

RESOLUTION
**REVISING THE EASTGATE REGIONAL COUNCIL OF
GOVERNMENTS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM TO
MEET THE MANDATES OF THE SAFE, ACCOUNTABLE,
FLEXIBLE, EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT: A
LEGACY FOR USERS (SAFETEA-LU)**

WHEREAS, the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments (Eastgate) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Transportation Management Area consisting of Mahoning and Trumbull Counties; and

WHEREAS, Eastgate's previous "Public Participation Plan" was approved by the General Policy Board in July 1994; and

WHEREAS, one of the SAFETEA-LU Metropolitan Planning Regulations that was enacted and signed into law on August 10, 2005, required that MPOs expand the public participation in all planning activities; and

WHEREAS, most of the transportation planning requirements became effective immediately, many provisions required rule-making to implement those changes and the FHWA and FTA initiated a comprehensive rule-making to update the metropolitan and statewide planning regulations and for the interim, the federal agencies realized that the planning process must continue to function as a whole; and

WHEREAS, all Long Range Transportation Plans (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), and State Transportation Improvement Programs (STIPs), adopted after July 1, 2007, must comply with SAFETEA-LU planning provisions, States and MPOs were encouraged to take advantage of the SAFETEA-LU provisions prior to July 1, 2007; and

WHEREAS, if a State or MPO chose to implement the SAFETEA-LU planning provisions prior to July 1, 2007, all SAFETEA-LU requirements in Section 6001 must be met since the various provisions are closely interrelated; and

WHEREAS, Eastgate will meet the July 1, 2007 compliance date and the requirements in Section 6001 and according to the SAFETEA-LU provisions, the Public Participation Program will be in place prior to the MPO adopting a transportation plan [Gap Analysis Technical Memorandum Supplement to the Updated 2030 LRTP], and TIP that addresses the newly enacted SAFETEA-LU provisions; and

WHEREAS, Eastgate remains committed to a transportation planning process that includes 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 the LRTP, TIP, and all on-going program activities; and

WHEREAS, Eastgate's objective to reaffirm this commitment through a specific plan of action designed to provide maximum opportunity for public involvement in consultation with all interested parties who participate in the metropolitan planning process; and

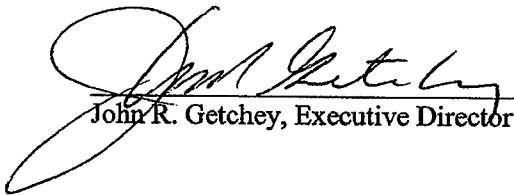
WHEREAS, in conjunction with public involvement, this process would include, as appropriate, consultation with those representatives from the State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation; and

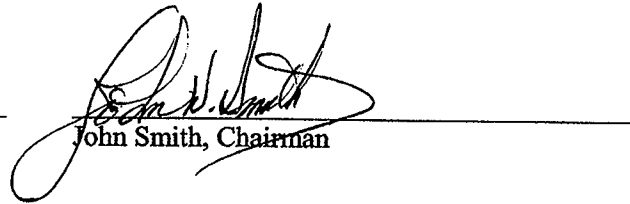
WHEREAS, the Public Participation Program was presented to Eastgate's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Board (CAB) in December 2006, and open for a 45 day public review and comment from January 2, through February 15, 2007.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the General Policy Board of the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments, State of Ohio, hereby approves this resolution revising the Eastgate Regional Council of Governments Public Participation Program to meet the mandates of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users requiring that the Public Participation Program be expanded and approved prior to the MPO adopting a transportation plan [Gap Analysis Technical Memorandum Supplement to the Updated 2030 LRTP], and TIP that addresses the newly enacted SAFETEA-LU provisions.

Passed this 23rd day of April, 2007.

ATTEST:


John R. Getchey, Executive Director


John Smith, Chairman

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM

1. Introduction

1.1 Strategy

Eastgate Regional Council of Governments remains committed to a transportation planning process that includes a proactive public involvement process which provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and all on-going program activities.

It is Eastgate's objective to reaffirm this commitment through a specific plan of action designed to provide maximum opportunity for public involvement in consultation with all interested parties who participate in the transportation planning process. In conjunction with public involvement, this process will include, as appropriate, consultation with those representatives from State and local agencies, and public officials responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. This process is intended to guide and facilitate meaningful discussion throughout the transportation planning process, as well as confirm that stakeholders, interest groups, and the general public have the opportunity to comment on all transportation plans and programs.

The goals of the Public Participation Program are to provide a fully engaged public forum between those decision making entities from State and local agencies, public officials, and citizens concerning transportation planning issues and the participation process. The participation process provides reasonable opportunities for interested parties to comment on the content of plans and provides the opportunity for public input. Citizens and interested parties contribute to the public review and are encouraged to enter into an active dialogue regarding plan development. The Public Participation Program is designed to educate the public on the process and issues involved in transportation planning, and the associated activities and mandated federal requirements prior to approval.

1.2 Identification of Interested Parties and Participation Issues

The Public Participation Program will recognize participants interested in or affected by the activities linked to plans and programs. This is achieved through direct mailings to interested parties, as well as utilizing indirect contact with the public through universal methods such as advertisements and notices in newspapers, press releases and other mass media associated activities, and to the maximum extent possible, in electronic format.

The LRTP is an comprehensive transportation plan compiled for Mahoning and Trumbull Counties. This plan is to serve as the blueprint where federal funding is to be used for highway, transit, non-motorized, and multimodal systems within Eastgate's planning area. Due to the significance and complexity of the LRTP, sufficient notification, adequate

information, opportunities for resolution of conflicts must be made available. Public participation insures that project and planning activities evolve from and address public needs. Once the draft Plan has been completed, at least two public meetings will be held; news releases will be sent to newspapers, radio and television stations; and advertisements may be placed in local newspapers.

The TIP is a comprehensive listing of specific transportation improvement projects scheduled for implementation over a four year time span. The projects included in the TIP are first included in the LRTP. The TIP is updated every two years, and the public will be provided the opportunity to comment and be involved in the decision-making process leading to the adoption of the TIP. This review is being used by the Western Reserve Transit Authority and Niles Trumbull Transit to satisfy the Program of Projects requirements as established by the Federal Transit Administration pursuant to 49 U.S.C. Section 5307 (c). Once the draft TIP has been completed, a public meeting will be held during the two week public comment period; advertisements will be placed in local newspapers; news releases will be sent to area newspapers, radio and television stations; and copies of the draft TIP will be made available at disclosed locations in our planning area.

1.3 Information and Education

One of the purposes of the Public Participation Program is to inform and educate the public regarding the purpose and development of the LRTP and the TIP. Information disseminated must be clear, concise, and represent a solid foundation that allows for the public to provide their input to recommendations that will result from the planning process conducted by Eastgate. To enhance this effort, Eastgate proposes to expand various visualization techniques to be more “user friendly” for those participants not traditionally involved in developing/reviewing the transportation planing process, enabling complex concepts to be easily understood.

1.4 Federal and State Guidelines and Requirements

In accordance with federal guidelines, Eastgate Regional Council of Governments is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for Mahoning and Trumbull Counties. Eastgate’s last Public Involvement Program was adopted in the early 1990’s, however new mandates contained in SAFETEA-LU require public participation in certain planning activities be expanded. According to FHWA guidance, “Most of the transportation planning requirements became effective immediately when SAFETEA-LU was signed into law on August 10, 2005.” Eastgate Regional Council of Governments intends to comply with the expanded scope, consultation, mitigation, and participation requirements set forth in SAFETEA-LU.

2. Achievement Strategies

2.1 Objectives

The primary objectives of this policy are to:

- Bring a diverse cross-section of the public into the public policy decision making process
- Maintain meaningful public participation from the early stages of the planning process
- Utilizing combinations of public participation and visualization techniques to meet the needs of the general public
- Reach out to traditionally underserved communities, including low income, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and minority populations to ensure environmental justice issues are addressed

2.2 Public Participation Core Components

In order to achieve the objectives outlined above, several core components must be included in the participation process including:

- Confirm that stakeholders, interest groups, and the general public have the opportunity to comment on public involvement plans and transportation plans and programs
- Involve key stakeholders early and throughout the planning process
- Personalize public participation meetings and activities to obtain productive input
- Expand visualization techniques to present transportation plans and programs
- When practical, publish transportation plans and programs in electronic format, such as on the agency web site
- Develop relationships with local media

2.3 Stakeholders

The previously approved Public Involvement Program identified possible stakeholders linked to the LRTP and TIP. Stakeholders are individuals and/or groups who have a direct interest, involvement, or are generally affected by projects, programs, or plans. Identifying “interested parties” outside of the formal organizational structure of Eastgate is necessary to obtain adequate public input. Stakeholders commonly include but are not limited to:

- People who live in a project area
- Businesses in a project area
- Civic and community associations
- Environmental or special interest groups
- State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation groups as appropriate

3. Public Participation Tools

The Public Participation Program exhibits the importance of effective public participation

as a component to a project or plan's success, therefore, various techniques are needed to engage the public in the decision making process. As appropriate, new techniques will be incorporated as they become available and are shown to be successful.

Below is a list of outreach activities, followed by a discussion of the technique including the specific objective of each and procedures to be used in implementation. Eastgate will use all or a combination of the following techniques, dependent on available resources, to involve the public in the transportation planning process:

- Direct mailings
- Newsletters
- Press releases
- Advertisements
- Web page
- Community events
- Office open-houses
- Citizens Advisory Board
- Public opinion surveys

3.1 Objectives and Procedures Involving Public Participation Tools

- **Direct Mailings**

Objective: To inform specific audiences through the distribution of pertinent information.

Procedures: Using mailing lists, disseminate letters, newsletters, plan information, etc. to inform the general public and encourage response.

- **Newsletters**

Objective: To inform specific audiences through the distribution of pertinent information; to encourage involvement through promotion of opportunities for the general public to become active in the process.

Procedures: Using the mailing list, Eastgate will continue to distribute the quarterly agency newsletter as well as any pertinent special edition newsletters published by Eastgate. Newsletters are also made available on the agency web site.

- **Press Releases**

Objective: To inform the general public through a wide-ranging distribution of pertinent information; to encourage involvement through promotion of opportunities for the general public to become active in the process.

Procedures: Distribute news releases to major regional and minority newspapers and radio stations, in addition to local university radio stations.

- **Advertisements**

Objective: To inform the general public of information available for review and/or public meetings to be held.

Procedures: Whenever possible and appropriate, advertisements will be placed in minority and ethnic newspapers, in addition to major regional newspapers. Radio announcements will also be aired when possible and appropriate.

- **Web Page**

Objective: To provide access to the latest public information, upcoming events and meetings 24-hours a day; to allow the general public to provide comments and feedback on projects and plans.

Procedures: Information regarding upcoming public meetings will be posted on the agency web site; agency programs and plans will be placed on the web site, the general public can also comment on plans throughout the public review process using e-mail.

- **Community Events**

Objective: To provide the general public with the opportunity to review, comment, and provide feedback on transportation plans, reports, and activities by setting up displays at public events and places.

Procedures: Set up displays featuring pertinent information and relevant transportation plans and reports available for review.

- **Office Open-Houses**

Objective: To provide the general public with the opportunity to tour agency offices and observe the tools and equipment used in the transportation planning process as well as review, comment, and provide feedback on transportation plans, reports, and activities.

Procedures: Hold periodic office open-houses and have relevant plans and reports available for review.

- **Citizens Advisory Board**

Objective: To inform specific and general audiences through the focused distribution of pertinent information; to encourage involvement through promotion of opportunities for the general public to become active in the process.

Procedures: At each monthly meeting of the Eastgate Citizens Advisory Board, provide details on transportation projects and related issues to inform the general public and encourage response.

- **Public Opinion Surveys**

Objective: To access widespread public opinion on various transportation plans and reports, activities, and miscellaneous issues in the area.

Procedures: Distribute public opinion surveys to members of the general public.

3.2 Consideration of Public Comments

Public comments from the various sources will be organized and analyzed, where appropriate, so that the suggestions may be considered by Eastgate staff and decision makers.

Summaries will be prepared and disseminated to Eastgate Committees and the General Policy Board.

When possible, Eastgate staff will respond to those who participated in order to demonstrate the results of their involvement. This will be done via direct mailings, e-mail, newsletters, and news releases.

4. Evaluating the Program

At the end of each fiscal year, Eastgate will review the Public Participation Program to determine if the objectives of the program were fulfilled.