

## Memorandum

**To:** MPO Committee Members  
**From:** Sandy Shackelford, Director of Planning & Transportation  
**Date:** September 4, 2020  
**Reference:** Public Participation Plan

### Purpose:

MPOs are required to comply with federal regulations to ensure that there are adequate public participation opportunities for the public when developing and adopting planning documents. The Public Participation Plan is the document the Charlottesville-Albemarle MPO uses to communicate the strategies that will be utilized to satisfy those requirements.

This Plan is intended to provide as much flexibility as possible in meeting the requirements established in the federal regulations. The TJPDC as an organization, which includes the MPO operations, is committed to exceeding the minimum requirements and developing meaningful public engagement opportunities for the public, considering the diversity of needs and preferences throughout the MPO area.

### Background:

The current Public Participation Plan was last updated in 2016 and is in need of revision. A summary of the proposed changes is listed below:

- Updating references to Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission (TJPDC) reports and *News Briefs* to reflect current practices.
- Including procedures for electronic meetings when authorized.
- Updating sections on accessibility for people with disabilities and non-English speakers.
- Updating plans for communicating with traditionally underserved communities.
- Generalizing the committee membership to remove references to specific individuals.

The draft of the Public Participation Plan included in your packets reflect all of these recommended changes. This is an initial opportunity for the MPO committees to review the document and provide feedback. The federal regulations require that there be a 45-day public comment period prior to any significant changes to the plan being made. This comment period commenced following the MPO Policy Board meeting in July and will commence on September 10, 2020.

MPO staff took the following actions to make the public aware of the opportunity to provide feedback:

- Updated the CA-MPO website with a link to the Public Participation Plan, a summary of changes, and staff contact information.

- Posted boosted Facebook advertisements to reach populations in the MPO region.
- Shared the information with the MPO committee members for them to disseminate at their discretion.
- Utilized the Albemarle County and City of Charlottesville Public Relations departments to disseminate information.

At the date this memo is being prepared, staff received two comments from the public that are attached for your review. Staff also received a request from Jaunt to update references throughout the document (changing “JAUNT” to “Jaunt” and removing the reference to “Jefferson Area United Transit” from the acronym table) and add them to the 5307 plan in Appendix B to establish that they will be using the Transportation Improvement Program to satisfy public engagement and public hearing requirements. Those changes are reflected in the draft of the Public Participation Plan included in the packet.

In compliance with the Public Participation Plan guidelines, a public hearing has been advertised for the MPO Committee meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

**Recommendation:**

It is the request of staff that the MPO Technical Committee and Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee review the draft plan and the public comments and provide a recommendation to the Policy Board for consideration at their meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2020.

It is the request of staff that the MPO Policy Board conduct the scheduled public hearing and take one of the following actions:

1. Approve the current draft of the Public Participation Plan (draft date of 9-4-2020).
2. Approve the Public Participation Plan with amendments.
3. Delay the approval of the Public Participation Plan and provide staff with specific direction on revisions that you would like made prior to reconsideration.

If there are any questions or comments, please contact Sandy Shackelford at [sshackelford@tjfdc.org](mailto:sshackelford@tjfdc.org).

Dear TJPDC,

per guidance - announced by Albemarle County -

Public comments on the proposed changes to the Plan are being accepted through September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. Comments and questions on the Plan can be directed to Sandy Shackelford at [sshackelford@tjpd.org](mailto:sshackelford@tjpd.org).

I am providing brief comments on the Charlottesville-Albemarle Metro Planning Organizations' 'public participation plan'.

Because I note apparent serious omissions in the plan regarding proper attention to THE ELDERLY AND AGING I have copied **JABA** and hope the JABA and JABA partners will send comments.

Because I note apparent serious omissions in the plan regarding BURDENS ON THE CLIMATE and other biological/ecological systems I have copied the **Climate Collaborative** and hope that the CCC and CCC partners will send comments.

Because I note apparent serious omissions in the plan regarding the role of taxpayers and feepayers I have copied the **Free Enterprise Forum** and hope that it and its partners will send comments.

My comments, per your solicitation, are below:

A LOT is missing and very strangely so!

These omissions include that

a. the proposed plan exhibits NO ATTENTION to the unique, special and/or complex transportation needs of THE ELDERLY and those with increasing infirmities and challenges AGING, nor to their caregivers. As much or more than many they needs affordable, effective and efficient transportation systems. They - as all others do - need SAFETY when encountering and using transportation systems. As we now see in pandemic times - with disease spreading from public transportation contacts - and as we see in violent times - with city buses set on fire, mass civil unrest contrary to safety of frail elderly, persons with special needs, and other pedestrians and public transportation users in Richmond and other cities - public participation in the systems and public participation in discussing the systems REQUIRES TRUST! Where is building and sustaining TRUST discussed?

b. the proposed plan exhibits NO FOCUSED ATTENTION to the needs, interests, and concerns of riders and users of metropolitan area transportation FROM RURAL AREAS, including

1. the THOUSANDS of rural area residents coming into the metro area daily FOR WORK.

2. the MANY THOUSANDS of rural area residents coming into the metro area in the course of the year for MEDICAL AND OTHER CLINICAL APPOINTMENTS, tests, procedures, and research purposes and the MANY MORE THOUSANDS of their family members

c. the proposed plan exhibits SCARCE ATTENTION to INNOVATION in transportation system design, effectiveness and efficiency including regarding

1. MULTIMODAL TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES for each and every encounter in the metro area where some sort of transportation is needed
2. REDUCTION OF BURDENS ON THE CLIMATE and on biological and ecological systems from transportation systems

d. the proposed plan does not properly recognize the uniquely necessary role of taxpayers and fee payers for the health of metro transportation systems and therefore the uniquely necessary duty to engage taxpayers and fee payers directly, explicitly and with ongoing sustained effort. TAX PAYERS and FEE PAYERS need the most effective and the most efficient transportation systems available because they are perhaps the most crucial and necessary 'public participation' in the metro transportation system. Fleets of whatever - buses, electric taxis, pedicabs, donkey carts, or those flying bubbles on the Jetsons - are POINTLESS without PARTICIPATION of riders who can afford to pay the fees required and taxpayers who can afford the taxes required to keep everything and everyone moving.

Thank you,

Edward Strickler

Hey Sandy.

You deserve much better than the small amount of information I'm about to provide here, about to head out on vacation, but I suppose something is better than nothing.

1. Get Out in the Field. Your staff is very effective at speaking directly to the public but it doesn't seem to happen that often. I can cite work that Will and Nick did with the Cherry Ave Small Area Plan, and I also observed Nick and Shirese working an event in Darden Towe for the Rivanna River Study and they were quite good at getting residents to speak to issues that may never come up at Water Street Center.

2. Give staff latitude to try new things. Not only will they pursue their work with much-enhanced enthusiasm if they are pursuing an idea but it also encourages the public to pay closer attention because it isn't the "same old thing" and it pulls people into the work.

3. Ask for public input really early in the process. Too often public meetings are really just pro-forma session in which an engineer presents an idea, with alot of thought and investment behind it and then it acquires inertia which the public can either accept or apply alot of negative energy to stop. This is what happened with the Route 20 project. In retrospect, it would have been better to say, "We have this problem of getting from A to B, how would \*you\* suggest we solve it?"

The public participation plan doesn't really speak to this stuff--it's mostly about meeting procedural due process but it's important.

I hope these suggestions will help.

Peter

Good afternoon,

I'm a member of CTAC and would like to provide the following comments on the MPO's draft updated Public Participation Plan (PPP).

I first wanted to thank MPO staff for all of its efforts to engage the public, as well as your continuing work to find opportunities to expand and enhance these efforts, including those specifically related to CTAC.

Below are a number of suggestions and recommendations on the draft PPP:

- **Introduction and Policy Statement (page 1):** To me, these two sections read a bit technical and legal. Particularly given the increasing interests and concerns in our community about ensuring adequate community engagement, I encourage the MPO to make these up-front sections more accessible and aspirational. The recent update of the Richmond MPO's PPP at the link below provides a good example (see the "What is Public Engagement" section):

<https://planrva.org/wp-content/uploads/Public-Engagement-Plan-FINAL.pdf>

- **Readability:** Along similar lines, I encourage the MPO to incorporate a few images, diagrams, and/or charts for some key information to make the document more easily understandable, such as when outlining timelines and public input opportunities for key documents, or to simply depict how the MPO's committees/bodies interrelate.
- **Dropping caveats:** As another general point, the PPP includes several caveats which, while undoubtedly true, do not seem necessary for this document and seem to detract from the intent of encouraging public participation. A few examples:
  - Page 1: "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."
  - Page 2: Regarding TJPDC's list of interested parties: "TJPDC staff will include to the extent practicable, but not limited to: private citizens, public agencies..."
  - Page 7: "Continually experiment with a wide variety of marketing tools and visualization techniques (within limited budgets) to describe transportation plans..."
- **Public notices (pages 6 and 7):**
  - In the listing of locations where notice of public meetings will be provided, it would be helpful to specify the TJPDC and/or MPO's Facebook page (and any other relevant social media).
  - In the section on "Public Notice for Amending Major Documents," I noticed that the LRTP is not listed among the others. Should it be?
- **Public participation (page 7)**

- In one of the first two bullets (or in a separate bullet) on public participation, I suggest adding mention of the MPO seeking community input at community events and festivals, which is something we have discussed at several recent CTAC meetings.
- The bullet providing the MPO will “Conduct focus group meetings in traditionally underserved communities...,” should be expanded to not just mention “long range planning efforts,” but also other MPO studies and plans.
- **State planning processes:** Key state planning processes, such as development of the Six Year Improvement Program also have significant effects on planning in our region. It would be helpful if this PPP discusses/provides for information and/or notice to the public of key state processes and input opportunities as well.
- **CTAC (Appendix A):**
  - The second sentence of the CTAC overview provides that CTAC will help the MPO plan a transportation system that is “safe, efficient, and responsive...” In recent changes to our bylaws, I believe we added “equitable” and “accessible” to this statement, and I encourage you to do so here as well.
  - In the first bullet on the committee’s list of roles, I would suggest the following tweak to reflect CTAC’s recent discussions: “Host community forums and/or participate in community events to solicit public input from a diverse range of citizens and reflecting a broad range of interests.”

Thank you for your consideration, and I hope you enjoy the holiday weekend.

Travis Pietila