



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Burlington - Graham Metropolitan Planning Organization's (BGMPO's) Public Involvement Plan is an umbrella policy document encompassing all plans and programs of the urban area's transportation planning processes including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Major Investment Studies (MIS), Program of Projects (POP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). These plans and policies are completed in coordination with the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) Statewide Public Involvement Plan, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Public Involvement Plan guidance.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan is to create an open and transparent process in accordance with federal, state and local requirements wherein the general public has the opportunity to be meaningfully engaged in all stages of the transportation planning decision-making processes. Underlying these efforts is the commitment to establish a two-way open dialogue for developing the most effective outreach methods for a given project or population. The Public Involvement Plan is designed to ensure that transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.

OBJECTIVES

1. Engage a broad cross-section of the public in the transportation planning decision-making processes of the BGMPO.
2. Enhance the public's knowledge of the BGMPO multimodal transportation system, costs and funding.
3. Evaluate the BGMPO's public involvement procedures and its effectiveness for increasing public engagement and access to relevant information.
4. Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes.
5. Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), signed into law in 1990, is a landmark civil rights legislation ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access

employment, public facilities, transportation, state and local government services and communications. The ADA requires coordinating with disabled community representatives in the development and improvement of transportation services. Persons with disabilities must also be able to access the sites where public involvement activities occur as well as the information presented. See www.ada.gov for more information. All notices for planning activities of the BGMPO will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator or other provisions requested).

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1965 prohibits discrimination based upon race, color or national origin. Specifically, 42 USC § 2000d states, "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds 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." See Title VI Civil Rights Act US Dept of Justice for more information.

Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898; Federal Actions to Address Environmental justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations. The Executive Order reinforced the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focused federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low-income communities. Furthermore, recent guidance issued by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) emphasizes the importance of considering and addressing Environmental Justice (EJ) in all phases of the transportation planning process. EJ calls for the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin or income, and that the benefits, as well as the impacts, of transportation investments are fairly distributed.

Executive Order 13166 – Limited English Proficiency

People with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) are those with a primary or home language other than English. Executive Order 13166 requires any agency that receives federal funds to make their activities accessible to non-English speaking individuals. See Limited English Proficiency Executive Order and the BGMPO Title VI Plan for more information.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)

Agencies that utilize federal project funding must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) before final decisions are made about federal actions that could have environmental impacts on social, cultural, and economic resources, and economic resources, as well as natural resources. NEPA provides an opportunity for public involvement in the decision-making process.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

MPOs are required to represent localities in all urbanized areas (UZAs) with populations over 50,000, as determined by the U.S. Census. The Burlington-Graham area was designated an "Urbanized Area" by the U.S. Bureau of Census in 1974. As a result of this designation, the Burlington-Alamance area formed the BGMPO in 1975. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed between the Cities of Burlington, Graham, and Mebane; the Towns of Elon, Gibsonville, Whitsett, Green Level and Haw River; the Village of Alamance; Guilford County, Orange County and Alamance County; and the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT).

TECHNICAL COORDINATING AND TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMITTEES

The BGMPO established a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) with the responsibility of general review, guidance, and coordination of the transportation planning process. A Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of elected officials in the urbanized area, was also established as the policy and decision-making body for the BGMPO.

MPO Board Meetings and Workshops

The TCC and TAC meet at least five times per calendar year the third Tuesday of the meeting month. The schedule of regular meetings will be posted on the BGMPO website. These meetings are open to the public and the public has the opportunity to provide comments at the beginning of each meeting. For particular planning issues (i.e. plan development and updates, special studies, amendments to planning documents, etc.), the TAC may schedule a public comment period and public hearing as outlined below.

- Posting agenda and meeting packet seven days in advance on the MPO website;
- Email distribution of agenda and packet to MPO Board members and mailing hard copies to members who have requested them, seven days in advance of the meeting;
- Email distribution of agenda and packet to other interested parties on the MPO's email contact list.

Other Public Meetings and Workshops

The MPO may wish to schedule other public meetings and workshops in the course of developing a wide variety of planning documents, researching specific issues, conducting surveys and public education campaigns. The MPO commits to maintaining the longstanding notification standard of:

- Issuing press release to major local newspapers, television and radio stations.
- Emailing members notice of meetings on topics of interest as appropriate.

Exceptions to Notification Commitments

Occasions may occur when the MPO is required to act quickly or delay forwarding and posting meeting agendas. This is most likely to occur as a result of the severe time constraints the agency operates under. When situations demanding immediate action arise, staff may bring proposed actions forward that the TAC and TCC have not had the opportunity to preview and comment on. The TAC and TCC may take action if it wishes to do so, or to decline to take immediate action and remand the item for further study.

Response to Public Comment

Acknowledging public comments is a way for the BGMPO to respond to public feedback. Public comments received will be compiled and responses reviewed by the TCC and TAC and if warranted included as an appendix in planning documents.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Effective communication and timely information exchange with the public are essential for maintaining community understanding and successful implementation of transportation programs and projects. The BGMPO public information dissemination efforts may vary but will generally include public notices and legal advertisements posted on the BGMPO website www.bgmpo.org and advertised in the local newspaper of general circulation. Public notification will be conducted in accordance with Title VI and related Notice of Nondiscrimination regulations.

MEETINGS AND OUTREACH

The BGMPO will seek public input through a menu of techniques including public notices, newspaper advertisements, public meetings, open houses, interviews, surveys, newsletters, emails, and social media. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning project. Public events will be inclusive, collaborative, interactive, and informative for all. Summary documents will detail how public input was considered in the decision making process.

Public Meetings

“Public meeting” refers to any meeting that is open to the public, such as public hearings, project meetings, stakeholder meetings, and TCC and TAC meetings. Attempts will be made to identify stakeholders that reflect the diversity of the BGMPO population.

- Public meetings will be conducted at times, locations, and facilities that are convenient and accessible and preferably located on a transit route.
- Meeting materials will be available in a variety of predetermined formats to serve diverse audiences.
- A variety of advertising means may be employed to inform the community of public meetings.

- Assistance to persons with disabilities or Limited English Proficiency will be provided as outlined in the BGMPO Title VI Plan.
- Meeting rescheduling or cancellations will be posted to the website at least seven days before the meeting to occur under the revised schedule.

The TAC may schedule public comment periods and public hearings in accordance with federal and state requirements. The notice for the public comment period and the public hearing will be advertised in the local newspaper of general distribution. Comments are compiled by the BGMPO and reviewed by the TAC. Special provisions may be accommodated upon notification to the BGMPO within 48 hours of the scheduled public hearing (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, sign language availability, translators, etc.).

Small Group Meetings

A small group meeting is a meeting held with a small group or individuals from the public at their request or consent. Small group discussion formats may be integrated into larger group public meetings and workshops in an effort to make participants comfortable and more likely to contribute,

- If it is determined that a targeted group has not been afforded adequate opportunities to participate, the group may be contacted to inquire about possible participation methods, including unscheduled project meetings. Unless unusual circumstances or safety concerns exist, the meeting may be held at a location of the group's choosing.

Community Surveying

Opinion surveys such as MetroQuest will occasionally be used to obtain input from stakeholders or the general public. Surveys may be conducted via email, project websites, at community events or by placing survey drop boxes in ideal locations. Surveys will be translated into languages other than English, when appropriate.

Other forms of notifications include flyers, newsletters, videos and social media.

SOCIAL DISRUPTIONS

Social disruptions include environmental, ecological or biological hazards. When social distancing is necessary the TCC, TAC and general public will be advised of meeting rescheduling or cancellations by email and notification posted on the BGMPO website. The BGMPO may establish online meetings and conduct electronic or voice voting in cases of significant closures/virus quarantine disruption if immediate action is required or to maintain project schedules. The BGMPO will provide a location and means for the public to listen and the meeting notice will indicate where the public may listen. The BGMPO may charge up to \$25 to each listener to help pay for the cost of providing the location and listening equipment. Project information may be presented as a video with voice over slides and posted on the BGMPO website along with additional background information. Virtual

attendees may be able to respond online after reviewing the slides to provide online format public participation.

POLICY ELEMENTS

In accordance with 23 CFR 450.316, a MPO is required to engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation, and consultation throughout the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Program of Projects (POP), the Major Investment Study (MIS), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Under this requirement, MPOs must allow for:

- adequate public notice of public participation activities;
- review and comment at key decision points; and,
- allow for multiple, accessible participation formats including electronic and in-person.

The Participation Plan itself must be prepared by the BGMPO with a 45-day public review and comment period. In addition, any revisions or amendments also require a 45-day review and comment period.

NOTE: This document will be monitored and updated on an annual basis for new or revised items/regulations.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The BGMPO Metropolitan Transportation Plan public involvement process (including transportation improvement plans, thoroughfare plans, corridor plans, special studies, etc.) is designed to provide early and adequate opportunities for stakeholders to be involved throughout the transportation planning process. It is also designed to provide gradual progression from the general information (vision setting and formulation of goals, objectives and policies) pertaining to plan development to very specific information regarding alternatives and plan selection. Meeting notices, plans and policy documents will be posted on the BGMPO and/or project website and website links shared with all member jurisdictions for distribution. Information dissemination, notification of meeting, publication of proposed plans will be integral elements of the public participation process.

1. The TAC will initiate the transportation plan development or update process.
2. The BGMPO will endeavor to involve the public at key decision points of the transportation plan development. Decision points are those stages where the TAC will be required to endorse or take action on particular work elements. These include, but are not limited to:

- Formulation of vision, goals and objectives
- Policy development
- Review and approval of socio-economic and demographic projections
- Review of land use information and scenarios
- Review and determination of transportation deficiencies
- Identification of transportation (facility) needs
- Evaluation of alternatives and selection of preferred option
- Plan recommendation and adoption

Public meetings or forums designed to solicit public comment may be held at various locations around the metropolitan area to encourage the greatest public participation. Public meetings will be held at locations that meet ADA requirements.

3. The TAC will conduct a minimum 30-day public comment period, effective from the date of the public notice publication, for draft plan review. The notices also will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, someone proficient in sign language, a translator, or other provisions as requested). Additionally, the notice will inform the public that copies of the draft documents are on file for public review at the BGMPO offices, The BGMPO contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice. Comments received during the public comment period will be added as an appendix to project documents and forwarded to the TCC and TAC.
4. The TAC may choose will hold a public hearing before adopting or approving the MTP. Comments regarding the draft strategy will be considered prior to adopting the final plan.
5. The process for developing, updating, and amending the MTP will generally follow the above sequence and procedures.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the document that describes the 10-year funding and scheduling program of transportation improvement projects (highway and non-highway, and transit capital and operating assistance) using state and federal funds. NCDOT developed guidance and specific standards for local methodology used in TIP development. The guidance requested that each planning organization develop and implement a methodology that maintains transparency and maximizes the opportunity for public review and input. The BGMPO Local Input Methodology details the public involvement process and is posted on the BGMPO website.

Public Participation Process

1. The BGMPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will develop a draft Prioritization Priority List from the Local Project Priorities.

2. The BGMPO draft Priority List and Program of Projects (POP) will be published for a minimum 30-day public comment period in the local newspaper and other media sources. The notices for the public comment period and the public hearing will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. The draft Priority List will be on file in the BGMPO office for public review and comment.
3. The BGMPO will develop a draft TIP from the approved NCDOT STIP and from revenue estimates provided by the NCDOT.
4. Copies of a draft TIP will be distributed to TAC members. The draft TIP will follow the same notification procedures as outlined above for the draft Priority List.
5. The TAC may hold a public hearing on the draft TIP. The public hearing will be held at a location, which is accessible to persons with disabilities. Public comments will be addressed and considered prior to the adoption of the TIP.
6. Written public comments and their responses will be published as an appendix to the final TIP. The BGMPO will maintain a record of all public comments received through adoption of the Final STIP by the Board of Transportation (or longer as per the BGMPO record retention requirements).
7. Amendments to TIP will occur by TAC resolution. Public comment may be sought at the discretion of the TAC by majority vote.

MAJOR INVESTMENT STUDY

The Major Investment Study (MIS) supports decisions on significant federally funded transportation investments along a corridor or sub area level of the metropolitan area. The MIS identifies all reasonable strategies for the study area in order to meet its transportation demands and relieve any transportation problems. It is a detailed analysis designed to provide local decision-makers with more comprehensive corridor level technical analysis early in the transportation planning process.

The scope of a major investment study for the BGMPO will be determined on a project-by-project basis. Therefore, the MPO will choose the appropriate public participation initiatives to meet the goals of the MIS. The public participation techniques that may be used are public informational meetings, newsletters, and media relations.

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

Federal planning regulations require that each MPO prepare an annual work program known as the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP identifies the MPO planning tasks to be undertaken with the use of federal transportation funds, including highway and transit.

Public Participation Process

1. The Draft Unified Planning Work Program is reviewed by the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC meetings are open to the public. The TCC then endorses a Draft UPWP and forwards the document to the TAC for public release.
2. The Draft UPWP is then reviewed and released for a 30-day comment period by the TAC. The Draft is also sent to the NCDOT Public Transportation Division and Transportation Planning Division for comments.
3. Once NCDOT approves the Draft UPWP, it is presented for TAC approval. The TAC will also accept public comments at this time. Upon TAC adoption, the Final UPWP is then forwarded to the NCDOT and posted to the BGMPO website.
4. Any significant revision and amendment to the plan work program will be subject to the public review process as outlined in the Modifications and Amendments section below.

NOTE: This document will be monitored and updated on an annual basis for new or revised items/regulations.

TRANSIT ALLOCATION PLAN

The Federal Transit Administration and NCDOT – Public Transit Division require recipients of Section 5307 funding to develop an annual Transit Allocation Plan and Program of Projects (POP) for public review. It is a federal requirement for MPOs to solicit public comments regarding the utilization of federal funds. The POP project list will detail the project purpose, funding requests, and the local, state and Federal shares.

Public Participation Process

1. The BGMPO Transit Advisory Committee will develop the Transit Allocation Plan and resulting Program of Projects. The draft POP project list is reviewed by the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC meetings are open to the public. Staff will present any comments received during the public comment period.
2. After public review, the TAC will consider adoption of the draft POP and incorporation of the funding and projects in BGMPO annual budget and work program. The adopted program will be the final program of activity for the fiscal year, unless amended by the TAC.

OPTIONAL PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES

As a method for increasing public involvement and participation in the process, the public involvement for NCDOT and federal (long range plan, surveys, workshops, etc.) and other ancillary BGMPO planning processes may also include any or all of the following techniques:

Public meetings/hearings, surveys, focus groups, newsletters, public service announcements, charrettes, transportation advisory group, mass media, etc. Public meetings (forums) designed to solicit public comment may be held at various locations around the MPO area to encourage the greatest public participation.

The BGMPO will coordinate with partner agencies with distribution to member jurisdictions, citizen groups and agencies. Notification of the draft documents may be provided through various media outlets. The notification will inform the public of the availability of the draft documents for review and comment where to send written comments, and addresses and phone numbers of contact persons.

MODIFICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS

Occasionally, the need may arise which requires minor modifications to the MTIP, MTP, UPWP, PIP or other planning documents. Changes can be categorized in three ways: Administrative Modification, Minor Amendments, or Major Amendments.

Administrative amendments shall be for the purpose of correcting an administrative error or informational change; minor modifications to project plans and adjustment of project starts and completion dates. These do not require a formal public review and comment, or re-demonstrations of fiscal constraint.

Minor Amendments shall be considered to be minor in nature. Examples include work plan task funding changes (\$50,000 or less) with no fiscal impacts, and technical/preliminary/exploratory studies. These do not require a formal public involvement process outside the regular meeting structure of the MPO. Minor modifications will be distributed as informational items in BGMPO Board and advisory committee meeting packets, in addition to being posted on the website.

Major Amendments shall be considered to be significant enough so as to require public review and comment. Examples include the addition or deletion of a regionally significant project or a substantial change in the design concept or scope of a project included in transportation plans. Major amendments require a 10-calendar day formal public comment period. The comment period shall be advertised in the local newspaper and on the MPO's website.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

For any questions, comments or for further information regarding the BGMPO Public Participation Plan, please contact the BGMPO office.

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