

Monroe Urbanized Area
Metropolitan Planning Organization

Public Participation Plan

Prepared by the
Monroe Urbanized Area
Metropolitan Planning Organization

Which is a body of the
North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc.
(North Delta)

Prepared in Cooperation with
The MPO Technical Advisory Committee
and
The Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development

Adopted by the
MPO Transportation Policy Committee
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Public Participation Plan
for the
Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Legislation such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century (TEA 21) , and the Safe, Affordable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) have not only placed new demands on local governments, but have also given them new vehicles for development. One vehicle is an enhanced community involvement role in the planning process. The nation's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) have been charged with enriching the transportation planning process with greater public awareness and involvement. The Ouachita Council of Governments (OCOG), which is a division of the North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc. (North Delta) is the designated MPO for the Monroe Urbanized Area.

The *Public Participation Plan* of the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization will be used for the transportation planning activities for our Urbanized Area. The program will provide opportunities for citizens to contribute ideas and voice opinions, early and often, during preparation of draft plans and programs. Of utmost importance to our *Public Participation Plan* is that information, education and participation is assured to the citizens affected by our planning efforts. The Monroe MPO's public participation process satisfies the City of Monroe's public participation process for the POP (Program of Projects).

Because regional planning is enhanced by increased public involvement, a strong communication channel is necessary between the public and the decision-makers. The Intermodal Surface

Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) underlined the need for an increase in the public's ability to affect what decisions are being made in their community. The U.S. Congress reaffirmed that assertion in the TEA 21 legislation it adopted in 1998. SAFETEA-LU further affirms the need for meaningful public input from all relevant parts of the community. By increasing the dialogue between the decision-makers and the public, better plans, which include the citizens as stakeholders, will be produced. The Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization looks to enhance the public's role as partners in transportation planning. Early knowledge about transportation changes is a goal of the Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization.

The *Public Participation Plan* of the Monroe Urbanized Area-Metropolitan Planning Organization includes three major components: **Community Dialogue**, **Public Meetings**, and **Review and Comment**.

I. **Community Dialogue**

- A. Every opportunity will be taken to distribute information to the public. Information will be distributed to the media and local interest groups via fact sheets, brochures, e-mails etc. Notices for upcoming meetings and public involvement activities will be published in the Monroe News Star and on the OCOG website. The Metropolitan Planning staff will maintain a list of interested parties who wish to be notified of any upcoming events of actions regarding the transportation planning process.
- B. Presentations to neighborhood groups, civic organizations, governmental meetings, and other special interest groups will be made on an as requested basis to discuss transportation activities within the Monroe Urbanized Area. Interested organizations should contact the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization

located in the North Delta offices and allow ample time for the staff to make arrangements to attend.

- C. Information will be provided to the public through technical assistance and access to publications. Official copies of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be kept in the Ouachita Parish libraries located in the city of Monroe and West Monroe for easy public access and information. These documents shall also be available on the OCOG website.

II. Public Meetings

- A. At least one public meeting will be held during development of the “Draft” Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the “Draft” Monroe Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program. Also, a public meeting will be held to adopt any final version of either document.
- B. Major amendments to the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program documents will also require a public meeting. Major amendments shall include any addition or deletion, project deemed to be regionally significant, or any changes that affect fiscal constraint. Exceptions:
 - 1. Minor revisions to document text or project descriptions.
 - 2. Revisions to project timing within the TIP time frame.
- C. Every effort will be made to accommodate traditionally under-served audiences including low income and minority households and person with disabilities. All public hearings and open houses will be held at wheelchair accessible locations. Persons with disabilities who have special communication or accommodation needs and who

plan to attend the meeting any contact the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization. Requests for special needs are to be in writing and received at least two working days prior to the meeting. The address is:

North Delta Regional Planning and Development District, Inc.
(North Delta)
3000 Kilpatrick Avenue
Monroe, Louisiana 71201
Attn: Director of Transportation

Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate these needs. For further information please call our office at (318) 387-2572.

- D. All public meeting will be announced in the Monroe News Star World and on the OCOG website. All persons or organizations maintained on the interested parties list will be notified of public meetings. Also, every effort will be made to ensure that stakeholders in the transportation planning process are invited to participate. These stakeholders will include, but not be limited to, persons or organizations involved in traffic operations, transportation safety and enforcement, airports and port authorities, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways, and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and appropriate private transportation providers.

III. Review and Comment

- A. Prior to adoption of a Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and/or Monroe Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program, or major amendments to either document, the public will be given a 15 (fifteen) day review

period. If after the comment period substantial changes are made to the MTP or TIP and new material issues which could not have been reasonably foreseen are raised, there shall be an additional comment period of 10 (ten) days. A notice will be published in the Monroe News Star World and posted on the OCOG website at least two weeks prior to any public meeting and notices will be sent to all interested parties. Copies of the draft documents or proposed amendments will be available for public review at the North Delta offices, and on the OCOG website as well as the Ouachita Parish libraries in the cities of Monroe and West Monroe.

- B. A comment and response summary will be included within the Monroe Urbanized Area Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Monroe Urbanized Area Transportation Improvement Program.
- C. The *Public Participation Plan* (PPP) will be reviewed at least every four years by the Monroe Urbanized Area - Metropolitan Planning Organization for effectiveness. Any changes to the PIP document will require a 15-day public comment period.

APPENDIX A

23 CFR Part 450

Statewide Planning: Metropolitan Planning, Rule

' 450.326 TIP revisions and relationship to the STIP

(a) An MPO may revise the TIP at any time under procedures agreed to by the cooperating parties consistent with the procedures established in this part for its development and approval. In nonattainment or maintenance areas for transportation-related pollutants, if a TIP amendment involves non-exempt projects (per 40 CFR part 93), or is replaced with an updated TIP, the MPO and the FHWA and the FTA must make a new conformity determination. In all areas, changes that affect fiscal constraint must take place by amendment of the TIP. Public participation procedures consistent with §450.316(a) shall be utilized in revising the TIP, except that these procedures are not required for administrative modifications.

(b) After approval by the MPO and the Governor, the TIP shall be included without change, directly or by reference, in the STIP required under 23 U.S.C. 135. In nonattainment and maintenance areas, a conformity finding on the TIP must be made by the FHWA and the FTA before it is included in the STIP. A copy of the approved TIP shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA.

(c) The State shall notify the MPO and Federal land management agencies when a TIP including projects under the jurisdiction of these agencies has been included in the STIP.

APPENDIX B

Requirements for Public Involvement Processes

The “Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act” (FAST Act), signed into law on December 4, 2015, contains specific language outlining federal requirements regarding public involvement processes and procedures.

In general, the FAST Act legislation built upon previous transportation legislation (ISTEA, TEA-21, SAFETEA-LU, and MAP-21) to provide states and metropolitan planning organizations specific direction in conducting and promoting broad-based public involvement activities. The FAST Act (Public Law 114-94) requires metropolitan planning organizations to develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. Resulting plans and processes are developed through a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process.

In addition, the Public Involvement Plan shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties and should describe explicit procedures, strategies and desired outcomes for public participation. Beyond the federal requirements, participation by citizens, affected public agencies, community groups, and other interested parties is an important part of a successful public planning program. OCOG actively encourages the participation of all interested parties in its planning efforts.

Legal Notice | November 21, 2013

The Public Involvement Process Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program Plan for the Monroe Metropolitan Planning Area will be available for public review for the next 45 days at the North Delta offices, 1913 Stubbs Avenue, Monroe, Louisiana. A public hearing (this will serve as the public participation process for the Monroe Transit Systems Program of Projects) will be held on Monday, November 30, 2009 at 11:30 a.m., at the Monroe City Hall Council Chambers prior to the OCOG meeting.

This legal notice was for changing from 45 to 15 days.