

Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency Public Involvement Process and Evaluation Manual

INTRODUCTION

The Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency (CRTPA) has developed a proactive public involvement process in order to meet the need for better community involvement in the transportation planning process. Through the Public Involvement Plan (PIP), the CRTPA strives to facilitate a cooperative and collaborative transportation planning process that gives citizens a voice in shaping the area's future. The CRTPA's mission is to provide continuous, coordinated and comprehensive planning to guide the future growth and development of Florida's Capital Region.

The function of this document is to provide a foundation to ensure that effective communication with the public and strong citizen participation is used throughout all of the CRTPA's transportation planning activities. The document is also intended to define federal guidelines governing public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process, describe the existing CRTPA public participation process and committee structure, identify the mandated CRTPA work products and invite the public to comment and suggest ways in which to improve the existing process.

The overall intent of this document is to serve as a guide for how the CRTPA will conduct, encourage, improve, and report public involvement activities in the development of transportation plans and services for Florida's Capital Region. Without the involvement of the local citizenry, it is difficult to design a program that effectively meets the greater needs of the area. This document provides the framework for accomplishing this cooperative planning process by:

- Educating and informing the public about the urban transportation planning process,
- Devising methods to increase public awareness of how transportation systems are planned and constructed, and to increase public input, interest and participation in transportation planning projects,
- Enhancing participation of various interest groups, the underserved population of the area, as well as minority populations, and
- Educating and informing committee members and the public so that informed decisions can be made.

THE CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AGENCY

A Metropolitan Planning Agency (MPO) is an area-wide, multi-jurisdictional agency mandated by federal and state law for urbanized areas of more than 50,000 people to provide a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive regional transportation planning process. An MPO is responsible for planning and programming in cooperation with local transportation agencies and the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), as well as for the expenditure of federal and state transportation funds in an effort to enhance the statewide and regional multimodal transportation system. To achieve this objective, MPOs develop a 20-year Long-Range Transportation Plan to guide future transportation decision-making and a 5-year Transportation Improvement Program to prioritize transportation projects for federal, state, and local funding within their regions.

Initially, the Tallahassee-Leon County Transportation Study, using input from government officials, technical experts, and private citizens, guided transportation planning in the Tallahassee-Leon County area. The Tallahassee Urban Area Transportation Study (TALUATS) was organized in 1965 as a joint undertaking between the City of Tallahassee, Leon County, and the State of Florida. The federal government participated through the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Federal Aviation Administration, and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Consistent with guidelines developed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, the Tallahassee Urban Area Transportation Study Policy Committee was reorganized into the Tallahassee-Leon County Metropolitan Planning Organization in early 1977, and was reconstituted on December 10, 1979, in conformance with Florida Statute 334.215. The Metropolitan Planning Organization was composed of the Leon County Board of County Commissioners, the Tallahassee City Commissioners, and a representative from the Leon County School Board.

In 2004, based on data from the 2000 Census, the Tallahassee-Leon County MPO was expanded to include the urbanized portions of Gadsden and Wakulla Counties and renamed the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency to more accurately reflect its new regional focus. The CRTPA is comprised of elected representatives from Leon County, Gadsden County, Wakulla County, the City of Tallahassee, the Town of Havana, the City of Midway, and the City of Quincy, as well as a representative from the Leon County School Board.

In addition to citizen input, the CRTPA Board receives input from four standing committees. These committees, with the exception of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), are mandated and created by state law. They are the:

- Technical Advisory Committee (TAC);
- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC);
- Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB); and

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

The **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** is comprised of planners, engineers, and other technical personnel who advise the CRTPA and the other CRTPA committees on the technical feasibility of proposed projects. The TAC is instrumental in assigning priorities to projects.

The **Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)** is comprised of citizen volunteers who provide input to proposed transportation plans from a citizen's perspective to the CRTPA. Through an integration of land use and transportation issues, the committee provides a meaningful discussion of the transportation planning process. Membership selections are from the general citizenry of the CRTPA area and are appointed by the Board Members.

The **Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB)** is a committee appointed by the CRTPA for each county in the urbanized area. The TDCB is responsible for identifying the needs of those who cannot secure their own means of transportation, bringing those needs to the attention of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), and monitoring the amount of Transportation Disadvantaged Funds being received locally.

The **Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)** is charged with reviewing projects to ensure that they are designed and constructed to promote safe walking and cycling. The BPAC provides comments on both recreational and non-recreational projects and seeks to provide connectivity between existing and planned projects. Membership selections are from the general citizenry of CRTPA area.

THE MANDATED CRTPA WORK PRODUCTS

Each year the CRTPA is required by federal law to produce certain documents. These documents include the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In addition to these two documents the CRTPA is required to develop a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) every five years. In exercising its authority to guide the expenditures of federal and state transportation funds, it is imperative that the CRTPA's public involvement processes provide complete information and appropriate public notification as well soliciting the involvement of the public in developing plans and programs that better enhance the public awareness of the transportation planning process. All of the documents listed below are available in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, compact disk, audio tape or other applicable sources for those people with limited English or physical abilities). Each of the documents is also available on the CRTPA web page located at:

www.crtpa.org

In the development of each of these mandated work products, the public is provided with an opportunity to make comments and recommendations at various times during the adoption stages of these documents.

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - In accordance with Chapter 339.175, Florida Statutes, the UPWP defines the work tasks and anticipated funding requirements of the CRTPA. This document serves to inform public officials and agencies that contribute manpower and allocate funds to the transportation planning process for the proposed work program. In addition, the UPWP provides the basis for federal, state, and local funding of transportation planning activities identified in the document.

The UPWP is distributed to local governments, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Transit Authority (FTA), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for review as a draft document by March 15th of each year. Prior to its distribution as a draft, the Technical Advisory Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee review the UPWP and provide comment on its content and structure. During this phase of the UPWP's development, public comment will be received and will be reviewed through the CAC. The UPWP is adopted and distributed by May 15th.

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a planning document developed and adopted by the CRTPA in response to the transportation needs in an urbanized area. The TIP updates and advances a five-year implementation program for all modes of transportation. This document is important because it not only addresses long-range transportation needs (constructing a new bridge or road), but it also contains short-term transportation improvements (intersection improvements, etc.).

In order to ensure effective communication with the public and strong citizen participation concerning the TIP, a public meeting (which is held in a traditionally underserved population center) and a public hearing are held prior to its adoption for the purpose of receiving comments from the general public concerning the TIP. The public meeting and public hearing are advertised in the local newspaper and publications serving minority communities or traditionally underserved populations to ensure there is notification of the upcoming TIP. All documents that are publicized are distributed in a manner such that they are advertised in the various publications at least one month prior to the TIP or adoption of the plan. Draft copies are made available prior to the meetings and are available for public inspection throughout the entire process before, during and after the adoption of the plan. The TIP is also available on our web page and is available in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, compact disk, audio tape or other applicable sources for those people with limited English or physical abilities).

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) - The LRTP is a twenty-year outlook for transportation improvements in an urbanized area and is updated every three to five years. The LRTP provides the community with a plan that meets regional objectives for land use and multiple modes of transportation. The LRTP goals and objectives exert a considerable, direct influence on future transportation improvements in the urbanized area.

The scope of services for the development of the LRTP includes a proactive public involvement program. This proactive approach is tailored to the project schedule to ensure that an open and thorough public involvement process is achieved. Public information workshops are scheduled throughout the study period for the LRTP. The plan consists of over twenty meetings and presentations during the critical junctures in the plan development process. The purpose of these meetings is to explain the issues, describe the potential solutions and the impacts associated with each and to receive input from the public. At least half of these meetings and presentation will be held in minority communities or near traditionally underserved populations to ensure that there is an inclusive public involvement process.

In keeping with the implementation of a proactive public involvement program, the public involvement coordinator commissions an aggressive advertising campaign – in local newspapers as well as publications serving minority communities and traditionally underserved populations to ensure there is notification of the upcoming meetings and presentations. Community workshops are also used to ensure that the community and underserved populations understand the purpose and function of the LRTP. Furthermore, notifications of upcoming meetings and presentations can be found on the CRTPA web page.

Finally, a public hearing is held after the Cost Feasible portion of the Long Range Plan has been developed, but before it has been adopted by the CRTPA, in which feasible long-term, transportation improvements are identified. Draft copies are made available prior to the meetings and are available for public inspection throughout the entire plan development process. The LRTP is also available on the CRTPA web page and is

available in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, compact disk, audio tape or other applicable sources for those people with limited English or physical abilities).

All CRTPA mandated work products are required to go through an adoption and amendment process. Of these work products, the LRTP and TIP involve extensive public participation. Once these products go through the CRTPA's public involvement processes, which provide comprehensive information and appropriate public notification, the CRTPA begins its procedures for final adoption of the work product.

The adoption and amendment process for this PIP and the CRTPA's mandated work products (such as the TIP and the LRTP) require a public comment period of 30 and 45 days, respectively, for citizen review and input prior to adoption. Towards the end of the comment period, the CRTPA will hold advertised public meetings and hearings to review and obtain final comments from the public. The documents then are reviewed by the CRTPA committees for their final comments and are then recommended to the CRTPA for adoption at the next scheduled meeting.

As mentioned previously, all CRTPA mandated work products are available in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, audio tape or other applicable sources for those people with limited English or physical abilities).

TRANSPORTATION EQUITY ACT FOR THE 21st CENTURY (TEA-21) AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE GUIDELINES FOR MAINTAINING PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

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) require a proactive public involvement process as an integral part of the transportation planning and project development process used by Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The public involvement process must provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement.

In addition, *Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* provides that “each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority and low-income populations.”

ISTEA/TEA-21/SAFETEA-LU

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) include the following requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) regarding public involvement:

- Provide timely information about transportation issues and procedures 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,
- 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, and
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

Executive Order 12898 includes the following two fundamental principles of environmental justice:

- To ensure the public involvement includes low-income and minority groups in decision-making, and
- To prevent disproportionately high and adverse impacts of decisions on low income and minority groups.

In general, this means that for any program or activity for which any federal funds will be used, the agency receiving the federal funds (including states, cities and MPOs) must:

- Make a meaningful effort to involve low-income and minority populations in the processes established to make the decision about the use of the federal funds, and
- Evaluate the nature, extent, and incidence of adverse human health or environmental impacts of the program or activity upon minority or the underserved population areas in the County.

The CRTPA is committed to the development of equitable policies that avoid disproportionately negative effects on minority and/or low-income populations. The CRTPA works continuously to ensure the full participation of all affected communities in the transportation planning process. This plan identifies policies for engaging those traditionally underserved by the transportation planning process. Specifically Policies 4.1 through 4.4 are designed to achieve the objective of ensuring that “all citizens, including the ‘underserved’ citizens have an opportunity to provide input and that their concerns and ideas are fully considered”

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Goals are used to define what the public involvement program is to achieve in the long run, while objectives are measurable steps that are used to evaluate progress towards these goals. As staff reviews the goals and objectives, it must be prepared to continuously reevaluate them in order to determine if they are reasonably achievable or still applicable. Therefore, it is important to redefine or update the goals and objectives for public involvement as a necessary step in evaluating the CRTPA's existing procedures and any new strategies of informing the public.

Goals and objectives provide the framework used to involve the public in the transportation planning process. CRTPA staff is committed to notifying the public about the metropolitan planning process early, often, and in a variety of ways via various communications and outreach activities. Necessary information will be made easily accessible and available to the public through pamphlets, newsletters, the Internet, and through a large contact list that will be continually updated. The development of this contact list is a key component to an effective public involvement plan. This list shall include community leaders from the various churches, neighborhoods and other organizations that are located within the traditionally underserved areas of the community, as well as other community leaders throughout the CRTPA's jurisdiction. As this list is developed and updated it will be a helpful tool in staffs efforts to develop a more effective community involvement plan.

Effective public involvement means more than just notifying people about the process, it also means incorporating their opinions, values, and distinctive understanding of the regional transportation needs through activities that encourage public input in the transportation planning process. Below are the goals and objectives that will be implemented so that this approach will be efficient and effective.

Goal 1: Inform the public about how transportation improvements are made and describe the role the CRTPA plays in the process.

- Objective 1.1: Provide frequent public opportunities to explain and discuss plans, how they are implemented and outline the transportation process for the general public.
- Objective 1.2: In addition to newspapers, make a conscious effort to distribute CRTPA materials and place CRTPA materials in areas such as libraries, grocery stores or community centers.
- Objective 1.4: Use the community profile database, maps and CRTPA mailing list for distribution of agendas; public notices and any other CRTPA related activities that are part of the outreach program.
- Objective 1.5: The Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency will distribute a twice-yearly transportation planning newsletter to help citizens keep current and gain a better understanding of the transportation planning process and related programs. The newsletter will be sent out to those on the community profile database mailing list and made available at libraries, grocery stores, meetings, the Internet and other various locations through the community.
- Objective 1.6: On a yearly basis the community profile database will be reviewed to ensure that any new community leader or community groups will have a chance to be involved in the transportation planning process.
- Objective 1.7: Produce a pamphlet to be distributed in the spring of each year to inform the public about the CRTPA, and let them know how they can become involved. These pamphlets will be made available in several public buildings.

Goal 2: Make an effort to ensure that all citizens have the opportunity to become involved and heard in the transportation planning process.

Objective 2.1: Consider periodically changing the times of the CRTPA meetings to the early morning or early evening so those citizens who work can attend.

Objective 2.2: Hold public hearings and workshops in various locations throughout the CRTPA boundaries to ensure that as many communities as possible are reached.

Objective 2.3: As part of the periodic update of the Public Involvement Process, update the community profile for the CRTPA area.

Objective 2.4: As part of the periodic update of the Public Involvement Process, review the demographic composition of the CRTPA advisory boards to ensure that they reflect the composition of Capital Region Metropolitan Area.

Goal 3: Raise the visibility of the CRTPA as the as the regional transportation planning agency within the Florida Capital Region

Objective 3.1: Use a variety of means to inform, the public about the CRTPA, its function, plans and projects, including consideration of direct mail out, print and broadcast media, and the Internet.

Objective 3.2: Maintain a website for the CRTPA. Post all CRTPA related meeting dates, advertisements of public hearings, meetings, or workshops related to transportation planning, as well as linking to meeting notices or websites for other transportation related projects or agencies. Utilize email to solicit comments on transportation planning materials. Include web site address in all printed materials. Make all draft and adopted CRTPA documents easy to download off the site. Include a description of programs, contact information and links to websites of other organizations that coordinate with the CRTPA.

Goal 4: Identify and involve traditionally underserved communities, including communities of minority, low-income or elderly populations, in the transportation planning process.

Objective 4.1: The Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency will work to identify traditionally underserved populations within the area, including minority, low income and elderly populations. The

Census Block group map will be used as a foundation to identify the traditionally underserved populations within the area. Outreach activities will be developed to involve stakeholders from these communities in the transportation planning process. Besides the traditional use of mail to reach the underserved populations, staff will actively solicit input from these areas by conducting one-on-one interviews with community leaders to gain information and solicit their participation or recommendations for community representation.

- Objective 4.2: Meeting sites will be selected which are more easily accessible to traditionally underserved communities. Meeting announcements will be placed in publications serving minority communities to ensure that these populations will be notified of upcoming meetings.
- Objective 4.3: Meeting locations served by transit or are accessible by means other than the automobile will be chosen whenever possible.
- Objective 4.4: To ensure there is comprehensive notification of upcoming CRTPA events, an effort will be made to provide any CRTPA mail out information pertaining to public hearings/meetings to publications serving minority communities or traditionally underserved populations.

Goal 5: Educate the public about the opportunities they have to determine transportation improvements for the future, and how transportation improvements can play a role in that future.

- Objective 5.1: Provide enough information to the audiences so that they will be able to make meaningful future decisions for their communities. Ensure that all CRTPA documents are available prior to the meeting/workshop. Make sure all advertisement/notice material is easy to understand. Provide formal or informal training on the transportation planning process to the targeted audience.
- Objective 5.2: Make use of a variety of public outreach techniques to target a wide range of audiences and generate and maintain interest and enthusiasm in the transportation planning process. Ensure the proper techniques for public involvement are used to disseminate relevant information to each particular group.

Goal 6: *Obtain and incorporate public comments, reactions and perceptions into plans and solutions where appropriate, and share such comments with local, state and federal officials where appropriate.*

Objective 6.1: Provide opportunities for the public to comment in writing or in person on any action being proposed by the Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency. Ensure that comment cards are available at CRTPA related functions and that contact numbers are provided on distributed materials. Provide for response and feedback opportunities on the web page.

Objective 6.2: Ensure that the public is provided multiple means of response including but not limited to: mail-in postcards, email, tape recordings, handwritten comments and /or voice-mail messages when feasible and/or appropriate.

Objective 6.3: Communicate a summary of public comments routinely to the CRTPA. Ensure that all items adopted by the CRTPA include a summary of the public comment as part of the documentation.

Objective 6.4: Publish an annual summary of public comments to be shared with local, state and federal government representatives. Ensure that at the end of each year (December) a report is produced that describes the effectiveness of the public involvement strategies used throughout the year. This report should include a summary of all public comment to be shared with the CRTPA, as well as local, state, and federal government representatives.

Goal 7: *Obtain and maintain the involvement of supporters of transportation improvements.*

Objective 7.1: Provide assistance, such as training or other resources, to community and special interest groups, especially those dedicated to transportation issues.

Objective 7.2: Periodically evaluate public involvement efforts for effectiveness. Adopt a flexible stance within the CRTPA that will enable it to modify participation strategies in response to the needs of local communities and the region as a whole.

CRTPA METHODS FOR INCREASING CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT AND PUBLIC INFORMATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

While it is clear that the current level of public involvement in the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process has been vital to the successes of the CRTPA, it is the intention of this document to stimulate an even greater level of citizen participation. This can be accomplished by examining some of the more difficult areas in the transportation planning process. One such area is the channel of communication between elected officials, technical personnel, and the citizenry of the CRTPA area. The ability of the public to have access, and to understand the written material is an important aspect of the public involvement process. The CRTPA will continue to implement an ongoing program that provides adequate information for the public to make informed decisions on transportation issues through various channels. Public comments and suggestions for improving this process are welcomed, and will be evaluated and incorporated as appropriate into this section in future updates of this document.

Public involvement is an ongoing activity of the CRTPA, with several efforts occurring on a continuous basis. Public involvement is also an integral part of one-time activities such as corridor studies and regular repeated activities such as the annual TIP and LRTP updates. This section contains descriptions of public involvement tools currently used by the CRTPA and tools that may be applied in the future.

Publication of CRTPA Meeting Agendas - Currently CRTPA staff produces the CRTPA meeting agendas to be placed on the Internet and sent out (via email and US Postal Service) to the public, various agencies, and regional stakeholders a minimum of one week prior to the CRTPA meeting. Besides the CRTPA meetings, staff regularly advertises the TAC, CAC and BPAC meetings. As of June 2003 staff has been sending out all agenda packets in Adobe PDF format. This type of format is accessible to most individuals who have access to a computer; the Adobe software can be downloaded from various sources on the Internet at no cost. And so, this is a very effective tool for outreach purposes, even for those who do not have computer, as they can access the Internet at no cost at a local library, read the agenda, and download and print its attachments. But again, the CRTPA offers offline as well as alternative formats of its agenda upon request, depending on the needs of the community.

CRTPA Semiannual Newsletter – CRTPA staff will produce and distribute a twice-yearly newsletter concerning transportation issues throughout the CRTPA's jurisdiction, which will be distributed to citizens, municipalities, interested individuals, organizations, the media, other agencies, and interested parties. This newsletter will give the public an idea of current CRTPA efforts and events, and outline other transportation related projects that are going on in the area. It will have items such as transportation projects for capital region metropolitan area, in addition to schedules of CRTPA sub-committees and other CRTPA related activities. The mailing list will be based on the community profile database, as well as maps that include those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems. The newsletter will be used to promote regular and special

meetings, planning studies, publications, and work products. Feedback from the public and contact information will be included in each issue.

Workshops/Transportation Fairs - A workshop or transportation fair can help to alleviate some of the miscommunication that may exist regarding the transportation planning process by educating citizens about its inner workings. The CRTPA will sponsor several public involvement workshops prior to decision-making points in the metropolitan planning process. These workshops will be informal meetings where the public can learn about the metropolitan planning process and upcoming projects. The object will be to provide a relaxed atmosphere in which individuals will feel more comfortable than at an official public hearing and thus able to participate more openly. The transportation fairs will offer a more family-oriented atmosphere in which to discuss transportation issues. This type of event would involve a variety of exhibits: maps, photos, models, slide shows, videos, and give-away items. At both the workshop and the fair, CRTPA staff, other transportation professionals, and elected officials would be on hand to answer citizens' questions. While workshops should be designed to bring the public up to date on the details of a plan or project under development, a transportation fair should be held twice a year in coordination with other transportation agencies.

Plan/Reports– These documents are published by the CRTPA at regular intervals and include the UPWP, PIP, LRTP, TIP and other plans and reports. Throughout the development and at various times during the adoption stages of these documents the public is provided with an opportunity to make comments and recommendations. Also, CRTPA material will be placed in various locations such as libraries, grocery stores, or community centers. All CRTPA mandated work products are available in alternative formats (i.e., Braille, audio tape or other applicable sources for those people with limited English or physical abilities) and are available on the web page.

Alternative Media –These tools offer additional ways (besides television, newspaper and radio) for the CRTPA to disseminate information. One such tool includes Internet web sites. Currently the CRTPA has a website which includes information such as meetings, applications, and reports. The availability of the web site will allow staff to more effectively distribute surveys and questionnaires concerning the effectiveness of the public involvement process. The web page is also a helpful location for CRTPA staff to provide reports and informational items to the public.

Informational Pamphlets – CRTPA staff will produce and distribute informational pamphlets regarding current transportation planning projects in Leon County and explaining the purpose of CRTPA. These pamphlets will be available to the public at various public locations and will be distributed to the public by various means, such as workshops, CRTPA meetings and other events held by CRTPA staff.

Newspaper, Television and Radio - Another potentially effective method of reaching out to the public sector is through the use of multi-media technology. The CRTPA will make information available through news releases to area newspapers, television and radio stations. Also, the CRTPA will periodically include newspaper supplements

explaining the LRTP and TIP in the *Tallahassee Democrat* and the *Capitol Outlook*. The CRTPA will use every opportunity to utilize public-access television for the purpose of educating the public on transportation issues throughout the Leon County area.

Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency Web Site -

www.crtpa.org

This web site is a user-friendly tool intended to provide the public with access to transportation information that will increase awareness of transportation planning activities in the area. This site will include information about the metropolitan transportation planning process, upcoming meeting agendas and other topics pertaining to the transportation planning process. Over the years the Internet has become a frequently used tool for sending and retrieving information; however, the CRTPA recognizes that traditional forms of public outreach will continue to be important for achieving meaningful participation. These traditional methods will be continually used by the CRTPA, but staff will continue its efforts to find the most efficient and effective ways to distribute information to citizens. Publications such as the TIP, the LRTP, the UPWP, the Bicycle – Pedestrian Master Plan, as well as this document, will be accessible directly from the site.

Targeting Educational Institutions – In the context of planning for long-range transportation improvements, provisions should be made to include young people in the process. This can be most effectively accomplished through the school and university system. A series of presentations will be developed and maintained that will target various levels of the local student population, from elementary school through the university level. At the elementary school level, the program will emphasize transportation issues such as pedestrian and bicycle safety and the history of transportation planning. At the university level, the program will be geared towards raising public awareness through the implementation of courses – possibly sponsored or directed by the CRTPA – that deal specifically with transportation planning or urban and regional planning. In its efforts to continually reach out to all segments of the community, CRTPA staff plans on visiting various schools throughout the school year to talk about the transportation planning process.

Outreach Services - One aspect of public involvement that is sometimes overlooked is the need to include all segments of a community in the transportation planning process. This means that participation should be sought from the disabled, the elderly, the young, ethnic minorities, and any other segment of the community that might have unique transportation needs. To better reach out to underserved populations, the CRTPA will make contact with these groups and determine what their needs are through the development of outreach services. Outreach services involve developing contacts, mailing lists, and other means of communication with a broader cross-section of the community. One way of developing communication with a representative collection of citizens is by holding "town-hall" meetings. Another is to target specific groups, such as homeowners associations or the local chapter of the American Association for Retired

Persons, and then set up informational meetings geared towards that group's particular needs and concerns.

Technical Memos – For long-term projects (i.e. the long range plan or roadway projects), CRTPA staff and /or project consultants will prepare technical memoranda concerning the technical and policy information used in each of the project's steps. These documents provide background information regarding how a project/plan was developed and the next step to be taken in the process.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)- One of the most essential functions of Metropolitan Planning Organizations, according to both the federal and state law, is ensuring that a proactive public involvement approach is used in the transportation planning process. Within the CRTPA subcommittee structure, the Citizens Advisory Committee is a required CRTPA advisory committee. The CAC serves as the citizens' voice in the CRTPA and is looked upon to provide a channel of communication into the transportation decision making process for traditionally underserved populations, including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households.

As the above-mentioned techniques are implemented to enhance the public involvement process, periodic evaluations will be necessary to determine the effectiveness of these tools. At a minimum, the CRTPA will assess the effectiveness of the PIP and make necessary updates on an annual basis. Over the next few years, as the PIP is refined and achieves its objectives, the length of time between reviews/updates may be increased (i.e., every two or three years). The strategies to encourage participation from traditionally underserved segments of the population will be adjusted as needed to best assure their access to the process.

EVALUATION OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Federal regulations require that metropolitan planning organizations review the Public Involvement Process periodically to determine if the objectives of the process have been achieved and if adjustments are necessary to make it more effective. By continuously evaluating public involvement activities, it is possible to discontinue activities that are ineffective and to improve or add new public involvement activities to the metropolitan planning program. These methods can include meeting evaluation forms, public comments, surveys, and other forms of public feedback. It is important that a specific public involvement process be prepared for each plan, program, or project developed by the CRTPA.

1. In determining the effectiveness of the Public Involvement Process, staff will hold semiannual assessment meetings. Their goal is to improve public participation and to make efficient use of the time and money allocated to the public involvement process. During this assessment staff will determine if the following public involvement objectives have been met: (1) informing the public about CRTPA activities, (2) educating the public, (3) involving the public, and (4) reaching the underserved populations of the area. This evaluation process will demonstrate the relative effectiveness of the current public involvement techniques. Additionally, this process will also point out any deficiencies in the current program and possibly identify methods of improving the program. Each of the objectives listed above will be evaluated in the following ways:
 - 1) Informing the public about CRTPA activities:
 - a. Types of media used to contact participants,
 - b. Meeting convenience (time, place, accessibility), and
 - c. Documentation of demographics of participants making sure that a representative group of the community in the planning area is involved.
 - 2) Educating the public:
 - a. Effectiveness of communication tools,
 - b. Types of techniques used, and
 - c. Whether input received from citizens has provided decision makers and funding agencies with reliable and useful information.
 - 3) Involving the public:
 - a. Documentation of how public input affected decisions,
 - b. Evaluation of the effectiveness of the public involvement program from participants' perspective (feedback); public input, and
 - c. Involvement process tailored to specific community needs and accessible to all segments of the public.

- 4) Reaching the underserved populations of the area:
 - a. Presence of strategies for engaging minority and low-income populations in the decision-making process,
 - b. Utilization of media targeted to low-income and minority populations,
 - c. Reduction of participation barriers for non-traditional transportation stakeholders,
 - d. Feedback from minority and low-income participants, and
 - e. Consideration and documentation of their concerns and input in the decision-making process.

Periodically it is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the public involvement process. Are underserved populations of the community being reached? Are the documents effectively reaching and informing the community? Questions such as these can be answered through an evaluation process and will provide information as to when new strategies and techniques should be developed to better reach the public and improve the overall performance of the public involvement process. If a lack of participation is deemed the result of flaws within the Public Involvement Process, then necessary adjustments will be implemented in order to upgrade the process.

Several methods may be used to gauge the effectiveness of the CRTPA's public involvement procedures. Valuable information may be gathered using techniques such as surveys, comment forms, and public comments at meetings, workshops or forums. As the CRTPA's PIP is implemented and various public involvement techniques are utilized over the next year, information concerning public comment patterns and trends will be collected. The evaluation performed at that time will form the basis of performance standards and measures for subsequent updates to the PIP. The evaluation process established by staff will provide information as to when new strategies and techniques should be developed to better reach the public and improve the overall performance of the public involvement process.

The CRTPA Public Involvement Plan will be reviewed periodically for effectiveness to assure that the process provides full and open access to all citizens. At a minimum, the CRTPA will assess the effectiveness of the PIP and make any necessary adjustments on an annual basis. Eventually, over the next few years, as the PIP is improved and achieves its objectives, the length of time between reviews and updates may increase to a review period of every other year. The Public Involvement Process is dynamic and must remain so to address the needs of the community and the entire capital region. As techniques are proven to be effective and efficient, the process will evolve to reflect these improvements. Participating stakeholders and CRTPA staff will comprehensively assess the effectiveness of every public involvement activity. Revisions to the process will be promptly incorporated.

PUBLIC COMMENT PROCESS

The CRTPA encourages anyone to provide written or verbal comments as often as they wish. Public comment is an important part of the public involvement process and provides informative feedback to the CRTPA on plans and programs. Below are ways for the public to comment on transportation issues.

The public is encouraged to provide written and verbal comments at any of the CRTPA workshops, public hearings, or events regarding the transportation issues. A portion of the agenda at all regularly scheduled CRTPA meetings is reserved for public comment, and public comment forms are available at all CRTPA sponsored events.

The public is encouraged to provide written or verbal comment on any transportation issue being considered by the CRTPA through the CRTPA office. The public is also encouraged to send comments through our web page located at:

www.crtpa.org

Written Comments

- 1) Type or write legibly, type or print your name under your signature.
- 2) Include your complete address.
- 3) Be brief and to the point.
- 4) Be courteous, but firm.
- 5) Keep a copy for your records.
- 6) Send written comments to:

Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency
300 South Adams Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32301
Fax: (850) 891-8734

Verbal Comments

- 1) Have your information ready before calling.
- 2) Have a pencil and paper ready for taking notes.
- 3) Identify yourself, speak slowly and clearly.
- 4) Present your views in a clear, concise, and polite manner.
- 5) Ask for the name of the person taking the call for future reference.

Attend Public Meetings

Public Involvement Workshops/Meetings - Workshops are used to bring citizens up to date on the details of plans or programs under development and are usually held prior to crucial decision-making points in the metropolitan planning process. Citizens are encouraged to provide meaningful comments regarding the plan or program being presented and are also provided with details regarding the next steps to be taken prior to the next workshop or public hearing. Local newspapers and the CRTPA web site will announce future public workshops or it is possible to contact the CRTPA office for information on upcoming events.

Public Hearings – These meetings are mandated by law, and are held by the CRTPA to consider the adoption of the plan or program. Watch the local newspaper for public hearing announcements, or contact the Planning Department for information on upcoming public hearings.

The CRTPA meets on a regular basis, usually the **third Monday** of the month, six times a year. The meetings usually begin at **3:00 p.m.** in the City or County Commission Chambers, in City Hall or the Leon County Courthouse, respectively. The CRTPA can elect to call special meetings at any time deemed necessary. These meetings are advertised in the local media and on the Internet.

Contact

To learn more on how you can become involved in the metropolitan planning process, please contact

**Peter Koeppel
Capital Region Transportation Planning Agency
300 South Adams
Tallahassee, FL 32301
(850) 891-8090
Email: koeppelp@talgov.com**

DEFINITIONS / ACRONYMS

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) – Committee that reviews and provides comments to the CRTPA on transportation projects to ensure that they are designed and constructed to promote safe walking and cycling . The BPAC provides comments on both recreational and non-recreational projects and seeks to provide connectivity between existing and planned projects.

Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) - Responsible for coordinating transportation services for disadvantaged individuals. For Tallahassee and Leon County, StarMetro is currently the CTC.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) - Representatives of the community who provide and gauge public reaction to planning proposals and provide recommendations to the CRTPA regarding transportation needs of the community

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) - An administration within the USDOT responsible for federal guidance and funding of aviation issues.

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) - The state agency granted the legislative authority to develop and maintain state transportation facilities and services.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) - An administration within the USDOT responsible for federal guidance and funding for federal and state highway facilities.

Federal Transit Administration (FTA) - An administration within the USDOT responsible for federal guidance and funding for public transportation facilities.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) - The federal transportation appropriation bill established to develop a national intermodal transportation system that is economically efficient and environmentally sound, encourages citizen participation, provides the foundation for the nation to compete in a global economy, and moves people and goods in an energy efficient manner.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) - A federally mandated 20 - 25 year transportation plan, which provides guidance in the development of an efficient, multimodal transportation system.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - An agency created under federal and state law to provide a forum for cooperative decision-making with regard to regional transportation issues. Membership includes elected and appointed officials representing local jurisdictions and transportation agencies.

Multi-modal Transportation System - A comprehensive transportation system which includes options for auto, bus, truck, airplane, motorcycle, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit modes of travel.

Project Development & Environmental Study (PD&E) - A study performed to determine the feasibility of a road improvement by identifying possible alternatives and evaluating the social, economic, and environmental impacts associated with each alternative. Also called a Corridor Study.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) – A regional representation of local and state planners, engineers, and transit operators who provide technical input regarding transportation plans and programs and makes recommendations to the CRTPA.

Transit Development Plan (TDP) - A short-range plan which profiles existing and future demand for transit (bus) service, analyzes current bus routes and establishes a five-year plan for bus service. A current and up-to-date TDP is required for the receipt of federal and state financial assistance.

Transportation Disadvantaged - Refers to those persons who because of physical or mental disability, income, age, or who for other reasons are unable to transport themselves or to purchase transportation. They may be dependent upon others to obtain access to health care, employment, education, shopping, social activities, or other life-sustaining activities or may be children who are handicapped or high-risk

Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB) - TDCB is responsible for identifying the needs of those who cannot secure their own means of transportation, bringing those needs to the attention of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC), and monitoring the amount of Transportation Disadvantaged Funds being received locally.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - Incorporates, and coordinates the transportation capital budgets of the FDOT, Leon County, and City of Tallahassee, delineating project activity, location, estimated costs, and proposed funding sources.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - A federally mandated report that documents the planning and resource activities of the MPO.

United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) - The federal department responsible for guidance and funding for all federally supported transportation activities.