

The Participation Process In Transportation Decision Making for the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council

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**Macatawa Area
Coordinating Council**
A Cooperative Effort Among Units of Government

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The Public Participation Process in Transportation Decision Making for the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council

I. INTRODUCTION

The Holland/Zeeland urbanized area was established in 1991 by the U.S. Census Bureau with completion of the 1990 census. Census estimates illustrate that the urbanized area population grew from 62,418 in 1990, to 91,795 in 2000, and to 99,941 by the year 2010. Under the guidance of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1990 (ISTEA), the Michigan Department of Transportation began working with local elected officials to establish a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urbanized area.

In September, 1992, local leaders in the Holland/Zeeland area designated the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) as the MPO for the Holland/Zeeland Area, and established a Metropolitan Area Boundary (MAB) which includes the Cities of Holland and Zeeland and the Townships of Zeeland, Holland, Park, Laketown and Fillmore. The MAB was expanded to include Port Sheldon and Olive Townships as a result of the 2000 census. The MACC addresses a number of areawide issues related to transportation and other considerations that affect development within the region. This document outlines the procedures the MACC will use when undertaking transportation planning initiatives.

Since the enactment of the *Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA)* in 1991, MPOs have been required to develop and utilize 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 metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs). The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU)* expanded the public involvement provisions by requiring MPOs to develop and adopt participation plans. Current legislation, *Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21)*, has maintained these provisions.

SAFETEA-LU, while retaining the previous public involvement characteristics noted above, has placed additional emphasis on extensive stakeholder “participation”, specifically requirements to:

- Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Employ visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs
- Make public information available in electronically accessible formats and means (such as the World Wide Web) as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of the information

II. MEETINGS

All regularly scheduled meetings of the Macatawa Area Coordinating Council (MACC) Policy and Technical Committees are open to the public and held at sites which comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. Time is allotted at Technical and Policy Committee meetings for any person wishing to address committee members. The Policy Committee meetings are televised and shown several times per month on a public access channel to a viewing audience that covers the entire MACC area. Online viewing of the Policy Committee meetings are also available on the internet, through MacMedia (www.macmedia.org). Meeting notifications are sent to local newspaper reporters and several members of the public also receive notification of Policy Committee meetings. Interested citizens may have their name added to the mailing list. A list of regularly scheduled Policy and Technical Committee meeting dates, times, and locations will be posted in the MACC office and distributed to each member unit of government for posting. This listing will also be posted on the MACC's World Wide Web site.

III. OUTREACH

The MACC will strive to implement the emphasis in SAFETEA-LU related to stakeholder participation. It will work to encourage the involvement of persons who have been traditionally underserved, as well as to meet the requirements of Executive Order 12898 related to Environmental Justice. The December 2011 document, *Environmental Justice Emerging Trends and Best Practices Guidebook*, and *Going the Distance Together – Context Sensitive Solutions (CSS) for Better Transportation* (April 2012), will also be used as guides to improve public participation.

The MACC, through written communication or phone, will endeavor to notify some or all of the groups listed below when a particular agenda item directly impacts an organization or the clientele they represent, a major planning project is initiated, such as the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan, or at the request of any MACC Policy Committee member.

Stakeholder organizations that represent the interests of:

The elderly

The disabled

Nonmotorized transportation users

Minority populations

Low income populations

Affected Tribal governments in Ottawa and Allegan Counties

MACC will notify the following types of organizations located in the MACC area:

Conventional and unconventional transit providers

Representatives of public transportation employees

Affected public agencies

Private providers of transportation

Law enforcement agencies and fire departments

Freight shippers and providers of freight transportation services
Railroad companies
Environmental organizations
Major employers
Local Chamber of Commerce
Tourism offices
Interested citizens
Human service agencies
Schools

IV. INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION AND REVIEW

The MACC recognizes that for the public to participate in transportation decision making, it must understand the transportation system's problems, processes, and potential solutions. Information must be provided in a timely manner, be easily understandable, and be reasonably accessible.

The MACC has a resource room at its office where citizens can have access to the Agency's library and map files. Copies of all MACC planning documents, meeting minutes, and maps can be made available upon request. The MACC receives extensive news coverage and MACC Staff meets with local media representatives from the Holland Sentinel and Grand Rapids Press to inform them of major planning initiatives and elicit their support in publicizing them.

The MACC has a presence on the World Wide Web. Local public libraries have computers available for public use so access to the Web will not necessitate personal ownership of a computer. Meeting schedules and minutes, planning studies, the MACC Area Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, annual reports, newsletters, and other applicable documents will be posted on the MACC home page. The MACC's World Wide Web address is <http://www.the-macc.org>.

Social media, such as Facebook and Twitter, will be used to inform the community of regional transportation planning issues and to solicit input. MACC Staff will also seek opportunities to work with local radio stations, WHTC and 1290 The Pledge, to reach the greater listening audience and inform the public of opportunities to get involved and make comments during the planning process.

As noted earlier, the Policy Committee meetings are recorded and shown on local cable television and on the internet to an audience that covers the entire MACC area. The Herrick District Library and the Howard Miller Public Library also receive copies of many documents published by the MACC. In addition, MACC Staff participates in public forums and conduct presentations at events hosted by numerous civic, religious, and public organizations.

V. SIGNIFICANT PLANNING INITIATIVES

Significant planning initiatives include, but are not limited to, updating the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program, corridor studies, subarea plans, transportation demand management studies and transit plan implementation activities. When describing a significant planning initiative to the public the MACC shall employ one or more of the following visualization aids: interactive computer applications, GIS-produced maps, aerial photos and/or computer simulation.

In an effort to demonstrate that community concerns are valued, MACC Staff will identify barriers to participation and devise outreach strategies to address these barriers. Various avenues will be considered when seeking public involvement in these initiatives including, but not limited to, public informational meetings, surveys, mailings, and notices. In an effort to reach populations traditionally underserved, special emphasis will be made to inform such populations through non-English language notices and public service announcements as well as placement of notices in senior citizens' centers and other agencies who provide services to populations that have been traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system.

VI. TREATMENT OF PUBLIC COMMENTS

When public comments are received on plans, studies, or other activities they will be summarized and forwarded to the Policy Committee prior to any formal action to adopt or approve a plan or study. The MACC website will include planning updates and provide a summary of how public comments will be addressed in the planning process. A copy of all comments will be filed and available for public review. Comments that request a formal response will be answered in a timely manner.

VII. REVISIONS TO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

The public is invited to comment on this plan prior to final adoption by the Policy Committee. A review of this public participation plan will periodically be undertaken by the Technical and Policy Committees. Major revisions will necessitate undertaking various measures as described in section V.

Comments or Questions concerning this Plan should be directed to:

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EXHIBIT A

Long Range Transportation Plan Participation Process

Task	Date(s)	Method
MACC stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Public survey	Month 2-3	A survey that asks broad questions concerning the transportation system will be published in local newspapers and posted to the MACC's Web site. It is intended that comments from this survey will serve as input into the development of network solutions. The survey will also be directly mailed to stakeholders
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 3-4	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input from their constituencies.
Public open house	Month 5-7	A select "package" of network solutions will be developed once transportation system deficiencies and potential solutions to those deficiencies have been selected and tested. A public open house describing the deficiencies and potential solutions will be held and the public invited to comment on network solutions.
Consultation with other agencies/organizations impacted by transportation plan	Month 5-7	Consult with federal, state and local agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation. This may include, but is not limited to, agencies responsible for economic growth, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, natural resources and historic preservation.

Long Range Transportation Plan Participation Process

Task	Date(s)	Method
Air quality conformity/environmental justice public comment period	Month 7-10	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analysis
LRTP public hearing	Month 13	This is the formal public hearing on the draft LRP. Newspaper notices will be placed announcing this meeting.
Postings on MACC world wide web page	Throughout entire process	As the plan is being developed, various documents will be posted on the MACC's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at MACC Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All MACC regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

EXHIBIT B

Transportation Improvement Program Participation Process

Task	Date(s)	Method
MACC stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Review environmental justice analysis area	Month 3-4	Meet with staff from appropriate agencies to confirm accuracy of environmental justice area. Update as necessary. Discuss strategies for gaining input from their constituencies.
Public review of preliminary project list	Month 5	A preliminary project list is released for public review and comment
Consultation with other agencies/organizations impacted by TIP	Month 5	Consult with federal, state and local agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation. This may include, but is not limited to, agencies responsible for economic growth, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, natural resources and historic preservation.
Air quality conformity and environmental justice public comment period	Month 6	Public comment on air quality and environmental justice analyses
TIP public hearing	Month 7	This is the formal public hearing on the draft TIP. Newspaper notices will be placed announcing this meeting.

Transportation Improvement Program Participation Process

Task	Date(s)	Method
Postings on MACC world wide web page	Throughout entire process	As the TIP is being developed, various documents will be posted on the MACC's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at MACC Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All MACC regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.

EXHIBIT C

Planning/Corridor Study Participation Process

Task	Date(s)	Method
MACC stakeholder list review and update	Month 1	Review and update stakeholder mailing list as necessary. Use list to contact stakeholders informing them of the initiative and how they can participate.
Public review of project's early phases	Month 2-3	Provide an opportunity for public review and comment on the early/preliminary phases of the study. May involve public meetings, surveys, interviews, etc.
Consultation with other agencies/organizations impacted by study	Month 7-8	Consult with federal, state and local agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation. This may include, but is not limited to, agencies responsible for economic growth, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, natural resources and historic preservation.
Public review of study's preliminary findings/conclusions	Month 7-9	Provide an opportunity for public review and comment on the preliminary findings/conclusions of the study.
Postings on MACC world wide web page	Throughout entire process	As the plan is being developed, various documents will be posted on the MACC's Web page. These postings will also invite the public to comment on what they see.
Input at MACC Policy & Technical Committee meetings	Throughout entire process	All MACC regularly scheduled Technical and Policy Committee meetings have time reserved for public comments.