



Mid-Ohio Regional
Planning Commission

Draft

2015 TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

 SEPTEMBER 2015

TABLE OF CONTENTS

BACKGROUND	1
MORPC AS THE MPO	1
INTENT OF THE TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN.....	2
TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN	3
Tier 1: MPO’s Committee Structure.....	3
Tier 2: Project-Specific Public Involvement	5
Tier 3: Public Outreach/Information Dissemination.....	6
CONSULTATION	7
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES.	7
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES	8
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE.....	9
AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT	10
MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION NONDISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES OF MORPC	10



MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

The Public Involvement Plan specifies the procedures that the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission will use when conducting its transportation planning process. The Plan also includes a section on Environmental Justice, the Americans with Disabilities Act and MORPC's Nondiscrimination Complaint Procedures.

BACKGROUND

The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission (MORPC) is a voluntary association of local governments in Central Ohio. Franklin County and nearby counties as well as their cities, villages and townships are eligible for membership. Elected and appointed officials sit on the Commission, which is the policy-making body of the organization.

As a regional planning commission, MORPC has the flexibility and capability to be responsive to its members' needs. MORPC assists with planning and implementing programs in areas of energy conservation, infrastructure, transportation, land use, economic prosperity, environmental protection and others.

MORPC serves as a forum for state and local governments on regional issues and helps represent local communities' interests and needs at the state and federal levels. MORPC recognizes and encourages public and private cooperation on a regional basis and works to build consensus, sound planning practices and realistic decision making for the future. Because of MORPC's role in the region, MORPC's Transportation Policy Committee was originally designated the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Columbus urbanized area in 1964 and re-designated in 1973.

MORPC AS THE MPO

As the MPO, MORPC's Transportation Policy Committee conducts the federally required 3C (continuous, cooperative and comprehensive) transportation planning process. This process results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports the goals of the metropolitan transportation plan. It is the basis for the development of the 20-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the 4-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The plans and programs lead to the development and operation of the region's integrated, multimodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient and economic movement of people and goods.

Public involvement provides a deliberative and transparent process for people affected by the projects, strategies and initiatives recommended from the transportation planning process. "People" as defined here include the general





public as well as major stakeholders, special interest groups, those traditionally underserved by transportation, minorities, people with disabilities, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, and neighborhood and civic associations. Input from all of these groups creates a more inclusive process in shaping the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

The public involvement process encourages early and continuous involvement that not only helps to develop plans that accommodate the needs of the traveling public but also the efficient movement of goods. Public involvement is also required by the Metropolitan Planning Regulations of the United States Department of Transportation 23 CFR 450.316, 49 U.S.C. 5307(b)(1-7) and FTA Circular 9030.1E. This Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is the process by which public involvement activities are conducted by MORPC's Public & Government Affairs Department.

The transportation planning process is complex and due to its complexity, the general public is encouraged to view the website, solicit presentations, and attend meetings and other public forums to gain an understanding of the process and plans. The meetings are designed not only to educate and inform the public but also to allow the public the opportunity to provide input into the various elements of the planning and decision-making process.

INTENT OF THE TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The PIP is designed to provide the public reasonable opportunity to participate in, review, and comment on the formulation of transportation policies, plans, and programs. This process provides a set of procedures to be consistently and comprehensively applied to incorporate the public's involvement in the transportation planning process including the planning and development of the Central Ohio Transit Authority's (COTA's) and Delaware Area Transit Agency's (DATABus's) programs and projects. The PIP further serves to satisfy the public involvement requirements for Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula Program grant funding received by both COTA and DATABus.

It is the intent of the MPO to utilize this process in a proactive manner to solicit input from a broad representation of the community. The MPO will secure data and consult with resource agencies, social service agencies, environmental groups and associations, state, county and local governmental agencies, townships, and other non-governmental agencies. The MPO actively seeks the views of the minority, people with disabilities, low-income and other populations traditionally underserved by transportation to ensure that a broad representation is obtained.



The overall process is based upon the following goals:

- Provide timely information about planning issues and processes to the public.
- Foster transparency by providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of transportation plans.
- Provide adequate notice of public involvement and planning activities.
- Continually seek specific ways to engage and consider the needs of all segments of the population.
- Obtain early and continuous public involvement in the transportation planning process.

The PIP is reviewed periodically by the Ohio Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to ensure that full and open access is provided by the MPO, COTA and DATABus in the decision-making process. The Public Involvement Plan outlined in the following section enhances the opportunity for public input and satisfies federal requirements for public participation.

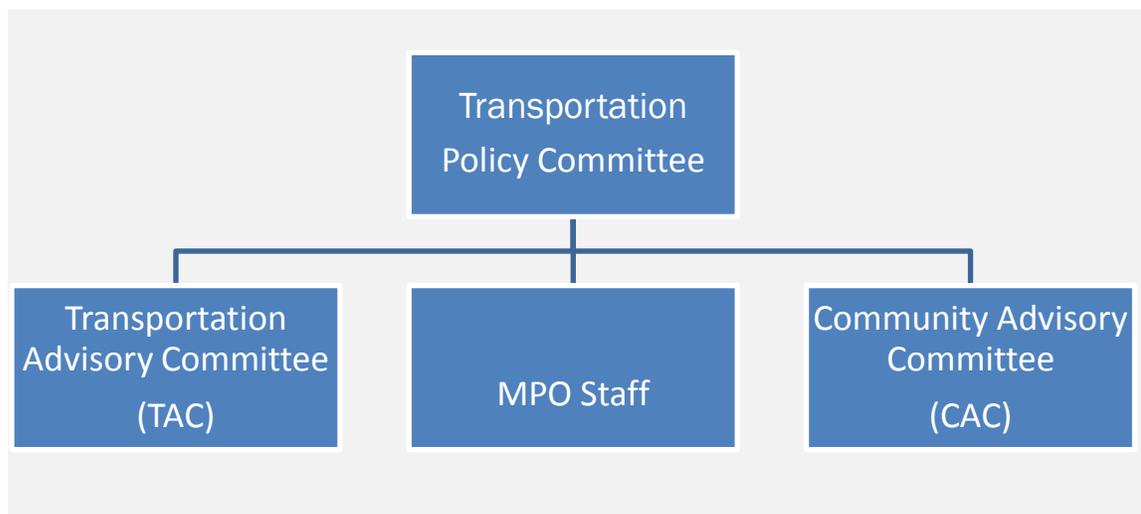
TRANSPORTATION PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

The transportation planning area for the MPO includes Delaware and Franklin counties, Bloom and Violet townships in Fairfield County, New Albany, Pataskala and Etna Township in Licking County, and Jerome Township in Union County. The MPO boundaries of the planning area are updated every 10 years based on the results of the national census. There are currently no Tribal lands or federal public lands identified in the MPO planning area.

MORPC uses a three-tier process to solicit input in the development of transportation plans, programs and policies. This process includes a structured MPO committee process, a project-specific process and a public outreach/information dissemination effort tailored to meet specific needs.

Tier 1: MPO's Committee Structure

The MPO's existing public involvement structure incorporates the activities of three transportation committees: the Transportation Policy Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).



Transportation Policy Committee - The Policy Committee is the MPO. It is responsible for the review and adoption of all MPO planning work products such as the PIP, the Planning Work Program (PWP), the 20-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the 4-year TIP, area studies, corridor plans, amendments to adopted plans and programs and COTA's and DATABus's programs and projects, and Section 5307 Urbanized Area Formula annual Program of Projects. This committee, upon recommendations from TAC and CAC, makes decisions on transportation policy.

The Policy Committee includes the representation of local elected officials, officials of agencies that administer or operate major modes or systems of transportation, appropriate state officials, and chair of the CAC.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) – TAC provides technical advice, assistance, and recommendations to the Policy Committee and MPO staff. TAC reviews the procedures for and results of the various phases of the transportation planning process and special studies, methodology, projections, assumptions, and recommended plans, programs, strategies and solutions before submission to the Policy Committee.

TAC's membership represents state, local, and federal transportation agencies, public utilities, public and private transportation providers, environmental and freight interests, and consultants.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) – The CAC provides recommendations to the Policy Committee from a citizen, special interest and community perspective. The CAC is one method by which the public can review and participate in all current transportation planning efforts, projects and issues.

The CAC membership, as defined by its bylaws, is a broad representation of the community including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households, special interest groups, neighborhood and area commissions and those traditionally underserved by transportation.

By having a membership which usually serves for several years, the CAC becomes educated about the often complicated transportation issues, constraints, and processes and their relationship to other conditions in the community. For more information see the CAC Bylaws (Appendix A).

Tier 2: Project-Specific Public Involvement

Participation in specific studies occurs through the formation of committees or the utilization of standing committees. The committee's structure is reviewed to ensure that the appropriate segments of the population and specific special interests are represented and encouraged to participate. The committee members assist by addressing study issues through reviewing and providing feedback on information presented, answering questions at public meetings and by providing information to local constituents.

Agencies that undertake area studies and corridor plans, where there is a specific need of intensive study to determine potential transportation needs and impacts and which will be formally adopted by the MPO follow this process. Persons who may be impacted directly by the study results are involved through the following process:

- Advisory groups may be established for the study or standing committees that include the representation of specific target groups. Representatives from appropriate neighborhood and area commissions, employers, resource agencies, businesses, special interests, and local, state and federal transportation agencies are invited to participate. The advisory group meetings are held in venues convenient to the study area.
- Public meetings are scheduled in the study area. Invitations to attend the meetings are placed on the Agency website and Facebook, placed in electronic newsletters, and distributed by direct and electronic mail to neighborhood and civic associations, employers, businesses, resource agencies, media and local communities in the study and transportation planning area.

Interim and final results of these studies are presented to the advisory groups, CAC, TAC, Transportation Policy Committee and other interested groups and communities. Short, written reports on progress may also be provided.

Information on the study milestones may be displayed in a newsletter and distributed to the media, general public, and public libraries, placed on a website and on social media. A website specifically for the study may be developed.



If this is the case, all written documents and presentations will include the web address of the study.

All study plans, draft and final versions, are available for public review and comment at area libraries, the performing agency, and on the website. Upon request, MPO work products and documents are made available in alternative formats.

Tier 3: Public Outreach/Information Dissemination

MORPC involves the public in the transportation planning process through an array of outreach methods. Public meetings, one-on-one contacts, social media, presentations and the website are used to engage the public in the planning process. Upon request, MPO work products and documents are made available in alternative formats.

Public Outreach

The public outreach program for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the TIP, COTA, DATABus and FTA Section 5307 Program of Projects includes the following:

Legal notices are placed, as required by 23 CR Part 450.316, in local newspapers (with the largest circulation for each county and minority newspapers) prior to public review periods for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the TIP and all public hearings. MORPC's Calendar of Events is updated and press releases are distributed to the media announcing the availability of draft and final major reports, public review periods, public meetings and other transportation planning efforts.

Posting of information on all transportation programs and projects including links to significant projects located within the transportation planning area that are not conducted by MORPC can be found at www.morpc.org. Public comments can be submitted on the website, by electronic mail or sent through U.S. mail.

Announcements to review draft reports and attend public meetings are sent to neighborhood and civic associations, local communities, special interest groups, businesses and resource agencies by direct and electronic mail, placed on social media and included in electronic newsletters.

MORPC's periodic publications that provide information pertaining to various transportation activities include an electronic newsletter, *Regional eSource* and the agency print newsletter, *MORPCconnection*.

Copies of all drafts and final reports are distributed to the metropolitan libraries and state library in the transportation planning area, and are placed on the website at www.morpc.org/transportation.





CONSULTATION

As the MPO, MORPC conducts a transportation planning process that is continuous, cooperative and comprehensive with a 20-year horizon. This process results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports the goals in the metropolitan transportation plan. During this process, MORPC as the MPO will consult agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan planning area that are affected by transportation (state and local planned growth agencies, airport operations, freight movements, safety agencies, active transportation groups, non-profit organizations, environmental protection groups, economic development agencies) and provide for the design and delivery of transportation services.

The consulting agencies will provide input and comments to MORPC, the Ohio Department of Transportation, COTA and DATABus (current plans, studies, data, and analysis) on the various components of the transportation planning process. The input will be considered and provided to the public for review and comment during each of the milestones:

- Evaluating the current transportation system and future needs
- Identifying performance measures and implementation strategies addressing deficiencies in the transportation system
- Identifying a fiscally balanced financial plan that can be expected for implementation
- Announcement of strategies, solutions and projects

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES

The various components of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan are presented to the CAC, TAC and Transportation Policy committees for review and comment over the course of its development. A notice of availability of the draft documents for review with a minimum 30-day comment period by the general public is distributed by social media, and by direct and electronic mail to neighborhood and civic associations, employers, resource agencies, media, and local communities. A notice of availability and copies of draft documents are distributed to area libraries and placed on the website at <http://www.morpc.org/transportation/overview/main.asp>.

The MPO hosts an open house 30 days prior to the adoption of the transportation plan. A formal presentation is provided, the various components of the transportation plan are displayed and MPO staff is available to answer questions. Invitations to attend the open house are distributed by direct and electronic mail



and social media to CAC, TAC, Transportation Policy Committee members, neighborhood and civic associations, employers, resource agencies, social service agencies, media, and local communities in the transportation planning area. A copy of the formal presentation is placed on the website. Upon request, MPO work products and documents are made available in alternative formats.

All comments received are considered public comments, and therefore are subject to disclosure under Ohio's Public Records Act. All public comments received are reviewed for consideration and if found appropriate, are incorporated into the document. All responses are included in the final adopted document in a separate appendix. Copies of the final adopted document are sent to metropolitan libraries and the state library in the transportation planning area.

In order for transportation projects to be eligible for federal funding, they must be included in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. At times it may be necessary to amend the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Amendments to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan will be made available to the public for a 30-day comment period prior to approval. The amendment is brought before the CAC, TAC and Policy Committees for approval. The amendment and the revised Metropolitan Transportation Plan including the revised project listing, map and other amendment changes will be placed on the website.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES

Prior to the development of the draft TIP, a legal notice is placed in the major local and minority newspapers announcing the update. The notice will satisfy requirements for public participation in the development of FTA Section 5307 Program of Projects. A notice announcing the availability of the draft TIP for review with a minimum 30-day comment period is sent to CAC, TAC, Transportation Policy Committee members, neighborhood and civic associations, employers, resource agencies, media, and local communities in the transportation planning area. The notice distributed by direct and electronic mail and social media announces the comment period and states where a copy of the document can be obtained or viewed. The draft document is distributed to the metropolitan libraries and the state library in the planning area and placed on the website at

http://www.morpc.org/transportation/overview/transportation_improvement.asp.

MORPC hosts an open house 30 days prior to the adoption of the TIP. Elements of the TIP, including FTA Section 5307 Program of Projects, are displayed and a presentation is conducted on the information. The presentation is placed on the website. MPO staff is available to answer questions. Invitations to attend the open house are distributed by electronic and direct mail, and social media to CAC, TAC, Policy Committee members, neighborhood and civic associations, employers, resource agencies, media, and local communities in the transportation planning area. Upon request, MPO work products and documents are made available in alternative formats.





Comments are received electronically, by U.S. mail, or submitted in writing at public meetings. MORPC will accommodate the needs of any public in submitting comments. All public comments received are considered and responses are included in the final adopted document located in a separate appendix. Copies of the final document are placed on the website and sent to the metropolitan libraries and the state library in the transportation planning area.

Periodically amendments to the TIP are needed because the schedule, scope or funding of a transportation project needs to be revised or a new project added to the TIP. Notice of the amendment will also satisfy the public participation requirements for FTA Section 5307 annual Program of Projects. The amendment is brought before the CAC, TAC and Transportation Policy Committees for approval. Notification of a TIP amendment will be included on the committees' agendas. Significant amendments are made available to the public for a 30-day comment period prior to approval. All amendments to the TIP are placed on the website.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Recognizing that the impacts of federal programs and activities may raise questions of fairness to affected groups, President Clinton, on February 11, 1994, signed Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. The needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system are sought and considered by the MPO. The following actions are meant to reduce the barriers for participation in the decision-making process by low-income and/or minority residents, elderly, or people with disabilities.

Post card notices are mailed informing the underserved populations of opportunities to participate, major milestones, and public meetings. When possible, public meetings are held in locations that are located along a transit bus route, convenient to low-income populations and accessible to people with disabilities. Such locations include public libraries, schools, community centers, and churches. Agencies and organizations that represent these populations are included in mailings.

Upon request, MPO work products and documents are made available in alternative formats.





AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) <http://www.ada.gov/pubs/ada.htm> is a civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in all aspects of life. ADA therefore calls for federally assisted programs to be accessible to people with disabilities. People with disabilities are encouraged to participate through MORPC's CAC and to get involved in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit plans and services. All public meetings conducted by the MPO take place at locations that have accessible facilities so as to accommodate people with mobility limitations.

MID-OHIO REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION NONDISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT PROCEDURES FOR PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES OF MORPC

MORPC does not discriminate on the basis of age, race, color, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, familial status, religion or disability in programs, services or in employment. Information on non-discrimination and related MORPC policies and procedures is available at www.morpc.org. The information is also publically displayed in all MORPC conference rooms, lobby and lounge areas. Nondiscrimination procedures cover all external complaints regarding MORPC programs and activities filed under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 or 49 CFR 21 and are available at: www.morpc.org/about-morpc/overview/policies/title-vi, "Nondiscrimination in the Federally Assisted Programs of the Department of Transportation." Information on how to file a complaint can be viewed on MORPC's website at www.morpc.org/about-morpc/overview/policies/non-discrimination-complaints, or a hard copy may be requested by calling the Director of Human Resources at (614) 228-2663.





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