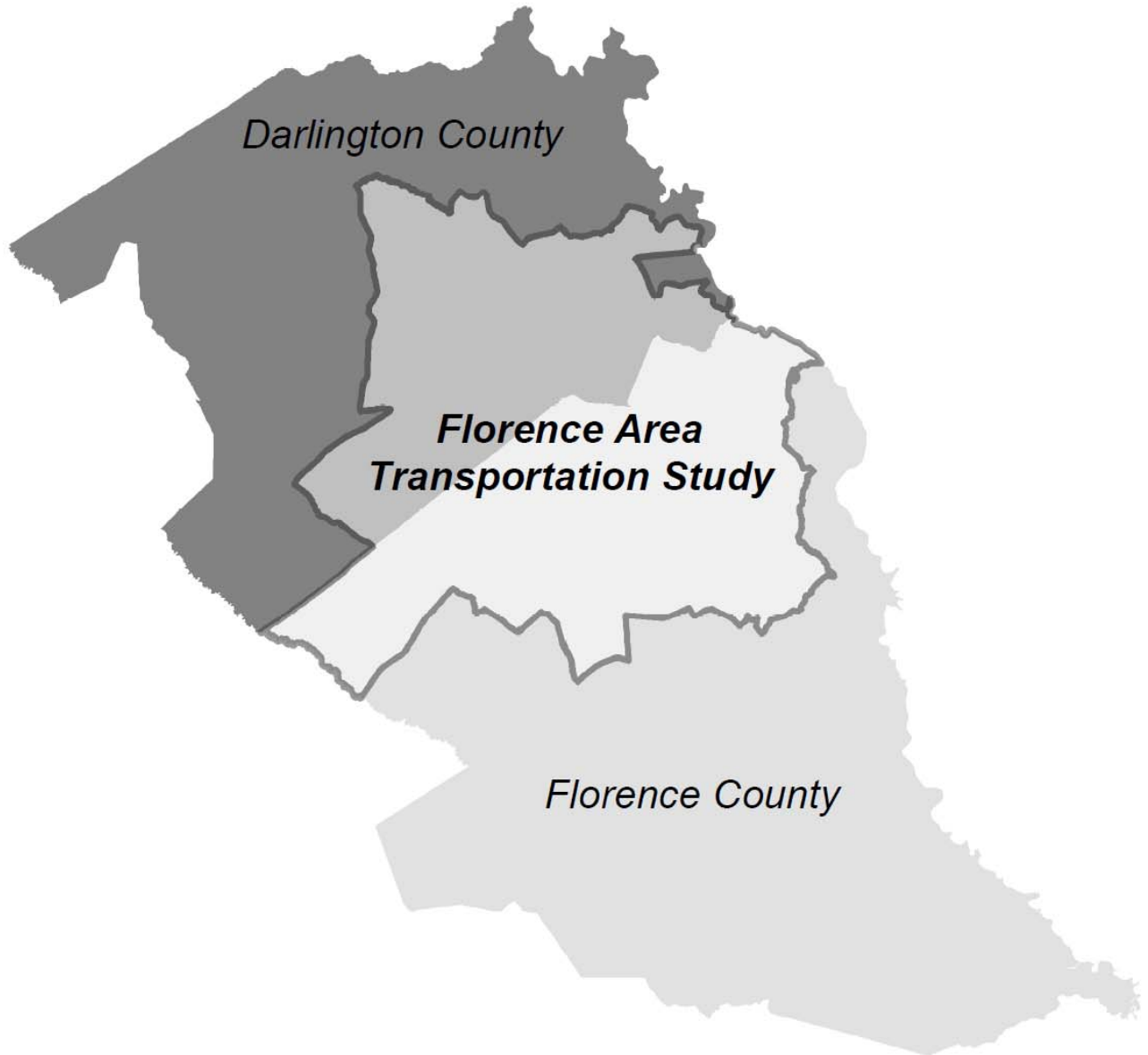




Florence Area Transportation Study Public Participation Process



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Florence Area Transportation Study
Public Participation Process
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Introduction

The Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) is one of eleven metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) in the State of South Carolina. The FLATS MPO is responsible for directing federal transportation funds to local transportation programs. Furthermore, transportation oriented grants are administered through the FLATS program.

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962 established the requirement for transportation planning in urban areas throughout the country. The laws extending the federal requirement for transportation planning are the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), adopted in 1998, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy For Users (SAFETEA-LU), enacted on August 10, 2005, and (MAP-21), Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act, which was signed into Law (P.L. 112-141), on July 6, 2012 and was enacted on October 1, 2012.

The FLATS area encompasses a population of 124,316 people. The FLATS MPO study area boundary includes the City of Florence, Town of Quinby, City of Darlington, Town of Timmonsville and surrounding unincorporated areas of Florence and Darlington counties.

Federal land represented within the FLATS jurisdiction includes two locations: the Florence National Cemetery and the McMillan Federal Building. The 24.9 acre cemetery site is located at 803 East National Cemetery Road, about a quarter-mile east of South Irby Street in the City of Florence. The McMillan Building is found at 401 West Evans Street at the northwest corner with McQueen Street. The cemetery is managed by the Department of Veterans Affairs while the courthouse is managed by the Department of Justice.

Purpose

Mobility improvements in the study area will impact citizens along major corridors as well as in connecting corridors. A singular focus on transportation projects will limit local potential in attracting additional state and federal transportation funding. Conversely, a mixed strategy of large and small projects including pedestrian walkways and bikeways, bus enhancements, and roadway projects of all types and sizes will optimize the success of local officials attracting new monies. The purpose of FLATS public involvement is to canvass the communities within the study area in search of ideas that will have public support and improve mobility and travel safety. Additionally, the purpose is to promote and provide a variety of meaningful forums for FLATS stakeholders to communicate with the Study Team. A list of known stakeholders and issues of interest will be outlined. The overall goal of public involvement will be that members of the general public will have access to information and opportunities to provide feedback regarding acceptable and effective ways to improve mobility and safety in the FLATS area.

The Public Participation Process is in response to changes to the metropolitan planning process. This Plan fulfills requirements outlined in the Final Rule for Statewide and

Metropolitan Transportation Planning as published in the Federal Register on February 14, 2007 by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. The rules were effective on March 16, 2007. The regulations are a result of the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) (Public Law 109-59, August 10, 2005) and more recently, the passage of the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) (Public Law 112-141, July 6, 2012. MAP-21 was enacted on October 1, 2012.

Objectives

- Disseminate information about the FLATS LRTP, TIP or a FLATS special study project to the general public and directly affected communities.
- Improve the comment response rate of citizens who live, work, and travel in the outer areas of the planning area, in particular those within the rural communities of Florence County.
- Identify and actively solicit input from stakeholder groups most affected by and interested in possible “short-term” and “long-term” improvements.
- Provide a variety of opportunities for public participation and involvement throughout the planning process.
- Produce recommendations based on public comment consideration. Respond to issues raised by the area’s residents, either by incorporation into the recommendations or as a separate summary of public issues that are not incorporated.

Principles Guiding the FLATS Public Interaction

FLATS recognizes and embraces the important role of public involvement in the transportation study process. Team members will be guided by the following principles when addressing people interested in and/or impacted by transportation plans or projects:

- Those groups likely to be most impacted will receive early identification and continuous communication regarding the project. A more personal, individual approach may be required for these groups to rectify misinformation (e.g., small group meetings lead by the local planning staff).
- Two-way communications (i.e., the free exchange of information, ideas, and values between staff and citizens/stakeholders) will be sought. A variety of communication methods (e.g. e-mail, phone, and mail) will be employed in order to reach the greatest number of people.
- Draft and final study findings will be communicated to all known stakeholders via public workshops, stakeholder interviews, and information (e.g., public flyers and agendas) provided to local newspapers, radio, and television stations.

- All reasonable input from the citizens and communities will be given consideration by the FLATS team. Evidence of such will be apparent in the form of technical documents as well as the public workshops.
- Citizen/public questions will be responded to within 2 business days. This quick action builds trust and confidence.
- A series of public outreach actions, both formal and informal, are necessary. Formal actions include the public workshops as well as small group meetings or stakeholder interviews. Informal actions encompass responses to citizen phone calls and e-mails. Team members will be mindful of technical jargon, cultural differences, language barriers, and the need for simple illustrations when possible.
- Opportunities for multiple forms of input will be illustrated from the beginning. Citizens will be provided points of contact for FLATS staff on all correspondence and information.

FLATS ORGANIZATION

The purpose of the Florence Area Transportation Study (FLATS) as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Florence area is to establish and maintain a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. While meeting the appropriate federal and state requirements, this process promotes the development of a safe, effective, efficient and environmentally sensitive multi-modal transportation system for moving people and goods in the FLATS area.

The FLATS MPO is currently monitored by two committees. The Policy Committee contains the voting membership and has final local approval and authority on all major transportation decision, policies, and programs of FLATS. The FLATS Study Team provides recommendations to the Policy Committee on technical methods, procedures and standards that are used in the development of transportation plans and programs.

General Guidelines

This Public Participation Process is intended to provide direction for public involvement activities to be conducted by the MPO and contains the policies, goals, objectives, and techniques used by the MPO for public involvement. In its public participation process, the MPO will:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdiction concerns).
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plans, the Transportation Improvement Program, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects,

and conduct open public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered.

3. Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program and other appropriate transportation plans and projects. If the final draft of any transportation plan differs significantly from the one available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan shall be made available.
4. To support Section 5307 grantees, this public participation process is being used to satisfy the Federal Transit Authority's (FTA) Program of Projects public participation requirements.
5. Respond in writing, when applicable, to public input. When significant written and oral comments are received on the transportation plan drafts (including the financial plan for the TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan developed in cooperation with the MPO Boards and Committees), as a result of the public participation process or the interagency consultation process required under MAP-21, report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan.
6. Solicit the needs of those under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to the transportation disadvantaged, minorities, elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income households. MAP-21 requires that the MPO shall provide reasonable opportunities for affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation planning process.
7. Provide a public comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of the Public Participation Plan and/or any amendments. Notice of the comment period will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation and various other publications prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period. Notice will also be mailed to the entire MPO mailing list prior to the start of the 45-day comment period.
8. Provide a public comment period of not less than 30 calendar days prior to adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

9. Provide a public comment period of not less than 10 calendar days prior to the adoption of the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program, Transit Development Plans, any formal amendments or updates, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.
10. Coordinate the Public Participation Process with statewide Public Participation Processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs.
11. The Consultation Process will allow many organizations and agencies to review and have the opportunity to comment on the LRTP process and product and the TIP. The MPO will solicit the proper official and method of notification desired of all the groups in addition to other local government agencies and non-profits that receive federal funding from those U.S. departments other than DOT for transportation related functions (other than emergency assistance). This list will be kept updated. Agencies not wishing to be on the list will be required to send an official letter to the MPO requesting to be removed from the list and these letters will be kept for documentation. The ability for the agencies and groups to effectively provide input and comment requires a reasonable time frame to respond. While a period of 10 working days seems reasonable, agencies and organizations needing greater lead time will be accommodated within reason.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal: To effectively interest, inform and involve the public in the regional transportation planning process, encouraging and accommodating their meaningful participation and input.

Objective 1

The MPO shall encourage the involvement of all area citizens in the transportation planning process.

Policy 1.1: The MPO will work to identify traditionally under-involved populations within the region, including minority, low income, and senior citizen populations.

Policy 1.2: Target audiences shall be identified for each planning study conducted by the MPO, including residents, business and property owners and those traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations, including but not limited to, low income and minority households within the study area.

Policy 1.3: The MPO shall, whenever feasible, hold public meetings at a site convenient to potentially affected citizens.

Objective 2

The MPO shall actively engage the public in the transportation planning process according to the policies contained in this Public Participation Process and State and Federal Law.

Policy 2.1: The MPO shall maintain an up-to-date database of contacts including at a minimum the following persons to provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the transportation planning process and products:

- a. Elected Officials
- b. Local Government Staff
- c. Transportation Agencies (Port, Airports, Transit, etc.)
- d. Local Media (Print)
- e. Civic Groups
- f. Special Interest Groups (Other Interested Parties)
- g. Libraries (For Public Display)
- h. Consultation with Federal, State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation, and other environmental issues (see Appendix B)
- i. Consultation with parties that would have an interest in the planning and development of the transportation network including affected public agencies in the metropolitan planning area (see Appendix C)
- j. Native American Tribal Councils
- k. Private Freight Shippers
- l. Representatives of Public Transportation Employees
- m. Providers of Freight Transportation Services
- n. Private Providers of Transportation
- o. Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
- p. Representatives of Users of Pedestrian Walkways
- q. Representatives of Users of Bicycle Transportation Facilities
- r. Representatives of the Disabled

Policy 2.2: The MPO shall, when feasible, electronically mail meeting announcements to the MPO contact list or to targeted groups for upcoming activities.

Policy 2.3: The MPO shall employ visualization techniques to depict transportation plans. Examples of visualization techniques include: charts, graphs, photo interpretation, maps, GIS, artist renderings, physical models, and/or computer simulation.

Objective 3

The MPO shall keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis.

Policy 3.1: The MPO shall make all publications and work products available electronically to the public via the Florence County web page, www.florenceco.org and the MPO office and employ visualization techniques to describe transportation actions as part of the Long-Range Plan.

Policy 3.2: MPO staff shall be available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups with reasonable notice.

Policy 3.3: The MPO shall maintain an internet web site that will be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled users.

Policy 3.3.1: The web site shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current and accurate transportation planning information available.

Policy 3.3.2: The web site shall, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- a. Contact information (mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail)
- b. Current MPO committee membership
- c. Meeting calendars and agendas
- d. Work products and publications (Transportation Improvement Program, Long Range Transportation Plans, Unified Planning Work Program,
- e. Current By-Laws and Operating Procedures (including the Public Participation Plan and updates)

Policy 3.4: MPO staff will produce an annual newsletter.

Objective 4

The MPO shall strive to continuously improve public participation.

Policy 4.1: The MPO shall continuously evaluate public involvement techniques.

Policy 4.2: This Public Participation Plan shall be reviewed and adopted, with revisions if necessary, at least every three (3) years in order to improve the effectiveness of public involvement.

Objective 5

The MPO shall participate in public participation activities for individual transportation improvement projects from the planning phase through construction.

Policy 5.1: The MPO shall actively assist the South Carolina Department of Transportation, local governments and transportation agencies in the development and implementation of public involvement techniques for planning and other studies, including Major Corridor/Feasibility Studies, and Project Development and Environmental Studies or other documents to support planning.

Objective 6

The MPO shall maintain a Title VI Program including a complaint procedure to report unfair treatment of groups based on race, color, and national origin.

Policy 6.1: The MPO will maintain a log of Title VI complaints and forward to appropriate State and Federal agencies for review and guidance.

Public Participation Techniques

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the MPO. Public participation is also an integral part of one-time activities such as corridor studies and regularly repeated activities such as the annual Transportation Improvement Program process and Long Range Transportation Plan updates.

This section contains descriptions of public participation tools currently being used by the MPO:

MPO Web Site

Description: The web site is established to provide basic information about the MPO process, members, meeting times and contact information. Work products, such as the drafted, and adopted Public Participation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan are available on the site.

The website address is www.florenceco.org. The web site will be maintained by the Florence County MPO staff and regularly updated.

Activities: The web site is used to list current and topical information on regular and special meetings, planning studies, publications, related public events and work products.

MPO Master Database

Description: MPO staff maintains a master database of business, federal, state and local agencies and interested public. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and web sites. The database is used for maintaining up-to-date committee membership lists, special interest groups and homeowner association contacts, and is the foundation in providing the public of any transportation related documents. The database will be used to establish and maintain a list of e-mail contacts for electronic meeting notification and announcements.

Activities: The database is used to enhance public involvement activities.

Legal Advertised Notices

Description: All notices of meetings and hearings of the MPO Transportation Policy Committee shall be posted pursuant to the *South Carolina Open Public Meetings Act*. Notices shall be published a minimum of seven (7) days prior to the meeting. The mailing and/or e-mailing of notices and press releases should be timed to be received locally within five (5) days of the meeting.

When official public hearings and public comment periods for regional plans and programs are provided, said meeting notices shall be published a minimum of ten (10) days prior to adoption in *The Morning News*. All notices of sub-regional plans and programs funded by the MPO shall be made in the newspaper of greatest circulation in the study area (see Table 1).

The FLATS Policy Committee, or another MPO committee, shall consider hosting special meetings when needed to consider a special non-routine item that necessitates action

but falls between regularly scheduled meetings. If a special meeting is called, the notice shall be published a minimum of three (3) days prior the meeting.

Activities: Regular and other meetings seeking public input are posted ten (10) days prior to the meeting.

Display Ads

Description: The MPO may publish ads that are used to promote meetings that are not regularly scheduled, such as corridor study workshops. They are published in selected newspapers in order to reach a larger audience than those that typically read legal notices.

Activities: Public awareness of project specific meetings, workshops, or open houses.

Other Media

Description: Opportunities are sought for articles in other newsletters produced by municipalities, homeowners' associations, church groups, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the MPO. Opportunities are also sought to present to civic and social agencies, participate on radio talk shows, and provide television news highlights and to utilize public service notices to create community awareness of planning activities.

Activities: Increased opportunities to make public aware of corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

Direct Mailings

Description: Used to announce upcoming meetings or activities or to provide information to a targeted area or group of people. Direct mailings are usually letters, but can be postcards or flyers. An area may be targeted for a direct mailing because of potential impacts from a project. Groups are targeted that may have an interest in a specific issue, for example avid cyclists and pedestrians may be targeted for pathways and trail projects.

Activities: Project-specific meetings, workshops, open houses, corridor studies, small area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

Press Releases

Description: Formal press releases are sent to *The Morning News* to announce upcoming meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the MPO or their committees. When specific communities are affected by transportation plans, then local newsletters and media will be sought to communicate the project status.

Activities: Corridor or other planning studies, workshops, open houses, public hearings, and other MPO activities.

Table 1. Target Audiences of FLATS Area Media Outlets

Media Outlet	Largest Audience			
	Age	Gender	Education	Race
Radio				
WYNN	25-34	female	some college	unknown
WBZF	35-44	female	high school	unknown
WCMG	45-54	female	high school	unknown
WHLZ	25-34	female	high school	unknown
WMXT	45-54	male	some college	unknown
WWFN	25-34	male	some college	unknown
WSIM	unknown – soft mix music			
WICI	unknown – classic rock music			
WWKT	unknown – urban music			
WDAR	25-54	female	unknown	unknown
WEGX	25-54	unknown	unknown	unknown
WJMX	18-34	female	unknown	unknown
WJMX-AM	25-54	male	unknown	unknown
WZTF	25-49	unknown	unknown	unknown
WGSS	unknown – gospel music			
WHMC	unknown – public news			
Television				
Ch-11, Gov. Access	unknown – public channel			
Print Media				
The Morning News	unknown – serves the Pee Dee area			
Community Times	unknown	female	unknown	African-American and Hispanic
The News Journal	unknown – delivered within the FLATS area			
She Magazine	unknown	female	unknown	unknown
The Greater Pee Dee Business Journal	unknown – serves the Pee Dee area			

Project Workshops

Description: These are targeted public meetings that are generally open and informal, with project team members interacting with the public on a one-on-one basis. Short presentations may be given at these meetings. The purpose of project-specific meetings is to provide project information to the public and to solicit public comment and a sense of public priorities.

Activities: Long-range planning studies, corridor studies, and other major MPO activities.

E-mail Announcements/Internet Websites

Description: Meeting announcements and MPO information are e-mailed to interested persons that have submitted their e-mail addresses to MPO staff.

Activities: Long-range planning studies, corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies, regular meetings, public hearings, workshops, open houses, and other major MPO activities.

MPO Logo

Description: A logo representing the MPO will be used to identify products and publications of the MPO. A logo helps the public become familiar with the different activities of the MPO by providing a means of recognizing MPO products.

Activities: A logo may be used on all MPO publications; including those developed by consultants working on MPO sponsored projects to create a community awareness of the MPO deliverables.

Public Hearings

Description: These are public meetings used to solicit public comment on a project or issue being considered for adoption by the MPO. Hearings provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments to the MPO or another decision-making body. Meeting minutes are taken and maintained. In addition, staff members may be made available who communicate in additional languages as required.

Activities: Long Range Transportation Plans, Transportation Improvement Program, corridor studies, Project Development & Environmental studies, and other planning studies as needed for other MPO activities.

Comment Forms/ Complaint Procedure

Description: Comment forms are often used to solicit public comment on specific issues being presented at a workshop, other public meetings or accompany documents made available for public review. Comment forms can be very general in nature, or can ask for very specific feedback. For example, a comment form may ask for comments on specific alignment alternatives being considered during a corridor study, or may ask for a person's general feelings about any aspect of transportation. Comment forms can also be included in publications and on web sites to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or web site.

In alignment with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, these comment opportunities allow for complaints associated with minority groups as described in Title VI of the U.S. Code (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.). Such complaints will be logged in at the MPO office, reviewed according to the Department of Justice's investigation procedures manual then forwarded to SCDOT and FHWA for further review and direction. Title VI complaints may be e-mailed, mailed by post or communicated directly by calling or visiting the MPO office. This information is shown on the cover of this document.

Activities: Public workshops, open houses, hearings and other meetings, accompany MPO documents on public display, general MPO activities.

Surveys

Description: Surveys are used when very specific input from the public is desired. A survey can be used in place of comment cards to ask very specific questions such as whether a person supports a specific alignment in a corridor study. Surveys are also used to gather technical data during corridor and planning studies. For example, participants may be asked about their daily travel patterns.

Activities: Conduct on-line surveys on issues and needs to provide input into the plans.

Posters and Flyers

Description: Posters and flyers are used to announce meetings and events and are distributed to public places such as City/Town Halls, libraries and community centers for display. The announcement may contain a brief description of the purpose of a meeting, the time(s) and location(s), and contact information. Posters and flyers may be used to reach a large audience that cannot be reached using direct mailings and/or newsletters.

Activities: Corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies, regular and special MPO activities.

Library Distribution Sites

Description: All MPO documents released for public review and comment are disseminated to the Florence County Libraries to afford the public the opportunity to review the documents. The documents are currently available in English, but providing Spanish language documentation will be explored.

Activities: Documents for review made available to the public.

Partner Agencies

Description: The MPO is dependent upon Federal and State guidelines for planning transportation projects. Continued interaction and communication enables the MPO to remain up-to-date on policies and project status. The following table lists those agencies which it consults for transportation plans:

- South Carolina Department of Transportation
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
- U.S. Department of Transportation
 - Federal Highway Administration
 - Federal Transit Administration
- Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority
- Florence County

- Florence County municipalities
- Pee Dee Council of Governments
- U.S. Department of the Interior
 - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Activities: Consultation with partner agencies about day-to-day operations as necessary.

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Table 2. Summary Public Participation Policy Table

Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Public Participation Techniques		Remarks
			Required	Proactive	
Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Initial Meeting, Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	30 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	Updated every five (5) years. Comments received included in LRTP
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	10 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	Updated every six (6) years. Comments received provided to FLATS Study Team and FLATS Policy Committee
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	10 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	Updated every year
Public Participation Process	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	45 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	Updated every 3 years. Comments received provided to FLATS Study Team and FLATS Policy Committee
Program Amendments					
Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	10 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	As Needed
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	10 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	As Needed
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	NA	10 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	As Needed
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Public Meeting on Draft by FLATS Study Team, and FLATS Policy Committee	45 Days	Legal Notice in Print Media	Web Site Comment Forms	As Needed

Table 3. Summary of Other Public Participation Tools

Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Required Legal & Proactive Public Participation Techniques		Remarks
Open Committee & Board Meetings	Scheduled as Needed	Dependent upon agenda items	Legal Notice in Print Media	Website	Includes a public comment period
Annual Calendar	NA	NA	Last Meeting of Year		Maintained and updated regularly
Newsletter	NA	NA	Sent to Master Database		Produced annually
Website	NA	NA	NA		Updated Regularly
Staff Presentations	NA	NA	NA		Upon Request

Evaluation Methods and Performance Goals

In order to determine the effectiveness of the public involvement tools, they must be evaluated and compared to established performance goals. The typical methods for evaluating the effectiveness of public involvement tools are surveys and quantitative statistical analysis. This section briefly describes evaluation methods used by the MPO. For each public involvement tool, performance goals and methods for meeting those goals have been identified.

Surveys

Surveys typically consist of short, specific questions regarding public involvement tools that are ongoing or that were used on a specific project. Surveys can be conducted in person, by phone, mail or e-mail. Face-to-face and telephone surveys provide quick responses and can be used when a respondent's answer may lead to a follow-up question. For example, respondents may be asked if advertisements are an effective notification tool. If the response is no, the surveyor can ask the respondent why advertisements are not effective and also what other tools they would prefer. In person and telephone surveys can target specific areas or groups or can be random sampling. Mail surveys may be used to provide written record of respondent's answers. Mail-back surveys can be distributed at meetings, inside other publications, or by mailing directly to potential respondents. Respondents can be a targeted group, such as members of special interest groups or residents of specific areas, or they can be randomly generated. Return postage for mail surveys typically can be pre-paid by the MPO, or can be the responsibility of the respondent. E-mail surveys, like mail surveys, provide a written record of responses. Unlike mail-back surveys, there is little to no reproduction or distribution cost to the MPO to send out the surveys, and little to no cost to respondents to return a response. To use e-mail surveys, it is necessary to have e-mail addresses for the targeted respondents, and random distribution rarely an option.

Statistical Analysis

Statistics can be used to determine the "return on the investment" of producing public involvement tools. For example, the number of persons attending an activity can be compared to the number of persons that were notified of the activity. This type of evaluation can be an indicator of whether or not the tools used for public involvement are actually reaching the intended audience, or which tools had a greater response rate. Statistical analysis is used to evaluate survey responses and the results of the analysis are compared to the evaluation measures to determine the rate of success of public involvement tools.

Improvement Strategies

The MPO continually strives for improved public involvement. Improvements should be made to increase public awareness and to improve the quantity and quality of information provided to the public. The decisions made by the MPO affect the entire population, both residents and visitors, of Florence County. Therefore, seeking public input on those decisions is vital to the success of the MPO as the agency responsible for transportation planning. Each time a public involvement evaluation is performed, a list of improvement strategies needed should be identified for implementation. If improvement is needed for an ongoing public involvement task, such as the MPO web site, a reasonable completion date should be established. If improvement is needed for one-time activities, such as corridor studies, the improvement should be implemented where appropriate on future activities.

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Table 4. Public Participation Tools Evaluation Table

Public Participation Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
Public Participation Process	No Measure/PPP should reflect the practices of the MPO	N/A	Update at least every 3 years to incorporate the improvement strategies from public involvement evaluations.
MPO Web Site	Number of Hits	Minutes of Hits	Use other public involvement tools to increase advertisement of the web site
MPO Master Database	Number of returned items	Max. of 2% return rate per mailing	Make immediate corrections when items are returned
Public Notices	No Measure/This tool is required by Statue	NA	NA
Annual News Letter	Calls, letters, etc. Number of returns	N/A. Return rate is addressed under MPO Master Database	Continue items that receive favorable comments and address items that receive negative comments
Other Media (newspaper, electronic media)	Calls, letters, etc.; number of persons contacted	Reference in project area community newsletters, presence on electronic news shows quarterly and public service announcement for public meetings associated with LRTP	Provide information to the publishers of these newsletters in a timely fashion. Investigate all possible newsletters that may reach an affected area.
Direct Mailing	Calls, Letters, etc.; Number of persons contacted	Min. of 15% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they received the mailing. – OR – Reaches a min of 85% of persons affected by a project	Increase/Decrease mailing list to more accurately target affected areas. Use the most up-to-date information for Florence County Assessor's Office.
Press Releases	Calls, Letters, etc	No Standard. Format may be modified based on specific comments received	Encourage publication of press releases and general articles by keeping the media informed
Project Specific Website	Calls, letters, etc.; Number of hits	Min of 30 hits/ month. Increase of at least 10% over the life of the project. Expectations may be higher depending on the size of the study area	Use other public involvement tools to increase advertisement of the web site
Project Specific Meetings/ Workshops	Calls, letters, etc.; Attendance	3%-5% of affected population (based on study area) in attendance	Schedule at convenient times and locations; hold multiple workshops; use multiple tools to increase awareness.
Email Announcements	Calls, letters, etc.; Number of persons contacted	Min. of 5% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they saw the announcement	Increase email list by advertising the availability of email announcements using other public involvement tools.

Table 4 continued...

Public Participation Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
MPO Logo	Calls, letters, etc.; Number of persons contracted	Recognition of the logo	The MPO logo should be used on all MPO products and publications, and on materials for all MPO sponsored activities
Surveys	Calls, letters, etc.; Number of respondents	60% of contacted persons participate in the survey –OR- 20% mail recipients return the survey	Encourage response by explaining the importance of receiving feedback to improve the planning process

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