

**Draft**  
**2020 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**INTRODUCTION**

The Lima Allen County Regional Planning Commission (LACRPC), as a metropolitan planning organization (MPO), must execute a formal process, in compliance with Federal requirements, to integrate public participation and input into not only the transportation planning process, but the development of all long- and short-range transportation plans. The local MPO recognizes that a public participation plan (PPP) is intended to provide methods, strategies, and desired outcomes for public involvement. The Plan provides for outreach to a broadly defined audience of affected parties as identified in Federal guidance.

A review of the Federal framework upon which these public participation requirements are based, include: the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (1991) (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (1998) (TEA 21), the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (2005) (SAFETEA-LU), the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (2012) (MAP-21), and the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (2015) (FAST Act). These, when implemented in conjunction with other Federal regulatory acts, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, to include Executive Order 12898, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA), as well as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), form a framework that requires entities delivering federally financed programs and services to ensure the equitable distribution of benefits. The PPP is intended to guarantee an open and informed discussion with affected communities regarding the environmental, social, and economic impact of MPO actions within its planning area.

The MPO's transportation planning area includes all of Allen County, as well as, the section of the City of Delphos within Van Wert County, the portion of the Village of Bluffton in Hancock County, the Village of Cridersville and a portion of Douchquet Township, both located in Auglaize County. While the villages of Bluffton, Cairo, Spencerville, and Elida are active members of the LACRPC, the village of Cridersville is not a member, and communications are limited. To promote and develop an informed and involved citizenry regarding the transportation planning process within these communities, the MPO will pursue the following objectives:

- Provide early and continuous public involvement opportunities;
- Provide reasonable public access to technical data and policy information;
- Provide adequate notice of public involvement opportunities and time for public review and comment at key transportation planning development milestones;
- Conduct public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Employ visualization techniques to describe the planning process inputs and outcomes;
- To the maximum extent practicable, make public information available in electronically accessible format;
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received;
- Seek out and consider the needs and input of traditionally underserved populations, including low-income and minority households;
- Provide information for/to populations with limited English proficiency (LEP), as needed; and
- Enhance decision-making by integrating diverse interests and desires that identify community values and support transportation needs.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT STAKEHOLDERS**

Potential stakeholders identified in the Federal legislation and executive orders described may have a special interest regarding specific projects and programs. These affected parties and segments of the community will be identified early in the process, to give opportunity for affected citizens to address potential issues or concerns. Citizen input solicited will include, but will not be limited to, the following:

- citizens affected by project/programs
- public transportation employees
- freight shippers
- providers of freight transportation services
- private providers of transportation, including area employers
- representatives of users of public transportation
- representatives of users of pedestrian walkways & bicycle transportation facilities
- representatives of the disabled
- representatives of minority populations
- representatives of low-income populations
- representatives of wildlife management agencies
- representatives of land use management agencies
- representatives of natural resources management agencies
- representatives of environmental protection agencies
- representatives of conservation agencies
- representatives of historic preservation agencies
- Allen County Port Authority
- representatives of tourism industry
- other interested parties

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN GOALS**

GOAL 1: Ensure the public is provided the opportunity to actively participate in the evaluation and decision-making of the transportation planning process.

GOAL 2: Provide the opportunity for local citizens to help shape the future of the region's transportation system through a public involvement process that provides the public with reasonable access to complete information about transportation planning issues and events.

GOAL 3: The public involvement process ensures the public is provided with timely notices of all transportation issues and events.

GOAL 4: Identify and involve traditionally underserved citizens/communities in the region's transportation planning process.

GOAL 5: Ensure the public is provided with various public involvement techniques that will meet the diverse needs of the general public.

## **PRODUCTS**

The Plan recognizes that the MPO has, as two of its major responsibilities, the development and publication of the long-range transportation plan (LRTP) and the transportation improvement program (TIP). These documents come under special scrutiny as they are fiscally constrained and comprehensive in nature and scope. While the LRTP and TIP are supported by other strategic reports, plans, and/or programs, these support studies allow the MPO to conduct more detailed analyses and make informed recommendations. The MPO's four core documents include, not only the LRTP and TIP, but also the unified planning work program (UPWP), and public participation plan (PPP), for which the MPO conducts public involvement strategies.

### **Long Range Transportation Plan**

The long-range transportation plan (LRTP), updated every four years, is a twenty-year plan that identifies the MPO's recommendations regarding the region's transportation system. Multi-modal transportation projects and programs are identified, as well as systemwide demands/remedies. In addition, goals and policies are identified, including funding forecasts and action plans. The LRTP is intended to guide, inform, and support the MPO's recommended transportation policies, programs, and investments. Because the LRTP must be comprehensive in its analyses of future conditions, it considers financial, social, environmental, and economic factors as well.

Public participation strategies may include convening the MPO's advisory committees to discuss the LRTP over several meetings. A 21-day comment period will be conducted. Public meetings, as required, will be advertised in the newspaper, on the MPO website, and communicated to stakeholders. The draft LRTP may be posted on the MPO website. When possible, staff may conduct outreach, including community presentations. A record of comments received will be kept on file, reported to committees, and incorporated into the final plan.

Periodically, State or local officials request that the approved Plan be modified, or that a project recommendation be added or dropped. Such requests shall also be provided a similar 21-day public comment period.

### **Transportation Improvement Program**

The transportation improvement program (TIP), adopted every two years, is the short-range (four-year) listing of financially constrained transportation projects to be undertaken by local project sponsors within the MPO planning area. Projects in the local TIP are incorporated into the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP). Transportation projects must be listed in the TIP/STIP to be eligible for federal funding.

Public participation strategies during the TIP development process is the same as, and conducted concurrently with, the STIP. The MPO will conduct a 21-day comment period. As available, staff may also conduct community outreach, including community presentations. The draft TIP will be made available to committee members and posted to the MPO website. The MPO may host an open house, in partnership with ODOT District One. The STIP/TIP open house will be advertised as a legal notice in *The Lima News*, on the MPO website and social media. Open house notifications may be mailed using the U. S. Postal Service or emailed to individuals and/or organizations on the stakeholders' list. A record of comments received will be kept on file with responses, reported to committees, and incorporated into the draft TIP.

Periodically, State or local officials request that the approved TIP be modified, or that a project recommendation be added or dropped. Such requests shall also be provided a similar 21-day public comment period. A record of comments received is kept on file with responses, reported to committees, and incorporated into the amended plan.

### **Unified Planning Work Program**

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), produced annually, provides a comprehensive list of the various planning and surveillance activities, programs, and plans the MPO will undertake during the fiscal year. Through participation of member political subdivisions, the MPO determines planning priorities and policies for the region.

A 21-day public participation process will be conducted. All standing committees may identify and discuss local needs and work toward prioritizing planning tasks. Committee meeting notices may be emailed to members and posted on the MPO website. Requests may also be emailed to *The Lima News* for the publication of meetings dates/times. Staff may conduct additional consultation with agencies and

interested parties as necessary. The MPO committee structure will adopt the final UPWP after the 21-day comment period. A record of comments received will be kept on file with responses, reported to committees, posted on the website, and may be incorporated into the final UPWP document.

### **Public Participation Plan**

The LACRPC Public Participation Plan (PPP) describes a formal process, in compliance with Federal requirements, to integrate public participation and input into not only the transportation planning process, but the development of all long- and short-range transportation plans. The PPP identifies stakeholders, goals, strategies, and mechanisms for increasing citizen participation.

Public participation strategies may include convening the MPO's advisory committees to discuss the PPP over several meetings. A 21-day comment period will be conducted. A record of comments received will be kept on file, reported to committees, and may be incorporated into the final plan.

### **Other Programs, Plans & Services**

The MPO recognizes that many of its on-going planning, surveillance, and modeling activities affect the community, its businesses, and local citizenry. The MPO commits to keep such activities in the public light and to keep local stakeholders apprised of on-going and current activities through the use of the media, newsletters, committee meetings, and the MPO website. Should local concerns generate MPO activities that develop new programs, plans, and/or services, the MPO will respond with the same public involvement process, including review and comment periods as previously identified. Potential changes affecting the delivery, service, or fares of public transportation may also generate requisite public awareness/education processes, public meeting(s), and required comment period. Such activities will be coordinated with the ACRTA and ODOT. The MPO's public participation process will serve as the public participation process for the Allen County Regional Transit Authority's program of projects, meeting the requirements of Section 5307 (b) as prescribed in FTA C 9030.1E DATE 1/16/2014.

### **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION MECHANISMS**

To support public involvement procedures, the MPO expects that in the course of developing any single program, project, or service one or more of the following mechanisms may be utilized as tools in the public involvement process. Each will be reviewed to assess effectiveness, to inform the public or encourage the public to comment, attend a meeting, or in some other way participate in the decision or issue at hand. The following listing presents a summary of the individual mechanisms that may be used by the MPO in furthering the goals of the PPP.

- **Website** - The MPO's website ([www.lacrpc.com](http://www.lacrpc.com)) is the principal means of communicating with the general public. The website allows 24-hour 7-day a week access to meeting schedules, notices, and materials, including meeting minutes, as well as draft/final program/project plans. The website makes available to internet users, the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and PPP, as well as MPO newsletters, summary reports, transportation surveys, etc.
- **Visualization Techniques** - As much as possible, the MPO may use maps, graphs, illustrations, charts, photographs, and/or interactive tools to engage the public. Visual techniques may be more effective for some than paragraphs or written documentation. The MPO will, as is fiscally feasible, continue to develop and integrate visualization in conjunction with other tools in order to convey specific information about transportation related programs, projects, and services.
- **Summary Sheets** - Summary sheets may be developed by the MPO to explain in non-technical jargon summaries of the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and PPP or other products as deemed appropriate. Summary sheets may be made available during the required formal public involvement process and be posted to the MPO website.

- **Public Service Announcements** - The MPO may prepare transportation-related public service announcements (PSAs), formatted for television, radio, or social media, as an effective mechanism to address certain specific issues, locations and/or populations.
- **Placard** - Placard postings may be an effective, low cost mechanism to support public involvement in the transportationally disadvantaged and underserved communities. Placards, small lightweight paperboard, can be printed in any language and size relatively quickly and inexpensively. Placards may be placed in social/human service agencies, at meeting locations, and on public transit vehicles to support notification of public involvement events.
- **Open House** - The MPO may host/facilitate open houses, when necessary, to promote informal discussion of transportation-related programs, projects, or services. Open house events are open to the general public and project sponsors use various public involvement mechanisms to promote discussion and elicit comment from the community.
- **Newsletter** - The MPO produces a quarterly newsletter to inform the general public and stakeholders of important events and opportunities for participation.
- **Press Release** - Succinct announcements of MPO events may be prepared and released to the local electronic and written media outlets as deemed appropriate and necessary.
- **Media Event** - To solicit more public acceptance and recognition of traffic and transportation-related issues, MPO staff may solicit and support special media attention on specific issues/events at specific times/locations.
- **Information Booth** - The MPO may choose to use informational booths at local events in order to increase public awareness of transportation-related issues and solicit public comment on specific projects, programs, or services.
- **Fact Sheets** - Fact sheets may be developed by the MPO, and/or local project sponsor, to address a single project, program, or service. The fact sheets, intended to provide the reader with essential subject matter to further public understanding of a single topic, may be used to provide participants with background for discussion and comment.
- **Stakeholder Meetings** - Efforts are made to schedule stakeholder meetings with neighborhood associations, member political subdivisions, internal and advisory committees, as well as other groups, as appropriate at convenient times and locations.
- **Public Meeting** - The MPO is sometimes required to hold public meetings. The purpose of a public meeting is to obtain public input on decisions regarding matters of plan adoption, amendment, and other key funding decisions. Public meetings may be conducted whenever the MPO is reviewing policies, programs, or services that affect a wide range of citizens.
- **Comment Period** - Formal public comment periods are initiated for review of the MPO's draft LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and PPP as well as other products as appropriate. All comment periods are 21 days and comments received are retained. Said comments may be published in final documents as required.

- **Legal Notices** - Legal notices advertising availability of MPO documents and/or public meetings are posted in *The Lima News* newspaper; similar legal notices may be purchased in other local publications as deemed necessary. Other additional non-legal advertising may also be purchased.
- **Comment Forms** - Simple, 1-page forms may be used to solicit public perception and attitudes about various transportation-related subjects. In addition, visitors to the MPO website may use the site's "Comments" function to make such comments.
- **Alternative Accessible Formats** - The MPO will work to provide limited English proficiency (LEP) persons in the community with appropriate translation services, in compliance with LEP requirements, within the confines of federal Safe Harbor provisions.

## **SUMMARY**

Federal regulation, taken collectively, calls for a transportation system that supports a just distribution of benefits across racial and socioeconomic lines; a system that is as friendly to commerce and the disadvantaged residing within a community as it is to the natural environment. Federally financed infrastructure must support mobility, economic development, and global competition, while furthering increased quality of life for the entire community. Such improvements must be well planned to further long-term community sustainability while protecting the future.

The MPO commits to five public participation goals to provide the public with opportunities to participate in the MPO's decision-making process. The PPP is intended to provide goals and strategies that result in the desired outcome for public involvement and participation. The PPP will be subjected to ongoing, as well as, periodic reviews, and maintained to meet Federal requirements for public involvement in metropolitan planning.