

Public Participation Plan

Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS)

Metropolitan Planning Organization

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List of Acronyms

FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
LATS	Lowcountry Area Transportation Study
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
PPP	Public Participation Plan
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SCDOT	South Carolina Department of Transportation
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
UZA	Urbanized Area

Introduction and Background

On March 27, 2012, the US Census published the list of 2010 Urbanized Areas (UZA) and reported the Beaufort/Hilton Head Island area urbanized population as 68,998. Federal regulations require the designation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to provide continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for areas with an urbanized population of 50,000 or more. As a result, the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) was established as the MPO responsible for coordinating the transportation planning process for the urbanized areas of Beaufort and Jasper Counties in South Carolina, including the municipalities of Beaufort, Bluffton, Hardeeville, Hilton Head Island, and Port Royal. In general, the MPO area includes land designated as urban by the most recent (2010) US Census and other land expected to be urbanized within the next 20 years.

This document establishes a set of policies and techniques through which the MPO can ensure opportunities exist for the public to be involved in transportation planning activities. This policy statement is a tangible example of the MPO's support of and encouragement for public participation as well as the MPO's mandate to adhere to the principles of Environmental Justice in the metropolitan planning process. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) outlines a process to ensure adequate opportunities for members of the community to express their opinion on transportation issues and to become active participants in the decision-making process. Specifically, the PPP outlines tools and time limits for public involvement for the three other major plans required for completion by the MPO:

- Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Purpose

Public involvement associated with LATS serves to actively solicit ideas from residents and stakeholders of the study area. Public involvement also seeks to provide meaningful ways for these residents and stakeholders to communicate with those making decisions regarding the allocation of transportation funds. Through the implementation of the PPP, residents and stakeholders will have access to information as well as established ways to provide feedback. The PPP fulfills requirements pursuant to Title 23 CFR 450.316 of Statewide Planning; Metropolitan Planning and 40 CFR 51.402(e) Criteria and Procedures for Determining Conformity to State or Federal Implementation Plans of Transportation Plans, Programs, and Projects rules. The regulations are a result of the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (Public Law 109-59, August 10, 2005) and more recently, the passage of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) (Public Law 112-141, July 6, 2012). MAP-21 was enacted on October 1, 2012.

Supporting Legislation

MAP-21

Adopted federal regulations require public participation as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process. The previous federal legislation (SAFETEA-LU) addressed the challenges the modern transportation system faces, including safety, security, traffic congestion, intermodal connectivity, freight movement, environmental protection, and delays in project delivery. To further guide the planning process, SAFETEA-LU set forth eight planning factors that agencies must consider when developing their plans. These planning factors remained unchanged as part of MAP-21:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight.
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, people, and freight.
7. Promote efficient system management and operation.
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Additionally, MAP-21 emphasizes four broad focal points for transportation investment:

1. Streamlines Federal Highway transportation programs.

MAP-21 continues to provide the majority of Federal-aid highway funds to the states through core programs. However, the core highway programs have been reduced from seven to five.

The Interstate Maintenance, National Highway System, and Highway Bridge program were streamlined to create a single new program, called The National Highway Performance Program. The program will provide increased flexibility, while guiding state and local investments to maintain and improve the conditions and performance of the National Highway System (NHS). This will eliminate the barriers between existing programs that limit states' flexibility to address the most vital needs for highways and bridges and will hold states accountable for improving outcomes and using tax dollars efficiently.

2. Establishes a performance-based system.

MAP-21 improves statewide and metropolitan planning processes to incorporate a more comprehensive performance-based approach to decision making. Utilizing performance targets will assist states and metropolitan areas in targeting limited resources on projects that will improve the condition and performance of their transportation assets.

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3. Creates jobs and supports economic growth.

The LATS MPO will coordinate transportation projects with local governments and agencies to improve the MPO region's global competitiveness. This will be achieved by promoting transportation corridors that improve access to the region.

4. Supports the Department of Transportation's (DOT) aggressive safety agenda.

MAP-21 builds on the successful Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). MAP-21 substantially increases the amount of funding for this program because of the strong results it has achieved in reducing fatalities. Under HSIP, states must develop and implement a safety plan that identifies highway safety programs and a strategy to address them.

This program also replaces the current Surface Transportation Program, but retains the same structure, goals and flexibility to allow states and metropolitan areas to invest in the projects that fit their unique needs and priorities.

Title VI and Environmental Justice

Environmental justice has been a federal requirement since recipients of federal funds were required to certify nondiscrimination through Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. A 1994 Presidential Executive Order required all federal agencies to make environmental justice part of their missions. The law was enacted to avoid the use of federal funds for projects, programs, or other activities that generate disproportionate or discriminatory adverse impacts on minority or low-income populations. The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) promotes environmental justice as an integral part of the long range transportation planning process as well as individual project planning and design.

According to the USDOT, environmental justice requires the understanding and incorporation of the unique needs of distinct socioeconomic groups in order to create transportation projects that fit harmoniously within the framework of their communities without sacrificing safety or mobility. The environmental justice assessment incorporated in the LRTP is based on three fundamental principles derived from guidance issued by the USDOT:

- Avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.
- Ensure all potentially affected communities' full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process.
- Prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Joint Federal Highway Administration/ Federal Transit Administration Planning Rule

The Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450, 49 CFR part 613) also requires MPOs to conduct locally-developed public participation. This legislation requires "a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and early and continuing

involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs (Transportation Improvement Programs),” including the Long Range Transportation Plan [23 CFR part 450.316(b)(1)].

LATS Organization

The purpose of the Lowcountry Area Transportation Study (LATS) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Beaufort, Bluffton, Hardeeville, Hilton Head Island, and Port Royal and surrounding unincorporated urbanized areas in Beaufort and Jasper counties is to establish and maintain a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. While meeting the appropriate federal and state requirements, this process promotes the development of a safe, effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive multi-modal transportation system for moving people and goods in the LATS area.

The LATS MPO is currently monitored by two committees—the Policy Committee and the Technical Committee.

Policy Committee

- Contains the voting membership
- Has final local approval and authority on all major transportation decision, policies, and programs of LATS

Technical Committee

- Provides recommendations to the Policy Committee on technical methods, procedures, and standards that are used in the development of transportation plans and programs
- Prioritizes projects in accordance with the criteria established by SCDOT and MAP-21 requirements
- Develops funding scenarios for consideration by the Policy Committee and individual governmental entities

Public Participation Process

General Guidelines

The LATS Public Participation Plan provides direction for public involvement activities conducted by the MPO. It includes a set of goals, objectives, policies, and techniques used by the MPO for public outreach initiatives. In its public participation process, the MPO will:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdiction concerns).
2. Solicit meaningful feedback from the public to guide the vision of the MPO and its planning activities, as well to identify, validate, and prioritize project and policy recommendations.

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3. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the LRTP, TIP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects, and conduct open public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered.
4. Involve a wide representation of the population segments in the region through a combination of innovative approaches and time-tested outreach techniques.
5. Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of the LRTP, TIP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects. If the final draft of any transportation plan differs significantly from the one available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan shall be made available.
6. Respond in writing, when applicable, to public input. When significant written and oral comments are received on the transportation plan drafts as a result of the public participation process or the interagency consultation process required under MAP-21, report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan.
7. Solicit the needs of those under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to the transportation disadvantaged, minorities, elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income households.
8. Provide a public comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of the Public Participation Plan and 15 business days prior to program amendments. Notice of the comment period will be advertised in all newspapers of record and various other publications in the study area prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period. Notice will also be mailed to the entire MPO mailing list prior to the start of the 45-day comment period.
9. Provide a public comment period of not less than 30 calendar days prior to adoption of the LRTP, TIP, or UPWP. Provide a public comment period of not less than 15 business days prior to any formal amendments or updates to these plans.
10. The statewide TIP (STIP) presents all projects within the State including statewide program projects and those adopted locally. As a partner agency to SCDOT, LATS will work with SCDOT to gather public input through the technique identified in the SCDOT's Public Participation Plan (www.scdot.org/inside/pdfs/Public_Participation_Plan.pdf) to avoid having to re-advertise changes to the TIP regarding projects in the LATS area.
11. Coordinate the Public Participation Process with statewide Public Participation Processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs. Close coordination of these processes will ensure the public is presented with a participation program that satisfies federal, state, and local requirements and uses a familiar and efficient methodology.
12. Periodically review the Public Participation Process to ensure it provides full and open access to all.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The fundamental goal of public involvement is to provide a collaborative environment that gathers, processes, and applies a diversity of opinions during the development of a plan, program, policy, or project. To the extent feasible and prudent, public participation should make the public aware of and provide a means to comment. Transportation planning decision-makers, in turn, should consider the outcome of this process. Specific goals, objectives, and policies for the LATS Public Participation Plan include the following:

GOAL: To provide the public with appropriate information on transportation planning services and project development in a convenient and timely manner.

Objective 1: Identify a broad representation of the public for inclusion in the transportation planning process.

Policy 1.1: Maintain a master database of contacts including but not limited to the following persons and agencies:

- Elected officials
- Local government staff
- Transportation agencies
- Federal, State, and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation, and other environmental issues
- Local media
- Civic groups
- Church groups
- Homeowner associations
- Homebuilder and realtor associations
- School Districts
- Special interest groups
- Private freight operators
- Representatives of users and supporters of public transportation, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle facilities
- Representatives of the disabled population
- Representatives of the study area's military community

Policy 1.2: Target traditionally under-involved populations within the region, including minority, low income, and senior citizen populations.

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Policy 1.3: Identify and engage persons and groups with unique interests specific to individual plans and studies conducted by the MPO.

Objective 2: Actively engage the public in the transportation planning process, by making it immediate and meaningful.

Policy 2.1: Conduct public meetings at a site convenient to potentially affected citizens when feasible.

Policy 2.2: Distribute electronic meeting announcements to the MPO contact list.

Policy 2.3: Employ visualization techniques (including those described in the PPP) to depict transportation plans.

Policy 2.4: Utilize social media, which the area has responded to effectively. Recent examples include the voting for the local American Idol contestant and the current gathering of ideas for potential retailers for the redevelopment of the shopping mall on Hilton Head Island.

Objective 3: Keep the public informed of ongoing transportation-related activities.

Policy 3.1: Maintain a website with information specific to the MPO.

Policy 3.1.1: Update the website to ensure it displays current and accurate information.

Policy 3.1.2: Include the following information at a minimum:

- Contact information (mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail)
- Current MPO committee membership
- Meeting calendars and agendas
- Work products and publications, including the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and plans and studies related to the mission of the MPO
- By-Laws and operating procedures, including the Public Participation Plan

Policy 3.2: Publish electronic publications and work products online.

Policy 3.3: Make hardcopies of general and project-specific information available at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups with reasonable notice.

Policy 3.4: Produce an annual newsletter.

Objective 4: Identify ways to continuously improve public participation.

Policy 4.1: Evaluate public involvement techniques annually at a minimum.

Policy 4.2: Review the Public Participation Plan and adopt necessary revisions at least every three (3) years.

Objective 5: Initiate public participation activities for individual transportation improvement projects from the planning phase through construction.

Policy 5.1: Assist SCDOT, local governments, and transportation agencies in the development and implementation of public involvement techniques for planning and other studies.

Objective 6: Establish a Title VI program including a complaint procedure to report unfair treatment of groups based on race, color, and national origin.

Policy 6.1: Maintain a log of Title VI complaints and forward to appropriate State and Federal agencies for review and guidance.

Public Participation Tools and Techniques

Effective public participation requires a continuous and evolving process that utilizes multiple techniques. Public participation is an integral part of one-time activities such as corridor studies and regularly repeated activities such as the TIP and LRTP. This section contains descriptions of public participation tools and techniques that are or could be employed to enable citizens to become well informed.

- MPO Website
- MPO Master Database
- MPO Logo
- Electronic Newsletter (quarterly)
- Legal Advertised Notices
- Other Media
- News Releases and Media Relations
- Display Ads
- E-mail Announcements/Internet Message Boards
- Project Workshops
- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Small Group Meetings/Focus Groups
- Public Hearings
- Comment Forms/Complaint Procedure (including web-based)
- Online Interactive Map
- Surveys/Questionnaires
- Posters and Flyers
- Library Distribution Sites
- Direct Mailings (optional)
- Visualization
- Title VI & Environmental Justice Review

Overview of Tools and Techniques

MPO Website

Description: The website will provide basic information about the MPO process, members, meeting times and contact information. Work products (draft and final) will be available on the site, including the Public Participation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan. Citizens will be able to submit comments and sign up to be added to the various distribution lists maintained by LATS. Links will be provided to other websites relevant to the MPO and its partners.

The website address is [Insert address here]. The web site will be maintained by LATS MPO staff.

Activities: The website will provide background information and promote regular and special meetings, planning studies, publications, and work products.

MPO Master Database

Description: MPO staff will maintain a master database of contacts from individuals, businesses, and federal, state and local agencies. The database also will include committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and websites. The database will be used to maintain up to date committee membership lists, special interest groups and homeowner association contacts. The database will be used to establish and maintain a list of e-mail contacts for electronic meeting notification and announcements.

Activities: The database will provide the foundation for the distribution of MPO information and will be used to enhance public involvement activities.

MPO Logo

Description: A logo representing the MPO will be developed and used to brand products and publications of the MPO. A logo will help the public become familiar with the different activities of the MPO by providing a means of recognizing MPO products.

Activities: The MPO logo will be available for use on all MPO publications, including those developed by consultants working on MPO sponsored projects to create a community awareness of the MPO deliverables. Feedback will be solicited from the Technical Committee and the general public in the creation and application of this logo.

Annual Newsletter

Description: MPO staff will produce an annual newsletter for distribution to citizens, municipalities, media, and other agencies. Each issue of the newsletter will include staff contact information, upcoming meeting schedules, links to the MPO and project-specific websites, project highlights, and current planning project status reports. When appropriate, information regarding significant transportation issues, MPO awards, and other one-time activities also will be included. Citizens will be

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added to the distribution list by their own request. Opportunities to request being added to the list will occur during public meetings hosted by the MPO, on the MPO website, and when citizens contact MPO staff.

Activities: The newsletter will be used to report planning studies, publications and work products from the past year. Feedback will be solicited from the Technical Committee and the general public to help determine content and organization of the newsletter.

Legal Advertised Notices

Description: All notices of meetings and hearings of the MPO Transportation Policy Committee will be posted pursuant to the South Carolina Open Public Meetings Act. Notices will be published a minimum of seven days prior to the meeting. The mailing and/or e-mailing of notices and press releases should be timed to be received locally within five days of the meeting. When official public hearings and public comment periods for regional plans and programs are provided, said meeting notices will be published a minimum of 10 days prior to adoption in all newspapers of record in the study area. Notices of sub-regional plans and programs funded by the MPO will be made in the newspaper of greatest circulation in the study area. The MPO Transportation Policy Committee may consider hosting special meetings to consider non-routine item that necessitates action but falls between regularly scheduled meetings. If a special meeting is called, the notice will be published a minimum of three days prior the meeting.

Activities: Regular and other meetings seeking public input will be posted ten days prior to the meeting.

Other Media

Description: Opportunities will be pursued for publication in other newsletters produced by municipalities, homeowners' associations, church groups, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the MPO. Opportunities also will be pursued to present to civic and social agencies, participate on radio talk shows, provide television news highlights, and utilize public service notices to create community awareness of planning activities.

Activities: Increased opportunities to make public aware of corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies or major activities. Direct outreach to church groups and other organizations targets local residents and employees that can be especially beneficial when focusing on nearby corridor or area plans.

News Releases and Media Relations

Description: Formal press releases will be sent to a media distribution list contained in the MPO master database to announce meetings/activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the MPO. When specific communities are affected by transportation plans, local newsletters and media outreach may be employed to communicate the project status.

Activities: Corridor or other planning studies, workshops, open houses, public hearings, and other MPO activities, and announcements about the interactive map, etc.

Display Ads

Description: The MPO may publish ads to promote meetings that are not regularly scheduled, such as corridor study workshops. The ads will be published in selected newspapers to reach a larger audience than typical of legal notices.

Activities: Public awareness of project specific meetings, workshops, or open houses.

E-mail Announcements/Internet Websites

Description: Meeting announcements and MPO information will be e-mailed to interested persons that have submitted their e-mail addresses to MPO staff and are included in the MPO master database.

Activities: Long-range planning studies, corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies, regular meetings, public hearings, workshops, open houses, and other major MPO activities.

Project Workshops

Description: Targeted public meetings will be a part of major plans and studies. These meetings generally will be open and informal, with project team members interacting with the public on a one-on-one basis. Short presentations may be given at these meetings. The purpose of project-specific meetings is to provide project information to the public and to solicit public comment and a sense of public priorities. Project workshops will be conducted in an inviting manner that actively solicits feedback from attendees as well as providing information about project activities.

Activities: Long-range planning studies, corridor studies, and other major MPO activities.

Citizens Advisory Committee

Description: A Citizens Advisory Committee may be established either as a standing advisory committee for all MPO activities or as an additional outreach group for certain plans and studies. The intent of this committee is to ensure that meaningful public participation is regularly and intentionally incorporated into the formal transportation planning process. This committee can review and provide input on the development of programs and projects within the LATS communities. Additionally, this committee considers the needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system.

Activities: Core work products of the MPO that can include the UPWP, LRTP, TIP, PPP, grant programs, and other activities.

Small Group Meetings/Focus Groups

Description: For some plans and studies, meetings will be held with small groups that have an interest in the project. Meetings could be with homeowners or neighborhood associations, civic groups, special interest groups, or other groups of affected or interested parties.

Activities: Corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies, and other MPO activities.

Public Hearings

Description: These public meetings will be used to solicit public comment on a project or issue being considered for adoption by the MPO. Public hearings will provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments to the MPO or another decision-making body. Meeting minutes will be recorded. Public hearings are more formal than public workshops and are less interactive, with citizens being asked to respond to a project-specific deliverable or set of recommendations.

Activities: Long Range Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Program, corridor studies, Project Development & Environmental studies, and other planning studies as needed for other MPO activities.

Comment Forms/Complaint Procedure

Description: Comment forms often are used to solicit public comment on specific issues being presented at a workshop, other public meetings, or via reports available for public review. Comment forms can be very general in nature or can ask for very specific feedback. For example, a comment form may ask for comments on specific alignment alternatives being considered during a corridor study, or may ask for a person's general feelings about any aspect of transportation. Comment forms can be included in publications and on websites to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or web site. In accordance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, these comment opportunities allow for complaints associated with minority groups as described in Title VI of the U.S. Code (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.). Such complaints will be logged in at the MPO office, reviewed according to the Department of Justice's investigation procedures manual, and forwarded to SCDOT and FHWA for further review and direction. Title VI complaints may be e-mailed, mailed by post or communicated directly by calling or visiting the MPO office.

Activities: Public workshops, open houses, hearings and other meetings, accompany MPO documents on public display, general MPO activities.

Surveys/Questionnaires

Description: Surveys or questionnaires (print, online, or both) will be used when very specific input from the public is desired. A survey can be used in place of comment cards to ask very specific questions and/or to gather technical data during corridor and planning studies.

Activities: Conduct surveys or questionnaires on issues and needs to provide input into the plans.

Posters and Flyers

Description: Posters and flyers will be used to announce meetings and events. These documents will be distributed electronically and displayed at public places such as City/Town Halls, libraries, and community centers. The announcement may contain a brief description of the purpose of a meeting, the time(s) and location(s), and contact information. Posters and flyers may be used to reach a large audience that cannot be reached using direct mailings and/or newsletters.

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Activities: Corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies, regular and special MPO activities.

Library Distribution Sites

Description: All MPO documents released for public review and comment will be made available at local libraries for public review and comment.

Activities: Documents for review made available to the public.

Direct Mailings (optional)

Description: Direct mailings may be used if feasible to announce upcoming meetings or activities or to provide information to a targeted area or group of people. Direct mailings typically will include letters but also can include postcards or flyers. An area may be targeted for a direct mailing because of potential impacts from a project. Groups that may have an interest in a specific issue may be targeted. For example, avid cyclists and pedestrians may be targeted for pathways and trail projects.

Activities: Project-specific meetings, workshops, open houses, corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

Visualization

Description: A critical component of public participation is to provide the public visual as well as written descriptions of transportation projects. Through visual imagery, the complex features of proposed transportation plans, policies, and programs can be portrayed at appropriate scales (e.g. regional, local, project architecture, etc.) and from different points of view. The MPO will utilize various visual design techniques when appropriate. Some techniques may include: sketches, drawings, artist renderings, aerial photography, mapping, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive geographical information system (GIS), GIS-based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation and computer simulation. Visualization techniques also will include charts and graphs.

Activities: Planning studies, TIP amendments, and other MPO activities.

Title VI & Environmental Justice Review

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and activities on the basis of race, color, and national origin. In 1994, Presidential Executive Order 12898 directed every Federal agency to make Environmental Justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." In complying with the aforementioned federal laws and policies, the MPO's Environmental Justice initiatives will strive to involve the potentially affected public through a Public Outreach Program. This program consists of MPO staff activities designed to develop partnerships with, and enhance their participation in the transportation planning process, by groups and individuals of "traditionally underserved" communities. These communities include minorities, low income, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Staff activities may include MPO staff participation in groups and coalitions serving within these communities, targeted communications with local media outlets,

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conducting meetings at times and locations that are accessible to transit dependent or non-driving individuals when possible, and publication of MPO documents in non-technical, accessible formats when needed. The goal of the MPO’s Public Outreach Program is to ensure that all citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, income status, national origin, age, gender, disability, marital status, or political affiliation, have an equal opportunity to participate in the MPO’s decision-making process.

Description: The MPO will take reasonable steps to ensure that all persons, including those with a disability or language barrier, have meaningful opportunities to participate in the transportation planning and programming process. The MPO also will strive to address environmental justice issues at all stages of the planning process, including implementing the following strategies to reduce participation barriers for under-served groups and engage them in the decision-making process:

- Representatives of minority, disability, low-income and limited English proficiency groups will be identified and included in MPO mailings.
- If needed, documents will be translated and public notices broadcast for Spanish-speaking populations.
- When possible, meetings will be held at locations accessible to persons with disability, bus riders, and bicyclists and that are convenient to neighborhoods with a concentration of minority and low income persons.

Activities: Corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies, regular and special MPO activities.

Summary of Public Participation Policies

Table 1 provides a summary of the four documents required of the LATS MPO. For each document, the required notifications, comment period, and required update schedule are included. Duration of comment periods varies based on whether the document is undergoing a major update or a minor amendment.

Table 1 – Public Participation Policy Summary Table			
Program or Plan	Required Notifications	Comment Period	Required Updates
Program Adoption			
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	30 calendar days	Every 5 years
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	30 calendar days	Every 3 years
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	30 calendar days	Every year
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	45 calendar days	Every 5 years

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Program Amendments			
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	15 business days	As needed
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	15 business days	As needed
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	15 business days	As needed
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Public hearing notices – advertised 5 to 10 days prior in print media	15 business days	As needed

Summary of Public Participation Techniques by Document

Table 2 summarizes the public participation techniques for each of the four documents required of the LATS MPO. Each technique listed may not be necessary during a given adoption or program amendment.

Table 2 – Public Participation Policy Summary Table		
Program or Plan	Public Participation Techniques	
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information posted on MPO website • Information delivered in electronic newsletter • Legal advertisements • Email announcements • Posters and flyers (meeting announcements) • Public workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group meetings • Public hearings (adoption process) • Comment forms (public meetings and online) • Online interactive map Surveys/questionnaires • Visualization of plan recommendations
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information posted on MPO website • Information delivered in electronic newsletter • Legal advertisements • Email announcements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small group meetings • Public hearings (adoption process) • Comment forms (online) • Online interactive map
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information posted on MPO website • Information delivered in electronic newsletter • Legal advertisements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email announcements • Public hearings (adoption process)

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Public Participation Plan (PPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information posted on MPO website • Information delivered in electronic newsletter • Legal advertisements • Email announcements • Posters and flyers (meeting announcements) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public workshop • Small group meetings • Public hearings (adoption process) • Comment forms (public meetings and online)
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Monitoring and Evaluation

As designated LATS staff, Lowcountry COG will monitor the amount of public participation resulting from each public outreach activity. This will be done through various means, including:

- Taking attendance at public outreach meetings using a sign-in sheet;
- Keeping a log of contacts with the public, via phone, mail, email, fax, in-person meetings, or other means, which resulted from a public outreach activity;
- Keeping a record of attendance and involvement at MPO events;
- Tracking the number of completed surveys or comment cards received from a public outreach event;
- Monitoring daily and weekly traffic to the LATS website and number of page views;
- Tracking distribution of public information materials, including brochures, newsletters, and other publications;
- Tracking number of addresses on mailing lists; and
- Other means appropriate for the type of public outreach used.

This monitoring will identify any special circumstances, which may have contributed to an unusually high or low attendance. It will also identify the nature of the notification process for the public outreach activity, including press releases, paid advertising, mailed notices, emails, phone calls, and other means.

On an annual basis, the information collected through monitoring public outreach will be compiled and evaluated to assess the effectiveness of each type of outreach activity. This will include both a quantitative assessment of the number of participants, as well as a qualitative assessment of the level of interaction and information exchanged. The assessment will note the public involvement techniques used, the public's response, the public involvement objectives that were met by the meeting, and any change to how the activity should be conducted in the future.

This monitoring and evaluation process will be used to determine the effectiveness of existing public involvement techniques. Each time a public involvement evaluation is performed, a list of improvement strategies needed should be identified for implementation. If improvement is needed for an ongoing public involvement task, such as the MPO web site, a reasonable completion date should

be established. If improvements are needed for one-time activities such as corridor studies, the improvements should be implemented where appropriate on future activities. Records of the monitoring and evaluation process will be kept on file at the LATS office.

Consultation

Consultation with agency partners and interested parties will utilize many of the Public Participation Tools and Techniques, including electronic communication (email and web-based), electronic newsletters, project workshops, small group meetings/focus groups, public hearings, comment forms, online interactive map, surveys/questionnaires, and direct mailings. Consultation with agencies in review and comment of programs and plans administered by LATS will be subject to the comment period stated previously, at a minimum.

Federal, State, and Local Agencies

In developing the LRTP and TIP, LATS staff will consult with local and regional agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the LATS study area. This consultation may include local, regional, and/or private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation. Ongoing coordination with these agencies will help identify effective mitigation strategies for potential impacts of projects included in the LRTP. The LRTP, TIP, and UPWP may be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the LATS study area, including the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

- Recipients of assistance under title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 53;
- Governmental agencies and nonprofit 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 service; and
- Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

Interagency agreements may be maintained between LATS and other local and regional agencies such as Palmetto Breeze. The agreements will describe LATS' role and responsibility in relation to the other agencies' work.

Interested Parties

LATS will provide notice of public review meetings or review periods being held on the draft and final documents of the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and PPP. Notice will be provided to known interested parties:

- Public transportation providers
- Users of public transportation
- Users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities
- Freight shippers

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- Providers of freight transportation services
- Military installations
- Private providers of transportation
- Disabled, Elderly, Low-income, and Limited English-speaking populations
- Land management agencies

Providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 53.s