

2016 Public Participation Plan



Indian River County MPO

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability or family status. Persons with questions or concerns about nondiscrimination, or who require special accommodations under the American with Disabilities Act or language translation services (free of charge) should contact Phil Matson at (772) 226-1455 or pmatson@ircgov.com.

Public Participation Plan

Introduction

One of the most important activities that the Indian River County MPO or any planning organization undertakes is public involvement. By involving the general public in plan development, project selection, and program development, the MPO can ensure that its activities can meet the needs and expectations of the public. To provide a framework for public involvement, the MPO developed public involvement procedures soon after the MPO was created.

In 1995, the MPO adopted its first ever Public Involvement Plan. Since that time, revised Federal and State guidance on MPO Public Involvement coupled with new techniques and technologies have prompted the Indian River County MPO to update the Public Involvement Plan. Beginning in 2011, the MPO has referred to its Public Involvement Plan as its Public Participation Plan.

Organization

Part I of the Public Participation Plan Update consists of an evaluation of the current Public Participation Plan. This chapter also contains an overall assessment of the effectiveness of MPO public outreach efforts. Consistent with revised Federal and State guidance on MPO public participation, this evaluation forms the basis of the latest Public Participation Plan.

Part II is the **Public Participation Plan**.

Drawing upon the evaluation in Part II, a number of new strategies are included to enable the MPO to meet its public participation objectives. These include using new technologies; employing effective practices of other MPOs; consistency with the FDOT Public Involvement Process Handbook; interaction with Treasure Coast Commuter Services; and incorporating suggestions from the MPO's advisory committees and the general public.

Recurring Activities

The Plan identified several annually-recurring activities undertaken by the MPO. As examples of annually recurring activities, the plan cited development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and preparation of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

Strategies for improving public participation during the course of annually recurring activities included:

- Actively promoting the education of the public with regard to the recurring activities of the MPO so the public is aware of opportunities to become involved;
- Making copies of draft and final products available for public review and comment;
- Coordinating public participation activities required by recurring activities with the MPO's other public participation activities; and
- Documenting all public participation as a component of reports.

Distribution of Information

The Plan indicated that the MPO develops information, ranging from major plan updates to basic transportation system data that should be provided to the public. Strategies for distributing information promptly and efficiently to the public included:

- Establishing local libraries as repositories of MPO information;
- Coordinating public participation activities with various agencies, including environmental agencies and FDOT;
- Issuing an annual report of MPO activities;
- Involving the media in the distribution of information in a variety of ways, from the postings in the "traffic update" section of the local newspaper to publication of agendas and meeting notices; and
- Seeking innovative ways to distribute information to the public, including the use of social media.

Conclusion

The Plan concluded with a documentation of the public participation activities that occurred in developing the plan and regulations concerning MPO public participation.



Since adoption of the PIP, the MPO and its committees have conducted the transportation decision making process in an open, cooperative and effective manner. Contributing to that effective decision making has been the composition of the MPO and its committees, a composition which has closely reflected the geographic and cultural diversity of the county. To enhance that diversity and ensure representation from traditionally under-served groups, the MPO recently added at-large minority community and disabled community representatives to the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC).

In the past, committee members were active participants who regularly provided input that ultimately became incorporated into major plans and projects. This was made possible because MPO agendas and advisory committee agendas have been prepared to be understandable to the general public and committee members. Also, information on committee activity has been distributed among a wide array of information outlets, including the media, Web Site, and e-mail.

Recurring Activities

The MPO has consistently received valuable input into recurring activities from the public either directly or through surveys, phone calls, and email or from its advisory committees. Products of MPO recurring activities, however, have been among the most sought-after MPO materials, and the MPO has effectively distributed these materials to the public.

The MPO has also garnered goodwill and promulgated safe transportation practices through its direct participation in Bike Safety Rodeos (have trained over 19,000 pupils); by participating in citizen grass root's efforts such as Bike Walk Indian River County (BWIRC); and by holding in-county workshops in TD communities.



With the exception of local newspaper announcements and advertisements, newsletters and web announcements, current public participation activities provide good but not spectacular dissemination of MPO information. To address this situation in the future, the MPO will engage in a more proactive course of public participation activities, to include additional distribution outlets, an improved website, and more widespread use of PSA's and social media.

With regards to innovative techniques referenced in the plan, the MPO has incorporated several advances in technology into its public outreach efforts. Currently, agendas, reports, work products and minutes are posted to the MPO web site. The MPO is in the process of updating its website to be more user friendly and graphic oriented.

In the past, the Indian River County MPO has regularly coordinated with FDOT on a number of issues. With respect to project development, this has involved MPO staff assisting FDOT and its consultants in providing public notice and responding to questions from the general public. For example, the MPO has worked closely with FDOT and its consultants on providing public notice for the widening of US 1, and the initiation of the Oslo Road and CR 510 PD&E Studies. Public participation activities performed in conjunction with FDOT have resulted in suggestions that have helped improve projects.

The media has been an integral part of the MPO's Public Participation strategies. Of particular note is the local newspaper's transportation section which has provided an effective forum for MPO commentary and project updates. On a weekly basis, local media is informed of upcoming meetings, and that information is published. In addition to meeting announcements, advertisements are regularly placed by the MPO.

Local libraries and the County Administration Building serve as outlets to distribute MPO documents to the public. In addition to these traditional distribution outlets, the MPO has utilized innovative outlets like Public Transit Buses on a project specific basis.

The MPO has engaged in extensive coordination activities with State and County environmental agencies on an ongoing basis. These activities have included appointing environmental agency representatives to the MPO's advisory committees; providing data; reviewing draft and final plans; and attending a variety of meetings.

In cooperation with the County Planning Department, the Indian River County MPO records and responds to all transportation inquiries. These inquiries come in on a daily basis from virtually all sectors of the community as well as from public agencies and businesses. The MPO then responds to these public information requests by mail, telephone, fax or e-mail. In the past year, the MPO has also made itself available to citizens concerned about proposed projects and has successfully mitigated or minimized the impact of proposed projects through this technique.

III. MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A. Introduction & Vision:

To ensure that transportation systems meet the needs of those that use them, it is vital that the public participates in transportation planning. In developing its plans and programs, the Indian River County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) provides numerous opportunities for public input. The MPO's Public Participation Plan serves as a guide to further guarantee the active participation of citizens and those affected by MPO decisions.

Federal and state regulations require that all MPOs develop a public participation process through which public participation in transportation decision-making is actively solicited. Some of the specific regulations that apply to MPO public participation are listed below.

- **23 CFR 450, Section 316 (b)(1)** contains requirements such as providing the public with timely information about transportation issues, plans, and programs; providing adequate public notice and time for public review of transportation activities; and granting explicit consideration and response to public input received.
- **Title VI** of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964, mandates non-discrimination by race, color or national origin in connection with programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
- **Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (1994)** requires measures to avoid disproportionately high adverse environmental effects of federal programs through full and fair participation of low-income and minority communities.
- **Chapter 286, Florida Statutes** (a.k.a. Florida Sunshine Law) requires public access to governmental meetings at the state and local level and requires meetings of boards and commissions to be open to the public, adequately noticed, and recorded via minutes.
- **FDOT Public Involvement Handbook** identifies required public hearings for projects and also best practices for public outreach.

In addition, the Public Participation Plan has been developed in consideration of FDOT's **Community Impact Assessment** process, a five-step methodology advocated by FDOT to identify community needs, analyze impacts and identify solutions.

It is the intent of the Indian River County MPO to comply with and, wherever possible, exceed minimum federal and state standards for public participation. To this end, the MPO's Public Participation Plan provides a process that is applicable to all MPO functions and activities.

Vision

A vision statement is a brief description of what the community hopes to achieve through planning. In the words of the third Florida Environmental Land Management Study Committee, "a vision shows where we want to go; a plan explains how we will get there." As it relates to the MPO's Public Participation Plan, the vision statement serves to define the end result of the MPO's public participation process. Because it keeps overall, long-range goals in view, the vision is

The committee is responsible for providing the MPO with citizen input regarding transportation-related matters.

The composition of CAC membership corresponds to the MPO governing Board membership and includes two at-large members representing the Disabled and Minority communities.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BAC) is composed of bicycling and pedestrian advocates and enthusiasts. While the BAC's major task is the update of the county's bicycle/pedestrian plan, the BAC also provides the MPO with input on enhancement projects and MPO planning activities.

Conduct of Public Meetings

Wherever possible, the MPO and all public meetings will be conducted consistent with the principles contained in Chapter 6 of the FDOT Public Involvement Handbook. Those principles include selecting an appropriate venue, time, and format for the meeting; use innovative techniques; communicate effectively; and record the meeting.

Objectives

It is the intent of the MPO to achieve the following public participation objectives with respect to the MPO and its Committees. For each objective, measures of effectiveness are included. These measures provide the basis for assessment of the objectives. The assessment process is discussed in *Section 5, Plan Evaluation*.

Objective 1.1: Attendance at MPO and Advisory Committee meetings by non-staff and non-committee members will exceed 100 people.

Measure Of Effectiveness: Number of non-staff, non-committee member individuals attending MPO and advisory committee meetings during the entire fiscal year.

Objective 1.2: The number of comments received at MPO and Advisory Committee meetings will exceed 20 comments.

Measure of Effectiveness: The number of comments received at MPO and Advisory Committee meetings during the entire fiscal year.

Strategies for public participation in this area

MPO and advisory committee meetings are public forums affording citizens an adequate opportunity to participate in the planning process. To enhance these opportunities, the MPO will implement the following strategies:

b) MPO Projects and Activities

On an annual basis, the MPO develops a number of work products in fulfillment of its statutory obligations. Major MPO projects (which include the Long Range Transportation Plan, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and Transit Development Plan Major Update) may involve collecting and analyzing background data, procuring consultant services, and performing extensive public outreach efforts.

On an annual basis, the MPO also completes a number of activities in preparation of various MPO work products like the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These activities greatly benefit from public participation but may afford fewer public participation opportunities than major projects due to their scale and relatively short timeframes for completion.

Long Range Transportation Plan (and other major MPO projects)

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is developed by the MPO approximately every five years pursuant to state and federal regulations. The plan provides cost-feasible solutions for the mobility of all residents of the MPO area across a 20-year horizon.

Adoption of the Plan and all amendments will be as specified in the MPO Administrative Manual and will include at a minimum 30 days of advertising via web and newspaper, a public hearing and a roll-call vote.

Because of the comprehensive nature of the LRTP, the MPO can engage in a wide variety of specialized public participation activities in addition to the general strategies for public participation applicable to all MPO projects.

For example, in accordance with FDOT's Community Impact Assessment (CIA) methodology, major MPO projects will incorporate a review of community profiles early on to ensure plan alternatives address community concerns. Community Impact Assessments are comprehensive inventories of communities, their values and characteristics.

For the Long Range Transportation Plan and other major MPO projects, the MPO requires the consultant working on the project to create a Public Participation Component as one of the first tasks in the scope of work. The Public Participation Component establishes procedures for public participation specific to the project and ensures that adequate public participation will be performed throughout the project. Public participation activities in the Public Participation Component may include, but are not limited to, strategies described in Section (c), *MPO Communications*. Innovative techniques will be encouraged in order to directly notify the public of

During the Long Range Transportation Plan Update (2015), over 200 individuals from all segments of the community attended MPO Workshops as part of the "Campaign Connect" public participation plan. Their input was essential in developing a workable plan.



In reviewing the proposed draft UPWP, the public and the advisory committees will provide comments to MPO staff about whether or not the UPWP reflects appropriate work activities for the MPO to undertake in light of local needs and state and federal regulations.

Recently, FDOT changed the requirements regarding amendments and modifications of the UPWP. All amendments and modifications will be advertised to the public and adopted at a public meeting as specified in the new requirements.

Congestion Management Process

The MPO's Congestion Management Process (CMP) is a process designed to consider alternatives to traditional approaches to solving traffic congestion problems. On an annual basis, the MPO and FDOT determine whether traffic conditions warrant a new CMS analysis. If so warranted, the MPO uses locally-developed performance measures and current transportation data to identify the most congested links on the County highway system. These links are then evaluated on an individual basis to determine if lower-cost treatments of the congested segment could be employed to eliminate or forestall the need for a more costly highway improvement. Ultimately, the CMS process attempts to improve mobility as efficiently and effectively as possible given limited funding while encouraging a high level of local decision making.

The Indian River County CMP considers community priorities such as hurricane evacuation, safety, and recreational access when selecting corridors for further study.



The MPO will obtain public input into the appropriateness of performance measures and standards used in prioritizing CMP corridors. The MPO will also seek public comments on proposed CMP solutions. Public participation will be adequately addressed through the MPO's public meetings and communications strategies.

Annual CMP updates also present an opportunity to inform the public of current transportation conditions in Indian River County via a required "state of the system" report component that will be circulated as part of a proposed MPO newsletter.

Public participation activities associated with CMP development will be coordinated with other MPO public participation programs to enhance public awareness and efficiently distribute information.

Transit Development Plan (TDP) Minor Updates (and other recurring activities)

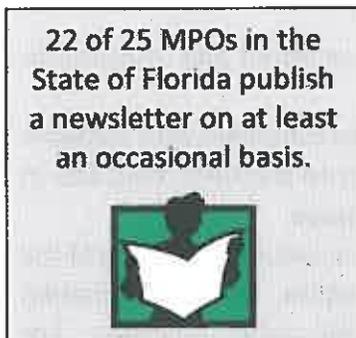
By state law, major updates of the TDP must be developed every three years in order for the County to remain eligible for state grant funding. On an annual basis, TDP minor updates are prepared and serve as evaluation tools to monitor progress toward major update implementation.

For TDP Minor Updates and other recurring activities, public participation is accommodated at public committee meetings with distribution of meeting agendas and/or work products to be completed through the MPO's communication strategies.

- The MPO may establish special consensus-building workshops, charrettes, discussion groups, or other public meetings during the course of project development. These meetings may be held at various locations throughout the county as appropriate.
- The MPO will include a public participation section documenting the public participation for the project as a component of final reports for projects.
- To provide information in a concise and understandable format, the MPO will produce an Executive Summary of major improvements for major projects.
- MPO staff will inform the media of upcoming projects so that interested citizens and officials may have the opportunity to become involved as early as possible.
- The MPO will make available draft scopes of work and draft work products for public review at MPO offices.
- MPO staff will seek out innovative methods to inform the public of project activities and allow the public to review and comment on project reports. This may include postings to the MPO Web Site, publication in the proposed MPO newsletter, and the preparation of periodic special edition newsletters, reports or flyers pertaining to the project.
- In developing major projects, the MPO will abide by FDOT's Community Impact Assessment methodology and its stated principles of informing, educating and including the public in the decision making process.
- MPO staff will consider all public feedback obtained during the course of its major projects when undertaking related recurring activities.

c) MPO Communications

The MPO develops and maintains transportation plans and information that are of interest to and requested by the general public. At the same time, the MPO relies on comments from the public to make sure its plans and activities reflect the values of the community. To fulfill its vision for a



well-informed public, the MPO will use a variety of techniques to distribute MPO information and publicize MPO activities. Wherever possible, the MPO will use interactive techniques to obtain valuable feedback from the community in the process of distributing information.

Communications strategies cited in this section resulted from evaluating previous plan strategies, identifying best practices of other MPOs, applying new technology, or considering strategies

obtained from the public in the development of this plan.

Objectives

It is the intent of the MPO to achieve the following public participation objectives with respect to MPO Communications. For each objective, measures of effectiveness are included. These measures provide the basis for assessment of the objectives. The assessment process is discussed in *Section 5, Plan Evaluation*.

traffic update section of the local newspaper. MPO staff will request that the media publish announcements for MPO meetings and MPO committee meetings.

- The MPO will explore additional media outlets, such as regional television networks and public radio stations, to announce major projects and activities via Public Service Announcements (PSA's).
- The MPO will distribute information at local libraries and other public outlets, such as schools and community centers. The MPO will seek out distribution locations in close proximity to those traditionally under-served in the planning process.
- The MPO will keep environmental agencies and organizations informed of upcoming studies and construction projects.
- Staff will respond to requests for information as promptly as possible.
- The MPO will create a presentation display to be posted in public locations and deployed at major community events. The display will include information on major proposed plans, staff contact information, and upcoming opportunities for public participation.
- The MPO will sponsor or participate in one or more annual transportation seminars in conjunction with state and regional agencies.

C. Consideration of Public Comments Received

Processing Public Comments

The primary objective of any public participation activity is to inform the public and solicit their comments as they relate to transportation improvements. Public comment will help build an understanding of community issues and needs that should be considered in designing transportation solutions that fit community needs. The most common way for the public to relay their ideas and input is through submitting verbal or written comments. Effective public participation activities produce public comments. The comments provide documentation for the public participation activities; and the information gleaned from them, if correctly synthesized and catalogued, will serve as an excellent record for future project phases. The amount and types of comments received will help in evaluating the success of the individual public participation activities, as well as the overall PIP. The ETDM process requires a summary of public comments as part of the Summary Report for each phase. The ETDM Manual, which can be found online at www.dot.state.fl.us/emo/pubs/etdm/etdmmanual.shtm, can provide additional information. These comments can be helpful in later phases to gauge public awareness and interest in the project. Depending on the scope of the PIP, as well as the level of controversy or interest surrounding the project, a tremendous volume of comments can be generated. A protocol is needed to handle these comments. The public comment process contains the following seven steps:

1. Collection
2. Documentation
3. Analysis
4. Acknowledgement
5. Distribution and tracking
6. Incorporation

D. Plan Evaluation

Procedure

Each year, an evaluation will be performed to determine to what extent objectives for public participation have been met by the MPO. The annual evaluation will be data-driven to the extent possible and will include data collection, data analysis, and a determination of whether or not plan objectives have been met. Qualitative measures of public participation appear on table 5-1.

Table 5-1. Quantitative Measures

The MPO and its Committees	
Recommended period of evaluation:	Annual
Quantitative measures:	Number of non-staff and non-committee members at MPO and Advisory Committee meetings.
	Number of comments received at MPO and Advisory Committee meetings.
MPO Projects and Activities	
Recommended period of evaluation:	At major project or activity milestones; and at project or activity completion.
Quantitative measures:	Number of participants from traditionally underserved communities, including transportation disadvantaged or minority communities, at MPO project or activity workshops.
	Number of comments received from all sources relating to an MPO project or activity.
MPO Communications	
Recommended period of evaluation:	Annual.
Quantitative Measures:	Percentage of the county's overall population that recognizes the MPO, its projects or activities.
	Percentage of the county's overall population that has been made aware of or participated in a public participation activity.
	Percentage of the county's transportation disadvantaged population that recognizes the MPO, its projects or activities.

APPENDIX 1

FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS CONCERNING MPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

23 CFR

450.316 Metropolitan transportation planning process: Elements.

(b) In addition, the metropolitan transportation planning process shall:

(1) Include a proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing participation of the public in developing plans and TIPs and meets the requirements and criteria specified as follows:

(i) Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public participation process is initially adopted or revised;

(ii) Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);

(iii) Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;

(iv) Require adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (in nonattainment areas, classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan, TIP and major amendment(s));

(v) Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;

(vi) Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;

(vii) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public participation process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;

(viii) If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public participation efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;

(ix) Participation processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;

forth in the report on the National Performance Review, each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories and possessions, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands.

Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act of 1964

Sec. 2000d. Prohibition against exclusion from participation in, denial of benefits of, and discrimination under federally assisted programs on ground of race, color, or national origin

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

(Pub. L. 88-352, title VI, Sec. 601, July 2, 1964, 78 Stat. 252.)

286.011 F.S.

Public meetings and records; public inspection; criminal and civil penalties.

(1) All meetings of any board or commission of any state agency or authority or of any agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision, except as otherwise provided in the Constitution, at which official acts are to be taken are declared to be public meetings open to the public at all times, and no resolution, rule, or formal action shall be considered binding except as taken or made at such meeting. The board or commission must provide reasonable notice of all such meetings.

(2) The minutes of a meeting of any such board or commission of any such state agency or authority shall be promptly recorded, and such records shall be open to public inspection. The circuit courts of this state shall have jurisdiction to issue injunctions to enforce the purposes of this section upon application by any citizen of this state.

(3)(a) Any public officer who violates any provision of this section is guilty of a noncriminal infraction, punishable by fine not exceeding \$500.

(b) Any person who is a member of a board or commission or of any state agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision who knowingly violates the provisions of this section by attending a meeting not held in accordance with the provisions hereof is guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. [775.082](#) or s. [775.083](#).

(c) Conduct which occurs outside the state which would constitute a knowing violation of this section is a misdemeanor of the second degree, punishable as provided in s. [775.082](#) or s. [775.083](#).

(4) Whenever an action has been filed against any board or commission of any state agency or

- (d) The entity shall give reasonable public notice of the time and date of the attorney-client session and the names of persons who will be attending the session. The session shall commence at an open meeting at which the persons chairing the meeting shall announce the commencement and estimated length of the attorney-client session and the names of the persons attending. At the conclusion of the attorney-client session, the meeting shall be reopened, and the person chairing the meeting shall announce the termination of the session.
- (e) The transcript shall be made part of the public record upon conclusion of the litigation.

Appendix 3. MPO Public Participation and Objective Achievement 2016

	Total Community Participation	Minority Community Participation	Objective Achieved?
Bike Rodeos (School)	2915	1399	Y
Bike Rodeos (Public)	450	216	Y
Bike Safety Pre-K	3225	1548	Y
Walk to School/Bike To School Days	200	96	Y
MPO Newsletters Distributed	500	41	Y
MPO Website Hits	715,274	N/A	Y
MPO Correspondence	420	N/A	Y
LRTP Survey	285	N/A	Y
LRTP Workshops	170	48	Y
MPO and Advisory Committee Meetings	34	12	Y
MPO and Advisory Committee Meetings Comments	25	5	Y
Wabasso Neighborhood Meeting	45	41	Y
Fellsmere Property Owners Association Meeting	37	2	Y
Bike Walk Indian River County Meetings	144	10	Y
Community Traffic Safety Team	48	14	Y
Radio programs, newspaper interviews.	5	N/A	Y
Martin Luther King Trail Opening Ceremony	75	51	Y
Total	723,852	3,483	Y