

TRI-CITIES AREA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)
PARTICIPATION PLAN
(January 2007)

The intent of the Tri-Cities Area MPO Participation Plan is to offer reasonable opportunities for the public to be informed and involved in the development of transportation plans and programs in the metropolitan area. The public and interested parties, including affected agencies and certain expressly identified population groups, are encouraged to help identify highway, transit, pedestrian, bikeway and other transportation needs and comment on proposed improvements in the metropolitan planning area. In the Tri-Cities, the metropolitan transportation planning area refers to the cities of Petersburg, Colonial Heights and Hopewell and the adjoining portions of nearby counties of Prince George, Dinwiddie and Chesterfield anticipated to be developed over the next 20-year period.

Components or objectives of the existing public involvement process followed by the Tri-Cities MPO have been revised to incorporate elements required of a Participation Plan process by CFR 23, Part 450.316 pursuant to Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users SAFETEA-LU), (Public Law 109-59, August 10, 2005). Sections A thru C of the Participation Plan describe the process for the Participation Plan. Section D addresses the agency consultation elements required by CFR 23, Part 450.316 for the development of the metropolitan transportation plans and programs.

Section A: Participation Plan Elements

1. In order to allow for adequate time for public review and comment of the draft participation plan, public notification will be provided 45 days in advance of consideration of action on this document by the Policy Committee of the Tri-Cities MPO. Public notification will be provided 30 days in advance of consideration of action by the Policy Committee of the Tri-Cities MPO on proposed long range transportation plan updates, transportation improvement programs and amendments to these planning documents.
2. Meeting notices will be provided electronically to local news media, including local public television, one week in advance of each regular Policy Committee and Technical Committee meeting. Reasonable access to available information about MPO sponsored transportation studies in the metropolitan area will be provided.
3. Meeting notices will be provided electronically to interested and available parties in the Tri-Cities Area, including

citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than title 49, U.S.C, Chapter 53, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

4. Available resources will be used by the MPO to visually convey information related to metropolitan transportation plans and programs.
5. Public information related to transportation plans and programs and meeting notices of the Tri-Cities MPO will be provided electronically on World Wide Web, including draft and final versions of the Participation Plan.
6. Public meetings sponsored by the Tri-Cities MPO will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. A citizen information period will be provided during each regular MPO meeting. Citizens may use this opportunity to express views on metropolitan transportation plans and programs directly to the MPO membership.
7. Public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the transportation improvement program will be given consideration by the MPO. Significant public comments received will be reported by staff to the Policy Committee and the Technical Committee.
8. Outreach efforts seeking input on metropolitan transportation plans and programs from low income and minority households traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems will be continued and documented.
9. Public notices advising citizens in the metropolitan area of the availability of draft transportation plans, transportation improvement programs and conformity reports in local public libraries will be continued. Additional opportunity for public comment will be provided if the final metropolitan transportation plan or transportation improvement program or conformity analysis differs significantly from the version initially made available for public review.

9. The implementation of the Tri-Cities Area Participation Plan will be coordinated with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes developed, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan area that are affected by transportation.
10. The overall effectiveness of procedures and strategies contained in the Participation Plan to ensure a full and open participation process will be reviewed periodically by the Tri-Cities MPO.

Section B: Disposition of Significant Comments

1. When significant comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan or the transportation improvement program as a result of the Participation Plan or the Interagency Consultation Process required under the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and transportation improvement program.

Section C: Agency Consultation on Other Planning Activities

1. As the transportation plan and the transportation improvement program are developed, the MPO shall consult, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities in the metropolitan area affected by transportation in order to coordinate planning functions to the maximum extent practicable.
2. The nature of the consultation shall include comparison of metropolitan plans and transportation improvement programs, as they are developed, with the plans maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies.
3. Public and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation in the Tri-Cities shall be included in the agency consultation process, as appropriate.
4. Metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs shall be developed with consideration for governmental agencies and non-profit organizations receiving Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation for the design and delivery of non-emergency transportation services.

5. The MPO will consider the future development of an operations plan for consulting with other governmental agencies responsible for the development of plans affected by transportation in the metropolitan area.