



Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization
Transportation Policy Committee
Public Participation Plan

Prepared by

Wichita Falls Area Transportation Study

2100 Seymour Hwy.

Wichita Falls, Texas

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WFMPO Public Participation Plan

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The contents of this Plan reflect the views of the Wichita Falls Area Transportation Study, which is responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the official view and policies of the Texas Department of Transportation or the U.S. Department of Transportation. This Plan does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulation.



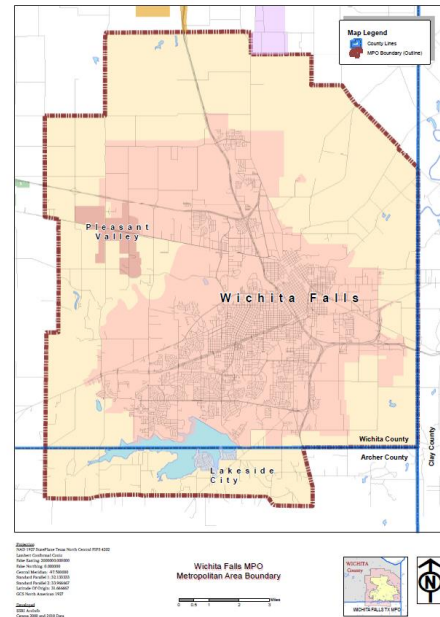
Contents

Introduction	6
Background	6
Organization of the MPO	9
Public Participation Plan Goal and Objectives	11
Plan Goal	11
Plan Objectives.....	11
Methods and Strategies	13
Public Notices.....	13
Public Access	13
Interactive Visualization Techniques	14
Education and Outreach	15
Public Input	16
Coordination and Consultation.....	17
Public Participation Plan Evaluation	18
Introduction	18
Improvement Strategy	18
Evaluation Methodology.....	19
Appendix A: Legal and Display Ad Minimum Requirements	20
Procedures	20
Summary Participation Policy Table	21
Appendix B: Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms.....	23

Introduction

Background

While the earliest beginnings of urban transportation planning go back to the post-World War II years, the federal requirement for urban transportation planning emerged during the early 1960's. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 created the federal requirement for urban transportation planning largely in response to the construction of the Interstate Highway System and the planning of routes through and around urban areas. The Act required, as a condition attached to federal transportation financial assistance, that transportation projects in urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population be based on a continuing, comprehensive, urban transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states and local governments – the birth of the so-called “3-C”, continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative planning process.



In compliance with the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, the Governor of Texas established the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (WFMPO) to ensure the quality implementation of the “3-C” process in all surface transportation decisions within the MPO’s boundaries. The Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) held its first meeting on March 29, 1973, thus giving birth to the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization, or WFMPO. In March of 2000, the PAC transitioned to the name of Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) to reflect more accurately the function of the Policy Committee, also known as the Policy Board. The new name was, and still is, the Transportation Policy Committee, or TPC.

It is the policy of the Wichita Falls MPO to support and encourage early and continuous public participation and input to the planning process and to adhere to the principles of Environmental Justice and to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act as part of the metropolitan “3-C” planning process. The Wichita Falls MPO is responsible for creating, developing, and reviewing transportation plans, which include the long-range, 25-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the short-range, 3-year Transportation Improvement Program, the annual Unified Planning Work Program, travel models, thoroughfare plans, transit plans, and bicycle/pedestrian plans. All of these documents work together to identify transportation programs and funding alternatives.

An array of subsequent highway bills further increased the need for the transportation planning process. The most significant of these bills in recent years are the:

- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)



- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century of 1998 (TEA-21)
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)
- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)
- Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act of 2015 (FAST)

President Obama signed into law the “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act of 2015”, commonly called “the FAST Act”, on December 4, 2015. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for the USDOT’s highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology and statistics programs. With its enactment, States and local governments may now move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a Federal partner over the long term. The Transportation Policy Committee approves the use of federal transportation funds within the Wichita Falls MPO area and operates under the FAST Act.

As the MPO, the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) must fulfill the requirements of the planning regulations for the Wichita Falls Area Transportation Study to maintain eligibility for Federal highway and transit funds through the Texas Department of Transportation. The FAST Act largely maintains current program structures and funding shares between highways and transit. It is a down payment for building a 21st century transportation system. The law also makes changes and reforms to many Federal transportation programs, including streamlining the approval processes for new transportation projects, providing new safety tools, and establishing new programs to advance critical freight projects.

The FAST Act continues the Metropolitan Planning program. The Program establishes a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas. Program oversight is a joint Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration responsibility.

Program features of the FAST Act include:

- Continuation of all the metropolitan planning requirements that were in effect under MAP-21
- Support for intercity bus and commuter vanpools
 - The FAST Act continues to require metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs) to provide for facilities that enable an intermodal transportation system, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities
 - The FAST Act also requires that the metropolitan long-range plan include identification of public transportation facilities and intercity bus facilities. [23 U.S.C. 134(c)(2) & (i)(2)]
 - 23 CFR 450.316 (a) Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation states, “The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit



WFMPO Public Participation Plan

program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process

- The WFMPO Public Participation Plan recognizes the Wichita Falls Transit System, Sharp Lines (Rolling Plains Management System), Texoma Area Paratransit System (TAPS), and Greyhound Bus Lines as representatives for their respective sectors of operation
- Selection of MPO officials
 - The FAST Act clarifies the representation of a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) according to its bylaws and/or enabling statute. It also changes the selection criteria for MPO officials to:
 - grant a representative of a transit provider authority equal to that of other MPO officials; and
 - allow a representative of a transit provider to represent a local community [23 U.S.C. 134(d)(3)]
- Consultation with other planning officials
 - The FAST Act continues to encourage MPOs to consult with officials responsible for other types of planning activities. It adds to the list of such activities tourism and the reduction of risk of natural disasters. [23 U.S.C. 134(g)(3)(A)]
- Scope of planning process
 - The FAST Act expands the scope of consideration of the metropolitan planning process to include:
 - improving transportation system resiliency and reliability;
 - reducing (or mitigating) the storm water impacts of surface transportation; and
 - enhancing travel and tourism [23 U.S.C. 134(h)(1)(I) & (J)]
- Capital investment and other strategies
 - The FAST Act continues to require a metropolitan transportation plan to include strategies to meet current and projected transportation infrastructure needs. [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(G)]
- Resilience and environmental mitigation activities
 - The FAST Act expands the focus on the resiliency of the transportation system as well as activities to reduce storm water runoff from transportation infrastructure. In addition, it



newly requires strategies to reduce the vulnerability of existing transportation infrastructure to natural disasters. [23 U.S.C. 134(d)(3) & (i)(2)(G)]

- Transportation and transit enhancement activities
 - The FAST Act continues to require a metropolitan transportation plan to include transportation and transit enhancement activities. When proposing these activities, the plan must now include:
 - consideration of the role that intercity buses may play in reducing congestion, pollution, and energy consumption in a cost-effective manner; and
 - strategies and investments that preserve and enhance intercity bus systems (including those that are privately owned and operated [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(2)(H)])
- Participation by interested parties in the planning process
 - The FAST Act explicitly adds public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs to the list of interested parties that an MPO must provide with reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan. [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6)(A)]

Organization of the MPO

The Wichita Falls MPO is the regional transportation planning organization responsible for working with local, state, and federal governments, the private sector, and the region's citizens to plan coordinated transportation systems designed to move people, goods, and services affordably, efficiently and safely throughout the MPO area. The function of the Wichita Falls MPO is to coordinate regional transportation planning between the State of Texas, Wichita and Archer Counties, and the cities of Wichita Falls, Pleasant Valley, and Lakeside City. The major goal of the Wichita Falls MPO is to bring about regional planning under one voice while providing the greatest transportation benefit for all. Other goals include supporting economic vitality, making transportation safer, providing greater access to mobility options, protecting the environment while promoting energy conservation, improving connectivity of the current transportation system, and preserving existing transportation infrastructure. The FAST Act establishes new goals of accelerated project delivery, contribution to the success of the National Highway Freight Program, the creation of new facilities that support intercity transportation, new planning considerations of resiliency/reliability, storm water mitigation, and the enhancement of travel and tourism. The long-range state plans must describe performance measures and targets while each state must account for insufficient progress on freight targets through a reporting process.

The Wichita Falls MPO provides a forum for local input into the expenditure of federal highway, state enhancement, and federal/state transit dollars. Citizens and stakeholders can come together and share ideas and information with the two main bodies that make up the MPO. The first body is the Technical Advisory Committee or TAC, which makes recommendations and reports directly to the second body, the Transportation Policy Committee or TPC. The Technical Advisory Committee is a combination of TxDOT and City planning professionals. The Transportation Policy Committee is responsible for all policy decisions made by the MPO, and is comprised of local and city officials. The TPC establishes all policies, reviews staff



proposals on all phases of the urban transportation planning process, and approves the annual budget and work program for the staff. The TAC and TPC meet on a quarterly basis.

Citizen and stakeholder involvement is very important to the mission of the MPO and we encourage participation wherever possible. Citizens provide information about community attitudes and values. WFMPO takes this information into account in the development of plans, programs, and projects. Public involvement is just one of the terms planners use for gathering information from the public. Other terms include public participation, public outreach, and public engagement. These terms are virtually interchangeable. They are all about ensuring that people have a voice in their transportation systems.

The public includes anyone who resides, works, has an interest in, or does business in a given area potentially affected by transportation decisions, including organized groups. It is important to note that private and public transportation service providers also have the opportunity to participate. Finally, minorities, low-income communities, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, and others usually underserved by transportation systems should be encouraged to participate in transportation planning. Traditionally, these folks experience underservice by existing transportation systems.

The public is a rich source of ideas, full of people who can contribute to improving their transportation systems. Community members intimately know their region's transportation issues and challenges and want to invest their time in seeing short and long-term improvements come to fruition. Full representation includes outreach to all potential participants from transportation agencies at all levels to representation from broad and varied segments of the communities served by the agencies. It is important to reach people who are not used to participating in transportation planning. Transportation systems that reflect the needs of the people those systems serve would not exist without full representation during planning. Community members bring different abilities, needs, and distinctive perspectives on transportation.

It is the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization's (WFMPO) intended purpose to foster greater public involvement in the decision-making process regarding all transportation matters within its discretion. WFMPO wants the citizens of Wichita Falls, Pleasant Valley, and Lakeside City to assist in delineating values, goals, and objectives of transportation-related services and planning documents. Furthermore, it is WFMPO's wish for citizens to participate in the selection of transportation facilities and programs for planning and programming. WFMPO depends on citizens to take on their responsibility of providing feedback regarding plans and programs under WFMPO's authority. Finally, it is a plan objective of WFMPO to adequately provide information to, and solicit input from, the historically underserved community of Wichita and Archer Counties including the elderly, minority groups, youth, disabled, and lower income residents.

Public Participation Plan Goal and Objectives

Plan Goal

The goal of this plan is to define a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation groups, 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, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

WFMPO is committed to developing and maintaining an effective citizen participation process. In order to accomplish this commitment, the MPO will guide the public involvement process by the following principles:

- A. It is the right and responsibility of citizens to be involved in the transportation planning process.
- B. Citizens should be educated about the needs and issues and encouraged to participate in finding solutions.
- C. Early and timely involvement of citizens is necessary to build community agreement on the needs and solutions before alternatives are proposed.
- D. Agreement on the final product is a desirable goal, but agreement does not mean 100 percent unanimity by all parties. Negotiation and compromise are essential ingredients to building agreement.
- E. The process by which the MPO reaches a decision is just as important as the product.
- F. After the MPO makes decisions, actions should follow to maintain confidence in the community involvement process.

Plan Objectives

1. Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Program of Projects (POP), which is used to develop Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program transit grants for the Wichita Falls Transit System
2. Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes
3. Employ visualization techniques to describe Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTP's) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP's)
4. Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web



WFMPO Public Participation Plan

5. Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
6. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program of Projects for transit grants
7. Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges when accessing employment and other services
8. Provide an additional opportunity for public comment if the final Metropolitan Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts
9. Coordinate with other agencies across the state concerning public involvement and consultation processes as they pertain to transportation planning.
10. Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained within this participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

Methods and Strategies

Public Notices

It is important to have proactive public involvement and support early in the transportation planning process. The success of any transportation plan is dependent upon the continuing involvement of the people it should serve. Likewise, the effectiveness of any program or policy plan depends upon its success in meeting the expectations of the public. Planners should reassess plans and programs periodically to determine if they are adequately providing for the public's evolving needs and expectations through the plan. In order to ensure that this occurs, planner must keep the public informed of activities, and must be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development and review of public policy.

To the maximum extent possible, the WFMPO shall provide citizens, stakeholders, affected public agencies and other interested parties with adequate public notice of upcoming public participation activities. The public shall have a reasonable amount of time and opportunity to review and make comments at key decision points concerning the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other appropriate transportation related documents, maps, plans and programs.

WFMPO will publish proper notification of all meetings and hearings in the *Times Record News'* legal section. The City of Wichita Falls' Public Information Office will act as liaison between the WFMPO and the local media by providing public meeting and hearing times, dates and locations of WFMPO sponsored events. For those individuals requesting notification by either email or regular mail, those notifications will go out at least 10 days prior to the event.

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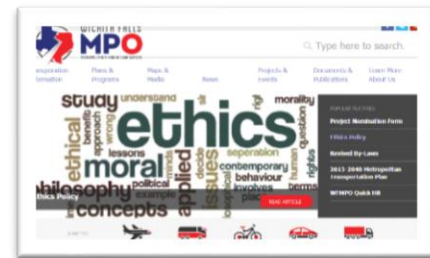
MPO staff will make available to the public all notice and agendas of all WFMPO Board meetings 10 calendar days before they occur. Notification of all Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) Meetings, Public Meetings, and Public Review and Comment Periods will occur at least 72 hours in advance of the meetings. All Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings shall be open meetings. Notification of all regularly scheduled quarterly TAC meetings will post at least 72 hours in advance of the meetings. The MPO Director will call additional TAC meetings as required without providing the notification described above. MPO staff will place agendas on the WFMPO website at <http://www.wfmpo.com> and on its Facebook page at www.facebook.com/wichitafallsmpo.

Public Access

WFMPO is dedicated to using the public involvement process to improve transportation plans by encouraging citizens to provide new information and to articulate priorities. The MPO will help citizens understand tradeoffs so that they may debate the merits of alternatives. The MPO will depend upon guidance from the public to select the best alternative. To accomplish this, the MPO shall develop the alternatives by identifying issues, gathering ideas, developing policies and setting the evaluation criteria.

WFMPPO will provide the public timely notice and reasonable access to technical and policy information used in the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and any other appropriate transportation plans and processes of the WFMPPO. MPO staff will make available copies of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) upon request and shall process those requests within a reasonable amount of time. WFMPPO staff shall be available to provide general plan or project specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups with reasonable notice.

All WFMPPO plans, documents, publications, and work products shall be available for public review at the WFMPPO office and, electronically, at its internet website: <http://www.wfmppo.com>. MPO staff shall update the Internet web site and maintain it to provide the most current and accurate transportation planning information available. At a minimum, the web site shall contain the following information:



- Contact information (mailing address, phone, fax and email)
- Current MPO committee membership
- Meeting calendars and agendas
- Work products and publications (i.e. Transportation Improvement Program, Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, etc.)
- Links to related agencies
- Current By-Laws, Public Involvement Policy and this Public Participation Plan

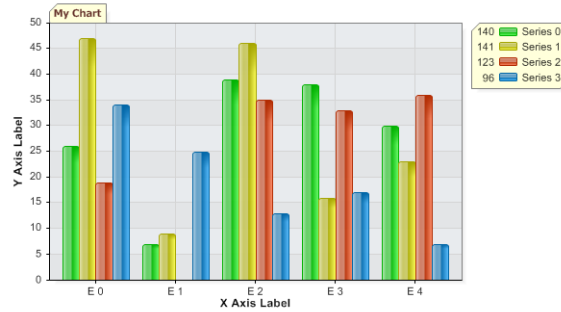
In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings should contact WFMPPO at least three working days prior to the scheduled meeting. All meetings and workshops of the Transportation Policy Committee and its advisory committees shall be held in ADA-compliant venues where and when public transportation is available to encourage participation by Title VI communities. All meetings and workshops of the Transportation Policy Committee and its advisory committees shall be open to the public.

Interactive Visualization Techniques

The average layperson may have difficulty understanding some of the concepts outlined in the various transportation policies, plans, and programs. It is vitally important that WFMPPO communicate these ideas to the public in a manner that is easy to comprehend. Therefore, the MPO shall employ visualization techniques that will make it easier to understand technical planning issues and strategies. Examples of visualization techniques include, but are not limited to:

- Power Point Presentations
- Charts

- Graphs
- Photo Interpretation
- Video Fly-Through
- Maps
- Geographic Information Systems
- Illustrative Drawings
- Physical Models
- Computer Simulations
- Animation
- Flowcharts



Education and Outreach

WFMPO encourages the involvement of all area citizens in the transportation planning process. It is important to interact and seek input from a broad spectrum of interested stakeholders and to inform them of how their involvement has affected a plan. Public participation (or public involvement) in the transportation field is the process through which transportation agencies inform people about and engage people in the transportation decision-making process. Some practitioners describe it as the logical extension of our democratic principles that serve to strengthen our civil society. Although the specifics of public involvement vary greatly by location, the organization leading the effort, and the project or study for which public input is sought, an overriding principle remains—to deliver communication mechanisms between governments and communities they serve. Therefore, whenever practicable, the MPO shall hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times. If feasible, the MPO may hold meetings of the Transportation Policy Committee at night and in locations throughout the Metropolitan Planning Area.

The MPO will create opportunities for all segments of the public to learn about issues and proposals under consideration by WFMPO. Particularly, those who can expect direct affects from the outcome or that may have special needs not well served by the existing transportation system. Therefore, WFMPO shall solicit the needs of those underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to, the transportation disadvantaged, elderly persons, persons with disabilities, and minority and low-income populations.

The MPO will endeavor to provide the public with balanced objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions of a particular project or proposal. WFMPO wants to obtain feedback on analysis of alternatives and/or decisions, work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure it has consistent understanding and consideration of public concerns and aspirations, and partner with the public in each aspect of the decision, including the development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution. Ultimately, it is the goal of the MPO to empower the public by placing part of the final decision-making process in the hands of the public.



WFMPO will accomplish this objective by identifying target audiences for each study or project prioritization conducted by the MPO. This shall include residents, business and property owners and those traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations, including but not limited to, low-income and minority households living within the study area. Adherence to Environmental Justice principles is, and will continue to be, an important part of the transportation planning process.

Public Input

WFMPO values the input it receives from all of its citizens, affected agencies, and stakeholders. It is necessary in the proper development of all transportation plans and programs because it reflects the views and opinions of local populations. The MPO takes a large part of its direction from the public input it receives from area populations. Many times a local citizen or stakeholder will bring to light a new idea or a hidden problem not considered during the formulation of a plan or program. Therefore, WFMPO shall demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and other appropriate transportation plans and programs. The MPO will provide an opportunity for public comment during all public meetings sponsored by the MPO concerning the aforementioned plans and programs prior to any final action taken to adopt or approve said plans or programs. The MPO will respond in writing to public input as needed on a case-by-case basis.

Consideration of public input shall be an integral part of the WFMPO decision-making process. This information exchange between WFMPO and the public is central to the public involvement process. What WFMPO needs the public to understand, and the public input the MPO needs in return, provides the framework for the ensuing engagement effort. This framework influences how the MPO identifies the target audiences for engagement as well as the specific tools and techniques that the MPO will use to facilitate the exchange of information. WFMPO shall conduct public hearings prior to the adoption of the transportation plans and programming for which it is responsible, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, Transit Development Plans and other appropriate transportation improvement priorities, and on substantive amendments and annual updates thereof. WFMPO will ensure the distribution of notices about public hearings go out to media outlets serving minority communities.

Certain plans and programs require a specific review period. These required review periods allow agencies involved in the consultation process and the public to submit written comments to the draft document and supporting material. WFMPO will notify the public of the specific review period required by statute. Furthermore, WFMPO shall provide all significant previously received public comments pertaining to the Transportation Improvement Program and transportation plans, studies, and projects for which WFMPO is responsible to the Transportation Policy Committee prior to any action taken on the planning products that are to be adopted or amended.

WFMPO shall provide an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final Metropolitan Transportation Plan or TIP differs significantly from the version made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts. If WFMPO receives significant written and oral comments on draft plans and programs because of the public involvement process or interagency consultation, a summary analysis and report on the disposition of comments shall be included in the final plans or programs.



WFMPO shall provide a public comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of this Public Participation Plan and/or any amendments. MPO staff will advertise a notice of the comment period in a newspaper of general circulation and various other publications prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period. MPO staff will also mail a notice to the entire MPO mailing list prior to the start of the 45-day comment period.

WFMPO will provide a public comment period of not less than 30 days prior to the adoption of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, and other appropriate transportation plans and programs. The MPO will also provide a public comment period of not less than 10 days for any formal amendments or updates, to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program and Transit Development Plans and other appropriate transportation plans and projects. For purposes of defining formal amendments, the definition will be any changes to the project scope and/or project costs exceeding fifty percent (50%) and/or resulting in an increase of \$1.5 million of the original estimated federal costs and/or project physical limits or project termini.

Coordination and Consultation

WFMPO shall coordinate the Public Participation Process with statewide Public Participation Processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and to reduce redundancies and costs. Consultation and coordination with Federal, State, Tribal and Local agencies and all interested parties concerning the new transportation planning factors for increased safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users will be considered during plan development. WFMPO will incorporate elements from the Texas Strategic Highway Safety Plan into WFMPO's Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

WFMPO shall solicit input from all interested parties concerning safety/security goals, objectives, performance measures, and strategies. The MPO will make available adequate safety and security data to support development of a safety and security element in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. The MPO will develop security goals and appropriate strategies in consultation with all interested parties.

Federal legislation encourages the MPO to consult with other planning officials responsible for other types of planning activities affected by transportation in the area including State and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movements. In addition, the MPO's metropolitan planning process will serve to promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns as part of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan update. WFMPO shall identify State and Local agencies responsible for growth and economic development and will include these entities in the development of the MTP and TIP.

As part of the development of a Metropolitan Transportation Plan update, federal legislation requires discussion of different types of mitigation within the 20-year planning document along with potential sites to carry out the activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the plan. The MPO shall develop this discussion of potential environmental mitigation in consultation with Federal, State, and Tribal wildlife, land management, and regulatory agencies.



In conformance with this Public Participation Plan’s objective to coordinate with other agencies across the state concerning public involvement and consultation processes, as they pertain to transportation planning, WFMPO shall identify and consult, as appropriate, with Federal, State Tribal, wildlife, land management and regulatory agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, and conservation and historic preservation concerning the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP. The consultation shall involve as appropriate – (i) comparison of the long-range transportation plans with State conservation plans or maps, if available; or (ii) comparison of long-range transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources, if available.

This MPO developed its Public Participation Plan in consultation with all interested parties and provided all interested parties with reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, TIP updates, and major revisions.

Public Participation Plan Evaluation

Introduction

The Federal Highway Administration and the Texas Department of Transportation require that the Wichita Falls Metropolitan Planning Organization (WFMPO) continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its public involvement activities. By continually evaluating public involvement activities, it is possible to improve or add new public involvement activities to the MPO program and to discontinue ineffective activities. Evaluation serves multiple purposes as a part of an overall public participation strategy. First, it provides evidence of the achievement of public involvement activities and their tangible results. Second, evaluation helps agencies know if they have attained their stated goals. Third, it demonstrates the effective and efficient use of allocated resources. Fourth, it gives an understanding of why outcomes occurred and the value gained through public involvement. Finally, and perhaps most importantly, it identifies which elements of the program are working and which are not. When done throughout the process, evaluation also allows adjustments to the engagement strategy to achieve the desired outcome.

The purpose of this section of the Public Participation Plan is to provide guidelines for the evaluation of public involvement techniques. The MPO’s public involvement activities outlined in this Participation Plan include descriptions of various public involvement techniques for possible use by the MPO. MPO staff should review this plan at least every three years and implement the appropriate changes. WFMPO will advertise any significant changes to the MPO’s Public Involvement Procedures and make them available for 45 days for public review and comment before final adoption.

Improvement Strategy

The MPO continues to strive for improved public involvement. WFMPO will make improvements to increase public awareness and to improve the quantity and quality of information provided to the public. The decisions made by the MPO affect the entire population, both residents and visitors, of the cities Pleasant Valley, Lakeside City, the City of Wichita Falls, and surrounding areas. Therefore, seeking public input on those decisions is vital to the success of the MPO as the agency responsible for transportation planning. Each time the MPO performs a public involvement evaluation, it will identify a list of

improvement strategies for implementation. If there is need for improvement for an ongoing public involvement task, such as the MPO web site, MPO staff will establish a reasonable completion date.

Evaluation Methodology

WFMPO will use the following five recommended performance measures to evaluate on a regular basis the Public Involvement Procedures.

1. The accessibility of the outreach process to serve diverse geographic, language and ability needs
2. The extent or reach of the process in involving and informing as many members of the public as possible
3. The diversity of participants in the outreach process and its ability to reflect the broad range of ethnicities, incomes and special needs of residents in the WFMPO region
4. The impact of public outreach and involvement on the plan/program and on policy board actions
5. The satisfaction with the outreach process expressed by participants

For each of these five performance measures, there is a set of quantifiable indicators. MPO staff will apply them, as appropriate, to each plan or program's level of requirements.

Accessibility Indicators: Hold meetings at easily accessible locations within the county. All meetings are to be accessible under Americans with Disability Act requirements. Determine if meetings are linguistically accessible to 100 percent of participants with three working days' advance request for translation. *(Meeting announcements will offer translation services with advance notice to participants speaking any language with reasonably available professional translation services.)*

Reach Indicators: Analyze the number of comments received and kept on file; the number of individuals actively participating in outreach program; the number of visits to the Public Participation Plan/Public Involvement Policy section of the WFMPO Web site; the number of newspaper articles mentioning transportation plans and programs; and the number of radio/television interviews or mentions on the plans and programs.

Diversity Indicators: Determine if demographics of targeted workshop/meeting roughly mirror the demographics of the WFMPO region; the percentage of targeted organizations and groups participating in at least one workshop/meeting; and the participants representing a cross-section of people of various interests, places of residence and primary modes of travel.

Impact Indicators: Record, analyze, summarize, and communicate all written comments received in time for consideration by staff and the policy board. Acknowledge significant written comments so that the person making them knows whether their comment reflects in the outcome of a policy board action, or, conversely, why the policy board acted differently.

Participant Satisfaction: *(MPO staff would obtain this information via an online and written survey available on the WFMPO web site, and at each workshop/public meeting involving the plan or program in question).*

Appendix A: Legal and Display Ad Minimum Requirements

Procedures

Section 551.041 of the Texas Government Code provides that "[a] governmental body shall give written notice of the date, hour, place, and subject of each meeting held by the governmental body." Most of the questions about notification concern the adequacy of the subject. The notice must identify the subjects of all deliberations, including those that may take place in executive session. The notice must be sufficient to inform the general public of the subjects to be considered, and if a subject is of particular interest to the community, more specificity may be required."¹ Some people refer to this section as the Texas Open Meetings Act of 1967.

The basic legal notice should include:

- Date, time, and place of public hearing or meeting
- Identity of the hearing body or officer
- General explanation of the matter to be considered
- General description, in text or by diagram, of the location of the real property, if any, that is the subject of the hearing or meeting
- The following statement when appropriate – "Individuals with disabilities may contact WFMPO to request auxiliary aids necessary to participate in the public meeting/hearing."

Public notices of all TPC Meetings and MPO Public Meetings should post at least 72 hours before regular meetings or 24 hours before special called meetings. Notification will post in the following locations and media venues:

- Times Record News
- City of Wichita Falls Memorial Auditorium
- Wichita County Courthouse
- Archer County Courthouse
- Local Public Access Cable Television (Channel 11)
- Martin Luther King Center
- Other groups or organizations that reasonably identified that may increase public involvement, including low income and minority populations.

¹ *Texas Open Meetings Act*, Office of the Attorney General, State of Texas, Internet page: http://www.oag.state.tx.us/opinopen/og_faqs.shtml



All Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meetings shall be open meetings. Notification of all regularly scheduled quarterly TAC meetings shall post at the following locations at least 72 hours in advance of the meetings:

- City of Wichita Falls Memorial Auditorium
- Wichita County Courthouse
- Archer County Courthouse
- Local Public Access Cable Television (Channel 11)
- Martin Luther King Center

The MPO Director will call additional TAC meetings as required without providing the notification described above.

Summary Participation Policy Table

The following table summarizes the times required for various meetings and or procedures.

Program Adoption	Public Hearing	Comment Period	Remarks
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	Yes	30 Days	MPO staff will provide a summary of all oral or written comments to the TPC and make them available for public review.
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Yes	30 Days	
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Yes	45 Days	MPO staff will expand outreach activities as opportunities permit.
Program Amendments			
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	Yes	10 Days	N/A
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Yes	10 Days	N/A
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	N/A	45 Days	N/A
Open Meetings		Public Meeting	
Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)	Quarterly, at the end of the month	N/A	MPO staff will change dates, times and locations as needed.
Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)	Quarterly, at the first of the month	N/A	MPO staff will change dates, times and locations as needed.



Additional Public Information		
Technical Assistance	Provided daily	MPO Staff responds to comments and requests through an ongoing process
Staff Presentations	As Needed	Available to address groups or individuals as needed
Publications	N/A	Annual Project Listing, MTP, TIP, Annual Performance & Expenditure Report, UPWP and other brochures and studies
Website	N/A	Electronic accessibility for agendas, schedules, documents and other information

Appendix B: Commonly Used Terms and Acronyms

ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990: Federal law that requires public facilities (including transportation services) to be accessible to persons with disabilities including those with mental disabilities, temporary disabilities, and the conditions related to substance abuse.

ADT – Average Daily Traffic: The number of vehicles passing a fixed point in a day, averaged over a number of days. The number of count days included in the average varies with the intended use of data.

AMPO – Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations: A national nonprofit membership organization serving the interests of metropolitan planning organizations nationwide

AVO – Average Vehicle Occupancy: The ratio of person trips to vehicle trips; often used as a criteria in judging the success of trip reduction programs.

AVR – Average Vehicle Ridership: The number of employees scheduled to start work during specified hours divided by the number of vehicles arriving at the site during those same hours.

CAAA – Clean Air Act Amendments: 1990 amendments to the federal Clean Air Act, which classify non-attainment areas and provide for rules dealing with air pollution in such areas; specifically brought transportation decisions into the context of air quality control.

CIA – Community Impact Assessment: Community impact assessment is “a process to evaluate the effects of a transportation action on a community and its quality of life.” It is a way to incorporate community considerations into the planning and development of major transportation projects. From a policy perspective, it is a process for assessing the social and economic impacts of transportation projects as required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The assessment may address a variety of important community issues such as land development, aesthetics, mobility, neighborhood cohesion, safety, relocation, and economic impacts.

CMAQ – Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program: A categorical funding program created under ISTEA, which directs funding to projects that contribute to meeting national air quality standards in non-attainment areas for ozone and carbon monoxide.

CMP – Congestion Management Process: A systematic process required under SAFETEA-LU for all TMAs that shall address congestion management through the metropolitan planning process that provides for effective management and operation, based on a cooperatively developed and implemented metropolitan-wide strategy of new and existing transportation facilities eligible for funding under title 23 and chapter 53 of title 49 through the use of travel demand reduction and operational management strategies. The CMP is required under 23 CFR 500.109 and shall include methods to monitor and evaluate the performance of the multi-modal transportation system, identify causes of congestion, identify and evaluate alternative actions, provide information supporting the implementation of actions, and evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of implementation actions. The CMP is periodically reviewed for efficiency and effectiveness of the implemented strategies, the results of this evaluation shall be provided to decision-makers to provide guidance on selection of effective strategies for future implementation purposes.



DOT – Department of Transportation: The Agency responsible for transportation at the local, state, or federal level. For title 23 U.S.C. federal-aid highway actions, this would mean the Federal Highway Administration and for federal-aid transit actions under title 49 U.S.C, this would mean the Federal Transit Administration.

EIS – Environmental Impact Statement: A National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document that explains the purpose and need for a project, presents project alternatives, analyzes the likely impact of each, explains the choice of a preferred alternative, and finally details measures to be taken in order to mitigate the impacts of the preferred alternative.

Environmental Justice: Describes the impact of transportation plans or projects, either positive or negative, on a particular community or population. Derived from Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Environmental Justice strives to ensure public involvement of low income and minority groups in decision making, to prevent disproportionately high and adverse impacts on low income and minority groups, and to assure that these groups receive equal benefits from transportation improvements.

FHPP – Federal High Priority Projects: Discretionary projects earmarked by the U.S. Congress as high priorities at the federal level during the Congressional appropriations and re-authorization process. This amounts to roughly 5% of the total transportation budget.

FHWA – Federal Highway Administration: Division of the U.S. Department of Transportation responsible for administrating federal highway transportation programs under title 23 U.S.C.

Fiscal Constraint: A requirement, originally of ISTEA, that all plans be financially constrained, balanced expenditures to reasonably expected sources of funding over the period of the TIP or Long-Range Transportation Plan.

FTA – Federal Transit Administration: The Federal entity responsible for transit planning and programs under title 49 U.S.C.

Functional Classification: Functional classification is the process by which streets and highways are grouped into classes, or systems, according to the character of service they are intended to provide. Basic to this process is the recognition that individual roads and streets do not serve travel independently in any major way. Rather, most travel involves movement through a network of roads. It becomes necessary then to determine how this travel can be channelized within the network in a logical and efficient manner. Functional classification defines the nature of this channelization process by defining the part that any particular road or street should play in serving the flow of trips through a highway network.

FY – Fiscal Year: A federal fiscal or budget year; runs from October 1 through September 30 for the MPO and the federal government.

HOV – High Occupancy Vehicle: In Texas, vehicles carrying two (2) or more people receive this designation and may travel on freeways, expressways and other large volume roads in lanes designated for high occupancy vehicles.

IMS – Incident Management System: A systematic process required under SAFETEA-LU to provide information on accidents and identify causes and improvements to the Transportation system to increase safety of all users.



ITE – Institute of Transportation Engineers: An international society of professionals in transportation and traffic engineering; publishes Trip Generation (a manual of trip generation rates by land use type).

ITS – Intelligent Transportation System: Use of computer and communications technology to facilitate the flow of information between travelers and system operators to improve mobility and transportation productivity, enhance safety, maximize the use of existing transportation facilities, conserve energy resources and reduce adverse environmental effects; includes concepts such as “freeway management systems,” “automated fare collection” and “transit information kiosks.” Intergovernmental Agreement: Legal instrument describing tasks to be accomplished and/or funds to be paid between government agencies.

LOS – Level of Service: A qualitative assessment of a road’s operating condition, generally described using a scale of A (little congestion) to E/F (severe congestion).

MG – Minimum Guarantee: A funding category created in TEA-21 that guarantees a 90% return of contributions on formula funds to every state.

MPO Activities: Are plans, programs and projects related to the MPO process.

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization: The forum for cooperative transportation decision-making; required for urbanized areas with populations over 50,000.

MTP – Metropolitan Transportation Plan: A 25- year forecast plan required of state planning agencies and MPO’s; which must consider a wide range of social, environmental, energy, and economic factors in determining overall regional goals and consider how transportation can best meet these goals.

NHS – National Highway System: Specific major roads to be designated September 30, 1995; the NHS will consist of 155,000 (plus or minus 15%) miles of road and represents one category of roads eligible for federal funds under ISTEA.

Officials: Are people who have governmental decision-making, planning or administrative responsibilities that relate to MPO activities.

PMS – Pavement Management System: A systematic process utilized by state agencies and MPO’s to analyze and summarize pavement information for use in selecting and implementing cost-effective pavement construction, rehabilitation, and maintenance programs; required for roads in the National Highway System as a part of ISTEA; the extent to which the remaining public roads are included in the process is left to the discretion of state and local officials; criteria found in 23 CFR 500.021-209.

PTMS – Public Transportation Facilities and Equipment Management System: A systematic process (required under ISTEA) utilized by state agencies and MPO’s to collect and analyze information on the condition and cost of transit assets on a continual basis; data is to be used to help people choose cost effective strategies for providing and keeping transit facilities and equipment in good condition; process must be developed in Transportation Management Areas (TMA’s); the use of CMS in non-TMA’s is left to the discretion of state and local officials.

Public Participation: Is an integral part of a planning or major decision-making process. It provides opportunities for the public to be involved with the MPO in an exchange of data and ideas. Citizen



participation offers an open process in which the rights of the community, to be informed to provide comments to the Government and to receive a response from the Government, are met through a full opportunity to be involved and to express needs and goals.

ROW – Right-of-Way: Real property that is used for transportation purposes; defines the extent of the corridor that can be used for the road and associated drainage.

RTDM – Regional Travel Demand Model: This is a tool for forecasting impacts of urban developments on travel patterns as well as testing various transportation alternative solutions to traffic patterns. The travel patterns are determined from US census results and in simple terms tell where residents live and where they go to work or school on a regional wide basis.

SIB – State Infrastructure Bank: Method of financing large capital projects by taking advantage of borrowing against future state revenues.

Sponsoring Agencies: Are organizations or governmental units, which enter into agreements with the MPO to undertake transportation related activities, which will be part of the MPO planning process.

SMP – Statewide Mobility Plan: TxDOT’s 10 year plan for adding capacity to the transportation system using the Mobility Category Funds of Federal and State Transportation funding.

SPP – Statewide Preservation Plan: TxDOT’s 10 year plan for maintaining the Transportation system using the preservation categories of Federal and State Transportation funding.

STIP – State Transportation Improvement Program: The TxDOT Five Year Work Program as prescribed by federal law.

TAC – Technical Advisory Committee: A standing committee of most metropolitan planning organizations (MPO’s); function is to provide advice on plans or actions of the MPO from planners, engineers and other staff members (not general citizens).

TCI – Texas Congestion Index: This is an index to measure the magnitude of congestion in a single performance measure across the state. The index measures the mobility of people and goods in each Texas metropolitan area, with attention to the delay time experienced by drivers.

TMMP – Texas Metropolitan Mobility Plan: This is a state based requirement intended to serve as a framework for identifying unmet transportation needs in the state’s larger metropolitan areas. The TMMP is a needs-based plan which quantifies transportation needs beyond the fiscal constraint barrier.

TPC – Transportation Policy Committee: A standing committee created for the purpose of serving as spokespersons for the citizens of the metropolitan area and as the designated MPO to prioritize and direct federal transportation funds for local projects. The TPC is comprised of elected and non elected officials from the cities of Wichita Falls, Pleasant Valley and Lakeside City and Wichita County in the urbanized area. The TPC also has representatives from TxDOT. The TPC is responsible for creating policies regarding transportation planning issues. The TPC meetings are open to the public and any member of the public can address the MPO on any transportation issue.

Transportation Acts: Below is the chronology of congressionally approved transportation authorization legislation since 1991.



- **ISTEA – Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991:** Federal law which restructured transportation planning and funding by requiring consideration of multimodal solutions, emphasis on the movement of people and goods as opposed to traditional highway investments, flexibility in the use of transportation funds, a greater role of MPOs, and a greater emphasis on public participation. ISTEA lasted until 1997. It was replaced by TEA-21 in 1998.
- **TEA-21 – Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century:** Federal Legislation authorizing funds for all modes of transportation and guidelines on the use of those funds. The successor to ISTEA in 1998, this landmark legislation clarified the role of the MPO’s in the local priority setting process. TEA-21 emphasizes increased public involvement, simplicity, flexibility, fairness, and higher funding levels for transportation. TEA-21 lasted until 2003.
- **SAFETEA-LU – Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users** - legislation enacted August 10, 2005, as Public Law 109-59. SAFETEA-LU authorizes the Federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period 2005-2009.
- **MAP-21 – Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century:** is the funding and authorization bill governing United States federal surface transportation spending from 2012 to 2015. Congress passed this federal law on June 29, 2012. President Barack Obama signed it into law on July 6, 2012.
- **FAST – Fixing Americas Surface Transportation Act of 2015:** is the funding and authorization bill governing United States federal surface transportation spending from 2015 to 2020. Congress passed the federal law on December 3, 2015. President Barack Obama signed it into law December 4, 2015.

Transportation Disadvantaged: People who are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation due to disability, income status or age.

Transportation Enhancements: Specific activities which can be funded with Surface Transportation Program (STP) funds; activities include pedestrian/bicycle facilities, acquisition of scenic easements and scenic historic sites, scenic or historic highway programs, scenic beautification, historic preservation, rehabilitation/operation of historic transportation structures, railway corridor preservation, control/removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning/research and mitigation of highway runoff water pollution.

The Public: Includes citizens, public agencies, advocacy groups and the private sectors that have an interest in or may be affected by MPO activities.

TIP – Transportation Improvement Program: A priority list of transportation projects developed by a metropolitan planning organization that is to be carried out within the four (4) year period following its adoption; must include documentation of federal and state funding sources for each project and be consistent with adopted MPO Long-Range transportation plans and local government comprehensive plans.

TMA – Transportation Management Area: An area designated by the U.S. Department of Transportation given to all urbanized areas with a population over 200,000 (or other area when requested by the Governor and MPO); these areas must comply with special transportation planning requirements



regarding congestion management systems, project selection and certification; requirements identified in 23 CFR - 450.300-33.6.

TSM – Transportation Systems Management: Strategies to improve the efficiency of the transportation system through operational improvements such as the use of bus priority or reserved lanes, signalization, access management, turn restrictions, etc.

TTI – Texas Transportation Institute: A legislatively created research center, located at Texas A & M University, whose purpose is to conduct and facilitate research and serve as an information exchange on issues related to urban transportation problems in Texas.

TxDOT – Texas Department of Transportation: State agency responsible for transportation issues in Texas.

UTP – Unified Transportation Plan: This is the state’s 10 year Transportation Plan with the first 10 years programmed and the second 15 years of projects under design. This document has two parts. The two parts are: The SMP and SPP respectively.

UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program: Developed by Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO’s); identifies all transportation and planning activities anticipated within the next one to two years, including a schedule for the completion of the identified tasks and activities.

V/C Ratio – Volume over Capacity Ratio: This is a roadway performance measure to show how a highway volume compares with a highway’s capacity.

VMT – Vehicle Miles Traveled: This is an output of the travel demand model and is a measure of traffic flow over a highway segment. While 1000 vehicles traveling over a mile road and 1 vehicle traveling over 1000 miles are mathematically equal only the former 1000 vehicle miles means anything to the transportation planner.