



Public Involvement for the Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization

September 2004

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Adopted Sept. 22, 2004



Public Involvement Procedures for Transportation Planning for the Lawrence Metropolitan Area

Introduction & Overview

Public involvement is a necessary and integral part of the transportation planning process. The public involvement process required by 23 CFR 450.316(b) should "...provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and support early, and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and Transportation Improvement Program..." As mandated by this regulation, Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) must institute and periodically update a public involvement plan. This plan should ensure early and continual public awareness of and access to the transportation decision-making process.

Congress has mandated that a Metropolitan Planning Organization be designated in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. In 1982, The Lawrence/Douglas County Planning Commission was designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Lawrence Urbanized Area. It is charged with maintaining an urban transportation planning process that is continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (the 3-C planning process). The Lawrence/Douglas County MPO is responsible for developing and approving several major elements of the urban transportation planning process; the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

The Public Involvement Process is a crucial element in the development of all planning products. The public involvement plan establishes the procedures, processes, and techniques that the MPO should follow to obtain public input into the transportation planning process. The public's involvement in the development of a comprehensive public participation process is most beneficial at this initial adoption stage.

Goals of the L/DCMPO Public Involvement Process

The L/DCMPO is committed to involving the community throughout the transportation process and to providing complete information, public notice, as well public access to significant transportation issues that will affect the community.

This will be accomplished by:

1. Providing reasonable access of information to all segments of the community about changes in the transportation planning documents for Lawrence and Douglas County;
2. Establishing on-going opportunities for participation in the development process and periodic review of transportation plans;
3. Increasing the awareness of the transportation planning process by the community through public notices; or

4. Increasing the cooperation between community groups and the agencies involved to yield a successful transportation process.

These goals will be achieved through the following objectives:

1. Providing public access to transportation planning documents at city halls, libraries, and online web pages.
2. Providing the public sufficient notification of public meetings and hearings and consistently scheduling meetings.
3. Circulating information in widely available and widely used media forms (i.e.) newspaper, internet...
4. Staying actively involved in appropriate citizen-based committees.

Special attention in this process will be given to seeking out those groups who are or may be underserved by the existing transportation system with particular emphasis given to groups (or individuals) who represent or who are mobility-impaired, lower-economic income brackets, and/or are minorities.

Public Participation and Transportation Planning Process

Engaging the public in the transportation decision-making process is the foundation of this involvement plan. As stated earlier, the Lawrence/Douglas County MPO is responsible for developing the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). To help solicit the public for their comments, these documents will be reviewed through public meetings and hearings.

The Public Involvement Process helps to actively solicit valuable feedback from the public so that the MPO can make informed decisions on pending plans and programs. All comments received will be summarized as necessary and then distributed to the Planning Commission prior to their taking action on the issues on which the comments were received.

Public Meetings

Public meetings and public hearings are intended to update the community and the public on the MPO planning process, the annual development of the TIP, special studies and plans, and the Long Range Transportation Plan and associated elements. Meetings held will identify and discuss proposals and draft alternatives, review criteria used to develop projects, and receive comments on the draft UPWP, the draft TIP, periodic updates of the Long Range Transportation Plan, and other planning products and special studies. These meetings will be designed to inform the public and will provide an opportunity to solicit comments from the public on these plans and associated elements. The main purpose of the public meetings and hearings is to both inform the public of work in progress and to receive comments from the public about pending transportation plans or proposals; these forums will be held as needed. Public hearings held by the

Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPO) on transportation related planning items are published in the *Lawrence-Journal World* and the *University Daily Kansan* a minimum of twenty-one (21) days before the scheduled public meeting. In this notice, the date, time and place of the public hearing will be identified and the topics under consideration will be summarized. The date and location for members of the public to view or pick up copies of any reports, data or supplemental information being considered by the Lawrence/Douglas County MPO also appear in this public notice.

In addition to publishing notices of public hearings, the public is also to be given notice of upcoming events involving transportation planning in the community through the following methods:

- Agendas are made available on the planning department web-site at: <http://www.lawrenceplanning.org>, as well as at the Lawrence planning department.
- Neighborhood meetings will be held as needed in areas where specific transportation-planning recommendations are being made to upgrade or change existing public infrastructure or when requested by a neighborhood group. Notices for neighborhood meetings will also be published through appropriate neighborhood association newsletters, if available. Such notices will also be included on the department website, the City of Lawrence website, and/or the Douglas County website.
- When transportation plans, maps or programs are proposed to be changed, copies of the existing document and the proposed changes will be made available advance of the scheduled public hearing date at the following locations: Lawrence City Hall, the Lawrence Public Library, as well as being posted on the planning website.

Some elements of the transportation planning process and some specific types of studies have additional public involvement process in addition to those regularly conducted through the MPO process. Major corridor studies, area plans, environmental studies, and major development proposals frequently have extensive public involvement as major elements of those projects. Public involvement can consist of websites, public notices and newsletters, and public hearings and/or public information meetings. Public meetings and hearings are either part of a of a specific study or as part of regularly scheduled meetings of elected and appointed boards and commissions.

Long Range Transportation Plan

MPOs are required by federal law to develop transportation plans for the areas under their jurisdiction. *Transportation 2025 (T2025)* is the current long-range transportation plan (LRTP) for the urbanized region that includes the City of Lawrence and the surrounding urban growth area of Douglas County expected to become urbanized through 2025.

The LRTP is developed through an open and deliberative planning process, complying with all appropriate government regulations and closely following Lawrence's approved *Public Involvement for Transportation Planning* procedures. Development of the plan

typically involves a series of public involvement workshops and meetings, involvement with the MPO's citizen's advisory committee and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and informational briefings and public hearings of the MPO, city commission, and county commission, and website updates. The approval process for the document includes a final round of public hearings, plus review by state and federal agencies, followed by approval by the Citizens Advisory Committee on Transportation, the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and finally the Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization. After approval from the MPO, it is presented to the Lawrence City Commission and the Douglas County Board of County Commissioners for approval.

Transportation Improvement Program

Among the MPO's responsibilities is the development and maintenance of a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is essentially a compendium of the transportation programs and projects proposed to be implemented by the various agencies during the TIP period. Projects included in the TIP are typically drawn from the City and County Capital Improvements Programs (CIP) and also from KDOT's Comprehensive Transportation Program. The TIP consists of a chronological plan for acquisition, engineering, construction, and financing of transportation projects within Douglas County.

Capital improvement programs have their own public involvement processes involving publication of public notices initiating the process, public hearings by the Planning Commission, City Commission, and County Commission, as appropriate. Following adoption of the Lawrence and Douglas County CIPs, the MPO typically begins preparation of the TIP, requesting submittal of projects and update of previous projects by the appropriate participating agencies. The draft TIP is then available for public review and comment and goes through public hearing by the Planning Commission/MPO, all in addition to the public involvement activities previously undertaken by the participating agencies and governments.

Document Availability

Access to public information is a crucial step in an effective planning and democratic process. Ensuring that transportation planning follows a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive process demands that the public have ample time to review proposed actions, documents and information pertinent to transportation projects. The proposed documents are available for public review during a thirty (30) day public comment period at the following locations:

- Lawrence City Hall, 6 E. Sixth St., 1st Floor, Information Window
- Lawrence Public Library, 707 Vermont St., Reference Desk

The documents are also published online on the planning department's website at <http://www.lawrenceplanning.org>.

Comments and Input:

The LDCMPO firmly believes in a commitment to public involvement in the transportation planning process. The public is encouraged to provide written and verbal comments on any transportation issue being considered through the MPO process. All comments and suggestions from citizens or community groups regarding transportations issues should be sent to:

**The Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization
P.O. Box 708, Lawrence, KS 66044-0708**

phone: (785) 832-3150

fax :(785) 832-3160

<http://www.lawrenceplanning.org>

If you have any questions about any aspect of the Public Involvement Process outlined in this document; please contact the transportation planner in the Lawrence/Douglas County Planning Department. We are located on the first floor of Lawrence City Hall, 6 East 6th Street.

The Public Involvement Plan shall be reviewed and re-evaluated on a periodic basis or at least every two years.

Approved by the Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization on
September 22, 2004

John Haase, Chair
Lawrence/Douglas County Metropolitan Planning Organization