

DRAFT

Monroe Urbanized Area

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Prepared by the

Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Which is a body of the

North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc.



Prepared in Cooperation with

The MPO Technical Advisory Committee
and
The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Adopted by the

MPO Transportation Policy Committee Date: November 30, 2009

Amended: February 25, 2019

Draft: June 26, 2023

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Introduction

Purpose

This plan outlines the public participation goals and techniques used in The Public Participation Plan of the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization and programming processes. This plan revises the previous plan, dated 2019. The revised plan reflects the Monroe Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) ongoing commitment to actively evaluate and improve the public involvement process and to ensure compliance with updated Federal requirements.

The goal of the plan is to provide opportunities for citizens to contribute ideas and voice opinions, early and often, during the preparation of draft plans and programs. It is of utmost importance to the Monroe MPO that information, education, and participation are assured to the citizens affected by our planning efforts. The Monroe MPO's public participation process satisfies the City of Monroe's public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).

Background

The Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization (Monroe MPO) is housed under the parent organization of North Delta Regional Planning and Development District Inc. (North Delta RPDD). The Ouachita Council of Governments (OCOG), which is a division of North Delta RPDD, is the designated MPO for the Monroe Urbanized Area. North Delta RPDD is a public, nonprofit organization servicing municipalities and public service agencies in the following Northeast Parishes: Jackson, Union, Morehouse, Caldwell, Richland, West and East Carroll, Madison, Tensas, Franklin, and Ouachita Parish. In addition, programs conducted by North Delta RPDD's professional staff of planners, economic development specialists, and others are as follows:

- Transportation and land-use planning (OCOG, FHWA, FTA, Safety, Reapportionment, etc.),

- Economic Development & Community Services (EDA, grantsmanship, site-selection database - [Invest North Delta](#), ED marketing, DRA, etc.),
- Planning and Community Services (DOT, Small Business Loan Program,)
- Mapping (GIS, U.S. census, data-gathering)

North Delta PRDD strengthens local government by establishing unity in dealing with federal and state agencies and legislative bodies. It has provided technical assistance to local governments on regional concerns such as water, air, and transportation priority goals.

Legislation such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA 21), and the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) have not only placed new demands on local governments but also given them new vehicles for development. One vehicle is an enhanced community involvement role in the planning process. The ISTEA underlined the need for an increase in the public's ability to affect what decisions are being made in their community. The U.S. Congress reaffirmed that assertion in the TEA 21 legislation it adopted in 1998. SAFETEA-LU further affirms the need for meaningful public input from all relevant parts of the community. The nation's MPOs have been charged with enriching the transportation planning process with greater public awareness and involvement.

By increasing the dialogue between the decision-makers and the public, better plans, which include the citizens as stakeholders, will be produced. The Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization looks to enhance the public's role as a partner in transportation planning. Early knowledge about transportation changes is a goal of the Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Core Planning Responsibilities

North Delta RPDD is responsible for four major transportation plans and programs: the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program

(TIP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): The MTP is a long-range (25-year) multimodal strategy and capital improvement program developed to guide the effective investment of public funds in transportation facilities. The MTP is updated every five years and may be amended due to changes in projected federal, state, and local funding; major investment studies; congestion management system plans; interstate interchange justification studies; and environmental impact studies.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The TIP is a four-year program that lists all regionally significant and federally funded projects and services in the MPO planning area such as highway and street projects, public transit projects, and bicycle/pedestrian enhancements. Projects that are included in the TIP must be consistent with or be selected from an approved MTP. Additionally, the TIP must be fiscally constrained or have funding mechanisms already in place for all projects and strategies. The TIP can be amended due to changes in funding or need. Administrative modifications to the TIP do not require a specific public participation plan, but these modifications are discussed in public meetings where comments are accepted. The TIP is updated every four years.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): The UPWP is a one-year document developed by MPO staff to focus work efforts and planning funds anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. All federally funded planning activities are required to be in the UPWP and must be developed through required planning factors. The UPWP is reviewed and discussed at the regularly scheduled TAC and Policy Committee meetings.

Public Participation Plan (PPP): The PPP identifies the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's programming processes and public participation methods, the strategies for public engagement and outreach, and state and federal regulations regarding public participation. The PPP is evaluated annually and updated every five (5) years.

North Delta RPDD also maintains a **Title VI Non-Discrimination Plan**. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or

national origin under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, while Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, entitled “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” further extends Title VI protections to low-income populations.

Public Participation Planning Goals

The goal of the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization's Public Participation Plan is to provide opportunities for citizens/stakeholders to contribute ideas and voice opinions during the preparation of draft plans and programs. The plan aims to ensure compliance with federal requirements, actively evaluate and improve the public involvement process, and facilitate information, education, and participation for the citizens affected by planning efforts.

Requirements for Public Involvement Processes

The “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act” (FAST Act), signed into law on December 4, 2015, contains specific language outlining federal requirements regarding public involvement processes and procedures.

In general, the FAST Act legislation built upon previous transportation legislation (ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU, and MAP-21) to provide states and metropolitan planning organizations specific direction in conducting and promoting broad-based public involvement activities. The FAST Act (Public Law 114-94) requires metropolitan planning organizations to 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, 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. Resulting plans and processes are developed through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process.

In addition, the Public Involvement Plan shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties and should describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for public participation. Beyond the federal requirements, participation by citizens-affected public agencies, community groups, and other interested parties is an important part of a successful public planning program. OCOG actively encourages the participation of all.

Federal Public Participation Requirements

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) federal surface transportation funding and authorization bill was signed in 2022 and continues to support previous federal public participation guidelines. MPOs are required to develop a PPP identifying reasonable opportunities for the public and all interested stakeholders to be involved in and comment on the contents of the long-range MTP and TIP.

The BIL also requires that MPOs identify a broad and inclusive list of stakeholders that must be provided the opportunity to comment and be involved in the planning process. The stakeholders included are the public, affected government agencies, transportation disadvantaged populations, providers of transportation, and more. MPOs are also required to coordinate with the statewide transportation planning, public participation, and consultation processes.

Additionally, the BIL also requires that MPOs conduct public meetings at convenient and accessible locations at convenient times, use visualizations such as maps and charts to help describe plans, and make public information available in electronically accessible formats.

Key Components

The *Public Participation Plan* of the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization includes three major components: **Community Dialogue, Public Meetings, and Review and Comment.**

Community Dialogue

Every opportunity will be taken to distribute information to the public. Information will be distributed to the media and local interest groups via fact sheets, brochures, e-mail notifications, social media etc. Notices for upcoming meetings and public involvement activities will be published in the Monroe News Star and on the North Delta RPDD website (information about OCOG and resources can be found on the North Delta RPDD website). The MPO staff will maintain a list of interested parties who wish to be notified of any upcoming events or actions regarding the transportation planning process.

Presentations to neighborhood groups, civic organizations, governmental meetings, and other special interest groups will be made on an as-requested basis to discuss transportation activities within the Monroe Urbanized Area. Interested organizations should contact the Monroe Urbanized Area – Metropolitan Planning Organization located in the North Delta RPDD offices and allow ample time for the staff to make arrangements to participate.

Information will be provided to the public through technical assistance and access to publications. Official copies of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be kept in the Ouachita Parish libraries located in the city of Monroe and West Monroe for easy public access and information. These documents shall also be available on the North Delta RPDD website.

Public Meetings

At least one public meeting will be held during the development of the “Draft” Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the “Draft” Monroe Urbanized Area

Transportation Improvement Program. A public meeting will also be held to adopt any final version of either document.

Major amendments to the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program documents will also require a public meeting. Major amendments shall include any addition or deletion, a project deemed to be regionally significant, or any changes that affect fiscal constraint. Exceptions:

- Minor revisions to document text or project descriptions.
- Revisions to project timing within the TIP time frame.

Every effort will be made to accommodate traditionally underserved audiences including low-income and minority households and persons with disabilities. All public hearings and open houses will be held at wheelchair-accessible locations. Persons with disabilities who have special communication or accommodation needs and who plan to attend the meeting may contact the North Delta RPDD. Requests for special needs are to be in writing and received at least two working days prior to the meeting. The address for written requests is:

North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc.
3000 Kilpatrick Blvd. Suite 100
Monroe, Louisiana 71201
Attn: Director of Transportation

Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate these needs. For further information please call the North Delta RPDD office at (318) 387-2572.

All public meetings will be announced in the Monroe News Star World and on the North Delta RPDD website. All persons or organizations maintained on the interested parties list will be notified of public meetings. Also, every effort will be made to ensure that stakeholders in the transportation planning process are invited to participate. These stakeholders will include, but not be limited to, persons or organizations involved in traffic operations, transportation safety and enforcement, airports, and port authorities, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian

walkways, and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and appropriate private transportation providers.

Review and Comment

Prior to the adoption of a Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and/or the Monroe Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program, or major amendments to either document, the public will be given a 15 (fifteen) day review period. If after the comment period, substantial changes are made to the MTP or TIP and new material issues which could not have been reasonably foreseen are raised, there shall be an additional comment period of 10 (ten) days. A notice will be published in the Monroe News Star World and posted on the North Delta RPDD website at least two weeks prior to any public meeting. Notices will be sent to all interested parties. Copies of the draft documents or proposed amendments will be available for public review at the North Delta RPDD offices and on the website as well as the Ouachita Parish libraries in the cities of Monroe and West Monroe.

A comment and response summary will be included within the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Monroe Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) will be reviewed at least every four years by the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization for effectiveness. Any changes to the PPP document will require a 45-day public comment period.

Glossary of Terms

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization

ND RPDD - North Delta Regional Planning and Development District

TAC - Technical Advisory Committee

DOTD - Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

POP - Program of Projects

ISTEA - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

FTA - Federal Transit Administration

EDA - Economic Development Administration

DRA - Delta Regional Authority

UPWP - Unified Planning Work Program

PPP - Public Participation Plan

MTP - Metropolitan Transportation Plan

TIP - Transportation Improvement Program

FAST Act - Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

BIL - Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

MAP-21 - Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century

TEA 21 - Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century

SAFETEA-LU - Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users

Title VI - Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act

EJ - Environmental Justice

OCOG - Ouachita Council of Governments

GIS - Geographic Information System

MPO Policy Committee - MPO Transportation Policy Committee

Review and Comment Period - The designated time for public review and feedback on draft plans and programs

Notice of Public Meetings - Public announcement of scheduled meetings

Wheelchair-accessible locations - Venues that are accessible for individuals with disabilities

Interested Parties - Individuals, organizations, or groups with a stake or interest in the transportation planning process

Public Notice - Official communication or notification to the public regarding planning activities

Comment and Response Summary - Summary of public comments received and the corresponding responses from the MPO

23 CFR Part 450 - Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, Part 450, which pertains to statewide and metropolitan planning

Public Review and Comment Period - Designated time for the public to review and provide feedback on draft documents or proposed amendments

APPENDIX A

23 CFR Part 450

Statewide Planning: Metropolitan Planning, Rule

'450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation

(a) 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 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.

(1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

- (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
- (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

- (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP 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;
- (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under [subpart B of this part](#); and
- (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations ([40 CFR part 93, subpart A](#)), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. 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.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should 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) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the

metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

- (1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
- (2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and
- (3) Recipients of assistance under [23 U.S.C. 201](#)–204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in [paragraphs \(b\), \(c\), and \(d\)](#) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under [§ 450.314](#).

APPENDIX B

Public Hearing Notice | June 26, 2023

The Public Involvement Process Plan for the Monroe Metropolitan Planning Area will be available for public review for the next 45 days at the North Delta RPDD offices, 3000 Kilpatrick Blvd. Suite 100, Monroe, LA 71201. A public hearing (this will serve as the public participation process for the Monroe Transit Systems Program of Projects) will be held on Monday, August 28, 2023, at 11:30 a.m., at the Monroe City Hall Council Chambers prior to the OCOG meeting.

This legal notice was for updates made to the Public Participation Plan