



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

LAREDO URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

UPDATED: May 15, 2017



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GENERAL

The Laredo Urban Transportation Study serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Laredo urban area. The purpose of the MPO is to provide continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for the area. The most recent highway legislation “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) of 2015” continues the legacy of greater public involvement that began with the passage of the “Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) of 1998”, the “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005”, and the “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) of 2012”, which all emphasized the need for public participation throughout the metropolitan and statewide transportation planning process. The Final Rule issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration reflecting the passage of MAP 21 and the FAST Act was approved on May 27, 2016. MPO’s are required to conduct a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early, and on-going public involvement in developing plans, programs, policies and procedures.

POLICY

It is the policy of the MPO to provide every opportunity for the involvement of individuals in the transportation planning process in conformance with the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316 (a) for the purposes of:

- Providing opportunity for input from: 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 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, hereafter referred to as segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects.
- Providing early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process;
- Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information concerning transportation issues and processes to area residents, 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;
- Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households;

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- Providing adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including the approval of plans and programs;
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development process.
- Providing for the employment of visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs.

SUMMARY OF COMMENT PERIOD AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Table 1 – Summary of public comment periods and notice requirements for policy, procedure, and program documents

Document	Comment Period	Notices
By Laws – revisions	10 days	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
Public Participation Plan – initial adoption	45 days	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
Public Participation Plan – revisions	45 day	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – initial adoption	20 days	5 days - Summary published in newspaper 72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
UPWP - revisions	0	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – initial adoption	20 days**	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
TIP – revisions	10 days**	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – initial adoption	20 days**	90 days - Nomination form in newspaper and on website 72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)
MTP - revisions	10 days**	72 hours advance notice postings* Policy packet - 7 days (mail) or 5 days (hand delivered)

* 72 hour advance notice postings will include: Posting at the Laredo City Hall and the Webb County Commissioners Court Building, emailing to the MPO interested party contact list, and publishing in the local English and Spanish language newspapers (the Laredo Morning Times and El Manana) in summary form in both English and Spanish prior to meeting in which final action will be taken.

** If comments are received during the comment period, which raise material issues that could not have reasonably been foreseen prior to the comment period; a second comment period of 10 days shall be added.

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REQUIREMENTS

Posting

Notice of meetings held by MPO staff for the purpose of securing public comment and all meetings of the Policy Committee shall be posted not less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting in the form and manner prescribed by the Texas Open Meetings Act at the Laredo City Hall and the Webb County Commissioners Court Building. Additionally, the notice may be posted at the Texas Department of Transportation Laredo District Office, El Metro Operations Facility, and on the MPO and Webb County website. Notice placed at the El Metro Operations Facility shall be located in a place and manner readily accessible to transit employees for the purpose of giving notice to employee union members.

Newspaper Publication

Notice of the proposed adoption or revision to any policy, procedure, plan or program requiring Policy Committee action shall be published in summary form in English and Spanish in one or more newspapers of general circulation in Laredo, Texas not less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting in which final action will be taken. Notice shall also be emailed 72 hours in advance to those listed on the interested party contact list maintained by the MPO. The notice shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the person who may be contacted regarding the proposed item. The notice shall include the location at which technical information and reports are available for review.

Meeting

All public meetings of the MPO Policy Committee shall be held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and recorded on audio or video tape for broadcast on the public access channel, and streaming on the web. Minutes of public meetings shall be prepared by MPO staff and shall constitute the official record of the proceedings. MPO staff shall prepare a meeting packet that includes the meeting agenda and action items for consideration by the Policy Committee. The meeting packet will be mailed to Policy Committee members 7 days prior to the meeting date or hand delivered 5 days prior to the meeting date.

Meetings held for the purpose of securing public comment shall be held at convenient and accessible times and locations. The meetings will be held within a reasonable distance of an El Metro route. Persons attending public meetings conducted by the MPO will be asked to register on a sign-in sheet.

It is the intent of LUTS to provide access to all individuals interested in attending MPO meetings. Groups or people with special needs who wish to attend a meeting should give MPO staff 5 working days in advance of the meeting in order that MPO staff may reasonably accommodate their special needs.

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Retention of Documents

All official meeting materials, including but not limited to notices, newspaper publications, minutes, sign-in sheets, audio/video tapes, documents proposed for adoption or revision, and written comments received during public review and comment periods shall be retained by the MPO for a minimum of three years, or longer if required by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

Public Review and Comment

The adoption or revision of certain documents may require a 10, 20 or 45 day public review and comment period prior to final action by the Policy Committee. The public review and comment period shall be initiated through action of the Policy Committee following a presentation on the proposed plan, program, policy or procedure. When a public review and comment period is required, the MPO shall make available at its offices and on its website a copy of the document. The public may review the document at the MPO offices during normal working hours and, when possible, staff will be available to answer questions. Written comments received during the public review and comment period will be presented to the Policy Committee prior to final action on the plan, program, policy or procedure being considered.

When significant written and oral comments are received during the MTP or TIP public participation process they will be summarized, analyzed, and accompanied with a description of how they were addressed in the applicable document.

ADOPTION AND REVISION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS

Initial Adoption

The adoption of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 20 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. A project nomination form will be published in a newspaper of general circulation and be made available through the Internet at least 90 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Presentations on the proposed MTP shall be made to the Laredo City Council and the Laredo MPO prior to the public review and comment period. Written comments and project nomination forms received during the public review and comment period regarding the draft MTP will be incorporated into the final document.

The MTP and TIP shall include at least one map designating the conceptual limits of project locations. The initial adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 20 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. A summary of the proposed UPWP will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 5 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee.

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Revisions

Substantive revisions to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 10 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Substantive revisions to all other planning and programming documents, including but not limited to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) do not require a public review and comment period, but must be approved by the Policy Committee.

Substantive revisions include any changes to a plan or program that consist of the addition, deletion or substitution of projects, changes to a project's scope and reprogramming of projects outside of the plan or program's scope. MPO staff may request action by the Policy Committee for non-substantive revisions to any plan or program. Any revisions shall be set out in full and indicate any portion to be deleted by strike-out type and indicate proposed new language by underscoring or the use of italics.

ADOPTION AND REVISION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The initial adoption or revision of the Public Participation Plan shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 45 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee.

Continuous improvement of the public participation process is a goal of LUTS. In striving towards that goal, this public participation plan shall be updated as needed and re-approved every five years. The purpose of this action shall be to ensure that the plan effectively allows for a full and open public participation process.

Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Contact List

The MPO shall maintain an interested parties contact list (email) of groups and individuals which have expressed interest in transportation planning activities, including state, county and local government officials, news media, special interest groups, and transportation providers who will be provided periodic updates concerning planning activities as well as meeting notices.

In the development of the metropolitan plan and TIPs, the MPO shall seek to consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements. 23 CFR 450.316(b)

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Measures of Effectiveness

The MPO will periodically collect and evaluate demographic data from meeting attendees in order to determine the effectiveness of the MPO's public outreach efforts. The type of data to be collected may include: zip code, gender, age, occupation, income range, and/or how the attendee became aware of the meeting.

Public Appearances

The MPO shall make every effort to comply with requests from local civic or professional groups, organizations or committees to present or discuss information related to the responsibilities of the MPO. The organization should contact the MPO and allow ample time for the MPO to make arrangements and attend.

The MPO may schedule appearances at meetings of groups such as neighborhood organizations to gather input from residents. Such meetings shall serve as an avenue through which the MPO seeks out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved segments of the population, including low-income and minority households. The focus of these presentations should be tailored to the interests and concerns of the audience. All significant comments received will be recorded and presented to the Policy Committee.