

## APPENDIX A SUMMARY OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Public participation played a critical role in the development of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. It helped the planning team, led by the Tallahassee-Leon County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and its consultant, Renaissance Planning Group, understand community values for bicycle and pedestrian transportation, and thus determine appropriate investment strategies to meet identified needs that could be publicly supported.

Meaningful public involvement requires proactive and timely public notice; readily accessible information about plan assumptions and findings; a wide variety of opportunities for comment that are easy to use and non-intimidating; and an attitude of responsiveness on the part of the planning team. Furthermore, an effective public involvement program must seek out and incorporate the ideas, needs and comments from groups that are traditionally underserved in the transportation planning process.

Toward that end, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan built a solid foundation of meaningful public input that was solicited early and continued throughout the completion of the project. In addition, agency partners were afforded good access to project data and materials, understand key assumptions, constraints and development options, and had a chance throughout the study process to provide guidance and comment on interim and final work products. This document presents the means by which the public involvement portions of this study were accomplished by MPO, the consultant team, and its partners.

### A.1 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT OVERVIEW

This section describes the chief mechanisms used to involve the public in the planning study. Members of the public were notified about the planning process early, often, and in a variety of ways through both communication and outreach activities. Planning materials and information were made easily accessible and available through newsletters, flyers, local media, and the Internet, and a large contacts list was developed and updated throughout the project. In addition, the process integrated local residents' opinions, values, and unique perceptions of local needs through activities that fostered public engagement in the planning process. Below is an outline of the major activities and strategies within this two-pronged approach:

- 1) Communication and Outreach
  - A) Plan Information Network
  - B) Briefings to MPO Advisory Committees and Community Interest Forum
  - C) Presentations to Community Groups
  - D) Newsletters
  - E) Meeting Advertisement and Outreach
  - F) Media and News Releases (including use of City/County public information and communications offices)
  - G) Website Materials



- 2) Engagement in the Planning Process
  - A) Stakeholder Interviews
  - B) Workshops
    - 1) April 2003: Goals and Issues & Mobility District Field Trips
    - 2) October 2003: Issues & Options
    - 3) January 2004: Needs Plan Review & Refinement
    - 4) April 2004: Draft Cost Feasible Plan and Project Priorities
  - A) School and Youth Involvement
    - 1) School & Parent Survey
    - 2) Workshop Activities
    - 3) Community Activities

Strategies were developed to ensure involvement of three target audiences. The first group included residents, workers, and students from local schools, colleges, and universities, as well as local employers in the county. The planning team made particular efforts to involve people from low-income and minority groups, as well as children, the elderly, and people with disabilities. The second target audience included public agencies, advocacy groups, the media, and other organizations that took an interest in the study. A third audience consisted of elected and appointed officials from the MPO and its member local governments. This latter group was particularly important in terms of priority funding issues and setting the land use context.

The planning team sought public comments and ideas early in each stage of the study process in order to ensure the technical analysis incorporated priority issues, appropriate goals, suitable evaluation criteria, and a range of viable options that addressed the criteria. Toward this end, public involvement activities, such as workshops, meetings, newsletters, email announcements, and media notices were timed and structured to coincide with the major project milestones, including the Existing Conditions Inventory, Issues and Options, Needs Analysis, Financial Analysis and the Cost Feasible Plan.

The plan was organized around four Mobility Districts to provide important context for the development of the plan. Physical inventories, community profiles highlighting issues and options, needs assessments, and recommendations were developed for each district and integrated into the regional plan. The public involvement process was tailored to take advantage of the detailed knowledge and sense of community among residents within each Mobility District, as well as providing opportunities for residents from the entire region to come together and build consensus on the final plan.

To initiate the process, the planning team interviewed key stakeholders from the region and key stakeholder groups and discussed overall planning issues and goals with local and regional officials, staff and advisory committees. As part of this effort, a Community Interest Forum was organized to provide a venue for a broad base of community members and advocates to discuss the plan and provide feedback to staff and the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.



The team then organized field trips and workshops in each Mobility District that enabled local residents to help planners identify issues and specific facility needs to be analyzed in the inventory of existing conditions. The workshops laid a foundation for the Issues and Options Report (“community profile”). A regional workshop was then held to build consensus on overall goals and priorities. Following this workshop, the team developed alternatives for needed bicycle and pedestrian improvement strategies and evaluated them with the help of local residents through a second regional workshop, using the criteria developed in the district workshops. A final regional workshop was organized to build consensus on the preferred 2025 Needs Plan from which the Cost Feasible Plan and short-term (1-5 years) priorities were drawn. In this manner, the public helped create and refine the plan, and the workshops helped foster enthusiasm and a commitment toward implementation.

The public involvement activities undertaken for this study were conducted collaboratively between the consultant and the Tallahassee-Leon County MPO staff. The consultant played the lead role in developing public involvement materials and organizing workshops, with logistical support, such as meeting arrangements, advertisements and distribution of materials provided by MPO staff. MPO staff also reviewed draft materials and agendas for the workshops. The consultant also developed a Plan Information Network (PIN) that included contact information for a wide variety of stakeholders. The PIN was given to the MPO staff, who updated it over the course of the project. MPO staff also ensured that materials and information provided by the consultant were distributed widely to the Plan Information Network. Finally, the consultant provided support to MPO staff in creating and updating a project website.

## A.1 COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH

The following methods were used to make contact with the public, raise awareness and maintain interest in the study issues and options, keep the community informed of study progress, and obtain input from the public to help guide recommendations and decisions. Each of these efforts was undertaken with the objective of encouraging involvement from traditionally underserved groups, such as the elderly, people with disabilities, lower income and minority residents and the transportation disadvantaged.

### A.1.1 PLAN INFORMATION NETWORK (PIN)

Early in the planning process, the consultant organized a database for each Mobility District and region-wide that included major community groups, organizations representing relevant perspectives or areas of interest, and key points of contact. The philosophy of the PIN was to develop a core group of community stakeholders who would assist in fostering a two-way dialogue between the study process and the constituents of each participating group.

Organizations in the PIN included civic groups, school and youth groups, university and college groups, faith-based organizations, environmental groups, chambers of commerce and economic development organizations, realtors, disabled persons/advocacy groups, news media contacts, community-based organizations, neighborhood association councils and community advocates. Throughout the planning process, people and organizational representatives could join the PIN by signing up at workshops or local briefings, on the project website, through surveys and interviews, or by contacting the MPO.

The PIN was a useful tool in helping to expand and stratify the MPO’s existing contact lists. The email address database was a particularly good resource in creating broadcast messages which had a lot of impact. Two observations about the PIN to improve it in future efforts are as follows:



MPO staff should maintain and update the PIN as soon as it is created by the consultant. Initially, the consultant was responsible for maintaining the PIN, but this led to some confusion in the early part of the planning process that resulted in duplicate versions and uncertainty about whether necessary updates had been made. Once the team agreed that MPO staff would maintain the information, these problems were solved.

Obtaining and using information about community organization’s meeting and publication schedules was sometimes difficult. Some groups never provided this information, despite repeated requests from the consultant team. Also, as the project went on, the team found the schedule of project milestones and upcoming meetings did not necessarily coincide well with the groups’ publication schedules. For example, some needed information more than a month in advance, when meeting locations or dates may not have been set yet. In other cases, the timing of news releases and announcements was too early or late for group publications. As a result, the team rarely used this feature of the PIN.

An approach to improve upon this in future efforts would probably be to distribute monthly briefings to the PIN that summarize plan progress and announce next steps, with a request to community groups that they include the briefing in any upcoming materials. The briefings could also be posted on the website in a “what’s new” section. Preparing and distributing such briefings would take a fair amount of staff and/or consultant time, however, so the benefits of this approach should be weighed against the costs.

### **A.1.2 BRIEFINGS TO MPO COMMITTEES AND THE COMMUNITY INTEREST FORUM**

At key milestones throughout the planning process, the consultant briefed the MPO and its advisory committees about project work products and progress. The briefings were designed to not only present information, but also to solicit feedback and guidance on the completion of work tasks. In addition, the consultant met with the Community Interest Forum, an ad hoc group including representatives of organizations such as Florida State University, Florida A&M University, Tallahassee Community College, the Council of Neighborhood Associations, Capital City Cyclists, the Better Transportation Coalition, environmental and economic development advocacy groups, community based organizations that support low-income and minority groups, schools, PTAs, and advocates for the elderly and people with disabilities.

The Forum provided the planning team with helpful information about the needs and priorities among member organizations as well as issues unique to each mobility district. Forum members were asked to:

- Provide feedback and guidance on key study documents;
- Stimulate participation in mobility district and regional workshops;
- Help with data collection and publicity appropriate for volunteers, such as canvassing a bicycle listserv for opinions and ideas or distributing information about the plan at local community events such as bike races, walk-a-thons, and children’s bike safety rodeos;
- Discuss the plan with their respective communities and special interest groups, and share the resulting information at each Forum meeting; and
- Encourage colleagues and community members to review and comment on the plan information available through the website and other distribution sites.



Forum membership was developed through invitations distributed by the planning team and by a policy of open attendance at each meeting. The Forum did not have a Chair. Rather, the consultant facilitated each meeting in a manner that encouraged equal participation by all in attendance. In addition, the Forum was not named as an official committee of the MPO or its Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. The intention of the Forum was to foster grassroots support for the planning process to complement the more structured process of plan review and approval through the MPO committees.

The consultant conducted five Community Interest Forum meetings during the course of this project. Meetings generally occurred during the same week in which the MPO advisory committees met. Consultant staff prepared meeting summaries for each Community Interest Forum presentation, with review by MPO staff.

The first couple of Community Interest Forum meetings were well attended with some 30-40 people participating, but over the course of the project attendance dropped markedly, with the last meeting drawing only about half a dozen people. However, this did not indicate a lack of interest on member parts. It seemed that many were simply getting the information they needed through workshops and direct communication with staff, so that the meetings became somewhat redundant. In retrospect, a series of meetings or focus groups with the Forum members might have been just as effective while reducing the cost and time spent to organize the meetings.

Alternatively, the Forum could have been allocated a formal charge and standing with the MPO, which might have provided the status and accountability to motivate continued participation. However, since it would have essentially been an advisory committee *for* an advisory committee (the MPO BPAC), such a formal purpose would have been hard to articulate or justify. This approach would probably not have been particularly effective. As it was, the Forum did provide a good way to involve a broad spectrum of interested parties at the outset of the planning process, which likely contributed to the increasingly healthy turnout at the regional workshops and a high level of community awareness about the plan.

### **A.1.2 PRESENTATIONS TO COMMUNITY GROUPS (SPEAKERS BUREAU)**

Through the PIN, web page and invitations on announcements and materials distributed to the public, the planning team encouraged community groups and organizations to contact the MPO to arrange a presentation as part of their regular meeting. The consultant and MPO staff collaboratively arranged the briefings and presentations to interested community groups, and MPO staff was kept well informed so that it was easy for them to offer presentations without the consultant present. The consultant team gave presentations to the Piney Z Neighborhood Association, the Council of Neighborhood Organizations and the Tallahassee Senior Center, and MPO staff provided information about the plan at a variety of community events and meetings, including bicycle safety rodeos, Springtime Tallahassee, and Florida State University's fall orientation fair.

The planning team also participated in two video interviews on the Master Plan, one airing on government access television (WCOT cable channel 13) and the other on a local Christian broadcasting channel. Both were frequently shown. Finally, at the end of the Master Planning process, the MPO's project manager participated in a call-in radio show hosted by the local National Public Radio station in which several elected officials discussed the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.



### A.1.3 NEWSLETTERS

The consultant prepared two four-page, color newsletters during the course of the study, each timed to specific milestones. The first newsletter, published in June 2003, provided an introduction to the study process, with a project overview and schedule, a summary of the Mobility District workshop results, the community telephone survey, and the physical inventory. The second newsletter, distributed in May 2004 presented the results of the workshop on the cost feasible plan, summarized the draft plan and design guidelines, and encouraged residents to comment at the upcoming public hearing. Newsletters were distributed by mail to the PIN, handed out at meetings and events, and posted on the website in PDF format.

In addition to the newsletters, the consultant team provided the MPO with a trifold brochure overview of the planning process that was distributed at workshops, public meetings, and presentations.

### A.1.4 MEETING ADVERTISEMENT AND OUTREACH

In addition to the notices routinely published by the MPO about its public meetings, the consultant team developed flyers before each workshop and worked with MPO staff to distribute them widely throughout the community at strategic locations such as bicycle shops, grocery stores, libraries, community centers, and other gathering places. The team provided flyers in a poster format that were placed on TalTran buses. The consultant team and MPO staff distributed announcements to a broad network of people and organizations via email. The Capital City Cyclists listserv proved a particularly good venue for making sure local cyclists were aware of and involved in the plan. The project team also found that monitoring the dialogue on the list serve provided helpful insights about issues that were important to local residents. The consultant also team provided draft press releases that were finalized and distributed to the media by the City and County public relations departments. The team had set a goal to provide information through the local school systems to parents, students, and school staff but was unable to locate an effective network within the school system for accomplishing this. To address this and other goals for involving schools in the plan implementation process, the final plan identifies the designation of a school-based bicycle and pedestrian coordinator as a high priority and suggests an individual within the existing school administration as a resource to help establish the position.

Based on the workshop comment sheets filled out by meeting participants, the most effective meeting advertisement strategies were direct contact (a reflection of MPO staff's efforts to spread the word), newspaper notices, and email announcements. The project team made significant efforts to ensure that people with disabilities, school children and their parents, and people from low-income and minority communities were encourage to attend workshops and meetings. The locations (elementary schools, community centers and the downtown library) and times of each workshop were carefully chosen to ensure full physical accessibility and proximity to transit routes. Key materials were available in Braille at the workshops, and facilitators were prepared to help people with disabilities to easily participate in discussions. A telephone number was included on all meeting announcements asking those with special needs to contact the MPO 24 hours prior to the meeting for accommodation. A children's table with appropriate activities was advertised and staffed at each workshop. While the majority of workshop participants were able-bodied people interested in bicycling issues, each workshop did draw at least a few non-traditional participants.



## A.1.5 MEDIA BRIEFINGS AND NEWS RELEASES

Newspaper coverage of the planning process, both through the major daily, *The Tallahassee Democrat* and smaller papers such as the *Apalachee Tortoise*, was thorough and frequent throughout the planning process. In addition, the plan was featured on two government access television programs and a local radio call-in show. The cooperative relationship between the consultant team, MPO staff, and the local public relations staff was invaluable in gaining good media coverage.

## A.1.6 WEBSITE MATERIALS

The consultant team provided initial content and ongoing materials which the MPO uploaded onto a special page linked to the Tallahassee-Leon County Planning Department's Transportation Planning website. The home page included a project overview, study news, contact information, a calendar and an opportunity to sign up for the PIN and/or comment on the study. Update materials included meeting notices and summaries, study reports and presentations.

## A.2 ENGAGEMENT IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

### A.2.1 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS, FOCUS GROUPS, AND SURVEYS

Early in the planning process, the consultant team organized and conducted interviews with active citizens and representatives from 17 key organizations in each mobility district and region-wide. In addition, the team organized a session in early July, 2003 in which 15 representatives from community organizations and bicycle shops and 21 staff members from state and local government departments shared ideas, issues and insights.

The purpose of the interviews was to enable a more informal discussion of issues and opportunities with those directly involved in the provision and use of bicycle and pedestrian facilities in Tallahassee and Leon County. Interviews were held with representatives of the following groups:

- Better Transportation Coalition
- Blueprint 2000
- Commuter Services of North Florida
- Council of Neighborhood Associations
- Downtown Improvement Authority
- FAMU Administrative Affairs
- FAMU Facilities Planning
- Florida Council for the Blind
- FSU Student Government Association
- Leon County Tourist Development Center
- Leon County Commission Staff
- Leon County School Board
- Leon County Sheriff's Office
- Sierra Club
- Tallahassee-Leon County MPO
- Tallahassee Police Department



In addition to the interviews, 248 community members filled out brief surveys distributed at community events, workshops, and on the web page during the spring of 2003, which helped identify major issues and priorities to be considered in the plan. Finally, surveys were also sent to all local schools to be completed by administrators or teachers which provided a few insights on children's issues, although the response rate was very low.

### A.2.1 WORKSHOPS

Seven public workshops were held during the course of the study, including one workshop in each of the four Mobility Districts and three regional workshops. Meetings were usually scheduled early on weekday evenings to allow for maximum accessibility.

Each workshop generally consisted of a period of time for the public to review maps and materials and talk informally with staff, and a one- to two-hour period for the specific meeting activity to occur. Structured activities for participants of all ages and abilities were organized for each workshop in order to glean information about their specific needs and desires for bicycle and pedestrian transportation.

At each workshop, participants were asked to complete an evaluation form of the public involvement activity for review by MPO staff and the consultant. Generally, participants reported that the workshops were helpful and informative, easily accessible, and well publicized. The team used comments from each survey to help improve and refine the activities and outreach at subsequent workshops. A brief summary of the workshops is included below.

**Goal Setting and Issues Identification Mobility District Workshops** (April 2003). These four meetings, held prior to the close of university spring semester, helped the planning team determine the current issues and opportunities to improve the bicycle and pedestrian network within each district. A total of 70 participants evaluated and refined the inventory and gaps/deficiencies findings developed by the planning team, with particular emphasis on safety concerns. The workshops helped the team identify community values that formed the basis of evaluation criteria for examining plan alternatives.

**Community Field Review** (April 2003): Coinciding with the initial workshops, the planning team, with assistance from TalTran, organized a bus and walking tour that provided an overview of key issues affecting the four mobility districts. The tour, which attracted about six interested citizens and one MPO Board member, complemented the existing conditions inventory and provided graphic examples of major problems and opportunities for improvement. Tour participants were provided checklists to rate the area in terms of its bikability and walkability and participated in lively discussions about both the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure problems they saw as well as providing insights about neighborhoods and commercial areas. While this outreach activity did not attract a large number of people, it was a useful exercise for the consultants, staff, and MPO board member to engage in (literally) on-the-ground dialogue about specific issues that needed to be considered in the plan.

**Issues and Options Regional Workshop** (October 2003): At this workshop, each Mobility District Community Profile was presented with a regional overlay of issues and options to be considered in development of the plan alternatives. In addition, the proposed evaluation measures developed by the consultant based on the Mobility District Workshops were reviewed and refined by the public. More than 100 participants attended this workshop, which was held at the Leon County Public Library. It was structured as an open house format, which allowed participants to easily circulate and discuss information on a collection of maps and posters around the room. They marked up the maps and provided comment sheets about preferred routes, problem areas, policy

suggestions, and favorite destinations. Running comments were posted on flip charts, and, as the list grew, participants were asked to note their most important issues with stars. The high level of energy and excellent turnout for this workshop was a critical factor in providing momentum for public involvement and community awareness throughout the rest of the planning process.

**Needs Plan Review and Refinement Regional Workshop (January 2004):** Nearly 100 residents gathered again in the Leon County Public Library for this workshop to review the guiding principles, programs, policies projects, and maps from the Draft 2025 Needs Plan for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan. Participants reviewed posters featuring illustrated one-paragraph stories about imaginary people that illustrated how the guiding principles would play out in daily life, and were asked to provide their own “stories” and suggestions for how the proposed projects and programs in the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan would affect their lives. They also used colored stickers to vote on maps of the proposed Needs Plan projects they felt would be most useful, and identify any projects that they felt should be added. This workshop provided a lead-in to the development of priorities for inclusion in the Cost Feasible Plan.

**Draft Cost Feasible Plan Workshop (April 2004):** The planning team presented the draft action plan with information about costs and financial resources for public comment and refinement. The level of turnout and enthusiasm at this workshop was similar to the previous ones. Three concurrent exercises were held to garner input:

- Maps of each Mobility District and its projects were displayed. Participants were given post-it notes to vote on specific projects and provide comments and feedback on their favorite projects.
- An “idea bicycle rack” poster was set up where participants are invited to write down whatever concerns they would like the plan to consider.
- Each participant was given \$10 million in “Mobility Dollars” to invest among five stations, each representing a major theme of the Master Plan: Major Corridors, Connectivity, Schools and Parks, Education/Encouragement/Enforcement, and Safety.

The results of this workshop helped shape the priorities laid out in the final plan.

### A.2.1 SCHOOL AND YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

The consultant worked to involve local schools, parents, and children in helping to ensure the plan would lead to a safe and effective bicycle and pedestrian network for children and youth. The approach focused on four types of activities:

**School Survey:** A simple survey was distributed to school principals throughout Tallahassee and Leon County early in the planning process. The survey was tailored to help the planning team follow up with interested parents and school personnel who wanted to develop projects or programs that could be included in the plan. However, the response rate to the survey was very low. The planning team realized that a better avenue for communicating with the schools needed to be developed before the proposed programming and networking activities with schools and parents could be done. Toward that end, the team focused its efforts in the plan on talking with school personnel who provided insights on the subsequent planning recommendation to designate an existing or new staff member to handle bicycle and pedestrian planning and programming for the schools.

The Implementation Plan included recommendations for integrating this representative into the proposed BikeWalk Network in order to help facilitate development of programs, funds, and coordination of resources between the schools and other agencies. In addition, the implementation plan included specific activities for the School Coordinator to launch such as a Safe Routes to School program in targeted schools that had participated in the survey, as well as mobilizing parents to support the school's work on these issues.

**Workshop Activities:** Activities for children and youth were provided at each public workshop, including materials to draw pictures of their ideal bicycling and walking environments as well as an activity booklet called "Getting There." The team had hoped to develop more targeted activities for children such as marking up study area maps with their routes to school. However, turnout by children and youth was spotty and unpredictable, so these types of activities didn't get off the ground. In future planning efforts, a targeted strategy to recruit a critical mass of children and youth at each workshop would provide the team with a better way to plan and execute activities for anticipated age groups and interests.

**Classroom Presentations and Projects:** The consultant team had hoped to promote teacher participation in the planning process as part of the 2003-04 school curriculum and was prepared to provide ideas and examples for classroom activities. However, the team realized it would take more time than originally anticipated to establish a venue to distribute information and communicate with teachers efficiently. As an alternative, the team developed an Educator's Resource Guide for the final plan that will help the MPO launch an ongoing process with schools to integrate bicycle and pedestrian information throughout the system.

**Community Activities:** The planning team took advantage of opportunities that arose throughout the planning process to link the plan with community-based activities and events that celebrate and advocate bicycling and walking among young people, as well as projects aimed at improving public health and reducing childhood obesity. MPO staff distributed plan information and talked with children and parents at activities such as bicycle rodeos and locally sponsored cycling events. In addition, the team drafted a plan for a community-wide poster contest for artwork to be included in the final plan but was unable to assemble a group of volunteers able to spearhead the project. However, in the early spring of 2004, the consultant team spotted an opportunity for the MPO to partner with a local organization for funding from the General Mills foundation to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian education and activities into a community program. The MPO quickly took the lead to assemble a team of public and private organizations that wrote and submitted a proposal to expand a YMCA summer programs focused on nutrition and physical activity. While the project was ultimately not selected for 2004 funding, the experience of pulling together a team was valuable and will likely lead to successful collaboration in the future.