

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN
LAREDO URBAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY**

GENERAL

The Laredo Urban Transportation Study serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Laredo urban area. The purpose of the MPO is to provide continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning for the area. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) emphasized the need for public participation in all stages of the transportation planning process and require a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early, and on-going public involvement in developing plans, programs, policies and procedures.

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) specifies whom should be invited to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. These people are citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, 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.

It is the policy of the MPO to provide every opportunity for the involvement of citizens in the transportation planning process in conformance with the requirements of 23 CFR 450.316 (a) for the purposes of:

- Providing opportunity for input from citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties, hereafter referred to as segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects.
- Providing early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process;
- Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information concerning transportation issues and processes to area residents, 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;
- Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households;

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- Providing adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including the approval of plans and programs;
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development process.

PUBLIC MEETINGS

**Table 1 – Summary of public comment periods and notices
for policy, procedure, and program documents**

Document	Public Comment Period	Notices
By Laws – revisions	30 days**	10 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In writing to the chair of the Policy Committee 10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
Public Participation Plan – initial adoption	45 days**	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
Public Participation Plan – revisions	45 days**	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) – initial adoption	30 days	10 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary published in newspaper 10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
UPWP - revisions	0	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – initial adoption	30 days**	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
TIP – revisions	10 days**	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – initial adoption	30 days**	90 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nomination form in newspaper and on website 10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*
MTP - revisions	30 days**	10 days (mail) or 7 days (hand delivered) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy Committee members 72 hours advance notice postings*

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* 72 hour advance notice postings will include: Publishing in the local newspaper in English and Spanish, emailing to the MPO contact list, posting at the Laredo City Hall, posting at the Laredo TxDOT District Office, post at El Metro Operations facility, and posting on the LUTS website.

** If comments are received during the comment period, which raise material issues that could not have reasonably been foreseen prior to the comment period, a second comment period of 10 days shall be added.

Notice Requirements- Posting

Notice of meetings held by MPO staff for the purpose of securing public comment and all meetings of the Policy Committee shall be posted not less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting in the form and manner prescribed by the Texas Open Meetings Act at the following locations: Laredo City Hall, Laredo District Office of the Texas Department of Transportation, El Metro Operations Facility, and on the MPO website. Notice placed at the El Metro Operations Facility shall be located in a place and manner readily accessible to transit employees for the purpose of giving notice to employee union members.

Notice Requirements- Newspaper Publication

Notice of the proposed adoption or revision to any policy, procedure, plan or program requiring Policy Committee action shall be published in summary form in English and Spanish in one or more newspapers of general circulation in Laredo, Texas not less than 72 hours in advance of the meeting in which final action will be taken. Notice shall also be emailed 72 hours in advance to those listed on the contact list maintained by the MPO. The notice shall include the name, address, and telephone number of the person who may be contacted regarding the proposed item. The notice shall include the location at which technical information and reports are available for review.

Meeting Requirements

All public meetings shall be held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Meetings held by MPO staff for the purpose of securing public comment and all meetings of the Policy Committee shall be recorded on audio or video tape. Meetings held for the purpose of securing public comment shall be held at convenient and accessible times and locations. The meetings will be held within a reasonable distance of an El Metro route. Meetings of the Policy Committee shall be taped for broadcast on the public access channel. Persons attending public meetings conducted by the MPO will be asked to register on a sign-in sheet. Minutes of public meetings shall be prepared by MPO staff and shall constitute the official record of the proceedings. MPO staff shall prepare a meeting packet that includes the meeting agenda and action items for consideration by the Policy Committee. The meeting packet will be mailed to Policy Committee members 10 days prior to the meeting date or hand delivered 7 days prior to the meeting date.

It is the intent of LUTS to provide access to all citizens interested in attending MPO meetings. Groups or people with special needs who wish to attend a meeting should give MPO staff

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reasonable notice in advance of the meeting in order that MPO staff may reasonably accommodate their special needs.

Retention of Documents

All official meeting materials, including but not limited to notices, newspaper publications, minutes, sign-in sheets, audio/video tapes, documents proposed for adoption or revision, and written comments received during public review and comment periods shall be retained by the MPO for a minimum of three years, or longer if required by the Texas State Library and Archives Commission.

Public Review and Comment

The adoption or revision of certain documents may require a 30 or 45 day public review and comment period prior to final action by the Policy Committee. The public review and comment period shall be initiated through action of the Policy Committee following a presentation on the proposed plan, program, policy or procedure. When a public review and comment period is required, the MPO shall make available at its offices and on its website a copy of the document. The public may review the document at the MPO offices during normal working hours and, when possible, staff will be available to answer questions. Written comments received during the public review and comment period will be presented to the Policy Committee prior to final action on the plan, program, policy or procedure being considered.

When significant written and oral comments are received during the MTP or TIP public participation process they will be summarized, analyzed, and accompanied with a description of how they were addressed in the applicable document.

ADOPTION AND REVISION OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Initial Adoption and Revisions

The adoption or revision of the Public Participation Plan shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 45 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Any revisions shall be set out in full and indicate any portion to be deleted by strike-out type and indicate proposed new language by underscoring or the use of italics.

Continuous improvement of the public participation process is a goal of LUTS. In striving towards that goal, this public participation plan shall be updated as needed and re-approved every five years. The purpose of this action shall be to ensure that the plan effectively allows for a full and open public participation process.

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ADOPTION AND REVISION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING DOCUMENTS

Initial Adoption

The adoption of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 30 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. A project nomination form will be published in a newspaper of general circulation and be made available through the Internet at least 90 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Presentations on the proposed MTP shall be made to the Laredo City Council and Webb County Commissioners Court prior to the public review and comment period. Written comments and project nomination forms received during the public review and comment period regarding the draft MTP will be incorporated into the final document. The MTP and TIP shall include at least one map designating the conceptual limits of project locations. The adoption of all other planning and programming documents, including but not limited to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 30 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. A summary of the proposed UPWP will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 10 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee.

Revisions

Substantive revisions to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 30 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Substantive revisions to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) shall require a public review and comment period of not less than 10 days prior to final action by the Policy Committee. Substantive revisions to all other planning and programming documents, including but not limited to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) do not require a public review and comment period, but must be approved by the Policy Committee.

Substantive revisions include any changes to a plan or program that consist of the addition, deletion or substitution of projects, changes to a project's scope and reprogramming of projects outside of the plan or program's scope. MPO staff may request action by the Policy Committee for non-substantive revisions to any plan or program. Any revisions shall be set out in full and indicate any portion to be deleted by strike-out type and indicate proposed new language by underscoring or the use of italics.

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

Contact List

The MPO shall maintain a current contact list (email) of groups and individuals which have expressed interest in transportation planning activities, including state, county and local government officials, news media, special interest groups, and transportation providers who will be provided periodic updates concerning planning activities as well as meeting notices.

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Public Appearances

The MPO shall make every effort to comply with requests from local civic or professional groups, organizations or committees to present or discuss information related to the responsibilities of the MPO. The organization should contact the MPO and allow ample time for the MPO to make arrangements and attend.

The MPO may schedule appearances at meetings of groups such as neighborhood organizations to gather input from residents. Such meetings shall serve as an avenue through which the MPO seeks out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved segments of the population, including low-income and minority households. The focus of these presentations should be tailored to the interests and concerns of the audience. All significant comments received will be recorded and presented to the Policy Committee.