

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES MOBILE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

These procedures have been developed to seek out a combination of outreach, inclusion, and engagement of the public in the transportation planning process. Opportunities for public involvement are not limited to those contained herein; in addition to the following, the MPO will continue to pursue innovative and effective public involvement procedures.

### **1. Meetings**

All MPO meetings are open to the public, and all material to be brought before the MPO is available for public inspection and review on request. Fees will be charged for photocopies.

### **2. Staff Availability**

MPO staff is provided by South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, located at 110 Beauregard Street, Mobile, (251) 433-6541, FAX 433-6009. Personnel are available during the office hours of 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday to respond to questions regarding the Mobile Area Transportation Study, either by telephone or in person. Staff is available to make presentations to the public upon request.

### **3. Public Notice**

Prior to MPO consideration for approval, the development process and the draft of the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and any updates of the Long-Range Transportation Plan will be advertised for public review, comment, and/or input in a Mobile County general circulation newspaper. This notification procedure will also apply to any new or substantially revised federal transportation project proposed for implementation in the study area and anticipated to have significant impact (examples include most TIP or UPWP modifications). The notice will briefly describe the proposed action, when public hearings/meetings will be held, when the MPO will meet to consider the action, and where more detailed information can be reviewed or obtained (see paragraph 4 following). The intent of this procedure is to provide a means for involvement and input from all interested parties at the earliest possible time prior to MPO decisions or action. Therefore, public notice of the proposed meeting or action will be made as soon as possible, but in no event less than two weeks prior to the date the MPO is scheduled to act on the proposal. The same newspaper notice or press release (or a more “user-friendly” version of the same) will be posted in senior citizen centers, Community Action Service Centers, and public housing offices within the study area.

### **4. Availability of Documents for Public Review**

The public notices described above will specify that a more detailed explanation of the proposed action can be obtained from the SARPC Transportation Planning staff and will include the office mailing address and phone number. When entire documents are involved (i.e., TIP, UPWP, or Plan Update, etc.), the notice will also state that the document can be reviewed at the SARPC office, the Alabama Department of Transportation Ninth Division office, the Metro Transit System office, the Mayors’ offices (or their designees) of Bayou La Batre, Mobile, Prichard, Chickasaw, Saraland, Satsuma, and Creola, the Mobile Area

Chamber of Commerce, the Saraland Chamber of Commerce, the Tillman's Corner Chamber of Commerce, all local libraries, public housing offices, and the main Mobile Community Action office. The project documentation available at each site will include comment forms with instructions on how to contact SARPC for additional information and where to submit written comments.

#### **5. Other Means for Information Dissemination**

MPO staff will utilize other available media (including public service announcements, billboards, and signs on public transportation vehicles) to encourage early and continuous involvement of citizens in the planning process and in the promotion of ongoing programs. Summary copies of most elements of the Long Range Plan are available free of charge from the SARPC office. SARPC also maintains a home page on the World Wide Web at <http://www.sarpc.org>. Information on the MATS program, including the long range street plan and bicycle plan, is posted there and additional data can be obtained through the electronic mail address [mats@sarpc.org](mailto:mats@sarpc.org). MPO staff will maintain mailing lists, including area of interest if available. Upon request, notification of document availability, public hearings or meetings, or pending MPO action will be mailed to individuals who have indicated interest in related matters and have provided a current mailing address within the study area. Community involvement efforts will be used to help establish new contacts to add to the mailing list.

#### **6. Resolution of Public Input**

All comments received on draft plans or proposals, whether submitted in writing or orally to MPO staff independently or at public meetings or hearings, will be documented and made available to the MPO prior to any action being taken on the proposal. All relevant comments and their responses will be included in the final plan/proposal adopted by the MPO. All responses to public comments will be made in a timely manner.

#### **7. Accommodation of Physically Challenged**

Access to meetings or information will be available to physically challenged persons by notifying the MPO staff at least seven days prior to the meeting date or date the information is desired so that adequate time is available to complete any special arrangements necessary to accommodate the individual's physical challenge.

#### **8. Revised Proposals**

Should any draft plans or proposals be substantially modified after being advertised for public comment, either due to such comment or otherwise, the public notice cycle will be repeated and the new proposal will be made available for public comment.

#### **9. Public Involvement through Other Community Development Programs**

SARPC and the MPO staff will continue to increase communication and expand public awareness through their involvement in several community improvement initiatives and organizations (e.g. Mobile United, Mobile Area Chamber of Commerce Envision Coastal Alabama and Mobile County Community Development Partnership). These programs are all consensus-building efforts made up of concerned citizens targeting all types of social awareness and community development, including infrastructure in general and transportation in particular. Representatives of each of these organizations, in turn, will

continue to serve on the MATS Technical/Citizen Committee and to have direct input to the MPO decision-making process. MPO staff has both policy and implementation involvement in Envision Coastal Alabama, which is the community visioning initiative undertaken by area citizens in 1997. Inherent in the Envision process is the concept that public involvement should drive plan development, and the program therefore provides an excellent opportunity for broad community representation in the transportation planning process. MPO staff will continue to assist in the establishment and implementation of the organization's goals and methodologies for transportation strategies in the region. The products and goals of all of these community-based efforts will continue to be integrated into all MPO plans and decisions.

#### **10. Review and Revision of Procedures**

The MPO staff will review the public involvement procedures with respect to changes in local, state and federal legislation and in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to the public. This review will be completed annually for the prior fiscal year. The current procedures will be assessed with respect to their success in meeting the performance requirements specified in the appropriate regulations pertaining to metropolitan system planning, project development, and/or certification reviews. The review will include the number of comments/responses received, citizen attendance at meetings, the number of citizens who actually review the documents distributed throughout the region, and the amount spent on public notices and advertisements. The results of this review will be summarized in a written report and presented to the MPO upon completion. If the MPO determines that the public involvement program is inadequate, additional involvement techniques will be developed and utilized; this might include alternate or new media resources. Should the MPO determine that it is necessary to revise these procedures, a 45-day notification/comment period will be given prior to MPO adoption of the proposed modifications.