

Guide to Public Involvement ...
For the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study (HATS)
Transportation Planning Process



Adopted
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Introduction ...

Public involvement is a key component of any planning process. Every person must have the opportunity to take part, feel entitled to participate, welcome to join in, and able to influence the transportation decisions made by the Harrisburg Area Transportation Study (HATS). This public involvement plan provides for a variety of ways to accomplish that goal. Outreach and education efforts are an important ingredient and are incorporated into the overall strategy as well.

HATS and the Tri-County Regional Planning Commission adopted a Public Education/Public Involvement Plan (PEPI) in June 1999 for the development of the Regional Growth Management Plan in coordination with the update of the HATS 2020 Transportation Plan. This plan builds upon the methods and techniques described in the PEPI plan and specifically focuses on the HATS transportation planning process.

Federal Regulations & HATS Public Involvement ...

HATS is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Harrisburg area. As such, HATS has a mandated responsibility to determine how federal transportation funds will be spent within the Harrisburg Urbanized Area. The urbanized area includes the counties of Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry, as well as Fairview Township in York County and Palmyra Borough and North Londonderry Township in Lebanon County. HATS serves over 500,000 people and encompasses 1,675 square miles with 106 municipalities.

Federal regulations for MPO transportation planning (23 CFR Part 450.316(b)(1)) require there be a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and programs. A deliberate and concerted effort, as provided in this plan, is necessary to ensure adequate public involvement opportunities exist throughout the HATS area.

As the transportation planning process evolved through ISTEA and TEA-21 a renewed emphasis was given to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and environmental justice. Title VI declares:

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

- *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000)*

President Clinton’s 1994 Executive Order 12898 to address environmental justice concerns provided additional reinforcement to Title VI and requires:

“Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

- *Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994*

Agencies that use federal funds, such as HATS, also must make a meaningful effort to involve low-income and minority populations in the process of making decisions regarding the use of those federal funds.

In support of Executive Order 12898, the United States Department of Transportation (DOT) issued an Order on Environmental Justice (DOT Order 5610.2) in 1997. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) followed with an Order on Environmental Justice (FHWA Order 6640.23) in 1998 to establish policies and procedures for compliance with Executive Order 12898. The FHWA Order established three fundamental environmental justice principles:

1. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
2. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority populations and low-income populations.

Executive Order 12898 and the DOT and FHWA Orders on Environmental Justice address persons belonging to any of the following groups:

- **Black** - a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.
- **Hispanic** - a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.
- **Asian** - a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.
- **American Indian and Alaskan Native** - a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

OMB, in its Bulletin No. 00-02, "Guidance on Aggregation and Allocation of Data on Race for Use in Civil Rights Monitoring and Enforcement," issued March 9, 2000, provided guidance on the way Federal agencies collect and use aggregate data on race. Added to the previous standard delineations of race/ethnicity was the category of:

- **Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander** - a person having origins in any of the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or other Pacific Islands.
- **Low-Income** - a person whose household income (or in the case of a community or group, whose median household income) is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.
- **Adverse effects** – the totality of significant individual or cumulative human health or environmental effects, including interrelated social and economic effects, which may

include, but are not limited to: bodily impairment, infirmity, illness, or death; air, noise, and water pollution and soil contamination; destruction or disruption of man-made or natural resources; destruction or diminution of aesthetic values; destruction or disruption of community cohesion or a community's economic vitality; destruction or disruption of the availability of public and private facilities and services; vibration; adverse employment effects; displacement of persons, businesses, farms, or nonprofit organizations; increased traffic congestion, isolation, exclusion, or separation of minority or low-income individuals within a given community or from the broader community; the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of, benefits of DOT programs, policies, or activities.

Disproportionately high and adverse effect on minority and low-income populations- (1) is predominantly borne by a minority and/or a low-income population, or (2) will be suffered by the minority population and/or low-income population and is appreciably more severe or greater in magnitude than the adverse effect that will be suffered by the non-minority population and/or non-low-income population.

HATS will define non-discriminating plans and programs through inclusive and continuing public involvement. The manner of involving the public will change from one plan or program to the next since there is no 'one-size-fits-all' standard. HATS will remain flexible and adaptable in this respect. Meeting the literal requirements of the law is the minimum acceptable level of effort, but experience has proven genuine public input demands more than the minimum accepted by regulations. This public involvement plan provides for a variety of methods to be used by HATS as particular or unique local circumstances warrant. HATS public involvement efforts will produce:

- ‡ non-discriminating transportation plans and programs responsive to public input; and,
- ‡ an engaged and informed citizenry of all socioeconomic, racial and ethnic backgrounds in matters of regional transportation planning; and,
- ‡ a sustained dialogue between the people and the transportation policy-makers of the HATS region.

Not only can public involvement improve the quality of decisions, but also effectively resolve conflict among competing interests, build trust, and educate and inform both the general public and policy-makers alike.

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission & HATS Public Involvement ...

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission (TCRPC) functions as the lead staff agency of HATS and provides planning and administrative support services. TCRPC staff also serve the planning commissions of Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry Counties. Because of the varied programs of TCRPC, our commitment to public involvement and outreach occurs both with the general public and the municipal governments and their elected officials who serve on the Regional and County Planning Commissions.

Though complex and ambitious, it is the efficiencies of the shared staff resources of our regional planning, local planning, and transportation planning programs that lend itself to integrated land use and transportation plans for our region. It is also the source of much confusion over who TCRPC and HATS are, what we do, and a driving force behind the need for public education and outreach efforts in tandem with our public involvement plan.

Demographic Profile of our Region ...

Data from the 1990 and 2000 Censuses show our region remains mostly urban (increasingly so), and is becoming more racially and ethnically diverse. Our region’s population is becoming older and attaining higher levels of education. At the same time, however, a greater number (and percentage) of the HATS region experiences some type of disability, is below poverty level and lacks affordable housing. A complete demographic profile is available by contacting HATS.

HATS Transportation Planning Process ...

Technical and Coordinating Committees composed of a balance of representatives from across the region, direct the HATS transportation planning process. The Coordinating Committee is the MPO decision-making body and the Technical Committee advises the Coordinating Committee.

Coordinating Committee

Entity/Agency	Number of Votes
PennDOT	2
Cumberland County	2
Dauphin County	2
Perry County	2
Harrisburg City	2
Capital Area Transit	1

Technical Committee

Entity/Agency	Number of Votes
PennDOT	2
Cumberland County	2
Dauphin County	2
Perry County	2
York County	1
Harrisburg City	2
Capital Area Transit	1

The HATS Technical Committee also includes Amtrak, Norfolk Southern Railroad, the Susquehanna Area Regional Airport Authority (SARAA), and the Pennsylvania Motor Trucking Association (PMTA) as non-voting members. This allows HATS to incorporate the expertise availed by these providers in its multi-modal decisions in addition to the viewpoints of local governments and the general public. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are ex-officio members as well. HATS also creates special committees or task forces to address specific transportation issues as the need arises. All plans are presented to the HATS Coordinating Committee for adoption.

Public Notice and Accessibility ...

All HATS meetings are open to the public and advertised in the *Patriot* newspaper at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting. Thirty-day public review and comment periods are held prior to the adoption of HATS transportation plans and programs and formal public meetings are held prior to the adoption of these plans. Those formal public meetings are advertised at least 2 weeks in advance. Legal notices indicate where copies for review can be obtained and where to send comments. When comments are received, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of all comments is discussed at the HATS Technical and Coordinating Committee meetings and made part of the final document. When the final document differs significantly from the one that was made available for public comment or raises new issues, an additional opportunity for public comment is provided.

All meetings are held in places accessible to the disabled as well as the visually and hearing impaired. With advanced notification accommodations will be provided for those with eligible transportation needs. Upon request, HATS will also arrange for translation services provided by International Services.

Public Education and Public Involvement Goals...

As previously noted, meeting the literal requirements of the law is the minimum acceptable level of effort, but experience has proven genuine public input demands more than the basic requirements. To that end, HATS uses a variety of public involvement and outreach techniques. General research and contacts within the region's communities continue on an on-going basis to develop and implement the most effective public involvement methods possible. All methods will:

- ‡ Engage low-income and/or minority population, and
- ‡ Assess impacts of programmed transportation plans/projects on low-income and/or minority populations to insure no disproportionate impact

Methods of Public Education and Public Involvement ...

Public participation is a process which provides private citizens and community groups opportunities to participate and influence public decisions. The following list describes many methods HATS uses to educate and involve the public. These methods ensure every citizen and community group's views and ideas are heard.

Brochures, Posters, Ads and Billboards are materials used in publicity and educational campaigns related to projects, planning and planning related issues. The substance of these materials may be factual or present a point of view. Some of these materials and items are small, containing a logo or telephone for more information. Advertisement and promotional materials may be geared to a broad audience, while others are more focused to individual recipients.

Charrette- A Charrette is meeting held within a specific time period for the participants to intensely work together to reach a resolution. Charrettes are problem-oriented meetings, which attempt to bring out all the points view from concerned citizens, agency representatives and experts by defining, analyzing, clarifying, and responding to issues.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)- Citizen Advisory Committees are one of the most common forms of public involvement. A CAC is a representative group assigned a role in the planning and/or review process. The CAC meets regularly to discuss and review issues of common concern in accordance with its mission.

Citizen referendum- A citizen referendum is a formal process where citizens vote their approval or disapproval of a public measure by official ballots. Structured legal requirements are in place for adding a referendum issue and/or question on the election ballot.

Citizen Training- During the plan process, and following its completion it is important to train citizens on the plan process and implementation mechanisms which they may use. Through the use of educational material and techniques, citizens are given training in the planning process that enables them too more knowledgeable participate and/or assist in implementation.

Conference- Conferences are highly structured special meetings designed to inform citizens and solicit input on specific policy issues, plans, or projects. Traditionally, conferences have presentations and panel discussions on a variety of related topics. They can be a subset of a larger meeting, a half-day session, or they may be a large multi-day event.

Exhibits and displays- Exhibits and displays include maps, photos, models, slide shows, videos and other visually oriented activities designed to inform citizens and develop interest in general and specific topics or projects.

Facilitation- Facilitation is guidance of a group in a problem-solving process. The group leader (facilitator) assumes a neutral role on the issues and topics and works with the group as a whole to provide procedural help in moving toward a conclusion. The goal of both the group and the facilitator is to arrive at a collective decision through substantive discussions.

Focus group- A focus group is a small-organized group discussion designed as a tool to gauge opinions on a specific topic or topics. Taken from marketing and advertising techniques, a focus group regards a plan, policy, process, or project as a product. Focus group members are asked in a formal discussion to comment on how the product may be improved for the public. It is a way to identify citizen/customer concerns, needs, wants, and expectations. Thus, focus groups can

assist in policy and program development and provide to decision makers the attitudes and values of affected citizens.

Goals achievement matrix- A goals achievement matrix is an organized method of assessing project and implementation alternatives. The matrix assesses the alternatives proposed by weighting them according to the citizen group policies, goals and objectives.

Handbook- A handbook is an information booklet used independently or as part of publicity and educational activities. A handbook is a well investigated and researched collection of factual and descriptive information used to educate, guide, instruct and assist the user to understand and apply a particular process and/or activity.

Information meetings and information fairs- Information meetings and information fairs are organized events used to publicize and interest local citizens in planning programs and specific projects. A fair is typically a one-day event, heavily promoted to encourage residents to see it. Information fairs focus on visual exhibits, videos, maps and/or models of projects and plans. Often, there is a speaker or presenter present to introduce the purpose of the fair. Other staff and officials are also present to address questions.

Nominal group technique (NGT-) Nominal group technique (NGT) is decision making process for a small group. The process is designed to identify issues and priorities. Where there may be individuals and officials of varying degrees of standing within a community, NGT provides a process where all participants are considered equals, thus the term nominal is used to define these techniques. Using cards or note boards a facilitator collects ideas and issues generated silently from the participants. This information is then compiled and registered in organized listings. The participants then discuss what these ideas mean and individually rank each idea or issues. Other variations of NGT are also in use.

Opinion/attitude surveys- Opinion/attitude surveys are wide spread public polls administered to a sample group of citizens via a written questionnaire or through interviews in person, phone, or by electronic media. The sample of citizens surveyed is considered representative of a larger group. They can be formal (scientifically designed and administered) or informal in design. Formal surveys give broad applicable results for planning. If not carefully designed, informal surveys tend to bring responses and reach from a self-selected rather than broader groups.

Policy Delphi- Policy Delphi is a group interactive process in which experts in a particular field are invited to formally prepare advice to decision makers on a related topic, project or issue. The process begins with a survey of the group members followed by a compilation and distribution of the survey results to each expert member. Upon receipt of the results, the experts are asked to meet and discuss the results. The expert group will meet and follow-up as necessary to reformulate positions until a consensus is reached. The findings and results of this process are used and/or forwarded to other decision makers as part of the public input process.

Press conference- A press conference is a formal public meeting where decision makers (usually elected officials or other appointed leadership) formally and publicly announces or present significant news related information regarding a decision, initiative, process, study, project. A

press conference often is recorded for television and customarily involves organized questioning from the press. Press conference events are used as a forum to publicize and inform local citizens of major planning projects, programs and other community issues, activities and initiatives.

Local government memorandums - Notices are mailed to the 106 municipalities in the HATS region indicating the date, time, place, and tentative agenda items of the next round of HATS meetings. These notices are mailed at least three weeks prior to the meetings. Local government memorandums are also sent prior to formal thirty-day public review and comment periods and formal public meetings to keep local elected officials and governments informed. It is hoped the local governments, in turn, can distribute information to their constituents and be ‘ambassadors’ for HATS.

Local Community Service Television - HATS Coordinating Committee meetings are videotaped and broadcast on a local community service television channel (through CRATV) so the information presented and discussed at the meetings will reach a wider audience. In fact, many casual observers have commented to staff about noticing the HATS meetings on television. It appears the broadcasts are capturing attention and relaying transportation information to those who may not be able to attend HATS meetings in person. Meetings will continue to be taped. Meeting minutes also are prepared as part of the MPO record for public review.

Planning Commission Outreach meetings – Cumberland County Planning Commission and its staff conducts quarterly outreach meetings, each held in different areas of Cumberland County. HATS planning staff participates in those meetings to relay timely information and gather input regarding the transportation program. HATS planning staff also will participate in Dauphin County and Perry County outreach efforts, as appropriate.

Local Planning Assistance (LPA) Program – TCRPC staff (which includes HATS planning staff) serve as professional/technical advisors to their assigned municipalities throughout the region to assist in subdivision and land development, zoning and comprehensive plan reviews and recommendations. As part of the LPA program, staff planners provide information to the municipalities as to the County and Regional Planning Commissions’ activities and request input and feedback from the municipalities. This function provides continuity between development activities occurring within the region and the identification of potential transportation infrastructure needs.

Newsletter – TCRPC and HATS planning staff produce a newsletter three times a year, with a distribution of over 650. The focus is on maintaining information and communication flows regarding transportation and land use planning.

Annual Reports – TCRPC and HATS planning staff produce annual reports for HATS, Cumberland, Dauphin and Perry County Planning Commissions, and Tri-County Regional Planning Commission to document the transportation and land use planning activities that occurred during the year. These are distributed to over 300 individuals and agencies by direct mail, and are also available upon request.

TCRPC web site – Information regarding the programs and activities of TCRPC are maintained on its website (www.tcrpc-pa.org). The site provides contact information and a section strictly devoted to HATS related items. This section contains general information about HATS, links to the HATS meeting schedule and upcoming agenda, minutes, reports, annual reports, newsletter, TIP, and current study information. An on-line ridesharing application is also available. This resource provides valuable current information for those with web access who wish to be involved. The website is continually updated to provide the most current information available.

Special studies/plans – TCRPC and HATS planning staff produce special studies and plans as issues and needs arise. This will continue to be a part of the transportation planning program. For instance, a *Short Range Transit Plan* is created annually in cooperation with the local transit providers to inform the general public, employees, and employers of the different transit opportunities and of the simplicity of using public transit for either business or personal travel. These booklets are distributed to over 150 human service agencies and are available upon request. Additionally, the Cumberland-Perry Counties Joint Task Force on Transportation and Land Use Planning and the Route 39/Route 743 Transportation Planning Study Group are currently active to define area needs and implement recommendations from their respective studies.

Public involvement is an evolving process, HATS continues to reflex the opinions of the region's citizens. HATS will continue to work with municipalities, elected officials, other agencies and community organizations as well as the general public to identify and develop an effective combination of outreach and involvement techniques to maintain ongoing communication on transportation plans, programs, processes, issues and products. All public involvement will be evaluated following completion. The information will be used to improve methods and techniques.

Additional Information Available Upon Request

- † Demographic Profile
- † Map – concentrations of low-income and minority population
- † FFY 2003 TIP Projects
- † Title VI / EJ Contacts