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Public Participation* Plan

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Information contained herein has been derived from Federal Regulation Code 450.316



Approved by the MPO Policy Board on January 23rd 2013

* “Participation” is used in the same spirit as “involvement.”

Glossary of Acronyms

The following transportation-related acronyms are used in this document:

ACCT	Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation
BRT	Bus Rapid Transit
CAT	Charlottesville Area Transit
CHART	Charlottesville-Albemarle Regional Transportation
DRPT	Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FY	Fiscal Year (refers to the state fiscal year July 1 - June 30)
JAUNT	Regional transit service provider to Charlottesville City, and Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, Nelson, and Buckingham Counties
LRP	Long Range Plan. Refers to the 20 year transportation plan (also referred to as UnJAM)
LRT	Light Rail Transit
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PL	FHWA Planning Funding (used by MPO)
RideShare	Free Carpool matching service for Charlottesville City, and Albemarle, Fluvanna, Louisa, Nelson, and Greene Counties
RTA	Regional Transit Authority
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (legislation governing the metropolitan planning process)
SPR	FHWA State Planning and Research Funding (used by VDOT to support MPO)
TDP	Transit Development Plan (for CTS and JAUNT)
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TJPDC	Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission
TMPD	VDOT Transportation and Mobility Planning Division
UPWP	Unified Planning and Work Program (also referred to as Work Program)
UnJAM Plan	United Jefferson Area Mobility Plan (combines MPO & Rural Long Range Plan, also referred to as LRP)
UTS	University Transit Service
UVA	University of Virginia
SOV	Single Occupant Vehicle
VDOT	Virginia Department of Transportation
Work Program	Unified Planning and Work Program (also referred to as UPWP)

I. Introduction

The *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)* of 1991 changed how Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) conduct the transportation planning process, requiring enhanced public involvement. TEA-21 reiterated and strengthened requirements for stakeholder and public involvement in 1998. In 2005, *Safe Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* reinforced TEA-21 and particularly focused on ensuring environmental justice and the involvement of minority and low-income citizens in the planning process. In October 2012 *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)* continued the trend developed by SAFETEA-LU. This document reflects the requirements of the present transportation act, contained in Federal Regulation Code 450.316. This document outlines the MPO's base Public Participation Requirements. MPO Staff make every effort to go above and beyond these requirements.

II. Policy Statement

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Metropolitan Planning Organization (CA-MPO) is the regional forum for comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative transportation planning in the urban study area and is committed to engaging all area citizens in its planning and programming activities. It is the policy of the CA-MPO to facilitate public information, access and involvement under the Three-C Agreement (for comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative planning) through which the interests of both public and private stakeholders are duly considered. To the extent possible by law and budget constraints, the policy and technical processes will be made inclusive of and accessible to the public as well as other regional stakeholders.

III. Purpose

The Public Participation Plan documents the process and activities through which the MPO carries out the following practices for effective participation, communication and consultation with all parties interested in the transportation planning process. This process includes, but is not limited to:

- Adherence to state and federal regulations regarding public notices and public hearings
- Complete access to information barring legal or fiduciary restraints
- Public input on key decisions
- Development of innovative public involvement strategies.

This plan also describes standard procedures for the development, adoption and amendment of major planning documents including the Long Range Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Unified Planning and Work Program (UPWP) and other major transportation studies. Additionally, this PPP specifies the following:

- MPO Plans and projects will include a public involvement component
- Legal requirements for public involvement will be met or exceeded by the CA-MPO
- All official meetings of the CA-MPO will include opportunities for public comment at the beginning and end of the meeting.
- A public comment period of 45 calendar days will be provided prior to the adoption of this public involvement process and/or any significant amendment to the process. The Public Participation Plan will be reviewed every three years and revised or amended as needed, in consultation with the public.

IV. Ongoing Activities

Enews, a quarterly publication of the Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, informs the public about the PDC and MPO's activities. The mailing list for *Enews* includes a broad cross-section of civic organizations, business leaders, presses members, leaders in education, public transit and members of the community who request to receive the newsletter.

TJPDC *News Briefs*, a bimonthly email notification that informs various stakeholders of the efforts and accomplishments for the TJPDC and the Charlottesville MPO. The mailing list for *News Briefs* includes a broad cross-section of civic organizations, business leaders, presses members, leaders in education, public transit and members of the community who request to receive the newsletter.

The TJPDC and CA-MPO staff is available on a full-time basis to respond to direct questions and inquiries from citizens concerning transportation plans, programs and the transportation planning process for the region. Staff will make presentations at the request of local civic organizations and routinely provides information to the local print and electronic media.

TJPDC maintains an extensive library of transportation, environmental, demographic, community planning and GIS materials that is available for use by the public during the regular workday.

TJPDC and the MPO maintain relationships with local academic institutions, making presentations to college and graduate level classes and often hosting an undergraduate or graduate intern on staff. The CA-MPO regularly utilizes the assistance of the CHART Citizens Advisory Committee in its transportation planning activities. CHART is composed of City, County and MPO-appointed community members with interest and expertise in planning-related topics.

According to the provisions of SAFETEA-LU, the TJPDC and the CA-MPO maintain a list of "interested parties" and "stakeholder organizations." TJPDC staff will include to the extent practicable, but is not limited to: private citizens, public agencies, providers of freight services, private providers of transportation, representatives of public transportation, employee representatives of uses of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities and representatives of the disabled. All citizens/groups requesting inclusion on the MPO mailing and e-mail list will be added.

MPO staff will be accessible to the public through a variety of means (e-mail, phone, fax, or in person).

V. Procedures

1. MPO Policy Board and Committee Meetings

- All MPO Policy Board and Committee meeting agendas will include meeting guidelines establishing time limits and procedures for public interaction with the Policy Board and Committees.
- As far as technically possible, access to MPO Policy Board and Committee members via email will be facilitated.

- All meetings of the Policy Board, Technical Committee and other MPO committees will be open to the public and will be held in locations accessible to persons with handicaps and on public transit lines.
- Arrangements will be made for interpreters for hearing impaired individuals, and every effort will be made to ensure provision of interpreters for non-English speaking persons, provided a request is submitted at least two days before the meeting.
- Public hearings, workshops, and forums will be scheduled at times that are accessible and convenient.

2. Public Notice for Proposed Adoption of Major Documents

- The MPO Policy Board will hold no fewer than 2 public hearings and a 30-day comment period prior to the adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan.
- The MPO Policy Board will hold at least 1 public hearing and a 30-day comment period prior to the adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program.
- The MPO Policy Board will hold at least 1 public hearing and at least a 2 week comment period prior to the adoption of:
 - The Unified Planning and Work Program
 - Other planning documents developed by the MPO requiring approval
- The MPO will advertise all public hearings at least 2 weeks prior to the date of the hearing.
- The MPO will provide notice for the proposed adoption of major documents by:
 - Publishing legal notice in the Daily Progress two weeks prior to the public hearings
 - Emailing legal notice to the MPO Stakeholder mailing list and the media two weeks prior to the public hearing
 - Posting legal notice at the TJPDC Offices and on the TJPDC website
 - Posting notices in central places of low-income and minority neighborhoods
 - DRAFT documents will be available on the TJPDC website and at the TJPDC offices two weeks prior to advertised public hearings
- Public information sessions and/or interactive workshops will be held regarding the LRTP, the TIP and other major studies affecting the region's transportation network as deemed necessary by the Policy Board, MPO staff or requests from the public.
- Summaries of all comments received and responses to these comments will be included in the TIP, LRP, and other relevant documents (e.g. meeting minutes).

3. Public Notice for Amending Major Documents†

- At least one public hearing will be held prior to amending:
 - The Long Range Transportation Plan
 - The Transportation Improvement Program
 - The Unified Planning and Work Program
 - The Title VI Plan
 - Other MPO Documents where a hearing is deemed necessary
- The MPO will provide notice for the amending of major documents by:
 - Publishing legal notice in the Daily Progress two weeks prior to the public hearings
 - Emailing legal notice to the MPO Stakeholder mailing list and the media two weeks prior to the public hearing
 - Posting legal notice at the TJPDC Offices and on the TJPDC website
 - Posting notices in central places of low-income and minority neighborhoods
- Materials documenting the proposed amendments will be made available two weeks prior for public review:
 - At the TJPDC Offices
 - On the MPO website
- Summaries of all comments received and responses to these comments will be included in the TIP, LRP, and other relevant documents (e.g. meeting minutes).

3. Public Participation in the Development of the LRP, UPWP, TIP, Plans, and Studies

During the updating process, the MPO will employ the following strategies as appropriate:

- Encourage and accept public input in a variety of ways (i.e. by mail, in person, website, phone and via e-mail)
- Include a broad segment of the population in development of programs, plans, and studies by conducting regional workshops to obtain public input on transportation and land use issues.
- Conduct focus group meetings in traditionally underserved communities to ensure the interests of these groups are incorporated into long range planning efforts.
- Meet with and identify needs of other groups with special interests in the community.
- Continually experiment with a wide variety of marketing tools and visualization techniques (within limited budgets) to describe transportation plans (including LRP and TIP) and to incorporate public participation into planning workshops.
- In developing the LRP and TIP, the MPO will consult with agencies and officials

† Minor technical, spelling, grammatical, and similar routine corrections to the LRP, TIP, and/or other TJPDC/CA-MPO documents shall not be required to be advertised per “2.Public Notice for Review and Adoption of Major Documents.” Interpretation of the term minor shall be made by the appropriate state or federal agency at the time that the correction is to be made. For TIP related “adjustments,” this is formalized in the “Unifying the System Improvement Process” (USIP) Memorandum of Agreement signed by VDOT, VDRPT and CA-MPO officials. The USIP MOA was approved on March 19, 2008. The USIP MOA shall be referred to in the interpretation of the term “minor” for TIP related adjustments.

responsible for other planning activities within the MPO that are affected by transportation or coordinate its planning process with such planning activities.

- The MPO will consider other related planning activities within the metropolitan area when developing the LRP, TIP, and other relevant plans or studies.
- The MPO will provide an additional opportunity for public comment if the final LRP, TIP or other transportation plan differs significantly from the version that was made available for comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.

4. Documentation of Public Participation

- The MPO staff will create a notebook (or database) to record public comments and records of public opinion acquired from a variety of sources.
- The review process will help MPO staff evaluate its success at meeting Environmental Justice goals and Title VI regulations.
- Comments and other input that come to the MPO will be forwarded to all members of the MPO Policy Board in a timely manner to allow adequate consideration but, no later than its next meeting.
- Copies of the approved Participation Plan shall be provided to FHWA and FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the MPO website.

5. Communications with the Public and Community Organizations[‡]

- The MPO will coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation process, as appropriate.
- The MPO will identify and communicate with populations traditionally underserved by the transportation network, such as those with disabilities and low-income persons through organizations and media outlets known to serve these populations.
- The MPO will identify locations of low income and minority communities using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or other suitable means and will provide information to seek input from these communities for the TIP and during Long Range Plan updates. Methods for communicating may include:
 1. Presenting at or sponsoring a community meeting in the targeted area and/or
 2. Seeking representatives from the community to participate in an MPO meeting focusing their concerns and/or
 3. Seeking representatives from the community and/or from service agencies familiar with the needs of these communities.
- Information regarding achievement of goals and deliverables identified in the UPWP will be provided for public review. A final report on the work programmed in the UPWP will be prepared and available for public review annually.
- Meeting materials will be made available electronically and/or distributed to those on the

[‡] The MPO Policy Board may act on an agenda item in the absence of proper notice with approval of a waiver of requirement by 75 percent vote.

MPO contact list and to the media approximately one week prior to the meeting.

- Notice will be sent to those on the MPO contact list approximately one week prior to each meeting to announce when meeting materials are electronically available.
- Arrangements will be made to accommodate individuals that require special assistance to review meeting materials and other documents and reports.

Appendix A – Committees of the MPO

The following pages include descriptions of current MPO committees:

1. MPO Policy Board
2. MPO Technical Committee
3. CHART (Charlottesville-Albemarle Regional Transportation) Citizen Advisory Committee

Once approved by a committee, committee meeting schedules and membership may be changed without amending the Public Participation Plan. Any changes will be listed on the TJPDC website and included with other committee advertisement materials.

Advisory committees can be established for major studies and issues affecting the region's transportation network. Examples of such committees past and present include the Community Mobility Committee (CMC), and the Transit Technical Committee.

City and County citizens will be represented on the CHART Committee, the MPO Policy Board (via a CHART representative), and the MPO Technical Committee (via a CHART representative).

The meeting schedule for all committee meetings will be posted on the TJPDC website, www.tjpd.org, per provisions in the Public Participation Plan. Furthermore, special meetings will be held as it becomes necessary and shall be posted in accordance with the established procedures as well.

There are public comment periods at the beginning and end of all meetings held by all three MPO Committees.

1. Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Policy Board

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

- a) Establish policy for the continuing, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process;
- b) Develop the long range transportation plan for the urban study area known as the Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transportation Plan (hereinafter referred to as the CHART Plan);
- c) Review the CHART Plan for the study area on an annual basis;
- d) Update the CHART Plan no less frequently than every five years;
- e) Recommend action by other appropriate agencies;
- f) Revise the CHART Plan study area, defined by the "cordon boundary", as required, and in conjunction with VDOT;
- g) Develop, in coordination with local governments and VDOT, socio-economic data for the regional traffic model;
- h) Develop and approve the annual Transportation Improvement Programming and after planning documents as required by the U.S. Department of Transportation Regulations, as amended;
- i) Perform or oversee other transportation reviews and evaluations; and
- j) Develop and approve the Work Program and Public Participation Plan.

Voting Members: Two Albemarle County Board of Supervisors Representatives, two Charlottesville City Council Representatives, and one VDOT Representative.

Nonvoting Members: UVA Office of the Architect, JAUNT, CAT, CHART Advisory Committee, TJPDC representative, FHWA, FTA, DRPT.

2. Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO Technical Committee

The MPO Technical Committee is composed of individuals with technical knowledge in transportation and land use matters. It will provide technical review, comment, and recommendations on transportation plans, programs, studies and other appropriate documents, and on regional transportation issues.

The Committee shall integrate land use and environmental considerations into all of its activities in order to forge a stronger link between transportation, land use and the environment. The Committee will:

- Determine the influence of current data upon the Transportation Plan in relation to previous data and projected trends
- Cooperate in the development of the procedures for the collection of traffic data and reassignment of traffic
- Work with the staffs of the TJPDC and VDOT to review, comment, recommend, and assist VDOT, participating political jurisdictions, or the TJPDC on any proposal, alternatives, and work performed on the location and design of facilities in the CHART Plan; and serve in an advisory capacity to the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Voting Members: Charlottesville Neighborhood Development Services, Charlottesville Public Works, Charlottesville Planning Commission, Albemarle County Department of Community Development, Albemarle Transportation Engineer (Department of General Services), Albemarle Planning Commission, VDOT, DRPT, CAT, JAUNT, TJPDC/RideShare, UVA Landscape Architect. Alternates for the MPO Technical Committee are selected by the Voting Members.

Nonvoting Members: FHWA, FTA, VA Dept of Aviation Senior Aviation Planner, FAA, CHART Advisory Committee

3. Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transportation Plan (CHART) Advisory Committee

The CHART Advisory Committee is composed of citizens appointed by the City, County and MPO to represent a broad range of interest in the community.

CHART's mission is to:

Develop and recommend updates to long range Charlottesville Albemarle Regional Transportation Plan (CHART) (in previous years, this document was called the Charlottesville Area Transportation Study, or CATS).

Meet frequently as needed during plan updates; meet no less than annually during interim years to evaluate plan progress and recommend amendments and updated project descriptions.

Host community forums to solicit public input.

Present plan update and recommendations for plan amendments to MPO Technical Committee for endorsement and approval by MPO Policy Board.

Create Policy Guidelines for the operation of the Committee, to be approved by the MPO Policy Board, to assure consistent and equitable operations while providing accountability of the processes.

Continue to assist, review, plan and recommend to MPO Technical Committee on-going changes and needs to the current Long Range Transportation Plan.

Serve in a project specific advisory capacity.

Via its own initiative and public input shall identify multi-modal transportation problem areas and recommend solutions to the MPO Technical Committee for consideration and inclusion in the current Long Range Transportation Plan.

Composition of CHART appointed members:

- Limit members to a total of thirteen.
- Both City and County shall have four appointments (Eight At Large Members), one of which should be a Planning Commissioner.
- The MPO shall appoint five members
- CHART may propose specific individuals to fill Committee vacancies to the MPO Policy Board, the City and County for Appointments. This does not preclude required public announcements of vacancies to be filled.
- As noted in the MPO bylaws, a CHART representative will serve as a nonvoting member of the MPO Technical Committee.

Appendix B – Section 5307 Grant Program

While a Federal Transit Administration grant applicant may choose to maintain a separate approach for complying with the public participation requirements of 49 U.S.C. Section 5307 concerning the applicant's proposed Section 5307 grant program, the grant applicant is encouraged to integrate compliance with these requirements with the local MPO's adopted public involvement process associated with the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). Charlottesville Area Transit chooses to integrate coordination with the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO and gives formal public notice in this Public Participation Plan that the MPO's TIP development process is being used to satisfy Charlottesville Area Transit's public participation and public hearing requirements of Section 5307(c). The public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review and comment on the TIP will satisfy the program-of-projects requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula Program. A project that requires an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement will involve additional public involvement, as presented in joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures," 23 C.F.R. Part 771.