


MID-EAST RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

Approved by Mid-East RPO Rural Transportation Advisory Committee, August 12, 2019


Chairman, Mid-East RPO - RTAC


Secretary, Mid-East RPO - RTAC

Mid-East RPO
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I. Purpose

The purpose of the Mid East Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) Public Involvement Plan (Plan) is to provide guidance and policy in engaging the public in the transportation planning process. The Plan has the following objectives:

- Create a well-informed public that contributes to transportation decision-making in a meaningful way
- Engage the public early and continuously in the transportation planning process
- Assist the Mid-East RPO in developing specific transportation projects that reflect the interest and needs of the community
- Gain the support and trust of the public
- Satisfy the requirements of N.C.G.S. § 136-212 regarding duties of a RPO
- Satisfy requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

The Plan is not intended to preempt any public involvement activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) or any local governments within the Mid-East RPO region.

II. Forms of Public Involvement

A. Public Outreach

Public Outreach is the process of informing the public about the transportation planning process, specific transportation projects, and activities of the Mid-East RPO. Typical public outreach strategies include, but will not be limited to, the following:

Identification of Stakeholder

A stakeholder is any formal organization, group, or individual who is affected by a rural transportation plan, program, or project. Stakeholders represent diverse interests and may include:

- The general public
- Local governments
- Business or industry organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce
- Economic Development Corporations/Commissions
- Environmental organizations or groups
- Conservation organizations
- Historic preservation organizations
- County transportation committees
- Neighborhood organizations or groups
- Civic organizations

- Public agencies
- Public transit providers
- Private transportation providers (e.g. taxi services)
- Transit users
- Motor freight carriers
- Bicycle and pedestrian groups
- Community organizations that work with disadvantaged populations (elderly, disabled, minority, low-income)

Stakeholder groups will be identified as needed to suit the purposes of specific projects or plans, for example in developing project steering committees. MERPO staff will also maintain an email list of any citizens or stakeholder groups who request to receive information on meetings, public hearings, public comment periods, and the publication of major planning documents.

Press Releases

Mid-East RPO may periodically issue press releases detailing significant actions of the RPO. These actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Endorsement of Long-Range Transportation Plans
- Adoption of Priority Needs List

Posting of Planning Documents

Copies of draft (when available) and final versions of certain planning documents will be posted on the Mid-East Council of Governments' website, and be distributed to Mid-East RPO member governments for posting on individual county and town websites.

Title VI Documents and Information

Title VI documents and associated information for the Mid-East RPO will be provided on the COG website for public access. **Hard copies of Title VI documents will also be made available at the COG upon request.**

Notification of Meetings

Notification of Mid-East RPO meetings will generally be made by electronic means, although other methods may be used as appropriate. MERPO staff will maintain an email list for this purpose, and will add to the list any media outlet that requests addition. Additionally, MERPO staff will provide electronic notification to citizens/stakeholders who request to receive these notifications, or who provide contact information to MERPO.

Meeting notifications must be sent out at least one week in advance of regularly-scheduled RTCC and RTAC meetings, and two weeks in advance of non-regularly-scheduled meetings.

Other Public Outreach

As deemed necessary or advisable by the RPO, the following public outreach methods may be used for specific activities/projects:

- Presentations to civic organizations
- Public informational meetings/workshops

Title VI Outreach

Press releases, posting of draft and final planning documents and notification of meetings as noted above will include the following statement(s):

*“This information is available in Spanish or any other language upon request **as well as to persons with disabilities**. Please contact the Mid-East Rural Transportation Planner at (252) 974-1857 or at 1502 N. Market St., Suite A, Washington, NC 27889 for accommodations for this request.”*

“Esta información está disponible en español o en cualquier otro idioma bajo petición. De igual forma, la información está disponible para personas con discapacidad. Por favor, póngase en contacto con el Mid-East RPO, Planificador de Transportación Rural, al (252) 974-1857 o visítenos en 1502 N. Market St., Suite A, Washington, NC 27889 para esta solicitud.”

B. Public Input

Public Input is the process of gathering the views, opinions, and ideas of interested individuals and groups in the transportation planning process. Opportunities for public input provided by the Mid-East RPO include, but are not limited to, the following:

Public Comment at Mid-East RPO RTAC and RTCC Meetings

Mid-East RPO meetings are open to the public and provide opportunity for public comment.

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held by the Mid-East RPO's Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) prior to taking formal action on specific planning documents. These actions will include:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Amendment to Planning Work Program
- Endorsement of Long-Range Transportation Plans
- Adoption of Priority Needs List

Surveys

Surveys may be developed and used to gather citizen opinions, perceptions, preferences, and practices. Survey results and findings may impact specific transportation projects and planning issues. Survey content, method of distribution (email, mail, website), geographic target area, and level of expense incurred will be dependent on the specific transportation planning project or issue being considered. Surveys will include the following statement(s):

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III. Schedule of Public Involvement

A. Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

- Planning Documents - All documents, resolutions, meeting minutes, etc. adopted by the Mid-East RPO are kept at the Mid-East Council of Governments (LPA) offices at 1502 N. Market St., Suite A, Washington, NC 27889. These documents will be made available for public review upon request.
- Meetings - Regularly-scheduled meetings of the MERPO RTAC and RTCC will be open to the public and will include opportunities for public comment. Notification of meetings will be sent to citizens/stakeholders within the MERPO Roster, as well as others who have requested inclusion on the email distribution list for meeting notifications.
- Public Hearings - Notification of all public hearings held by the Mid-East RPO will be sent to citizens/stakeholders within the MERPO Roster, as well as others who have requested inclusion on the email distribution list for notifications. Notification of all public hearings held by the Mid-East RPO may also be sent to news media in the region.
- Press Releases - All press releases issued by Mid-East RPO will be sent to news media in the region.

B. Public Involvement for Specific Activities

Public involvement strategies will vary depending on the particular issue or project for which public comment is desired. Typical actions for specific activities of the Mid-East RPO may include, but are not limited to:

1. Long-Range Transportation Plans

- Workshops
- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Public Hearing
- Posting of Draft and Final Document

2. Prioritization of Projects for Recommendation to State's TIP

- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Public Hearing
- Posting of Draft and Final Document

3. Specific Projects/Issues

- Press Releases
- Workshops
- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Surveys

IV. Response to Public Input

Public involvement may be documented in a variety of ways. Any comments received during a meeting of the Mid-East RPO's RTCC or RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes and can be provided in other languages upon request to accommodate Title VI protected groups/persons. Also, any comments received during a public hearing held by the Mid-East RPO's RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Comments received during workshops, open houses, or presentations to civic organizations and public interest groups will be summarized, presented to the RTCC and RTAC, and kept on official file. Results of surveys conducted will be compiled, summarized, presented to the RTAC and RTCC, distributed as directed by the RTAC, and kept on official file.

Public comments may be included as appendices in formal documents or plans for which they were made. The RTCC or RTAC may direct Mid-East RPO staff to respond directly to public comments via letter.