

2014

Public Involvement Policy

**Rocky River Rural Planning
Organization**

Adopted: January 16, 2014



ROCKY RIVER RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	3
Overview	3
Purpose	3
2. Policy Elements	4
Regular Public Involvement Opportunities.....	4
Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items	4
Posting of Draft and Final Planning Documents.....	5
Response to Public Comment	7
3. Transportation Plan	7
Minimum Transportation Plan Public Involvement Procedure.....	7
Optional Public Involvement Techniques (Comprehensive Transportation Plan)	8
4. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).....	8
Introduction.....	9
Public Involvement Process.....	9
5. Air Quality Conformity Determination.....	10
Introduction.....	10
Public Involvement Process.....	10
6. Planning Work Program	10
Introduction.....	11
Purpose	11
Public Involvement Process.....	11
7. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Provisions.....	11
8. Appendix	11

1. Introduction

Overview

Public involvement is an integral part of the RPO's planning efforts. The Rural Planning Organization's (RPO's) Public Involvement Policy is an umbrella policy, encompassing the plans and programs of the rural area's transportation planning process. The policy is comprised of the public involvement programs for all the major planning activities, including the Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the Air Quality Conformity Determination, the Planning Work Program (PWP) and the RPO's provisions for the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The RPO will seek public input through a menu of techniques, including public notices, comment periods, workshops, charrettes, public hearings, newsletters, surveys, media relations, and the use of committees and work groups with citizen representatives as appointed. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning task. The RPO's Plans and Policies will be consistent with the requirements of the following:

- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU); MAP-21 took the place of SAFETEA-LU
- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21);
- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA);
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) ;
- FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

Purpose

The purpose of the RPO and Public Involvement Policy is to create an open decision-making process where citizens have the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the transportation planning process. This Policy is designed to ensure transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.

Objectives

1. Bring a broad cross-section of the public into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.
2. Maintain public involvement from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
3. Use different combinations of public involvement techniques to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
4. Determine the public's knowledge of the rural transportation system and the public's values and attitudes concerning transportation.
5. Educate citizens and elected officials in order to increase general understanding of transportation issues.
6. Make technical and other information available to the public.
7. Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.
8. Evaluate the public involvement process and procedures to assess their success at meeting requirements specified in the ISTEA, TEA-21, MAP_21, NEPA, and the FTA/FHWA Guidance on Public Participation.

2. Policy Elements

The Public Involvement Policy is comprised of a number of sub-policies. All planning programs and activities are required to go through the Transportation Advisory Committee's (TAC) public process. In addition, the RPO will initiate public involvement programs for Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP), the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), the Air Quality Conformity Determination (if needed), and the Planning Work Program (PWP).

Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

The TAC's regularly scheduled meetings are advertised on the rockyriverrpo.org website. The meeting schedule is also posted in Stanly County (Lead Planning Agency) at the Stanly County Commons. These meetings are open to members of the public and, upon request, anyone can be placed on the TAC mailing list.

Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items

For particular planning issues (i.e., plan development and updates, studies, amendments to planning documents, etc.), the TAC may open a public comment period (2-6 weeks depending on the item) and hold a public hearing. The notice for the public comment period and the public hearing may be **advertised** using the following resources:

- Local Newspaper(s):

<p>Stanly News and Press 237 W. North Street Albemarle, NC 28001 Phone: (704) 982-2121 Advertising Fax: (704) 982-8736 classified@stanlynewspress.com (Legal Adds) tiffany@stanlynewspress.com (stories)</p>	<p>The Enquirer Journal PO Box 5040 500 W. Jefferson Street Phone: (704) 289-1541 Advertising: (704) 261-2251</p>	<p>Anson Record 210 E. Morgan Street Wadesboro, NC 28170 Phone: (704) 694-2161 www.ansonrecord.com</p>
<p>The Express 205 West Morgan Street Wadesboro, NC 28170 Phone: (704) 694-2480 Fax: (704) 994-9090 theexpressnews@gmail.com</p>	<p>The Home News John Edmondson, Editor. 704-624-5068 homenewseditor@aol.com</p>	<p>The Weekly Post 212 E. Main Street Locust, NC 28097 Phone: (704) 888-1229 Fax: (704) 888-9082 www.Adweeklypostnc.com Www.Weeklypostnc.com</p>

- Transportation Website: rockyriverrpo.org

The notices will include an announcement stating persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 5 days in advance (i.e., having available large print documents, audio material, or other provisions as requested). Both written and oral comments received are compiled by the planning staff and reviewed by the TAC. In addition, **press releases** may be provided to the appropriate print/radio media:

<p>Stanly News and Press 237 W. North Street Albemarle, NC 28001 Phone: (704) 982-2121 Advertising Fax: (704) 982-8736 classified@stanlynewspress.com Before 10 am.</p>	<p>The Enquirer Journal PO Box 5040 500 W. Jefferson Street Monroe, NC 4 on Monday Press Release: news@theej.com Classifieds@theej.com Phone: (704) 289-1541 Advertising: (704) 261-2251</p>	<p>Anson Record 210 E. Morgan Street Wadesboro, NC 28170 Phone: (704) 694-2161 www.ansonrecord.com gtyson@ansonrecord.com Before 5 pm</p>
<p>The Weekly Post 212 E. Main Street Locust, NC 28097 Phone: (704) 888-1229 Fax: (704) 888-9082 www.Adweeklypostnc.com www.Weeklypostnc.com</p>	<p>WSPC Radio/Blog PO Box 549 Albemarle, NC 28001 Phone: (704) 983-1580 www.1010wspc.com Leon: leonradio@hotmail.com Stanly News Blog- Jim Lisk-jrlisk@windstream.net</p>	<p>The Express 205 West Morgan Street Wadesboro, NC 28170 Phone: (704) 694-2480 Fax: (704) 694-2480 theexpressnews@gmail.com</p>

Posting of Draft and Final Planning Documents

Copies of draft and final versions of certain planning documents will be made available at www.rockyriverrpo.org. In addition, the following libraries and other locations in the RPO Region:

- Anson County Public Library (all branches) <http://204.211.56.212/anson.html>

<p>Hampton B. Allen Library 120 South Green Street Wadesboro, NC 28170 Telephone: (704)694-5177 Fax: (704)694-5178</p>
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- Stanly County Public Library (all branches) <http://www.stanlylib.org/info.html>

<p>Albemarle Library 133 East Main Street Albemarle, NC 28001 Telephone: (704)986-3765</p>	<p>Locust Branch 213 Town Centre Drive Locust, NC 28097 Telephone: (704)888-0103</p>	<p>Badin Branch 62 Pine Street Badin, NC 28009 Telephone: (704)422-3218</p>	<p>Oakboro Branch 214 South Main Street Oakboro, NC 28129 Telephone: (704)485-4310</p>	<p>Norwood Branch 207 Pee Dee Avenue Norwood, NC 28128 Telephone: (704)474-3625</p>
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- Union County Public Library (branches serving the RPO area) <http://www.union.lib.nc.us/>

<p>Monroe Library (Main Library) 316 East Windsor Street Monroe, NC 28112 Telephone: (704)283-8184</p>	<p>Edwards Memorial (Marshville) 414 Hasty Street Marshville, NC 28103 Telephone: (704)624-2828</p>
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- County offices in all RPO jurisdictions
- Municipal offices in all RPO jurisdictions

<p>Stanly County 1000 North First St., Suite 10 Albemarle, NC 28001 Telephone: (704)986-3600 http://www.co.stanly.nc.us/</p>	<p>Anson County 114 North Greene St., Room 30 Wadesboro, NC 28170 Telephone: (704)694-2796 Fax: (704)694-7015 http://www.co.anson.nc.us/</p>	<p>Union County N. Main Street Monroe, NC 28112 Telephone: (704)283-3810 Fax: (704)282-0121 http://www.co.union.nc.us/</p>
<p>Stanly County Municipalities</p>		
<p><u>City of Albemarle</u> 144 N 2nd Street PO Box 190 Albemarle, NC 28001 Telephone:(704)984-9405 Fax: (704)984-9406 Email:grmichael@ci.albemarle.nc.us s http://www.ci.albemarle.nc.us/</p>	<p><u>Town of Badin</u> PO Box 707 Badin, NC 28009 Telephone: (704)422-3470 Fax: (704)422-5344 Email: jimharrison@badin.org http://www.badin.org</p>	<p><u>City of Locust</u> 186 Ray Kennedy Drive PO Box 190 Locust, NC 28097-0190 Telephone: (704)888-5260 Fax: (704)704-888-1566 Email: sefird@locustnc.com http://www.locustnc.com/</p>
<p><u>Village of Misenheimer</u> PO Box 100 Misenheimer, NC 28109-0100 Telephone:(704)463-1234 Fax: (704) 463-1107 Email: clerk@villageofmisenheimer.com</p>	<p><u>Town of New London</u> PO Box 191 New London, NC 28127 Telephone:(704)463-5423 Fax: (704)463-0230 Email: newlondonnc@ctc.net</p>	<p><u>Town of Norwood</u> PO Box 697 Norwood, NC 28128 Telephone: (704)474-3416 Fax: (704)474-3201 Email: townofnorwood@carolina.rr.com</p>
<p><u>Town of Oakboro</u> PO Box 610 Oakboro, NC 28129 Telephone: (704)485-3351 Fax: (704)485-2439 Email: TownOfOakboro@Oakboro.com http://www.oakboro.com/ Community Building 626 N. Long Street Oakboro, NC 28129 Telephone: (704)485-8211</p>	<p><u>Town of Stanfield</u> PO Box 699, Stanfield, NC 28163 Telephone: (704)888-2386 Fax: (704)888-0523 Email: sth2386@bellsouth.net</p>	<p><u>Town of Richfield</u> PO Box 158 Richfield, NC 28137 Telephone: (704)463-1308 Fax: (704)463-1408 Email: richfieldnc@aol.com Town Hall 138 N. Hwy 49 Richfield, NC 28137 Telephone: (704)463-1308</p>
<p><u>Town of Red Cross</u> 176 East Red Cross Rd. Oakboro, NC 28129 Telephone/Fax: (704)485-2002 Email: awhitley@redcross-nc.com www.redcross-nc.com</p>		

Anson County Municipalities		
<u>City of Ansonville</u> PO Box 337 Ansonville, NC 28007 Telephone/Fax: (704)826-8404 townofansonville@yahoo.com	<u>Town of Peachland</u> PO Box 120 Peachland, NC 28133 Telephone: (704)272-7781 townofpeachland@windstream.net	<u>Town of Polkton</u> PO Box 99 Polkton, NC 28135 Telephone: (704)272-7463 Fax: (704)272-7493 townofpolkton@windstream.net
<u>Town of Wadesboro</u> PO Box 697 Wadesboro, NC 28170 Telephone: (704)694-90-225 wadesboromanager@windstream.net		

Response to Public Comment

The TAC typically acknowledges public comments in one of two ways: The TAC may incorporate a summary of public comments and the RPO’s response, as an appendix, into the specific planning document; or depending on the number of comments, the TAC may instruct the planning staff to respond directly by letter. Acknowledging public comments is a way to let the public know its comments are being addressed and is part of the public involvement feedback process.

3. Transportation Plan

Minimum Transportation Plan Public Involvement Procedure

The RPO will provide opportunity for meaningful public involvement in the development and update of Comprehensive Transportation Plan(s) (CTP). The public comment period will be for a minimum 30-day period, effective from the date of the public notice publication. Written comments will be received during the comment period and will be directed to the RPO or NCDOT. The RPO or NCDOT contact person, phone number and e-mail address will be included in the public notice. The RPO or NCDOT will assemble all comments and forward comments to the TAC. The jurisdiction shall hold at least one public hearing for the CTP.

If the text of the CTP is completed after the adopted CTP maps, then NCDOT will give at least 30 day review for the jurisdictions to comment.

The availability of the CTP will be publicized using the resources listed in: *Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items* (page 5).

Optional Public Involvement Techniques (Comprehensive Transportation Plan)

As a method for increasing public involvement and participation in the process, the public involvement for the CTP may also include any or all of the following techniques:

1. Information dissemination, notification of meetings, publication of proposed plans will be integral elements of the public involvement process.
2. The Rural Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) will initiate development or an update of the CTP process. Elements of the Plan, and/or amendments will meet all current North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) requirements. A work program and schedule for the CTP update process will be developed by NCDOT and the TCC and provided to the TAC for approval. It will be made available to the public for its information. The work program will detail the strategy for the Plan development or update process including work elements and a tentative schedule. The TCC and TAC may elect to receive public comment and involvement on the work program.
3. Proactive participation techniques may be employed to involve citizens and provide fuller access to information and technical data on the CTP. The technique may include, but, not be limited to: public meetings/hearings, surveys, focus groups, newsletters, public service announcements, charrettes, transportation advisory groups, mass media, etc.
4. Public meetings may be held to: formulate a vision for the CTP development; provide the public with background information on the rural transportation system and other issues as well as the proposed framework of the CTP update process; and to receive citizen input.
5. Public meetings (forums) designed to solicit public comment may be held at various locations around the rural area to encourage the greatest public participation. Public meetings will be held at a location accessible for people with disabilities.
6. Copies of the draft CTP will be distributed to the member jurisdictions, and citizen groups and agencies. They also can be placed in local libraries. Notification of the draft CTP may be provided via resources listed in: *Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items* (page 5).
8. Any significant revisions to the CTP will also be subject to public comment process as described in this policy.
9. Involvement during key points in the plan may be included. Decision points are those stages where the TAC may consider endorsement of the work in progress or take action on particular work elements. These may include some of the following:
 - Formulation of vision, goals and objectives
 - Review of multi-modal goals and elements
 - Review and approval of socio-economic and demographic projections
 - Review and determination of transportation deficiencies
 - Evaluation of alternatives and selection of preferred option

4. State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

Introduction

The STIP is on a two-year cycle and is a fiscally constraint document. The RPO needs to meet Session Law 2012-84 to submit its priority projects for consideration in the STIP. Session Law 2012-84 amended Section 2 of the General Statutes 136-18 by adding a new subdivision to read:

“The Department shall develop and utilize a process for selection of transportation projects that is based on professional standards in order to most efficiently use limited resources to benefit all citizens of the State. The strategic prioritization process should be a systematic, data-driven process that includes a combination of quantitative data, qualitative input, and multimodal characteristics, and should include local input. The Department shall develop a process for standardizing or approving local methodology used in Metropolitan Planning Organization and Rural Transportation Planning Organization prioritization.”

Public Involvement Process

1. Project List:

The Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) will develop a *draft transportation priority list* from the local project priorities of the RPO jurisdictions. RPO municipalities and counties should provide the RPO their priorities for all modes (aviation, bicycle, pedestrian, highway, and rail) to be considered. These may be developed as each governing agency sees fit (e.g., they may come from staff, the elected boards, or the elected boards with public involvement) and will be considered as long as they meet the minimum NCDOT project threshold. Local priorities should be developed and coordinated with local public involvement policies.

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) will hold a public meeting on the priority list and an take official action. The public meeting will be held at a location which is accessible to persons with disabilities. The final project list will then be posted on the RPO website.

2. Project Prioritization Methodology:

The TCC will develop a *draft project prioritization methodology*. It will be submitted to NCDOT staff for its approval before being presented to the TAC.

The TAC will hold a public meeting on the draft project prioritization with a public comment period. The TAC will take official action after considering public comments. The final project prioritization methodology will then be posted on the RPO website.

3. Local Point Allocation:

The TCC will develop a draft local point allocation, once all the projects are reviewed by NCDOT. The TAC will hold a public meeting on the draft local point allocation with a public comment period. The TAC will take official action after considering public comments. The public meeting will be held at a location which is accessible to persons with disabilities. The final project prioritization methodology will then be posted on the RPO website.

4. Comments on Draft STIP:

The State shall produce a draft STIP and provide a subset of that document to the RPO. Copies of a draft STIP will be distributed to TCC and TAC members. Each jurisdiction will also have copies available for public review. The TCC will review the draft STIP and make comments to the TAC. The TAC will review draft STIP and make comments, if appropriate. This will be conducted in a regularly scheduled meeting.

5. Air Quality Conformity Determination

Introduction

The NCDOT assists the RPO in making a conformity determination by performing a system level conformity analysis on the highway portion of the STIP.

Public Involvement Process

1. The RPO, in conjunction and cooperation with the NCDOT, will prepare an air quality conformity analysis.
2. The TCC will receive the draft Conformity Report from NCDOT, review it, and forward it to the TAC who will publish the draft Conformity Report for public review and comment. This may be done in coordination with the MPO.
3. Copies of a draft Conformity Report will be distributed to TAC members. Each affected jurisdiction will also have copies available for public review. Notices regarding the draft Air Quality Conformity Report will be publicized using the resources listed in: *Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items* (page 5).
4. The public review period will be dictated by state and federal agencies. The public comments will be compiled and presented to the TCC. The TCC will review comments and forward recommendations for responses as appropriate to the TAC.
6. The RPO will provide additional opportunity for public comment on any revisions to the draft Conformity Report (if the final Conformity Report is significantly different than the one which was made available for public comment by the RPO, and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen for the public review notifications).
7. The Air Quality Conformity Determination is valid for three years, unless changes are made to the Transportation Plan that would impact the air quality analysis. If such changes are made, a new analysis has to be conducted, including the public involvement procedure outlined above.

6. Planning Work Program

Introduction

NCDOT requires that each RPO prepare an annual work program known as the Planning Work Program (PWP). The PWP must identify the RPO planning tasks to be undertaken with the use of state transportation funds.

Purpose

The purpose of public involvement in the PWP process is to keep the public apprised of and to receive input on the planning activities to be undertaken by the Rural Planning Organization.

Public Involvement Process

1. The local jurisdictions will assist in preparing a list of tasks and funding for the state fiscal year. These lists are submitted to the RPO for compilation into a draft Planning Work Program.
2. The draft Planning Work Program is reviewed by the Rural Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC meetings are open to the public. Once the TCC endorses the draft PWP, it is then forwarded to the TAC.
4. The draft PWP is reviewed by the TAC. Public comments may be provided at this time. The draft is sent to the Transportation Planning Branch (TPB) of NCDOT.
5. The final draft PWP comes back to the TAC for approval. Once approved the PWP is forwarded to the TPB of NCDOT.

7. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Provisions

All notices for planning activities of the Rural Planning Organization will include an announcement stating persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 5 days in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, or other provisions requested).

Spanish Translator: City of Albemarle, Detective Sergeant Francisco Porras (704) 986-3728

Hearing impaired: Stanly County School System, Barbara Klein (704)982-9508
barbara_klein@scs.k12.nc.us

Notices for the public comment period and the public hearing will be advertised using the resources listed in: *Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items* (page 5). Public meetings will be held in locations accessible to persons with disabilities.

8. Appendix

Websites

The following websites can help identify minority and low-income populations. No one website will provide all the information to comply with Environmental Justice Policies. However, using the information found on each website in combination with other tools will ensure special efforts were taken to include minority and low-income groups within the public participation process.

The United State Census Bureau

<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/37000.html>

Census can provide: education attainment, disability, race, poverty, occupied housing units without vehicles, language spoken at home, elderly, time leaving home for work as well as other basic information. The above website has North Carolina's census information. It is an easy way to gain City and County information.

The United States Department of Health and Human Services

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/index.shtml>

The United States Department of Health and Human Services has a lot of information on the definition of poverty. As this definition can change each year, it is important to use the most current poverty guidelines.

The United States Department of Agriculture

www.fns.usda.gov/cga/contacts/fieldoffices/nc.htm

This office has information on grocery stores that accept food stamps in the targeted study area.

USDA North Carolina:

Raleigh Field Office Phone: 919-790-2927,

Fax: 919-790-2930

United States Department of House Urban Development

www.hud.gov/apps/section8/index.cfm

While researching a project, it may be necessary to locate low-income housing. This is a good source to find subsidized apartments in North Carolina.

School Information

www.greatschools.net

Elementary schools have smaller boundaries than census blocks for rural areas. Therefore, they may be a better gauge of race and ethnicity for the study area. This website will also provide information regarding the percentage of students utilizing free and reduced lunch program. However, this data does not include private schools

The State of Literacy in America

www.nifl.gov/readers/reder.htm

This website can provide literacy rates, county by county. The database includes some North Carolina cities and towns, but not a complete list.

Mobile Home Parks with 55+ units

The mobile home park data includes addresses and phone numbers for the parks. This website is useful for locating low-income population.

<http://www.mobilehomeparkstore.com/list.htm>

African-American Churches

African-American Churches are a great place to do outreach. This website will provide a partial list of African-American churches. It is a good place to start.

<http://www.blackchurchpage.com/>