6. The TPB should develop project partnerships as a strategy to help identify and build constituencies for planning projects.
7. The TPB should convene more frequent regional transportation (or “mobility scenario”) forums at which stakeholders, decision makers and the public could be educated and provide input.

Program Evaluation

1. The TPB must do a better job of defining and prioritizing key constituencies and must then create public involvement programs that effectively reach those constituencies.
2. The TPB should consider specific measures when evaluating its public involvement performance.

SECTION 8: CONCLUSION

The TPB can draw upon a wealth of experience and tools in shaping its public involvement policy and program. This evaluation offers recommendations based on the input received, programs of other MPOs and the evaluators’ collective experience in developing and implementing public involvement plans and programs over the past twenty years.

The agency may wish to do more in the area of public involvement than available resources allow. However, with enough commitment and support from the TPB leadership, the public involvement program can be structured to more effectively support transportation planning efforts.

Common fears about how public involvement slows the process can be overcome with a structured, comprehensive, well-managed plan that clearly articulates what benefits are derived from the plan. Agencies often have the perception that the public does not listen to the facts or understand key planning principles. Some stakeholders are also concerned that the public’s supposed lack of understanding will result in criticism of the agency and its process if more public involvement is fostered. All of these very real concerns can be overcome.

In the rapidly growing Washington, D.C., area, the TPB can help the region plan for growth and change. In its unique role, the TPB can develop a process that is structured *and* that

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – June 1, 2007

remains flexible, with an iterative approach that can adapt itself to the dynamics of politics, people and policy.

The evaluation team's strongest recommendation is that the TPB become more strategic in its public involvement efforts by

- Focusing only on what it chooses to implement in a given time period and where it chooses to spend its resources,
- Establishing a clear road map of how the TPB's public involvement supports regional—and local—decision making
- Creating multiple opportunities for public comment and feedback.

These efforts will continue to build trust and credibility with the public while also effectively increasing the involvement of key constituencies in the process.

This report includes many recommendations. It is the evaluators' hope that the TPB will find them to be interesting and useful additions to its growing toolbox of public involvement techniques.

APPENDIX A

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN TRANSACTION 2030

The Northern Virginia Transportation Plan Northern Virginia Transportation Authority

Purpose of Public Involvement

The Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) developed a significant public outreach program for their last transportation plan, TranAction 2030, to determine travel and commuting habits and gauge public preferences for which transportation projects should receive attention and how they should be funded.

Target Groups

Demographics, culture, and lifestyles of residents were all considered in the design and implementation of the outreach plan. Specific efforts were made to engage:

- Baby-boomers
- Young adults
- Senior citizens
- Other underrepresented populations

Public Involvement Techniques

NVTA used the following techniques to engage thousands of citizens in northern Virginia in the development of 2030 plan:

- Participation at community festivals and events
- Ballot exercise
- Telephone surveys
- Online public survey
- Project website
- Project Newsletter with comment forms
- Fact sheets
- Project brochure
- Telephone hotline
- Combined open house and public hearing

These techniques are described below.

Participation at community events

In the spring and summer of 2005, NVTA set up TransAction 2030 booths at community events around the region. Staff sought to educate the public about the plan and solicit opinions on proposed transportation improvements in northern Virginia's eight major corridors. Each booth had the following materials available:

- Project newsletter
- Fact sheets for each corridor
- Large-scale map showing key projects
- Ballot sheets to vote for corridor improvements
- Project contact information
- Activity sheets for children

Ballot exercise

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

At community events and on the project website, NVT A conducted a ballot exercise where participants could vote on their top transportation projects in each of the eight transportation corridors in northern Virginia. The results were used to help prioritize projects.

Telephone survey

Between the end of April and the middle of May 2005, NVT A conducted a telephone survey of residents in Northern Virginia. The purpose was to assess:

- Commuting patterns
- Means of travel
- Transportation corridors most often used
- Priorities for improvements within corridors
- How residents decide where to live
- How much respondents would be willing to pay to have their highest priority project built

NVT A got 1263 respondents to the survey.

Online public survey

Between May and September 2005, NVT A conducted an online public survey similar to the telephone survey. Two hundred seventy-eight members of the public completed the online survey.

Project Web site

In order to provide project updates and information to those unable to attend other events, NVT A developed a TransAction 2030 website. The Web site was publicized through three press releases, the project newsletter, project business cards distributed at community events, and multiple email broadcasts. The site contained the following information:

- Project overview
- PDF and Flash versions of the project presentation
- Educational information
- Calendar of community events
- Online survey
- Corridor ballots
- Comment forms
- Project schedule

Newsletter

To reach a broad segment of the regional population, NVT A produced and distributed a project newsletter to local/regional libraries and community centers and over 3200 community representatives. The newsletter was published before community events to:

- Inform the public about TransAction 2030
- Publicized public participation opportunities and avenues

Electronic and Spanish versions of the newsletter were also available and all copies of the newsletter included a comment form to solicit additional feedback.

Fact sheets

Two types of fact sheets were created. Corridor fact sheets detailed the TransAction 2030 Plan and 2030 CLRP projects in each corridor.

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Technical fact sheets detailed travel demand modeling, multimodal corridor evaluation, and project prioritization methodologies.

Summary brochure

To foster public understanding the 2030 plan and results of the technical analysis, NVTA produced a twelve-page summary brochure that described the corresponding relationship among

- Area population
- Employment
- Housing
- Transportation

NVTA produced and distributed 15000 copies to:

- The project mailing list
- Local libraries
- Community centers
- Elected officials
- Government agencies
- Major activity centers.

INFO line

A toll-free information line was available to the public. During normal business hours citizens could:

- Leave comments
- Have questions answered
- Receive project status update

After business hours citizens could:

- Hear recorded message announcing upcoming events
- Learn about the availability of the project website
- Leave messages for the project team

Combined open house and public hearing

In December 2005, NVTA conducted a combined open house and public hearing on the 2030 plan to share the results of the study and receive additional public feedback. For the open house segment, displays and informational materials were available for participants to review. A project video provided background information and the team gave a formal presentation on the technical findings of the study. Citizens had the opportunity to speak one-on-one with project staff from participating agencies.

A formal public hearing with sign language and Spanish interpreters and a formal comment period followed the open house.

Public Involvement in the 2004 Maryland Transportation Plan
State Long-Range Transportation Plan
Maryland Department of Transportation

The following is a summary of the public involvement efforts undertaken in the development of the 2004 Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP).

Public Involvement for the MTP

The MTP is a policy plan. As such, the nature and extent of public input was different from that of project level plan. Input received through public participation activities provided important guidance for the development of the Plan. Comments were vetted internally and a summary document of questions and responses was circulated to policy makers and the public. The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) made a concerted effort to let the public know their opinions were heard and given due consideration.

Public Involvement Techniques

MDOT used six primary techniques to engage the public in the development of the plan:

- Telephone surveys
- Regional workshops
- Interactive MTP website
- Meetings with local governments
- Leadership interviews
- Comprehensive mailing list

These techniques are described below.

Telephone Survey

With support from the University of Baltimore, MDOT conducted a telephone survey of Maryland residents to gauge public opinion on important goals and objectives for the Plan to address. 1050 people participated in the survey.

Regional Workshops

Seven regional open-house style workshops were conducted throughout the state. MDOT, along with the consultant hired to manage public involvement, divided the state in to seven geographical target areas in order to maximize attendance at the workshops. Stations with visual aides were used to educate the public and allow participants to talk directly with study representatives.

Project Web site

Though the site has since been deactivated, MDOT maintain an interactive MTP website that provided project information and the opportunity for the public to provide feedback directly to the study team.

Leadership Interviews

Leadership interviews were conducted with:

- Elected official
- Business leaders
- Community representatives

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Mailing List

The Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) maintains mailing list for each of its projects in its pipeline. MDOT was able to merge these lists to develop an extensive database of over 5000 individuals and organization and use this to publicize public participation opportunities. A critical component of the mailing list is the hundreds of neighborhood associations across the state, which is included. MDOT believes that through these and other community organizations, they are able to distribute information significantly further than the 5000 entries in the database.

Meetings with Local Governments

As part of MDOT's capital program process, the Secretary of Transportation meets annually with leaders from Maryland's 22 counties and the City of Baltimore. During the development of the 2004 MTP Plan, MDOT used this opportunity to discuss the plan and get feedback from local governments.

D

R

A

F

T

Appendix B

Metropolitan Planning Organizations Budget Detail

Resources

The resources MPOs dedicate to public involvement varies greatly both in budgets and staff. The matrix below attempts to compare public involvement resources across the MPOs surveyed for this memorandum. Precise dollar amounts are difficult to quantify since at many MPO's public involvement has become an agency-wide initiative with responsibilities spread across many different departments and projects. What is listed here are specific public involvement budgets described in the MPOs' Unified Planning and Work Programs, which generally do not include the funds dedicated to specific public involvement activities for corridor or sub-regional studies, certification documents, or Environmental Justice and Title VI programs.

MPO Public Involvement Resources

MPO	Total Budget	Public Involvement Budget	Public Involvement Staffing	Notes
Atlanta Regional Commission	\$9.5 million	\$450,000 (4.7%) ¹	Agency-wide effort Consultants	1 – Transportation Public Involvement program
Boston Region MPO	\$6.8 million	\$640,000 (9.3%) ¹	Agency-wide effort No consultants	1 – Planning Process & Public Outreach
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	\$10.8 million ¹	\$1.4 million ² (12.8%)	86 person months ³	1 – Includes CATS (\$6,923,270) & NIPC (\$3,962,700) 2 – Includes CATS Public Involvement \$960,100 & NIPC Public Involvement \$432,700 3 – Includes CATS 63 person months & NIPC 22.5 person months
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	\$15.5 million	\$300,000 (2%) ¹	Agency-wide effort ² Consultants	1 – Public Participation, Information, and Visualization Techniques 2 – Dedicated staff include: Director, Office of Communications and Public Affairs and a Public Outreach Manager
Denver Regional Council of Governments	\$3 million	\$41,000 (1.3%) ¹		1 – Public Involvement in Decision Making
East-West Gateway Council of	\$21.1 million	\$368,000 (1.7%) ¹	Agency-wide effort ²	1 – Community Building program.

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Governments			Significant outreach occurs at the corridor study level.	2 – Five dedicated staff from the Community Engagement and Outreach department. Transportation Planning (14 staff) also have a role in project level public involvement
Miami-Dade MPO	\$7.2 million	\$710,000 (10%) ¹	2 staff ²	1 – Public Information Program (\$432,000) & Citizen & Private Sector Involvement (\$278,744) programs 2 – Public Involvement Manager & Public Involvement Officer
North Central Texas Council of Governments	\$15.6 million	\$980,000 (6.3%) ¹	6 staff ² No external consultants for typical outreach (media events, community events, legislative outreach) Occasionally consultants used for specific projects	1 – Public Involvement, State of the Region, & Legislative Support 2 – Currently includes: • Public Involvement Coordinator (Lead) • Urban Planner • 2 Public Outreach Specialists • Administrative Assistant • Senior Program Manager
Puget Sound Regional Council	\$24.5 million	\$1.1 million ¹	Agency-wide effort ² Consultants hired for project outreach	1 – Government Relations and Communications 2 – One dedicated staff - Public Involvement Coordinator.
Southern California Association of Governments	\$44.8 million	\$1.5 million (3.4%) ¹	Agency-wide effort	1 – Public Information & Involvement

SAFETEA-LU

SAFETEA-LU includes additional requirements for public involvement including:

- Developing the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties
- Including procedures for employing visualization techniques
- Making public information available electronically in accessible formats and means

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

According to AMPO, many MPOs around the country have been waiting for the final rule on Statewide and Metropolitan Planning to clarify public participation requirements before finalizing any changes to their specific plans. None of the MPOs contacted for this peer evaluation were considering significant changes to their Public Participation Plans. Changes being considered include:

- Better documentation of public involvement activities
- Codifying the informal outreach activities in which MPOs currently engage.
- Increasing coordination with a broader range of government agencies in areas such as land use, wildlife management, environmental mitigation, and historical preservation. This could include conducting joint outreach meetings.
- Increased use of visualization tools and technologies to help the public better understand what projects will look like and what their potential impacts might be.

The matrix below summarizes the changes MPOs have made or are considering based on SAFETEA-LU and any challenges they have encountered.

MPO	Changes based on SAFETEA-LU	Challenges
Atlanta Regional Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completely rewriting PPP • Major changes are conceptual • Now seen as a participation plan for everyone 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requirements for consultation • Training for visualization
Boston Region MPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New, more interactive website • Linking to other newsletters • Finding new outlets for coordination • More emphasis on presenting information graphically – GIS, interactive mapping 	None
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New CMAP Public Participation Plan being developed that will incorporate SAFETEA-LU requirements 	None
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Currently updated PPP. Will include more language on visualization, but no major changes 	None
Denver Regional Council of Governments	TBD	TBD
East-West Gateway Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More coordination with other agencies in land use, wildlife management, environmental mitigation, historical preservation • Developing a land use evaluation model to foster a discussion about the relationship between the LRP and regional development 	None

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Miami-Dade MPO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major changes 	None
North Central Texas Council of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No major changes More direct outreach about impacts in local neighborhoods Considering new technologies for 3-D visualization Moving away from a huge map with tiny lines Reviewing the types of state agencies with which the MPO can do more outreach 	None
Puget Sound Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Better documentation of what the PSRC is already doing PSRC is already practicing most of the new requirements Public Participation Plan will be more grass roots and focus on “Piggybacking” meetings with SoundTransit, DOT, and other agencies 	None
Southern California Association of Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New draft participation plan incorporates SCAG’s interpretation of the new regulations. 	None

Evaluation

There is agreement among MPOs that evaluation of public involvement efforts is important. However, a significant open question for some MPOs is what exactly the best performance measures are for evaluating public participation. Budgets, resources, numbers of meetings, and attendees may not adequately or accurately reflect the value or success of public participation efforts. NCTCOG noted that low public turnout at meetings may indicate the MPO has been successful at educating the public, addressing their needs and building trust. Conversely, a large turnout may mean the MPO has not done enough work with local communities to address their concerns.

All of the MPOs surveyed conduct some form of evaluation of their public involvement activities. Informal, self evaluations often include answering questions such as:

- How did a specific location or room setup serve us?
- Whom did we reach?
- Did the public understand what we were presenting?
- How effective were various information formats and communication tools?
- What was the success of specific strategies in attracting the public and associated comments?
- What level of public input was received for various planning products?
- Was the public satisfied with the process and the outcome?

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

- Was public input considered by decision makers and what changes were made because of public comments?
- How were public concerns addressed?
- Should any new strategies or adjustments be considered for public involvement?

More formal evaluations have involved surveying attendees of meetings and events to determine how to make them more engaging and meaningful for the average citizen. Tracking statistics such as the number of newspaper articles written, the number of comments received, hits on Web sites, the number of people on the mailing list, the number of presentations given and the number of participants as well as their relevant demographic and geographic characteristics has also proved valuable for MPOs to compare over time.

Evaluations are generally conducted at least annually, and with the exception of the Boston Region MPO, where evaluation is conducted by the MPO's Public Participation Committee, evaluation is conducted by MPO staff.

The matrix below details how the MPOs surveyed for this peer review conduct evaluations of their public involvement programs and how the information from those evaluations is used.

Appendix C Stakeholder Interview Participants

Name	Agency/Organization	TPB Role
Michael Knapp	Councilmember Montgomery County Council, Maryland	TPB Board Member: Current Chairman
Charles Graves	Washington DC Office of Planning	TPB Board Member
Nat Bottigheimer	Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA)	TPB Board Member
Wally Covington	Brentsville District Supervisor Prince William County, Virginia	TPB Board Member
Patrice Winter	Fairfax City, Virginia	TPB Board Member
Frank Jones	City of Manassas Park, VA	TPB Board Member
Dr. Edith Patterson	Commissioner District 2 Charles County Maryland	TPB Board Member
Rodney Roberts	City of Greenbelt, Maryland	TPB Board Member
Andrew Fellows	Councilmember College Park City, Maryland	TPB Board Member
Chris Zimmerman	Board of Supervisors Arlington County, Virginia	TPB Board Member (Current) and Past Chairman
Kathy Porter	Councilmember Takoma Park City, Maryland	TPB Board Member and Chairman of Human Services Trans. Coordinator Task Force
David Synder	Councilmember, Falls Church Virginia	TPB Board Member and Chairman of MOITS Subcommittee
Cathy Hudgins	Supervisor Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Virginia	TPB Board Member: Current First Vice Chair
Sandra Jackson	Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	TPB Non-Voting TPB Board Member
Peter Shapiro	J.M. Burns Academy of Leadership	Former TPB Chairman, Facilitation Consultant for Comm. Leadership Inst.

Appendix C Stakeholder Interview Participants

Name	Agency/Organization	TPB Role
Rick Rybeck	District Department of Transportation (DDOT)	TPB Technical Committee Member
Mr. Kanti Srikanth	Virginia Department of Transportation (DDOT)	TPB Technical Committee Member
Tamara Ashby	Arlington County Transportation Department, Virginia	TPB Technical Committee Member
Rick Canizales	Prince William County Trans. Department, Virginia	TPB Technical Committee Member Chairman
Emmet Tydings		TPB Citizens Advisory Committee, Current Chairman
Larry Martin		TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
Stephen Caflisch		TPB Citizens Advisory Committee
Don Edwards	Washington Regional Equity Network	TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (Former member)
Dennis Jaffe		TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (Former member)
Harry Sanders		TPB Citizens Advisory Committee (Former member)
Brenda Richardson	Women Like Us	TPB Access for All (AFA)
Dr. Bud Keith	Arlington County Virginia	TPB Access for All (AFA)
Kim Propeak	CASA of Maryland	TPB Access for All (AFA)
Bob McDonald	Virginia Department of Transportation (DDOT)	

Appendix C Stakeholder Interview Participants

Name	Agency/Organization	TPB Role
Alex Versosa	Fairfax Transportation Agency	
Debbie Burns	Federal Transit Administration	
John Bailey	Smart Growth Alliance	
Bob Grow	Greater Washington Board of Trade	
Eric Gilliland	Washington Area Bicyclists Association	
Stewart Schwartz	Coalition for Smarter Growth	
Michael Replogle	Environmental Defense (DC Office)	
Bob Chase	Northern VA Trans. Alliance President	
Carol Petzold		
Sam Zimmerman-Bergman	Reconnecting America and the Center for Transit-Oriented Development	
Robert Dorsey	City of Rockville, Maryland	
Ronald Kirby	TPB	Staff
John Swanson	TPB	Staff
Gerald Miller	TPB	Staff
Darren Smith	TPB	Staff
Wendy Klancher	TPB	Staff

Appendix D

Public Involvement Plan Example

1) EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- a) Background and description of the studies
- b) Factors affecting the public involvement plan
- c) Public involvement program objectives
- d) Key public involvement activities
- e) Public involvement outcomes and milestones

2) INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- a) Project description
- b) Study managers
- c) Study process & milestones

3) KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS

- a) Planning and implementation issues
- b) Study area
- c) Project operations and facilities
- d) Environmental impacts
- e) Costs, financing, and institutional arrangements

4) INTERESTED PUBLICS AND LEVEL OF INTEREST

- a) Constituents
- b) Governmental interests
- c) Environmental and natural resources organizations
- d) Environmental justice organizations
- e) Recreation organizations
- f) Planning/land use organizations
- g) Community/civic organizations
- h) Native American organizations
- i) Agricultural/rural interests and landowners
- j) Business/labor interests
- k) Media

5) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT APPROACH AND RATIONALE

- a) Alternatives for public involvement approaches
- b) Recommended approach and rationale
- c) Resources
- d) Evaluation

6) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT METHODS, PRODUCTS & ACTIVITIES

- a) Public involvement planning and coordination

**Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities**

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

- b) Stakeholder outreach planning and coordination
- c) Agency coordination
- d) Public meetings and briefings
- e) Information materials and issue tracking
- f) Media relations

7) SECTION 6 SCHEDULE

D

R

A

F

T

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Appendix E

MPO Approaches to Evaluation of Public Involvement

MPO	Perform Evaluation (y/n)	Frequency of Evaluation	Performed by	Methodology	Measures	Use of Evaluation
Atlanta Regional Commission	Y	At the conclusion of every RTP or TIP update	ARC staff	Participants and planners in the process are contacted for feedback and advice via <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct interviews • Group discussions • Questionnaires • Summary evaluation forms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessibility & convenience • Diversity of participants • Availability and timeliness of information • Adequacy of public notice • Effectiveness of formats and communication tools • Plan changes from public comment • Public understanding of process and information • How public concerns were addressed 	Report for ARC staff, policymakers and the public. Includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Techniques used • Effectiveness • What measures can be implemented in the future to improve the public involvement process
Boston Region MPO	Y	Ongoing	MPO Public Participation Committee	Committee uses both quantitative and qualitative measures and includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written and verbal comments • Event exit surveys of participants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of event attendance • Number of comments received • Use of the Web site • Citizen level of comfort with process, outcome, and sense of fair treatment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee recommends changes • Planning and Programming Committee votes to release draft modifications during a 45-day public review and comment period. • Recommendations are forwarded to the MPO Board • MPO acts on the recommendations.
Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning	Y	Ongoing	MPO staff	Surveys of past meeting attendees and committee/task force meetings and participants		Try to determine how to make outreach events more engaging and meaningful for average citizen
Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission	Y	Annual and following major planning efforts	DVRPC staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal process looking at what worked and what did not work for specific outreach activities 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has resulted in a shift away from traditional public meetings
Denver Regional Council of Governments	Y	Annual		Evaluate the strategies and methods for engaging the public and soliciting comments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level of public input received for various planning products • Whether or not public input was considered by decision-makers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess new strategies or adjustments to be made in the following year • Determine if changes or amendments are necessary to the Public Involvement Plan
East-West Gateway Council of Governments	Y	Annual	COG staff	EWGCOG maintains a statistical database of participants at outreach events. Follow up survey are conducted to quantify outreach.	Demographic and geographic characteristics of citizens	Staff prepares a narrative report describing methods and extend to which citizens have impacted plan and project development. Report is presented to the Board and community

Evaluation of the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board
Public Involvement Activities

FINAL REPORT – REVIEW DRAFT – April 25, 2007

Miami-Dade MPO	Y - General Outreach including: outreach events, newsletters, website, brochures, etc.	Annual	MPO staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified tools, tasks, and targets which are evaluated against performance indicators and targets Previous years' targets are recognized as minimum targets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of Community Outreach Events Information from and evaluation of outreach events Production and distribution of newsletters Citizen comments received and input into MPO database How comments were received Responses to comments PSAs produced and broadcast MPO material produced and broadcast on radio stations Timeliness of website material 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess existing and future PI activities Gauge the level of success of its public involvement outreach Ensure compliance with federal agency regulations
	Y – Studies and Required Documents	Annual or at the end of a project	MPO project managers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of how the goals set by the PIP were achieved Guided by the use of MPO Public Involvement Development Forms 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Results are documented and reviewed, and then project plans are modified accordingly
North Central Texas Council of Governments	Y	Periodic	COG staff	Informal evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did location set up serve a project or meeting? What segments of the public were reached? How many people attended each outreach event? Did people understand what was being presented? 	
Puget Sound Regional Council	Y	Periodic	PSRC staff and Consultants	Compile relevant demographic and geographic characteristics of participants in an outreach database and evaluate how the base numbers change over time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Number of presentations Topics of presentation Number of participants Number of newspaper articles Number of comments received Hits on the website Number of people asking to be added to the mailing list 	
Southern California Association of Governments	Y	Periodic	SCAG staff	Proposed under new PPP - Surveys of members, partners, stakeholders <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early on in the planning process Again later to determine the affect of the communication effort. 		Assess how effective the agency's communication strategies have been impacting public policy.