

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

"To involve the community in making transportation decisions"



Prepared for the

Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
for the Gainesville Urbanized Area

By the

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I

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document describes the public involvement process of the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area was established April 1, 1978 pursuant to Chapter 163.01, Florida Statutes. The MTPO is responsible for transportation system planning within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area as specified in Chapter 339.175, Florida Statutes. Illustration I shows the Gainesville Metropolitan Area.

The MTPO is comprised of ten voting members and two ex-officio members. The voting members include the Mayor and four City of Gainesville Commissioners and the five Alachua County Commissioners. The University of Florida President (or his designee) and the Florida Department of Transportation District 2 Secretary (or his designee) are the MTPO ex-officio members.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public involvement in transportation planning was given a new emphasis by Congress with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The ISTEA Act requires the metropolitan transportation planning process to include

"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 plans and TIPs [Transportation Improvement Programs]."

Emphasis of public involvement in transportation planning was continued with the passage the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21).

This Public Involvement Plan is designed to establish a process to:

1. provide timely information to the public;
2. provide timely public notice;
3. allow for full public access to key decisions; and
4. support early and continuing involvement of the public in developing transportation plans and transportation improvement programs.

II

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

This section identifies Federal rules concerning the public involvement process for the metropolitan transportation planning process. Copies of these rules are included in Appendix A.

Included in this section are:

1. general requirements;
2. rules concerning the long range transportation plan; and
3. rules concerning the transportation improvement program.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS- FEDERAL

According to the Federal metropolitan planning rules contained in the Federal Register dated October 28, 1993 in section 450.316(b) (1) (i) through (xi), the requirements and criteria for the public involvement process are listed below.

1. require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
2. provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);
3. provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
4. require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs;
5. demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
6. seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing

transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;

7. when significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's conformity regulations, summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and Transportation Improvement Program;
8. if the final transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or Transportation Improvement Program shall be made available;
9. public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all; and
10. metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN- FEDERAL

According to the Federal metropolitan planning rules contained in the Federal Register dated October 28, 1993 in section 450.322, the requirements and criteria for the public involvement process for the long range transportation plan is as follows:

"There must be adequate opportunity for public official (including elected officials) and citizen involvement in the development of the transportation plan before it is approved by the MPO, in accordance with the requirements of § 450.316(b)(1). Such procedures shall include opportunities for interested parties (including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, and private providers of transportation) to be involved in the early stages of the plan development/update process. The procedures shall include publication of the proposed plan or other methods to make it readily available for public review and comment. The procedures also shall include publication of the approved plan or other methods to make it readily available for information purposes."

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)- FEDERAL

According to the Federal metropolitan planning rules contained in the Federal Register dated October 28, 1993 in section 450.324, the requirements and criteria for the public involvement process for the transportation improvement program (TIP) is as follows:

"There must be reasonable opportunity for public comment in accordance with the requirements of Section 450.316(b)(1).....The proposed TIP shall be published or otherwise made readily available for review and comment. Similarly, the approved TIP shall be published or otherwise made readily available for information purposes."

With respect to amendments,

"public involvement procedures consistent with Section 450.316(b)(1) shall be used, except that these procedures are not required for TIP amendments that only involve projects of the type covered in Section 450.324(i)."

Section 450.324(i) states that

"Projects proposed for FHWA [Federal Highway Administration] and/ or FTA [Federal Transit Administration] funding that are not considered by the State and MPO to be of appropriate scale for individual identification in a given program year may be grouped by function, geographic area, and work type using applicable classification under 23 CFR 771.117 (c) and (d)."

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III

STATE REQUIREMENTS

This section identifies State rules concerning the public involvement process for the metropolitan transportation planning process. Included in this section are:

1. general requirements;
2. rules concerning the long range transportation plan; and
3. rules concerning the transportation improvement program.

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS- STATE

Technical Advisory Committee

According to Chapter 339.175(5)(d), Florida Statutes,

"Each M.P.O. shall appoint a technical advisory committee that includes planners; engineers; representatives of local aviation authorities, port authorities, and public transit authorities or representatives of aviation departments, seaport departments, and public transit departments of municipal or county governments, as applicable"

Citizens Advisory Committee

According to Chapter 339.175(5)(e), Florida Statutes,

- "1. Each M.P.O. shall appoint a citizens advisory committee, the members of which serve at the pleasure of the M.P.O. The membership of the citizens advisory committee must reflect a broad cross-section of local residents with an interest in the development of an efficient, safe, and cost-effective transportation system. Minorities, the elderly, and the handicapped must be adequately represented.

2. Notwithstanding the provisions of subparagraph 1., an M.P.O. may, with the approval of the department [Florida Department Of Transportation] and the applicable federal government agency, adopt an alternative program or mechanism to ensure citizen involvement in the transportation planning process."

Alachua County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board

According to Chapter 427.0157, Florida Statutes,

"The members of each Board shall be appointed by the metropolitan planning organization or designated official planning agency. The appointing authority shall provide each board with sufficient staff support and resources to enable the board to fulfill its responsibilities..."

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN- STATE

According to Chapter 339.175(6)(e), Florida Statutes,

"In the development of its long-range plan, each M.P.O. must provide affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and members of the general public with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the long-range plan."

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)- STATE

According to Chapter 339.175(7), Florida Statutes,

"In the development of the transportation improvement program, each M.P.O. must provide affected public transit agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and members of the general public with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation improvement program."

IV

ADOPTED MTPO POLICIES, RULES AND RESOLUTIONS

The following information concerning public involvement issues is taken from adopted Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area (MTPO) rules and resolutions.

ANNUAL REPORT- MTPO

Section 1.024 of the adopted MTPO Rules entitled MTPO Responsibilities and Functions states

"The MTPO shall prepare and publish an annual report of study activities for the purpose of disseminating information to the public."

CITIZENS INVOLVEMENT- MTPO

Section 1.024 of the adopted MTPO Rules entitled MTPO Responsibilities and Functions states

"The MTPO shall establish a Citizens Advisory Committee and shall guide and assist such Citizens Advisory Committee in its activities and public involvement programs."

"The MTPO shall provide the opportunity at each of its meetings for citizens to comment or be heard on any matter pertinent to the urban transportation planning process. Comments on specific items as shown on the agenda of the MTPO may be in writing and, if so, shall be read by the Chairman or his designee at the appropriate time, or copies distributed by the Chairman or his designee to the members of the MTPO."

BYLAWS OF THE MTPO CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE- MTPO

Section 1.04 of the adopted MTPO Rules entitled Bylaws of the MTPO Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) states

"The citizens of the area shall be involved in the transportation planning process by the establishment of the CAC. The purpose of the CAC is to insure adequate citizen involvement in the transportation planning process. It shall be the function of the CAC to:

1. Assist the MTPO in the formulation of goals and objectives for shaping the urban environment.

2. Conduct public information programs.
3. Provide an effective citizens' review of the preliminary findings and recommendations of the continuing study.
4. Assist in other functions as deemed desirable by the MTPO.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE RESPONSIBILITIES AND FUNCTIONS- MTPO

Section 1.044 of the adopted MTPO Rules entitled CAC Responsibilities and Functions states:

1. The CAC shall be composed of citizens from the Gainesville Metropolitan Area and Alachua County selected to provide a broad cross-section of citizens with an interest in development of an efficient, safe and cost-effective transportation system;
2. The CAC will be responsible for functions within the community involvement program as adopted by the MTPO; and
3. The CAC shall transmit to the TAC and MTPO the findings of all public information programs, citizen comments on study recommendations, and other representative concern expressed by the general public regarding the transportation planning process.

BICYCLE/PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY BOARD (B/PAB)- MTPO

In 1982, the MTPO adopted a Resolution creating the Urban Area Bicycle Advisory Board (UABAB). In 1995, this Board was renamed the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board. The voting membership of this Board is made up of thirteen citizens.

Duties of the B/PAB include making recommendations to the City Commission, County Commission and the MTPO. These recommendations are concerned with all matters concerning planning, implementation and maintenance of policies, programs and facilities for the safe and efficient integration of bicycle and pedestrian transportation into the Gainesville Metropolitan Area transportation system and also into the transportation system of the remaining unincorporated portions of Alachua County. The bylaws adopted by the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board in 1997 are attached to this plan as Appendix E.

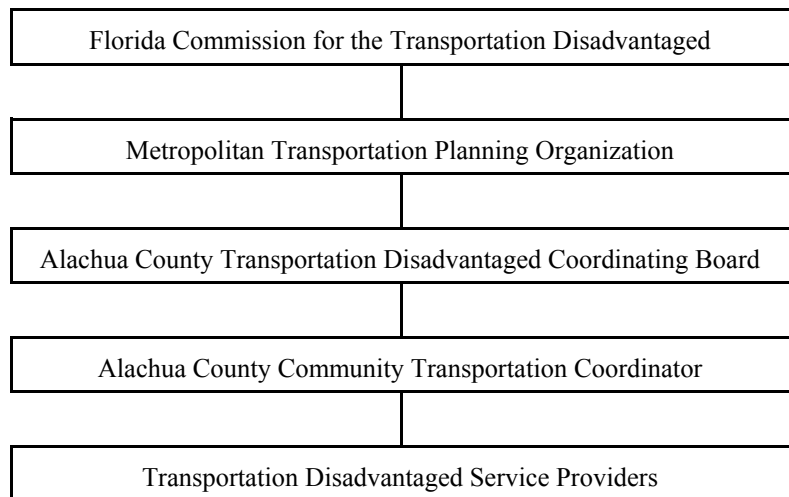
ALACHUA COUNTY TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED COORDINATING BOARD

The State of Florida provides a program to facilitate mobility of the transportation disadvantaged. Transportation disadvantaged persons include those who by their physical capacity, age and/or economic status meet eligibility criteria established for the transportation disadvantaged program.

In accordance with Florida Administrative Code Rule 41-2, the MTPO serves as the designated official planning agency for transportation disadvantaged planning in Alachua County. Tasks required of the MTPO include:

1. appointment of members to the Alachua County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board;
2. provision of staff support to the Alachua County Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board;
3. monitoring of the Alachua County Transportation Disadvantaged Program; and
4. recommendation to the State of Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged of the Community Transportation Coordinator for Alachua County.

The organization chart below illustrates the relationship of the state and local agencies and businesses involved in providing transportation disadvantaged services.



NOTICE OF MEETINGS AND WORKSHOPS- MTPO

Section 3.01 of the adopted MTPO Rules entitled Notice of Meetings and Workshops states:

1. Except in the case of emergency meetings or workshops, the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization for the Gainesville Urbanized Area (MTPO) shall give at least (4) days' public notice of any meeting or workshop.
2. The notice of such meeting or workshop shall provide:
 - A. The date, time, and place of the event;
 - B. A brief description of the purpose of the event; and
 - C. The address where interested persons may write to obtain a copy of the agenda.

V

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

This section discusses public involvement issues that must be addressed according to Federal or State rules. Included in this section is a discussion of existing procedures related to a particular issue and recommendations for new implementation strategies if needed.

STRATEGY #1- PROCEDURES TO PROVIDE TIMELY INFORMATION ABOUT TRANSPORTATION ISSUES AND PROCESSES

The transportation planning program must provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects.

Throughout this planning process, information about transportation issues and processes are provided, in a timely manner, to the MTPO's Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.

The Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, Citizens Advisory Committee and the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board are the primary forum for citizen participation. However, other citizens are also encouraged to contact staff for timely information about transportation plans and programs.

The Technical Advisory Committee includes representatives from a number of public agencies affected by the transportation planning process.

In addition, information about transportation issues and process is currently sent to the main library from time to time, especially as part of the long range plan update process.

Currently, full MTPO meeting packets are sent to the Alachua County Library District's main library in downtown Gainesville and the branch libraries on Tower Road and Millhopper Road. In addition, full MTPO meeting packets are also mailed to the Gainesville Sun news desk, the Gainesville City Clerk and the Alachua County Clerk.

STRATEGY #2- PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT AT KEY DECISION POINTS

There must be adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs).

Public notice is currently being given when the long range transportation plan is being considered for adoption and/or amendment. This includes advertised public meetings, public workshops and public hearings.

At the point in the development of the long range plan, that alternative plans under consideration have been identified and technical information analyzing the alternatives have been assembled, a MTPo public meeting should be held to receive comments on the alternatives. At least 21 days prior to such meeting, a description of the alternatives (including maps if appropriate) and the location of the related technical information available for public review will be published in the Gainesville Sun.

At least 21 days prior to the public hearings on the long range transportation plan, a description of the alternatives (including maps if appropriate) and the location of related technical information available for public review shall be published in the Gainesville Sun.

Prior to the annual adoption of, or substantial amendment of, the Transportation Improvement Program, information will be published in the Gainesville Sun which includes a summary of the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (with maps) along with a summary of the long range transportation plan.

STRATEGY #3- AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

The transportation planning program must provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs.

Reasonable public access is provided to technical and policy information. This information can be provided in accessible format upon request. All technical and policy information is available to the public at the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC) office, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

All meetings of the MTPo and its Advisory Committees are open to the public.

As appropriate, technical and policy information will be placed in the Main Library and the branch libraries on Tower Road and Millhopper Road.

STRATEGY #4- PROCEDURES TO INFORM THE PUBLIC ABOUT MEETINGS

In order for the public to be involved in the transportation planning program, information needs to be provided on a regular basis concerning local meetings where transportation planning recommendations and decisions are being made.

The date, time and place for all meetings of the MTPO, including its subcommittees, Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, Citizens Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board are listed in the Gainesville Sun "List of Meetings for the Week."

In addition, except in the case of emergency meetings or workshops, the MTPO gives at least (4) days' public notice of any meeting or workshop. This notice is given by publishing a legal notice in the Gainesville Sun on the Sunday before the Thursday MTPO meeting.

This notice provides:

- A. the date, time, and place of the meeting;
- B. a brief description of the purpose of the meeting; and
- C. the address where interested persons may write to obtain a copy of the agenda.

In order for the public to be involved in the transportation planning program, information needs to be provided on a regular basis concerning transportation issues being considered by the MTPO. This can best be accomplished through the local news media, especially the local newspaper. In order to insure that the local newspaper is aware of transportation issues being considered by the MTPO, a full meeting packet will be sent to the Gainesville Sun news desk.

When display ads are placed in the Gainesville Sun, these ads will be written in a manner that is "reader friendly." This language will be clear, concise and interesting. Appendix C is an example of this type of display ad.

STRATEGY #5- OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS

Federal laws and rules require the MTPO planning program to provide open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered. In addition, Florida's "Sunshine Law" also requires open public meetings.

Currently, all meetings of the MTPO, the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Technical Advisory, the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board and the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board are open public meetings.

STRATEGY #6-

ESTABLISHMENT OF ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Existing Advisory Committees

The MTPO has established a Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board, a Citizens Advisory Committee, a Technical Advisory Committee and a Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board

In 1982, the MTPO established the Urban Area Bicycle Advisory Board (UABAB). In 1995, this Board was renamed the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board (B/PAB). The purpose of the B/PAB is to assist the MTPO with the planning, implementation and maintenance of policies, programs and facilities for the safe and efficient integration of the bicycle and pedestrian transportation into the Gainesville Metropolitan Area transportation system and also into the transportation system of the remaining unincorporated portions of Alachua County.

Citizens Advisory Committee

The MTPO must have a citizens advisory committee. The membership of the citizens advisory committee must reflect a broad cross-section of local residents with an interest in the development of an efficient, safe, and cost-effective transportation system. Minorities, the elderly, and the handicapped must be adequately represented on this Committee.

Technical Advisory Committee

The MTPO must have a technical advisory committee. This Committee must include planners, engineers, representatives of local aviation authorities, port authorities, and public transit authorities or representatives of aviation departments, seaport departments, and public transit departments of municipal or county governments, as applicable.

Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board

This Board has been established to develop local service needs and to provide information, advice and direction to the Community Transportation Coordinator on the coordinating of services to be provided to the transportation disadvantaged.

STRATEGY #7-

ESTABLISHMENT OF TRANSPORTATION INFORMATION NETWORK

In order to increase the level of citizen participation in the transportation planning process, the MTPO has established the Transportation Information Network. The purpose of the Network is to provide a forum to educate and inform the public about MTPO plans and strategies. This network consists of individuals representing the following groups:

- community
- environmental
- business
- neighborhoods
- professional
- low-income, elderly and disabled

From time to time, Transportation Information Network workshops are held in Gainesville to discuss proposed transportation plans and programs. These meetings are conducted as interactive workshops and are held both during the day and in the evening.

Transportation Information Network workshops are publically noticed similarly to other MTPO and advisory committee meetings. The workshops are noticed in the Gainesville Sun "List of Meetings for the Week." Notice of meeting is sent to the local news media and to each member of the Transportation Information Network.

STRATEGY #8-

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

There must be adequate opportunity for public official (including elected officials) and citizen involvement in the development of the long range transportation plan before it is approved by the MTPO. Such procedures must include opportunities for interested parties (including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, and private providers of transportation) to be involved in the early stages of the plan development/update process.

The procedures must include publication of the proposed plan or other methods to make it readily available for public review and comment. The procedures also shall include publication of the approved plan or other methods to make it readily available for information purposes.

If the final transportation plan differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MTPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan must be made available.

There are not any specific written policies addressing these issues. However, the MTPO schedules public workshops, public meetings and public hearings as the transportation plan is being developed. As part of the public hearing process, an ad is published in the Gainesville Sun to inform the public about the public hearing.

When the long range transportation plan is adopted ~~or amended~~, the MTPO currently schedules two public hearings. One public hearing is held prior to the MTPO adopting the Needs Plan and the second public hearing is held prior to the MTPO adopting the Cost Feasible Plan. When the long range transportation plan is amended, the MTPO schedules one public hearing in which the Cost Feasible Plan and the Needs Plan are changed concurrently.

Proposed planning documents are prepared and made available to the public for review and comment. In addition, the approved plan is published and made available for the public to read at no charge in the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council library and is available for purchase at a nominal cost.

As mentioned above, if the final transportation plan differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MTPO, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan is made available.

STRATEGY #9- TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

There must be reasonable opportunity for public comment on the TIP before it is approved by the MTPO. The proposed Transportation Improvement Program must be published or otherwise made readily available for review and comment. Similarly, the approved Transportation Improvement Program must be published or otherwise made readily available for information purposes.

The MTPO must provide affected public transit agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and members of the general public with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the Transportation Improvement Program.

If the final Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MTPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised Transportation Improvement Program must be made available.

TIP Amendments

With respect to TIP amendments, there must be adequate public involvement procedures consistent with Section 450.316(b)(1) shall be used, except that these procedures are not required for Transportation Improvement Program amendments that only involve projects of the type covered in Section 450.324(I)(see Appendices I and II). The Transportation Improvement Program includes an amendment log that tracks changes made to the document.

Existing Procedures

There are not any specific written policies addressing these issues. Currently, the MTPO does not schedule public workshops, meetings and hearings as the Transportation Improvement Program is being developed or amended.

However, the proposed Transportation Improvement Program is prepared and made available to the public for review and comment. In addition, the approved Transportation Improvement Program is published and made available for the public to read at no charge in the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council library and is available for purchase at a nominal cost.

Prior to the annual adoption of, or substantial amendment of, the Transportation Improvement Program, information will be published in the Gainesville Sun which includes a summary of the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (with maps) along with a summary of the long range transportation plan.

As mentioned above, if the final Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MTPO, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised Transportation Improvement Program will be made available.

STRATEGY #10- ANNUAL REPORT

One means of providing information to the public on a regular basis is through the publication of an annual report.

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC) prepares an annual report each year to describe Council activities during the year. Council annual reports usually cost about \$2,000 per year to publish for approximately 750 copies. This does not include the staff time involved in preparing the materials to be printed.

Council annual reports include several pages devoted to describing transportation planning and MTPO activities. A copy of the latest annual report material describing transportation planning activities is included in Appendix B.

As noted earlier in Strategy #9, prior to the annual adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program, information will be published in the Gainesville Sun which includes a summary of the proposed Transportation Improvement Program (with maps) along with a summary of the long range transportation plan. This information can be prepared in such a manner that it also contains annual report information.

STRATEGY #11

CITIZENS' GUIDE TO TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

As part of the Year 2020 transportation plan update process, MTPO staff prepared a document entitled Citizen's Guide to Transportation Planning. This document was prepared in order to:

1. help citizens gain a better understanding of the transportation planning process; and
2. to help them get involved and participate in the decision-making process concerning how transportation funds are spent in this area.

This guide also shows who can be contacted for more information and explains some of the technical terms and acronyms used in transportation planning.

STRATEGY #12-

NEEDS OF THE TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED

The transportation planning program must seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to low-income and minority households.

In 1989, the Florida Legislature enacted Chapter 427, Florida Statutes which established the Transportation Disadvantaged Program. The purpose of this program is to improve transportation services to low-income individuals, elderly individuals, persons with disabilities and children at risk. The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) is the designated official planning agency for this program in Alachua County.

The MTPO appointed a Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board in Alachua County to identify the needs of the transportation disadvantaged. This Board provides advice and direction on the provision of transportation services to the transportation disadvantaged. The membership of this Board is composed of agencies who serve the disadvantaged. For example, the Community Action Agency represents low-income individuals. In addition, citizen advocates in the community serve as representatives of the disabled and elderly. Minorities are represented on the Board and staff continues to encourage minority participation.

Annually, the Coordinating Board is required to hold a public hearing on transportation needs and services of the transportation disadvantaged. This public hearing provides the general public an opportunity to inform the Board about their concerns over transportation services. This Board provides the MTPO with its recommendations concerning the provision of transportation services to the disadvantaged. MTPO staff also informs the Board of transportation plans and programs that affect the disadvantaged.

The MTPO also encourages representatives of the low-income, minority and disabled communities to seek appointment to the MTPO's Citizens Advisory Committee. The MTPO currently notifies the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board when there are vacancies on the Citizen's Advisory Committee in order to better seek representation of the transportation disadvantaged community.

STRATEGY #13- RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INPUT

The transportation planning process must demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes.

When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process, summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

Some examples of this response to public input are the recent SW 20th Avenue Design Charrette, MTPO Design Team, and MTPO Internet access. All of these items have been initiated for the purpose of increasing the level of public participation on transportation improvements.

The North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC) maintains Internet access and information regarding transportation planning activities in the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. General information can be viewed via the NCFRPC homepage located at:

<http://www.ncfrpc.org>

Correspondence can be forwarded to MTPO staff via the NCFRPC homepage or directly by addressing email to:

mtpo@afn.org

Response to Comments or Questions Raised at MTPO Meetings

Comments or questions raised by any member of the public that cannot be answered at the MTPO meeting shall be responded to in writing, provided that person provides their name and address. A post card shall be sent to the person to acknowledge that the MTPO staff is researching the question or comment. Then, the MTPO staff will send a followup letter with a response or a referral to a more appropriate agency to respond to the person's question or comment.

STRATEGY #14- COORDINATION OF STATEWIDE PROCESS

The MTPO's public involvement processes are expected to be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible. This coordination will enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

The MTPO's public involvement processes also include its participation in the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC). The MPOAC facilitates in the coordination of transportation planning efforts among MPOs statewide and with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

MTPO staff participate in FDOT statewide Level of Service and Mobility Management Task

Teams. This participation facilitates MPO input into statewide transportation planning efforts.

MTPO staff will work with FDOT District 2 staff to identify, and coordinate with, statewide public involvement processes.

STRATEGY #15- REVISION PROCEDURES

This Public Involvement Plan must have a minimum public comment period of 45 days before it can be adopted or revised.

If it becomes necessary to revise this plan, a minimum public comment period of 45 days will be provided.

STRATEGY #16- PERIODIC REVIEW AND UPDATE

The MTPO's public involvement processes must be periodically reviewed by the MTPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all.

Each year, this Public Involvement Plan will be reviewed and approved by the MTPO.

STRATEGY #17- MTPO NIGHT MEETINGS

In December 1996, the MTPO approved a motion to:

“recommend that staff report back to the MTPO concerning which meetings staff recommends be held at night to allow greater participation from the public and to allow more time for discussion of items.”

At the March 1997 MTPO meeting, MTPO staff recommended that the MTPO schedule night meetings for the three meetings during the year concerning the development of the 5-year funding plan for specific transportation projects (see Illustration II). MTPO staff felt that these three meetings are the most important time to encourage greater public participation in the planning process by holding night meetings. At this meeting, the MTPO approved a motion to:

“schedule evening meetings each year in June, September and December to allow greater participation from the public and to allow more time for discussion of items.”

STRATEGY #18- CHARRETTES

Over the last few years, the MTPO has conducted charrettes for the SW 20th Avenue/Hull Road project and the Tower Road/SW 24th Avenue projects. A charrette is defined as “a series of meetings, that include both interested citizens and public agencies, to work intensively on a particular problem or issue to develop a resolution or recommendation within a specified time limit.”

In January 1999, the MTPO approved a motion to:

“include in future MTPO budgets and work programs enough funds to conduct at least one annual charrette and to submit requests for additional funds to support this effort during the City and County budgeting process.”

According to page 103 of a document entitled, Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-making,

“a charrette enlarges the degree of public involvement in transportation, reducing feelings of alienation from government. It offers people interaction with public agencies and allows questions to be asked before decisions are made.”

In October 2001, the MTPO allocated charrette-designated funding for the West 6th Street Project and the Plan East Gainesville project.

STRATEGY #19- MTPO DESIGN TEAM

The MTPO has appointed a Design Team to review detailed construction plans for transportation projects in the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. The membership of the Design Team includes both interested volunteer citizens and public agencies. In addition to membership on the Team, any interested citizen is welcome to attend Design Team meetings and can request that meeting agenda packets be mailed to them for all upcoming meetings.

Currently, volunteer citizens on the Design Team include the following:

1. a member of the MTPO’s Citizens Advisory Committee;
2. a member of the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board;
3. a member of the City of Gainesville Beautification Board;
4. a member of the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board; and

5. other MTPO-designated project appointees, currently including:
 - A. a citizen advocate, the City of Gainesville Community Redevelopment Agency representative, and the City of Hawthorne Mayor for the State Road 20 project; and
 - B. a citizen advocate for the State Road 26/26A project.

STRATEGY #20- MTPO WEB SITE

The MTPO has created an Internet web site to provide both general and detailed information regarding transportation planning and projects in the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. The web site includes information regarding the membership of the MTPO and its advisory committees.

<http://www.ncfrpc.org/MTPO>

In an effort to further the understanding of the transportation planning process, the web site has links to several associated agencies, such as the City of Gainesville, Alachua County, the Florida Department of Transportation and Federal Highway Administration web sites.

In addition to membership information, interested citizens are encouraged to attend meetings and can request materials through the web site. Simple point and click forms are being added to enhance the ease of use for browsers of the site. These forms will enable users to request information, participate in discussions, and provide feedback directly to elected officials and staff.

STRATEGY #21- MTPO TELEVISION BROADCASTS

Through the City of Gainesville's franchise agreement with Cox Communications, the MTPO conducts live broadcasts of all of its meetings. These cable television broadcasts also include live telephone call-in capability. Citizens are encouraged, through the on-screen marque, to call with questions or comments regarding the meeting's agenda items or MTPO discussion. MTPO staff forwards comments, during the citizen comment section of the meeting, directly to MTPO members and those in attendance. These broadcasts are also replayed, within the following week, both on the local public access channel and the rural television stations.

The MTPO retains a copy of the MTPO meeting videotape which may be copied for a nominal charge or viewed at the MTPO offices at no charge.

STRATEGY #22- AMENDMENTS TO MTPO PLANNING DOCUMENTS

On occasion, by initiative of citizens, government agencies or the MTPO, the MTPO considers amending its planning documents. The planning documents covered by this strategy include the long range transportation plan (LRTP) and the transportation improvement program (TIP).

Long Range Transportation Plan Amendments

The public involvement process for long range transportation plan amendments varies with the magnitude and complexity of the project being considered. At a minimum, a public hearing, noticed in the same manner as long range transportation plan updates, is conducted by the MTPO. At a regularly scheduled MTPO meeting, the MTPO considers the comments from the public and its Advisory Committees' recommendations.

For the more complex projects, the MTPO may conduct charrettes, field trips and workshops in order to accommodate appropriate public involvement.

Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

The public involvement process for transportation improvement program amendments is the same as for other regular MTPO meeting agenda items. At a regularly scheduled MTPO meeting, the MTPO considers the comments from the public and its Advisory Committees' recommendations.

STRATEGY #23- MTPO URBAN DESIGN POLICY MANUAL

Urban design and planning policies adopted by the MTPO are consolidated into a single document. The MTPO Urban Design Policy Manual is updated as the MTPO approves and/or amends its urban design and planning policies. These policies apply to construction and reconstruction to state-maintained, county-maintained and city-maintained transportation facilities. The City of Gainesville and Alachua County has incorporated these policies into their respective comprehensive planning processes to the maximum extent feasible. Policies included cover such items as:

1. bicycle facilities;
2. intermodal and multimodal facilities;
3. joint bicycle, pedestrian, intermodal and multimodal planning;
4. landscaping;
5. pedestrian facilities;
6. planning- transportation language and Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (MPOAC);
7. roadway;
8. transit facilities and service;
9. transportation enhancement project; and
10. MTPO Design Team.

STRATEGY #24- CONSIDERATION FOR COMMUNITIES IN WHICH ENGLISH IS NOT THE PRIMARY LANGUAGE

U.S. Department of Commerce Bureau of the Census Year 2000 Census for Alachua County data was evaluated for consideration of language as a barrier to the public involvement process. Alachua County, as host to the University of Florida, attracts faculty and students from around the world. English is the language used for research and instruction at the University, Santa Fe Community College and the Alachua County school system. There are instruction programs to teach English to nonenglish-speaking persons.

Table 17 of the Gainesville, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) Census of Population and Housing identifies the following language characteristics for Alachua County:

PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS SPEAKING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE PERSONS FIVE YEARS OLD OR OLDER ALACHUA COUNTY		
FOREIGN LANGUAGE GROUP	NUMBER	PERCENT
Spanish-Speaking Persons	11,438	5.53
Spanish-Speaking Persons That Do Not Speak English "Very Well"	2,705	1.31
Spanish-Speaking Persons Linguistically Isolated	1,079	0.52
Other Indo-European Language-Speaking Persons	6,278	3.03
Other Indo-European Language-Speaking Persons That Do Not Speak English "Very Well"	1,328	0.64
Other Indo-European Language-Speaking Persons Linguistically Isolated	410	0.20
Asian & Pacific Island Language-Speaking Persons	4,781	2.31
Asian & Pacific Island Language-Speaking Persons That Do Not Speak English "Very Well"	2,113	1.02
Asian & Pacific Island Language-Speaking Persons Linguistically Isolated	548	0.26
Other Language-Speaking Persons	936	0.45
Other Language-Speaking Persons That Do Not Speak English "Very Well"	215	0.10
Other Language-Speaking Persons Linguistically Isolated	32	0.02
Total Persons Linguistically Isolated	2,069	1.00
Total Persons Five Years Old or Older	206,860	100.00

Since there is a relatively small percentage (1.0%) of the population five years old or older which is nonenglish-speaking and that there are facilities for learning to speak English, MTPO documents are currently offered only in English.

STRATEGY #25- **OUTREACH TO TRADITIONALLY UNDERINVOLVED COMMUNITIES
AND/OR COMMUNITIES TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED BY
TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS**

Underinvolved Communities

For the purpose of implementation and evaluation of this public involvement plan, underinvolved communities (out of the mainstream) may include persons of the following minority groups: economically distressed (low-income); ethnic; racial; persons with disabilities; special cultural; under-educated; and elderly. These groups, for such reasons as lack of information, mobility and/or time constraints have not participated in the transportation planning process to the extent of the mainstream community.

Underserved Communities

For the purpose of implementation and evaluation of this public involvement plan, underserved communities may include persons of the following minority groups: economically distressed (low-income); ethnic; racial; persons with disabilities; special cultural; under-educated; and elderly. These groups, for such reasons as lack of information, mobility, geographic location and financial constraints have not had access to the transportation system, including public transit, to the extent of the mainstream community.

Community Outreach Process

To facilitate outreach to traditionally underinvolved and/or underserved communities for public hearings and community workshops, the MTPO distributes flyers and posters for display on RTS buses, information kiosks and paratransit vans and meetings notices, flyers and posters are placed on community service bulletin boards and information kiosks at:

1. community centers, recreation facilities and other public buildings located in lower income and minority neighborhoods, such as the:
 - A. Alachua County Administration Building;
 - B. Alachua County One-Stop Centers;
 - C. Alachua County Public Health Department;
 - D. Alachua County Sheriff's Office;
 - E. Gainesville City Hall;
 - F. Gainesville Housing Authority;
 - G. Gainesville Police Department;
 - H. Gainesville Regional Utilities;
 - I. Social Security Administration Offices;
 - J. Regional Transit System's (RTS) Bethel Gas Station; and
 - K. Wilhemina Johnson Center;
2. houses of worship and other private buildings that serve the public located in lower

income and minority neighborhoods;

3. both public and private places serving special needs populations located within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area, such as:
 - A. adult congregate living facilities;
 - B. assisted living facilities;
 - C. Center for Independent Living;
 - D. Division of Blind Services; and
 - E. Eldercare of Alachua County; and
4. the University of Florida in places such as:
 - A. Housing Administrative Office and residence halls;
 - B. Parking Services Administration; and
 - C. Reitz Union Office of Student Activities.

STRATEGY #26- MTPO PLANNING PRODUCT NEWS LETTERS

The MTPO is responsible for producing both long range and short range planning products as part of the transportation planning process for the Gainesville Metropolitan Area. These planning products include:

1. Long Range Transportation Plan [long range];
2. List of Priority Projects [short range];
3. Transportation improvement Program [short range]; and
4. special studies such as the:
 - A. Plan East Gainesville Special Area Study; and
 - B. US 441 Bicycle Safety Study.

The Long Range Transportation Plan is produced on a five-year cycle, but may be amended anytime within the five-year period. The List of Priority Projects and Transportation Improvement Program are produced annually. The List of Priority Projects includes those projects that the MTPO desires to be in the Transportation Improvement Program. The Transportation Improvement Program is the short range implementation document of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The Transportation Improvement Plan may be amended anytime within the annual planning period.

Since the planning products involved are developed over a long period of time, the MTPO staff produces a newsletter to keep the MTPO, its Advisory Committees and the public-at-large informed regarding the status of the transportation planning process. These newsletters are to be published for distribution to the MTPO maillists.

STRATEGY #27- PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN IMPLEMENTATION MONITORING AND ANNUAL EVALUATION OF PERFORMANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

To ensure that there is sufficient outreach to all transportation system-effected communities, the MTPO shall monitor its public involvement process in order to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of its strategies during the year. MTPO staff shall prepare an annual public involvement monitoring report. This monitoring report is to be used to provide major input to the annual Public Involvement Plan evaluation. The instruments for the evaluation the performance and effectiveness of the Public Involvement Plan strategies are described in Appendix H. Information collected from this monitoring process will used for Public Involvement Plan updates.

STRATEGY #28- MAJOR PROGRAM/PROJECT WRITTEN COMMENTS

The MTPO periodically discusses major programs and projects such as: the long range transportation plan, transportation improvement program, list of priority projects, facility construction and reconstruction projects. The MTPO makes comment forms available at its charrettes, public hearings, regular business meetings and workshops. Appendix I includes a sample comment form. These comment forms are provided for those persons who may not be able to speak at the meeting about a project that said persons desired to comment and for persons who prefer to comment in writing rather than speaking. In addition, the MTPO staff maintains these comment forms at its office for a person to stop by the office to pick up and a comment form that can be downloaded from the MTPO website.

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APPENDIX A

Federal Register, Thursday, October 28, 1993, Section 450.316(b)(1)

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APPENDIX B

North Central Florida Regional Planning Council (NCFRPC)

Annual Report

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APPENDIX C

Display Ad Example

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APPENDIX D

Calendar of Major Transportation Planning Products

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MTPO CALENDAR

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>REQUIRED ACTION</u>
July	
August	MTPO Priority List of Unfunded Projects (Step1- MTPO identifies what projects it wants FDOT to fund)
September	
October	
November	
December	FDOT Draft 5-Year Work Program (Step 2- FDOT shows MTPO what projects it has decided to fund)
January	
February	
March	
April	
May	
June	Approve MTPO 5-Year Transportation Improvement Program (Step 3- MTPO decides which federally-funded projects in the FDOT 5-Year Work Program to approve)
	Approve MTPO Annual Budget

(Please note that the MTPO is also responsible for updating its long range transportation plan every five years. Updating this plan is usually a three year long process.)

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APPENDIX E

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Board By-Laws

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APPENDIX F

Sample MTPO Newsletter

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APPENDIX G

Community Profile

According to the 2000 Census, Alachua County consisted of 217,955 persons. The majority of these people resided within the Gainesville Metropolitan Area (GMA), with the City of Gainesville having 95,605 persons. Gainesville, the county seat, is the host of the University of Florida. The university draws faculty and student from across the country and from numerous foreign countries. Therefore, the county includes a diverse population. The racial proportions of the county included: 73.5 percent White; 18.8 percent Black; and 7.7 percent other races. In addition, 5.7 percent of the population was identified as Hispanic. Illustration G-1 and Exhibit G-1 show the areas of concentration, by census tract and block group, of white and minority persons residing within the county.

The census data shows that the majority of the persons living below the poverty level reside in the east and southeast portions of the GMA. There is also a significant proportion of the population in eastern Alachua County living below the poverty level. The census data also shows that the northwest quadrant of the GMA is the most affluent. Illustration G-2 and Exhibit G-2 show the areas of concentration, by census tract and block group, of persons living below the poverty level.

Table G-I shows the ratio of persons by race that live below the poverty level according to the 2000 Census.

TABLE G-I

ALACHUA COUNTY POVERTY STATUS- BY RACE [2000 CENSUS]			
RACE	POPULATION	PERSONS BELOW POVERTY LEVEL	PERCENT BELOW POVERTY LEVEL
WHITE	152,213	29,352	19.3
BLACK	38,356	12,242	31.9
OTHER	26,895	9,094	33.8

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APPENDIX H

Public Involvement Plan Evaluation Criteria

The MTPO, in order to assure that the community is involved in making transportation decisions, shall establish criteria for the evaluation of the public involvement process. This criteria is to be a means to measure the magnitude and effectiveness of public participation.

Measurement 1

MTPO, MTPO Subcommittee and Advisory Committee meeting checklist- this instrument is to be used to monitor and provide assurance that the public notification strategies of the Public Involvement Plan are executed for any regular or special meeting, public hearing, workshop or transportation fair. See Exhibit H-1.

Measurement 2

MTPO, MTPO Subcommittee and Advisory Committee meeting sign-in/attendance log- this instrument is to be used to monitor attendance for any regular or special meeting, public hearing, workshop or transportation fair. See Exhibit H-2.

Measurement 3

Public Involvement Evaluation Form- this instrument is to be distributed at any regular or special meeting, public hearing, workshop or transportation fair. It entails a short questionnaire (see Exhibit H-3) to ascertain from respondents:

1. how they were informed about the meeting;
2. whether they had adequate understanding of the presentation of meeting topic(s);
3. whether they had adequate opportunity to discuss topic(s) on the meeting agenda; and
4. whether they had any comments and/or suggestions regarding the MTPO's public involvement process.

Measurement 4

MTPO Public Involvement Map- this instrument is to be used to monitor attendant residency for any special meeting, public hearing, workshop or transportation fair. See Exhibit H-4.

EXHIBIT H-1

MTPO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT CHECKLIST

✓	MEETINGS	PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITY
	All	Gainesville Sun Newspaper Meetings of the Week Notice
	MTPO	Gainesville Sun Newspaper Legal Ad
	Public Hearing	Gainesville Sun Newspaper Display Ad (LRTP, TIP)
	All	Sign-In Log
	All	Public Involvement Evaluation Form
	MTPO	Public Involvement Residency Map
	All	Flyers- MTPO & Advisory Committee Calendar
	MTPO	Flyers- Public Hearings and Workshops (Strategy #25 & #26 locations)
	MTPO	Flyers- Charrettes and Special Planning Study Areas
	MTPO	Television Broadcast
	MTPO	Television Videotape Recording
	CAC, DT, TAC	Audio Tape Recording
	MTPO	MTPO Subcommittee Newsletter
	MTPO	MTPO Planning Product Newsletter (LRTP, LOPP, TIP)
	All	MTPO Citizens Guide (updated for membership and activity changes)
	All	MTPO Website (updated for MTPO calendar, member & planning product changes)
	MTPO	MTPO Quarterly Public Involvement Monitoring Report
	MTPO	MTPO Annual Public Involvement Monitoring Report
	MTPO	MTPO Annual Report

GROUP

CAC- Citizens Advisory Committee

DT- Design Team

TAC- Technical Advisory Committee

DOCUMENT

LOPP- List of Priority Projects

LRTP- Long Range Transportation Plan

TIP- Transportation Improvement Program

EXHIBIT H-2

**METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION
FOR THE GAINESVILLE URBANIZED AREA**

MEETING SIGN-IN LOG

MEETING:	
DATE:	
NAME	ADDRESS/AFFILIATION
1.	
2.	
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EXHIBIT H-3

MTPO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION FORM

SIDE 1

MTPO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT EVALUATION FORM-Date: _____		
NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE
1. How were you informed about the meeting?		Flyer (location)_____
Newspaper Ad_____	Radio Ad_____	Television Story_____
Newspaper Story_____	Radio Story_____	Other_____
2. Did you have adequate understanding of the presentation of the meeting topic(s)?		
YES____ NO____ [comment on back of card]		
3. Did you have adequate opportunity to discuss topic(s) on the meeting agenda?		
YES____ NO____ [comment on back of card]		

SIDE 2

4. Comments and/or suggestions on the MTPO's public involvement process.

EXHIBIT H-4

MTPO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT MAP- SAMPLE

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APPENDIX I

Sample Major Program/Project Written Comment Form

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PROJECT COMMENT FORM

**YEAR 2020 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN
PUBLIC HEARING
DECEMBER 14, 2000
7:00 P.M.**

The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization thanks you for attending this public hearing to review the proposed Year 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan update. The MTPO seeks your comments and concerns regarding this planning document. Please take a few minutes to complete this form before leaving this meeting.

1. Please share your concerns concerning the Year 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan update.

If additional space is needed for your comments, please use the back of this form.

2. Please provide your name and address below if you would like to receive future information regarding this project.

Name:

Organization:

Address:

Phone:

Email:

For further information or comment, please contact the:
Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization
Attention: Marlie Sanderson
2009 NW 67th Place, Suite A
Gainesville, FL 32653
Phone: (352) 955-2200 Fax: (352) 955-2209

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APPENDIX J

Public Involvement Plan Revision Log

The Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (MTPO) approved the initial Public Involvement Plan on December 15, 1994. The Public Involvement Plan has been revised and/or reviewed by the MTPO as indicated in Table J-1.

TABLE J-1

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN REVISION LOG

REVISION / REVIEW* DATES
June 13, 1996
March 6, 1997
January 15, 1998
October 15, 1998*
November 4, 1999
November 1, 2000
December 13, 2001

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