



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
Federal Transit  
Administration

# Working Together on Transportation Planning: An Approach to Collaborative Decision Making

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May 1995

*An FTA Policy Paper*

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U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**Federal Transit  
Administration**

400 Seventh St., S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20590

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C-95-17

Dear Transit Colleague:

I am pleased to provide you with a copy of the enclosed publication, "Working Together on Transportation Planning: An Approach to Collaborative Decision Making." This report provides information to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in developing a consensus-based planning approach in which MPOs work in partnership with transportation stakeholders including community groups, special interest groups, minorities, public agencies, private sector interests, and elected officials to develop transportation plans and programs with maximum community involvement. It also provides detailed examples that demonstrate how MPOs can design collaborative processes that meet the intent of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and strengthen the plans produced by the MPOs.

Chapter one describes the project and the research methodology. Chapter two summarizes the impact of ISTEA on MPOs during the revision of their transportation decision making process. Chapter three presents a four stage consensus building model which can direct MPOs in implementing a collaborative planning process. The final chapter describes how to measure the success of the collaborative process once implemented. Case studies of the public involvement processes used by six MPOs are included in the appendix.

If you need additional copies, please contact your Regional Office.

Sincerely,



Gordon J. Linton

Enclosure

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**WORKING TOGETHER ON  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING:  
AN APPROACH TO COLLABORATIVE  
DECISION MAKING**

*Prepared for:*

*Office of Policy*

*Federal Transit Administration*

*U.S. Department of Transportation*

*Report No. FTA-DC-26-6013-95-1*

*Prepared by:*

**THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF REGIONAL COUNCILS**

*in association with:*

**Program For Community Problem Solving**

May 1995

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# Executive Summary

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 has redefined the role of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the transportation decision making process. In addition to providing MPOs with greater authority in defining regional transportation systems, the Act emphasizes intermodal planning and greater community and private sector involvement in developing plans and programs. It is essential for MPOs to continue their ongoing collaborative forums related to transportation decision making. This report is designed to explore innovative methods of enhancing public and private sector participation during the transportation planning process and to assist MPOs in modifying and/or developing flexible collaborative decision making strategies.<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Chapter One describes the project and research methodology. A research assessment (available upon request from NARC) of twenty-eight MPOs was conducted to collect information on public involvement techniques used during the development of a long-range plan or transportation improvement program. Based on the data collected, six MPOs were selected for additional investigation. An examination of best practices utilized in other fields was also conducted. Finally, Chapter One describes how the report is organized.

## Collaborative Transportation Planning: The MPO Experience To Date

Chapter Two summarizes ISTEA and its impact on MPOs during the revision of their transportation decision making processes. Section A provides a brief overview of the ISTEA and CAAA planning provisions. Section B focuses on the public participation provisions included in the joint Statewide and Metropolitan Planning Regulations developed to assist the implementation of ISTEA. The discussion covers the need for greater proactivity and provision of timely information. Greater opportunities for representation of non-traditional stakeholders and the expansion of the public's decision making role are also examined.

Due to the complex structure of many MPOs, efforts to encourage a regional approach to transportation decision making have proven to be extremely difficult. The multi-state status of many MPOs, fragmented land use policies at the local level, and tendencies to make decisions based on parochial interests contribute to the obstacles evident in developing plans supported by the entire region. MPOs face a major challenge in engaging community leaders and the general public in planning processes geared to produce long-term benefits for the region as a whole rather than immediate direct benefits to particular neighborhoods. The creation of a process based on consensus is an important vehicle to encourage flexibility and promote dialogue between diverse groups with conflicting interests.

Often, those groups directly affected by transportation decisions are the most difficult segments of the metropolitan population to reach. Many citizens, such as members of

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<sup>1</sup> In this document, "collaboration" is used to mean joint planning efforts, where an MPO works with community residents, special interest groups, elected officials, and other agency representatives as true partners in the planning process.

minority groups, people with low incomes, and transit-dependent individuals, are unaware, unable, or for other reasons, do not take advantage of their opportunities to provide input into the planning process on a regular basis. Traditionally, many citizens have not become involved in transportation planning processes unless a controversial issue being considered directly affects them. The challenge is to reach such citizens and stimulate participatory interest at the grassroots level. In order to accomplish this goal, MPO staffs need to develop new strategies to engage the public.

Section C reviews MPO efforts and recommendations for creating effective public participation strategies while section D discusses reasons to push further to achieve a truly collaborative process. MPOs will need to negotiate differences between the diverse groups attempting to influence the process and help them to identify mutual goals. A collaborative decision making process based on consensus building can create such opportunities.

The final section discusses challenges MPOs face in establishing collaborative planning processes, as well as examples of what some MPOs are doing to address these challenges.

## **Approaches For Implementing A Collaborative Planning Process**

Linking public involvement and collaborative problem solving can assist MPOs in developing successful public participation programs. Local governments and citizens can reap the benefits of developing a collaborative decision making process. Collaborative problem solving is a proactive process that provides a dialogue during all stages of planning. Controversial issues are explored through a consensus building process, thereby preventing situations where parties might feel they are not treated fairly or left out entirely. The fundamental principal of collaboration is that it is based on inclusiveness. In order to operate a decision making process based on consensus: 1) all stakeholders should be involved at the beginning of the process; 2) all potentially affected parties must be afforded an opportunity to participate in the process; and 3) community and private sector input should be reflected in the final product.

MPOs and/or local elected officials can make the process compelling by demonstrating its relevance to community and private sector groups. The process itself must then be designed by the group. Through collaboration the stakeholders participating in the process can forge a partnership leading to an ongoing relationship that will address long-term planning efforts.

Chapter Three presents a four-stage consensus building model, which can direct MPOs in implementing a collaborative planning process. The four stages of the consensus building model include getting started, defining the task, making choices, and implementing decisions. The four-stage model provided can be used as the starting point in developing more collaborative local processes. Local conditions will influence process development. The model presented can be modified to fit the needs of the organization using it, because it is important for MPOs and citizens to design a process with which all feel comfortable.

Many of the MPOs that developed effective public participation programs created a public participation plan which was linked to the decision making process for their long-range plan. After establishing committees with representation from community and private sector groups, the goals and objectives of the long-range planning team were developed by the group. The evaluation criteria were also developed in a similar fashion. MPOs

can develop regional plans that are strongly supported by community and private sector groups by creating opportunities for meaningful involvement by all stakeholders throughout plan development.

## **Evaluating the Success of A Collaborative Process**

Chapter Four briefly describes how to measure the success of the collaborative process once implemented. An evaluation component is also considered important in determining whether adjustments are needed to the process developed by an MPO. Techniques that can be used to measure success include identifying the beneficial outcomes of the process.

This report presents a variety of challenges, that MPOs, local governments, and ultimately, transportation stakeholders should address, concerning the provisions of ISTEA, but it also demonstrates that with the right resources, these entities are capable of meeting these challenges. By providing opportunities for meaningful involvement in the transportation decision making process, MPOs may gain public support for transportation plans and projects. Some MPOs have demonstrated the potential for developing effective programs but are confronted with many challenges such as limited resources and political constraints. Developing a public participation process that is based on consensus building has proven to be effective in forging a partnership among all stakeholders that is proactive, resource efficient, and beneficial to all parties involved

Increased concern with the transportation system and the quality of the air we breathe reflects the need for a change in the way we conduct business. A collaborative effort directed on a regional level appears to be an effective way of addressing the existing transportation and air quality problems in the United States.

## Acknowledgments

This document was developed jointly by the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and the Program for Community Problem Solving (PCPS) with funding provided by the Federal Transit Administration. NARC promotes understanding of multi-purpose regional councils, represents its members before Congress and the federal government, and provides technical assistance and educational services. PCPS, a consortium of six associations, assists communities across the country in using collaborative approaches for controversial issues, such as long-range planning, multi-sectoral partnerships, and program development.

NARC would like to thank the following transportation stakeholders for their participation in this effort:

- Southern California Association of Governments, Los Angeles, CA
- Chicago Area Transportation Study, Chicago, IL
- Metropolitan Transportation Council, New York, NY
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission, San Francisco, CA
- Atlanta Regional Council, Atlanta, GA
- East-West Gateway Coordinating Council, St. Louis, MO
- Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, Washington, D.C.
- Southeast Michigan Council of Governments, Detroit, MI
- Maricopa Association of Governments, Phoenix, AZ
- Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization, Worcester, MA
- Capitol Region Council of Governments, Hartford, CT
- Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Council of Governments, Cincinnati, OH
- BCKP Regional Intergovernmental Council, Dunbar, WV
- North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Planning Council, Fort Collins, CO
- Ada Planning Association, Boise, ID
- Mid-America Regional Council, Kansas City, MO
- Metropolitan Service District, Portland OR
- Bannock Planning Organization, Pocatello, ID
- Northwest Arkansas Regional Planning Commission, Springdale, AR
- Chatham Urban Transportation Study, Savannah, GA
- Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission, Essex Junction, VT
- Green River Area Development District, Owensboro, KY
- Transportation Advisory Committee, Hickory, NC
- Amalgamated Transit Union
- Highway Users Federation for Safety and Mobility
- National Association of Neighborhoods
- National Resources Council of Maine
- 1000 Friends of Oregon
- Save the Bay
- United Parcel Services
- Western North Carolina Alliance.

# CHAPTER I

## Introduction

### A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

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This report provides examples to MPOs and other transportation stakeholders for developing collaborative decision making processes for producing transportation plans and programs to meet the challenges of the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 and the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991. These legislative initiatives empower MPOs, State DOTs, and the communities they serve to work together throughout the development and adoption of transportation plans. This report shows, through detailed examples and practical advice, how MPOs can design collaborative processes that fulfill the intent of these Federal statutes and strengthen the plans produced by MPOs.

### B. THE BENEFITS OF USING A COLLABORATIVE PROCESS

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Collaborative decision making as applied to transportation planning refers to a consensus-based planning approach in which MPOs work in partnership with citizens, special interest groups, other agencies, and elected officials to develop transportation plans and programs with maximum community support. This partnership is developed at the beginning and continues throughout the plan development and approval process, in contrast to the review and comment approach historically utilized by many government agencies to provide stakeholders with input after the plans have been developed.

There are several benefits from using a well-conducted collaborative problem solving process, including:

- Maximum creativity, resources, and power brought to bear on tough issues;
- Effective engagement of diverse segments of the public;
- Consensus on a maximum number of issues;
- Smoothest possible implementation of resulting decisions; and
- Strengthened working relationships between the MPO and the community.

Collaborative forums can be very effective vehicles for intergovernmental coordination and the development of multi-sector partnerships valuable for plan implementation.

### C. APPROACH USED TO DEVELOP REPORT

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The development of this report began with a research assessment of MPOs' current public involvement practices. Data collected from the assessment were used to determine which MPOs would be selected for more detailed case studies. Additional research activities included collecting data from a variety of private sector, public interest, and advocacy groups, and an examination of collaborative practices being used in other

fields.

The purpose of the research assessment was to develop an understanding of how MPOs currently conduct their decision making processes and to evaluate current practices used by the MPOs to elicit public participation during the transportation planning process. NARC, the Program for Community Problem Solving (PCPS), and the Federal Transit and Federal Highway Administration staff together selected twenty-eight MPOs for initial data collection. The sample included MPOs representing a diversity of population sizes, air quality designations, and regional locations.

Based on the data collected, case studies were conducted at six MPOs having innovative public involvement processes. The case studies were designed to obtain in-depth, qualitative data about decision making methods currently used by MPOs. The six MPOs selected for further study were: Bannock Planning Organization in Pocatello, Idaho; Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments in Cincinnati, Ohio; Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission in Savannah, Georgia; Ada Planning Association in Boise, Idaho; and East-West Gateway Coordinating Council in St. Louis, Missouri. The investigation consisted of three-day visits to each site to obtain additional information from the full set of stakeholders participating in the decision making process.

The initial assessment of collaborative decision making also included an examination of "best practices" utilized in other fields. Information was gathered on techniques that could assist in developing a framework for decision making processes useful for MPOs.

## **D. HOW THE REPORT IS ORGANIZED**

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Chapter Two, **Collaborative Transportation Planning: The MPO Experience**, is divided into six sections. A brief summary of the provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991, and the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 is included. The public participation provisions are then highlighted, followed by a discussion of the lessons MPOs have learned from their efforts to date, and of new directions they are taking to provide greater opportunities for public input. The chapter concludes with a discussion of challenges in making collaboration work and examples of strategies MPOs are using to overcome them.

Chapter Three, **Approaches to Implementing a Collaborative Planning Process**, discusses the public involvement/collaboration continuum. The link between public involvement and collaborative problem solving is evaluated. Some of the approaches used by MPOs to provide opportunities for public input are examined, and strategies to create a consensus-based decision making process are identified. The principles of collaboration are defined, and a four-stage model for collaborative planning provides a framework for MPOs interested in implementing such a process. The final section explores the benefits of institutionalizing a collaborative decision making system versus ad hoc development of a decision making process.

Chapter Four, **Evaluating the Success of Your Collaborative Process**, briefly provides examples to MPOs on how to evaluate their process to determine what adjustments are necessary to improve subsequent efforts. A variety of "success indicators" and methods of measuring the effectiveness of the process is provided.

The report also includes a resource section which contains a glossary of relevant

transportation terms, a bibliography, a list of resource organizations, and appendices. The appendix includes a description of three of the case studies conducted during the initial data collection phase and an example of an effective process implemented using collaborative decision making in another field which can be applied in the transportation arena.

## CHAPTER II

# Collaborative Transportation Planning:

### *The MPO Experience*

#### **A. THE ISTEA AND CAAA PLANNING PROVISIONS**

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The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 link the development of transportation plans and programs to improve the nation's transportation system with the attainment of national air quality standards. Together, they provide the foundation for moving people and goods more effectively in the future.

ISTEA contains various innovative provisions and alters the focus of transportation planning. Bob Kochanowski, Executive Director of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission in Pittsburgh, says that ISTEA not only levels the playing field between highway and transit interests, "it changes the game's rules, spots the underdog points, moves the competition into a new stadium, drafts new players, and even invites the spectators onto the field."<sup>2</sup> The Act is a grand experiment in democracy in the transportation arena, and there's plenty of room for everyone.

The CAAA stresses tighter integration of transportation and air quality planning processes than preceding clean air legislation. Regional and State transportation plans must be consistent with State air quality plans that include strategies to meet or attain Federal air quality standards. Strict Federal penalties, including the withholding of Federal funds, may be imposed if the provisions provided in the CAAA are not met within prescribed deadlines. The CAAA prohibits the expenditure of any funds on transportation projects, included in a transportation plan, unless the entire plan is consistent with or conforms to the State air quality plan.

In regions classified as non-attainment areas because of unacceptable pollution levels, the transportation plans must include strategies, identified in the State Implementation Plan (SIP), such as ridesharing, high occupancy vehicle lanes, busways, etc., that will help the area reach acceptable air quality standards within a time period prescribed by the Act. In non-attainment Transportation Management Areas, ISTEA reinforces the CAAA by requiring that any new highway or transit project, which will significantly increase single occupant vehicle capacity, must be a part of an approved Congestion Management System including a variety of Transportation System Management and Transportation Demand Management strategies to reduce congestion and air pollution.

Together, ISTEA and the CAAA change the decision making arrangements in transportation. They strengthen the role of metropolitan planning organizations, minimize the barriers between highway and transit funds to provide greater spending flexibility, and establish new criteria to be followed in developing transportation plans and programs, including the attainment of clean air standards.

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<sup>2</sup> Thomas, Clarke M. ISTEA: A Different Kind of Highway Act. University of Pittsburgh, Institute of Politics.

Transportation planning is shifting greater attention to goods movement. Consideration should be given to freight and the intermodal aspects of the transportation system because they have significant impact on how well the system operates. Establishing more efficient connections between modes is important. Private sector freight shippers including rail, sea, and air must be included in examining intermodal issues.

The need for broad public participation underlies many of these changes. The roles of citizens and interest groups are enhanced to include early and meaningful participation in developing plans from the beginning of the process to its end. Some of the most important changes and their relation to greater public participation are described below.

## **B. HIGHLIGHTS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROVISIONS**

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The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) jointly issued the final planning regulations (23 CFR Part 450) guiding the development of statewide and metropolitan plans and programs on October 28, 1993. These regulations require MPOs to have "a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public" (23 CFR 450.316(b)(1)).

The public involvement portion of the joint planning regulations expands the decision making process involved in developing and implementing transportation plans and programs. If ISTEA is to be successful, broad public involvement in making transportation decisions must occur. Traditional planning procedures have generally considered the direct input of communities in the final stages of a linear decision making process in which an MPO or State DOT staff prepares a plan and then attempts to "sell it" to various constituents including the business community, environmental organizations, and citizen groups.

In addition to the joint planning regulations, in December of 1994 the FTA and the FHWA issued an interim policy on public involvement. Consistent with the Clinton Administration's objective of "putting people first", "it is the policy of the FTA and FHWA to aggressively support proactive public involvement at all stages of planning and project development. State departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and transportation providers must develop, with the public, effective involvement processes which are custom-tailored to local conditions." As a part of this policy, FTA and FHWA commit to promoting an active role for the public in the development of plans and programs, to sponsoring outreach, training, and technical assistance programs, and to evaluating processes and procedures implemented by MPOs and states.

### **1. The Need For Greater Participation**

In order to encourage citizen participation, MPOs must educate the public about their services. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in Oakland, CA, has utilized a variety of approaches to educate the public during the development of its long-range plan. The MTC Public Information Division has sponsored special conferences, workshops, and public meetings where information is presented both orally and in writing, in a format that can be readily understood outside of transportation circles. In addition, the staff goes to the public instead of expecting the public to come to the MPO by sponsoring activities such as small community meetings.

MPOs need to develop strong outreach programs in order to develop new relationships of

mutual trust and understanding with citizens and private sector groups. In order to accomplish this, local elected officials serving on MPO boards must increase their involvement in their communities. The joint planning regulations state that "...where appropriate, existing MPOs should increase the representation of local elected officials on the policy board and other committees as a means for encouraging their greater involvement in MPO processes (23 CFR 450.306 (i)). Many MPOs, that have created effective public participation plans, concentrated initial efforts on educating local elected officials and mayors and then directly involved them in community outreach programs developed by the MPO staff. The Ada Planning Association in Boise, ID, involved local elected officials during its long-range plan outreach activities, which included having elected officials from varying jurisdictions sponsor public meetings (See Appendix, page 47).

Early public involvement can steer the development of future highway and transit improvement alternatives into areas of support and away from deadlock at the end of the process. Broad participation is necessary in linking transportation strategies to related issues such as environmental and socioeconomic goals. The implementation of transportation strategies to reduce pollutant levels will need substantial public involvement to be successful. Ridesharing, HOV use, transit ridership, congestion pricing, and other pieces of the solution depend on an informed public for implementation. Early public involvement in developing these strategies will help to ensure their success.

## **2. Providing Timely Information**

Federal regulations indicate the process should provide for "...timely information about transportation issues and processes 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...(23 CFR 450.316(b)(1)(ii)). In an effort to inform stakeholders about the process, the regulations state that the process "provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans," (23 CFR 450.316 (b)(1)(iii)) and give "adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (23 CFR 450.316( b)(1)(iv))."

Despite the belief by some transportation staffs that involving the public delays the planning process, various MPO experiences indicate that timely involvement by the public can actually speed up the process. As noted by East-West Gateway staff, "strong citizen participation may result in a better plan and better assurances for implementation." By creating opportunities for the public to be involved throughout the process, planners may avoid costly delays and litigation. Early, continuous, and meaningful involvement is often effective in cultivating citizens' sense of ownership in plans and programs.

## **3. Representation of Non-Traditional Stakeholders**

Many public participation plans provide opportunities for "interested parties" to receive additional information about the transportation planning process. Unfortunately, "interested parties" often only include those groups that traditionally participated in the process (e.g., interest groups, environmentalists, and "professional citizens"). There needs to be greater emphasis placed on attracting participation from the "uninformed public." Public participation plans should be designed to "seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems including but

not limited to low-income and minority households.” (23 CFR 450.316(b)(1)(vi)).

A collaborative decision making process encourages the creation of a process that is truly inclusive, ensuring that all stakeholders participate. In an effort to attract non-traditional stakeholders, several MPOs have created advisory committees that specifically target underserved citizens. For example, the Metropolitan Council-Twin Cities MPO created the Minority Issues Advisory Committee, the Advisory Committee on Aging, and the Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee to ensure participation by these groups which are traditionally not heard during the transportation decision making process. The Council also actively recruited non-traditional stakeholders to participate in activities such as the Regional Transit Board and the Transit Advisory Board through advertising positions in several newspapers, including three minority-owned newspapers.

#### **4. Expanding the Public’s Decision Making Role**

With the growing empowerment of community groups, citizen participation near the end of the planning process has often resulted in opposition that ultimately defeats or defers a particular plan or project. This failure usually reflects an assumption that business and community groups are problems, not resources, in making decisions. All sides have too often viewed each other as adversaries, instead of partners in effectively addressing transportation issues through collaborative planning.

ISTEA seeks to rectify this situation by encouraging early and meaningful involvement in the transportation planning process. New partnerships are developing. For example, the New York Metropolitan Transportation Commission conducted an Intermodal Management System Private Sector workshop for shippers, carriers, etc. to educate them on how the transportation planning process operates. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s (MTC) Regional Bicycle Advisory Committee in the San Francisco Bay Area, held a one-day conference to develop consensus on bicycle plans and projects throughout the region, and the Spanish Speaking Unity Council has been working with MTC on a neighborhood redevelopment plan around a local BART station in Oakland. Politicians, planners, and engineers can benefit from the public’s expertise in particular areas of interest.

### **C. CREATING EFFECTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES**

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The joint planning regulations have outlined basic steps that MPOs should take and principles they should follow in order to provide effective public input opportunities. To understand the types of public participation approaches currently being used by MPOs and thus assess the kind of information they might need to comply with ISTEA’s provisions, the National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) and the Program for Community Problem Solving, under FTA sponsorship, conducted a research assessment and case study investigations. Twenty-eight MPOs, representing a broad cross-section in terms of size and air quality classification, were asked to respond to the research assessment. In the assessment, MPOs were asked to:

- Indicate who is responsible for establishing their public involvement process for developing TIPs and long-range plans;
- Indicate changes and innovative public involvement strategies they have utilized since the passage of ISTEA;
- Determine how these revised public involvement processes are working;

- Discuss problems encountered;
- Identify the pros and cons of public involvement;
- Indicate which groups are participating in public involvement forums; and
- Provide recommendations for others on how to develop a successful public involvement program.

## 1. Strategies

In response to the need for greater public participation, many MPOs have implemented aggressive outreach programs which included strategies such as: the use of innovative public involvement programs; the appointment of non-traditional stakeholders to key committees; the creation of effective citizen advisory committees; the development of new public participation plans; and the reliance on the assistance of consultants and facilitators.

In utilizing a variety of techniques to educate the public and encourage greater public input, MPO staff have made presentations to numerous organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce, civic groups, school boards, and neighborhood associations. As noted previously, MPOs have also produced a variety of publications highlighting the important provisions of ISTEA and the CAAA and defining the language of transportation planning. The success in implementing controversial transportation projects experienced by many MPOs has been linked to their development of collaborative decision making processes. By designing a collaborative decision making process, MPOs work with a broad range of stakeholders, including local elected officials, who generally represent the voting members of an MPO board, to develop a plan that is supported by all participants.

### a. *Using Innovative Planning Techniques*

Many of the MPOs created successful public involvement programs prior to the passage of ISTEA. For example, the Ada Planning Association in Boise, Idaho, works with a public that is “committee conscious.” Many residents serve on two or three different committees. Grassroots organizations are very powerful, and public involvement is considered to be crucial to the passage of plans and projects. Community and private sector groups have played a major role in developing key planning documents, including **Boise Visions** and the 2010 Regional Plan.

The **Boise Visions** process, initiated by the mayor, included a survey designed to identify the three major concerns of Boise citizens. The survey led to the development of a steering committee and subcommittee that created a document designed to lead the region’s planning activities over the next twenty years. During the process, Ada staff held televised town-hall meetings and worked closely with the media to publish articles on the process, which included newspaper cut-out coupons to elicit public response.

During the 2010 Regional Plan Update Ada staff used two public involvement processes designed to meet the needs of both the rural and urban population of the Boise region. The design of the process served to eliminate any feelings that the transportation needs of the rural community were being overlooked in favor of the urban community and increased participation by citizens representing rural and urban communities (see Appendix, page 47).

In examining public involvement techniques utilized in fields other than transportation to

ensure participation by groups representing underserved groups, Santa Barbara, CA provides a strong example. During the Santa Barbara, California General Plan update, staff outreach efforts included visiting African American and Hispanic churches and broadcasting a bilingual television program explaining the general plan update process (See Appendix, page 51).

## **b. *Appointing Non-Traditional Stakeholders to Key Committees***

MPOs generally use policy, technical, and citizen advisory committees in developing long-range plans and transportation improvement programs. As a result of the passage of ISTEA, many MPOs are expanding existing committees and developing new ones to address the new planning provisions. The planning regulations indicate that the process "provide for the involvement of traffic, ridesharing, parking, transportation safety and enforcement agencies, commuter rail operators, airport and port authorities, toll authorities, appropriate private transportation providers, and where appropriate city officials..."(23 CFR 450.316(b)(4)).

New partnerships have been created by appointing private sector and community group representatives to key long-range plan development committees at various MPOs. In an attempt to create committees representative of all modes, transit, railroad, and trucking representatives have been appointed voting members of technical committees. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, reorganized its Board following the passage of ISTEA and added four new voting members—two transit operators, a representative from the City of Pittsburgh, and a representative of the Governor's office (See Appendix, page 44).

MPOs have also created new committees, such as freight advisory councils and intermodal planning committees, to obtain input from the private sector during plan development. MTC, located in Oakland, CA, began the Bay Area Partnership in January 1992 with a conference attended by local, regional, State, and Federal policy makers as well as regional leaders from the disabled, environmental, and business communities. By March, a regular working group was meeting to examine ways to balance the many concerns ISTEA imposes on project selection.

The Bay Area Partnership consists of officials representing the region's mass transit operators, county congestion management agencies, airports and seaports, Caltrans, FHWA, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, the California Air Resources Board, EPA, and RIDES for Bay Area Commuters among others. This loose confederation meets regularly to chip away at some of the institutional barriers that hamper the smooth operation of the region's transportation network. The group also establishes the ground rules for ISTEA implementation in the Bay Area.

As a means of broadening public participation, the Partnership formed a Blue Ribbon Advisory Council of representatives from the various communities, including environmental and public interest groups, the business community, elderly and disabled organizations, academic research institutions, and minority citizens.

In developing the regional transportation plan, MTC is conducting special community forums and small workshops throughout the Bay Area, and has hired a consultant to expand its mailing list and recruit citizens to participate in smaller focus groups.

## **c. *Creation of Effective Citizen's Advisory Committees***

In the past, some advisory committees may not have had any real influence on the

transportation decision making process. The effectiveness of an advisory committee depended on such factors as a strong leader and to what extent the committee was allowed to participate throughout the process. Due to the charismatic leadership of its chairman, the Citizen's Advisory Committee in Chatham County-Savannah, Georgia, strengthened its role in helping to define the directions taken by the Policy and Technical committees in developing and adopting policies and plans.

The Citizen's Advisory Committee was created during the seventies, but did not develop an active and effective program until 1987 under the leadership of the new chairman. The Chairman appointed a subcommittee to develop by-laws for the committee. An attendance policy, which established procedures to address absenteeism at committee meetings, was adopted as a part of the new by-laws. The policy has helped produce a proactive committee that maintains an 85% attendance average for meetings. The CAC chairman has been a voting member of the Policy Committee since 1987. The Chatham CAC has been used as a model to create Citizen Advisory Committees at the other MPOs in Georgia.

However, MPOs should be careful to avoid using committees in a manner that can perpetuate existing biases. For example, providing the public with an advisory role only, may not provide the framework for building the kind of decision making partnership necessary for true collaboration. The regulations state that planning processes should "demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development process" (23 CFR 450.316(b)(1)(v)). MPOs must produce and adopt formal public participation plans, as indicated by the planning regulations, that specifically address procedures for developing public participation activities during transportation plan development. These plans add legitimacy to the efforts and help to reduce confusion concerning the various roles of the participants and inter-relationships of different forums. In addition, MPOs must provide a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised (23 CFR Part 450.316).

The East-West Gateway Coordinating Council developed a formal public involvement process that incorporated the use of citizen advisory committees. In an attempt to avoid the creation of ineffective citizen advisory committees, the Council included a component that provided participating citizens an opportunity to review and comment following the completion of each phase of the long-range planning process. Upon completion of each phase of the long-range plan, joint citizen committee meetings were held to review data and to allow committee members to assist in designing the most effective method of presenting the information to the general public. In addition, a select group of citizens was appointed to the policy committee. In this way, citizens assisted in developing the policies that help direct the Gateway long-range transportation plan decision making process.

#### ***d. Assistance of Consultants or Facilitators***

Many MPOs have found it useful to seek assistance in developing their public participation processes by hiring public relations consultants, skilled facilitators, and citizen participation experts. The public relations consultants have provided assistance to the MPO in working with the media and publicizing planning efforts to elicit greater community involvement. In the 1980s, the North Front Range Transportation and Air Quality Council obtained a consultant to design a consensus-building strategy to involve the public in the planning and execution of controversial public-sector projects, programs, plans, etc. The strategy assists public officials in determining how to conduct a citizen

participation effort. It can vary depending upon project or program, but the principles that remain the same focus on maximizing opportunities for project approval through citizen participation. The staff is taught how to create an inclusive process as a means to successfully implement a plan or project. As a part of this process the staff has to carefully identify people who may be negatively affected by a potential project or plan.

A list of potentially affected interests is developed. This list identifies parties the staff thinks will be concerned with the plan or project. The next task is to identify any specific problems the plan would create. This process assists in identifying objectives to be addressed with the public. The techniques used to design the meetings will vary based on the objectives identified for each target audience (e.g., focus groups, one-on-one, and surveys). Input is solicited from these groups and their recommendations are used to modify and improve the process. Staff members with training in facilitation usually moderate the meetings, but when an issue is controversial, an outside facilitator is hired to eliminate any perceived biases. During the upcoming Regional Transportation Plan development process, the MPO staff estimates that approximately \$100,000 will be spent to implement the citizen participation element of the process.

Using a consensus building process can take additional time, but due to the controversy that often arises during project planning and implementation, the MPO staff feels that using a public involvement process based on consensus will save time. Because the staff and Council members believe that everyone should have a voice in the planning process, plans are not developed prior to receiving input from the public.

In Cincinnati, Ohio, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments is requiring the consultant selected for a Major Investment Study (MIS) to assign a Community Involvement Specialist to provide assistance throughout the study. The Request for Proposals for the study indicates that a comprehensive public involvement program be implemented from the beginning of the effort. The Community Involvement Specialist will design and participate in meetings and outreach activities, as well as produce a comprehensive, documented record of public involvement efforts and outcomes throughout the MIS process. (See Appendix, page 39)

Many MPOs are relying on outside resources to enhance communication with the public. Often, transportation planners have limited formal training in making public presentations and/or facilitating meetings. Facilitators have been contracted to provide training to staff members in an attempt to build effective skills in conducting committee meetings and dealing with the public. Providing this training is particularly valuable in following through with collaborative participation strategies because staff members are taught to be more objective and consider the opinions of the public without becoming defensive, argumentative, or both. The Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission co-sponsored a forum on transportation and livable communities. A professional facilitator was hired to lead the process and to insure that no biases were represented (See Appendix, page 44).

Proactive outreach programs, which utilize innovative techniques, are necessary in order to create an inclusive public participation process. MPOs will have to experiment to determine which techniques work best for them. By designing a broad-based program to attract diverse participation from the community, the MPO staff can establish a working relationship that coordinates activities between local elected officials and the public. This type of process can create a partnership based on mutual trust which can garner support for proposed programs in the future.

## 2. Lessons Learned

MPOs contacted during the research assessment indicated that they have learned that when developing new public participation strategies they should:

- Start early - at the beginning of the planning process, if at all possible. Have a clear and easily communicable understanding of what the planning process is going to look like. A confusing first impression is hard to overcome.
- Develop a well-thought-out public participation component which is recognized as an integral part of the overall planning process and not an add-on activity.
- Emphasize/stress the involvement of local elected officials. Develop a participatory environment that encourages the participation of politicians and promotes the need for positive interaction with their constituents.
- Do not create unrealistic expectations for plan development or implementation. Be honest with people and do not promise to make the plan meet all concerns. Make it clear to citizens what kind of input is needed, and how it will be used in the decision making process.
- Avoid complex presentations concerning the planning process or technical procedures. Lengthy flow charts and the use of numerous acronyms and technical jargon can confuse participants.
- Provide additional training on the new role MPOs have acquired under ISTEA and the implications of ISTEA and CAAA provisions.
- Make sure staff feel confident about their abilities to handle groups effectively. If needed, provide public presentation and mediation/facilitation training to strengthen skills in this area.

Many MPOs are designing proactive public involvement programs that provide stakeholders with an opportunity to design the process that will lead transportation planning efforts. Innovative public involvement activities should:

- Develop leadership opportunities for community members to promote the plan and to interact with elected officials and other community and interest groups.
- Incorporate multiple levels of opportunity for involvement. Different stakeholders may need different kinds of involvement.
- Work with all local governments within the MPO and seek their input in developing public participation strategies.
- Manage the process carefully. MPO staff must demonstrate strong and effective leadership, not only in conducting public sessions, but also in negotiating compromises on policy and technical issues without alienating stakeholders.
- Make the long-range plan development process interesting for the citizens. Link the development of the plan to quality of life goals such as economic development and clean air attainment, using hard-hitting, practical examples.
- Consider creating special committees to educate and directly involve diverse citizens, i.e. Minority Issues Advisory Committee, Advisory Committee on Aging, Developmental Disabilities Advisory Committee, etc.
- Schedule meetings at convenient times - they should be accessible - consider

evening meetings at convenient community locations, such as neighborhood centers that can be reached by mass transit and by automobile.

- Increase the public visibility of the MPO by attending local business/chamber of commerce luncheons, interest group meetings, and other activities involving the public sector.
- Consider making groups equal partners and ensure that advisory committees are representative of all stakeholders. Organize retreats to foster long-term relations with the various stakeholders involved in the transportation plan development process.
- Involve the media in publicizing activities. Utilize radio, television, and newspapers to introduce the MPO to the community and to promote its efforts. Develop a speakers bureau and train selected members of various citizen committees to assist in outreach in their communities. Consider vehicle windshield, utility bill mailing, community bulletin boards, transit riders, cable television, talk-radio, and door-to-door distribution efforts in making people aware of MPO activities.

## **D. CHALLENGES IN MAKING COLLABORATION WORK**

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Many MPOs continue to rely heavily on traditional planning mechanisms such as ad hoc committees, citizen's advisory committees, and public hearings. As indicated above, some MPOs have designed innovative approaches to working with the public that represent initial experimental steps toward true collaboration. However, MPOs have encountered many challenges to developing effective participatory strategies.

### **1. Engaging The Public**

When participating in transportation planning, citizens are generally more concerned about individual projects, particularly controversial ones in their area, rather than long-range planning which addresses long-term future needs of the region. It can be difficult to generate and maintain public interest during the development of the long-range plan because of the time frame that it covers (twenty years) and the significant amount of time it takes to complete it. Some of the analyses, such as travel demand forecasting and air quality modeling, utilized in plan development are highly technical and difficult to understand. The relationships between transportation, land use, and the environment are complex and there is a general lack of public understanding about how these factors interact. Developing the plan can appear to be a lengthy, complex process that seems, at times, more like an academic endeavor rather than the production of a document that provides guidance for the long-term expenditure of transportation funds. The challenge is to make the plan compelling and the process used to develop the plan easy to understand and attractive to potential participants.

It can also be difficult to reach various segments of the metropolitan population such as "non-professional" citizens (in terms of public participation), members of minority groups, low income people, transit-dependent individuals, etc. Often, these individuals are the most directly affected by transportation decisions, yet they have little or no involvement in the planning process. Dealing with powerful interest groups and other established community organizations sometimes represents the beginning and the end of public involvement, and while their participation is important, they represent only a small portion

of the population. The challenge is to reach deep into communities to stimulate participatory interest at the grassroots level.

Finally, ISTEA stresses the need for the establishment of efficient connections between modes of travel in moving freight and passengers and recognizes the importance of planning for the total transportation system. The legislation encourages the participation of private sector shippers - air, ship, rail, and truckers. However, these potential participants often ask "what's in it for them?" They may be unfamiliar with MPOs and unwilling to spend time participating in a process that has not considered their needs. The challenge is to attract their participation while developing a planning process that has a customer orientation rather than a facility orientation.

## **2. Assuming New Authority**

The adaptation of MPOs and State DOTs to their new roles is evolving slowly. While MPOs are provided with greater autonomy and authority in developing plans and programs, in some parts of the country, the assumption of authority is occurring slowly. Long-standing decision making processes which have operated with political support and State legislative authority often respond slowly to change. Building new partnerships is the foundation of ISTEA. The challenge to MPOs and State DOTs is to develop new relationships that promote cooperation and allow both agencies to perform in accordance with the law. The law envisions the passing of the decision making authority ultimately to the local communities.

## **3. Developing A Regional Perspective**

MPOs, by nature, are confronted by political fragmentation within their boundaries. They are usually comprised of many local jurisdictions within the urbanized area, with each county, city, town, borough, township, etc. often focusing on its own political agenda. Public pressure is often targeted toward the political figures closest to controversial issues. This pressure can make it difficult for an elected official to support a project that has a positive effect on the region but does not directly benefit his or her particular jurisdiction. Disjointed politics among the various jurisdictions, therefore, often results in the pursuit of local projects that represent a piecemeal approach to dealing with transportation problems. This kind of approach can prevent the region from developing effective strategies to reduce congestion. MPOs are challenged to help revise this approach by providing the environment for building consensus in reconciling local differences while developing regional transportation plans and programs.

The Southern California Association of Governments is considering establishing a Dispute Resolution Consortium. This proposal seeks to provide the resources to thoroughly assess, plan, design, implement, and evaluate a customized dispute resolution system which incorporates collaborative decision making processes early in the planning and programming functions of the Southern California Association of Governments. Expected results of this project will include the institutionalization within the agency of a comprehensive dispute resolution system which seeks to identify competing interests and needs early on, involve representatives of such interests and needs in collaborative decision making processes to achieve long-term solutions to problems, reduce costs incurred in protracted litigation, and serve as a model which can be replicated by other regional government agencies. In implementing this effort, the agency leadership will participate with a team of experienced dispute resolution consultants.

In addition to local jurisdictions, some MPOs have American Indian Reservations within their boundaries. These areas are governed by sovereign tribal governments, which follow their own laws and customs. ISTEA instructs MPOs and states to provide for active involvement of Indian tribal governments in transportation planning and programming and to work proactively with them in gaining an understanding of their planning procedures.

In Pocatello, Idaho, the Bannock Planning Organization (BPO) has initiated an effort to develop a working relationship with the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribes. The Tribes live on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, which is located within the metropolitan area. BPO and the Tribes have engaged in an educational program to discuss each other's operations and have attended training involving the development of collaborative processes, and facilitation and negotiation skills. These introductory efforts have provided the foundation for further discussions to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between BPO and the Tribes, which describes the specific details concerning the nature of their evolving working relationship. (See Appendix, page 37)

#### **4. Balancing Limited Resources**

MPOs are tackling a myriad of new planning provisions found in ISTEA and the CAAA. In general, MPOs are implementing new procedures to strengthen their planning processes to meet these provisions. As they develop new plans under rigorous deadlines, they are also trying to balance the various new demands being made on them. Given the limited resources available to many MPOs, the challenge is to efficiently integrate proactive public involvement strategies into the framework used to produce transportation plans and programs.

## CHAPTER III

# Approaches To Implementing A Collaborative Planning Process

### A. THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT/COLLABORATION CONTINUUM

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Phrases like “public involvement” and “collaborative decision making” tend to trigger different images for different people, depending on what personal experience they may have had with such endeavors. The goal is to move beyond the image of citizens lodging formal comments with public officials at the end of the long-range plan or TIP development process. Instead, the process should focus on the image of citizens and public officials engaging as peers in an ongoing conversation. The challenge is then to learn how to create opportunities for such dialogue. This chapter will discuss ways of doing this using both comprehensive public involvement and consensus building processes. These two processes represent points along a continuum, with the continuum reflecting the extent to which an MPO shares decision making responsibilities with the public.

**Public involvement** generally refers to a two-way communication process between public sector decision makers on the one hand and the public-at-large on the other hand. It includes the agency’s effort to inform the public about decisions being considered and the process by which the public communicates its views on these decisions to the agency. Usually, problem solving that needs to occur as a result of differences between the staff’s analysis and the public’s views is done by the agency staff or elected officials following public input.

While at times, in the past, public involvement efforts have emphasized “telling” the public and at other times “selling” something to the public, the operative phrase now is “consulting with” the public. It is important that the public be able to influence the MPOs’ decision making throughout the process, from shaping the process and defining the issues to choosing the alternatives considered and identifying potential mitigation measures. The primary benefit of conducting public involvement activities in this spirit is that the resulting decisions are likely to be seen as legitimate, even if their contents do not completely satisfy everyone. The public tends to be almost as concerned about the process by which decisions are made and the respect with which their views are treated as they are about the substance of MPO decisions.

Some challenges MPOs are facing are so complex or controversial that a more intensive and complex public participation process is called for. For example, such a challenge could involve determining the location and size of a major new facility, crossing several jurisdictions, that may displace various neighborhoods within the metropolitan area. Under these circumstances, collaborative problem solving should be considered.

**Collaborative problem solving** can be thought of as a specialized form of public involvement, in which consensus-building tools are used throughout the decision making process. Rather than consulting with the public on its views and then going back to the

office to figure out how to reconcile differences, the staff works proactively with members of the public and interest groups to develop mutually agreeable solutions together. In a collaborative process, different types of stakeholders are involved in different ways, depending on factors such as their respective levels of interest in the issues, the time they have available to participate, and whether they represent others or solely themselves.

The basic framework for creating a multiple tier public involvement process is:

- Primary stakeholders are typically brought together in a working group for face-to-face collaborative problem solving.
- Secondary stakeholders are offered multiple ways to participate in forums held throughout the process.
- The “public-at-large” is kept informed of the proceedings and invited to participate in open forums.

Collaborative problem-solving processes provide useful vehicles for intergovernmental coordination as well, since representatives of relevant governmental agencies qualify as “stakeholders” and should therefore be involved throughout such a process. Since many transportation issues need active (and often financial) support from many different organizations, collaborative problem solving processes can be an effective vehicle for building multi-sectoral partnerships.

Stakeholders include:

- Those who are, or could be, significantly affected by the issues, either directly or indirectly;
- Those who could ensure implementation of potential solutions ; and
- Those who could block implementation of potential solutions.

Both collaborative problem solving and comprehensive public involvement programs tend to be more resource intensive than traditional public involvement approaches. A good public involvement program will suffice when a single decision making entity has authority to make and implement a decision. A collaborative process should be considered if the political and economic climate dictate the need for support from other organizations and individuals to implement relevant decisions.

## **B. PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION**

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The fundamental principle of collaboration is that it is based on **inclusiveness**. All stakeholders must have a meaningful voice in the planning process so that their input is reflected in the final products developed. However, each stakeholder need not be involved in the same way. Typically, the planning process offers stakeholders a **variety of ways to become involved**, reflecting stakeholders’ varying levels of availability and investment in the issues.

Moreover, a collaborative planning process goes beyond inclusiveness, as might be envisioned by MPO staff, in that the **planning process itself is subject to approval by the stakeholders**. In practice, this means that the decision-making agency and the staff person designing the process work with a representative group of stakeholders to develop the preliminary process design. When this group is satisfied with the design, the full group of participants are convened to discuss the design and negotiate any

modifications necessary for all stakeholders to feel comfortable with it. Thus, **stakeholders in a collaborative planning process are involved from the very earliest stages of the process.**

A collaborative planning process also goes beyond the search for an acceptable compromise. In effect, the participants make a pact to use **consensus-based decision making** as a tool to collectively strive for **three kinds of satisfaction for all stakeholders**—substantive satisfaction, procedural satisfaction, and psychological satisfaction. “Substantive satisfaction” refers to the kind of satisfaction that most readily comes to mind when a negotiated agreement is considered—whether or not the agreement contains the provisions sought by a given participant. “Procedural satisfaction” refers to whether or not participants perceived the planning process to be fair. And “psychological satisfaction” refers to whether or not participants felt that their views were heard, respected, and carefully considered by other participants.

It is not always possible to achieve all three forms of satisfaction for all participants. However, the process of seeking all three levels of satisfaction for everyone involved helps change the dynamics from adversarial to collegial. By having stakeholders work together toward a common goal, it is possible for the group to mobilize around proposed solutions developed by the group rather than each participant asserting and defending their respective positions.

Finally, a collaborative planning process must be **linked effectively to the conventional decision making process already in place.** The product of the collaborative effort must be fed back into the formal decision making process for ratification—the legitimization necessary if implementation of the plan is to occur. Otherwise, the process is simply a time-consuming exercise. The underlying principles of a collaborative planning process should be discussed prior to implementing the process. Understanding these principles will provide MPOs with the resources needed to meet unexpected challenges and adapt their programs to changing circumstances.

## **C. A FOUR-STAGE MODEL FOR COLLABORATIVE PLANNING**

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This section describes a four-stage consensus-building model for implementing a collaborative planning process<sup>3</sup> It is only one of many such models, which reflect different contexts in which collaboration has been important. There is no single model likely to fit all circumstances; successful collaboration depends on an openness to a different way of doing things. The model presented below provides a framework for working with stakeholders in a particular community. It can be modified to fit the needs of those involved, or an alternative model can be created.

The four stages of this consensus-building model include:

1. Getting Started;
2. Defining the Task;
3. Making Choices; and
4. Implementing Decisions.

Each stage is described in some detail below. Although the model is presented in a very

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<sup>3</sup> This model was initially developed by Frank Blechman of George Mason University in the late 1980's, based on a synthesis of other existing models. It has been modified for presentation here.

linear way, its users typically do a significant amount of “cycling back” to earlier stages as they progress toward consensus on the issues of concern. For example, the problem analysis that typically occurs during the “Defining the Task” stage may induce participants to make changes to the way the collaborative process is structured. Despite the fact that the process design is typically negotiated in the earlier “Getting Started” stage, participants should remain flexible throughout the process, making modifications to earlier agreements, as appropriate.

## **1. Getting Started**

The goal of the “Getting Started” stage is to design a collaborative process that all stakeholders are satisfied with and can use as a vehicle for working toward, for example, a mutually acceptable long-range transportation plan. This stage begins when someone recognizes there is a planning provision that can only be met if a number of parties work collaboratively to make it happen. That “someone” might be an elected or appointed official, it might be an MPO staff member, or it might be someone affiliated with an interested advocacy group. This individual sets the process in motion by:

- Identifying stakeholders;
- Making initial contact with stakeholders, usually through interviews, to explore their interest in participating;
- Assessing the input received from stakeholders as a group, determining whether collaboration still seems appropriate, and (if so) drafting a preliminary process design; and
- Convening stakeholders to negotiate agreement on the process design.

This stage is completed when stakeholders agree on a written description of a planning process that reflects the collaborative principles described above. The process design should identify: the goals and desired products of the planning effort; the convening entity; an initial list of stakeholders; key roles that various parties will play in the collaborative planning process; specific types of forums that will be used to involve different types of stakeholders; a diagram showing how these different forums relate to one another and how this process, as a whole, relates to the conventional decision making process; and a timeline for the planning process.

While stakeholders may be impatient to move on to substantive (rather than procedural) negotiations, this stage lays the groundwork for the substantive negotiations. Making sure everyone understands and agrees to the process design before proceeding will minimize the likelihood of future challenges to the planning process itself and begin to instill stakeholders with confidence that they are capable of reaching agreement on the tougher issues.

## **2. Defining the Task**

The goals of the “Defining the Task” stage are: (1) to develop a shared definition of what the stakeholders are trying to achieve through the collaborative process; and (2) to develop a variety of options for how to go about achieving that end. In developing a long-range plan, for example, this is the stage where stakeholders would discuss the objective of the plan and propose a variety of projects and strategies for possible inclusion in the final document. In updating the TIP, the group would consider the prioritization of critical short-term transportation needs.

Each stakeholder typically enters a collaborative process with his or her own way of defining the aim of the process. Therefore, participants must negotiate a shared definition of what they are trying to achieve through their joint labors. Otherwise, each is likely to be trying to “solve” a slightly different problem.

Once the group defines its goals, participants enter a period of mutual education. Each identifies his or her constituents’ issues and explains their concerns to the rest of the group. Together, they work toward a joint understanding of the problems they are trying to solve. (As this understanding emerges, stakeholders may choose to cycle back and modify the problem statement accordingly.)

It is usually necessary to gather information during this stage. In this case, stakeholders *jointly* agree on related issues, such as:

- The type of data needed;
- Credible sources of that data;
- Who should collect and analyze it; and,
- How it should be analyzed.

By making these decisions jointly, participants avoid future disputes over the credibility of data fundamental to the development of solutions.

As participants begin to understand one another’s issues and concerns, they generate a range of options for addressing the issues. During the “Defining the Task” stage, participants should be creative in generating as many different options as possible. There will be time for formal evaluation of options during the next stage (“Making Choices”); the “Defining the Task” stage is not the time for participants to criticize one another’s ideas because it inhibits creativity. If participants have difficulty developing options, they may find it helpful to spend some time articulating a shared vision of their desired outcome and then work backwards to identify alternative ways of realizing that vision.

This stage will be completed when participants agree on: (1) a written definition of the “problem” or challenge that all stakeholders are working together to address; and (2) a comprehensive list of substantive options for how to address the particular problem or challenge.

### **3. Making Choices**

The goal of the “Making Choices” stage is to select a proposed solution to the group’s shared problem from among the options identified in the last stage. For example, in developing a long-range plan, the recommended option or alternative would be decided during this stage. During TIP development, the group would identify projects proposed to address short-term transportation needs.

The first step in moving from a range of options to one proposed solution is for the stakeholders to list all possible criteria by which they could evaluate the options that they identified in the “Defining the Task” stage. Once a list of criteria is prepared, stakeholders negotiate agreement on which criteria should actually be used. All stakeholders need to agree to look for a solution that best meets the collective list of criteria.

Once participants agree on the evaluation criteria, they apply the criteria to each option. Based on their option evaluation efforts, participants may move toward a proposed solution by eliminating the impractical options, gathering more information on certain

options, combining two or more options, and testing the emerging results in some way (e.g., a pilot project). When stakeholders have put together a proposed solution which is agreed upon by the group, they then develop an implementation plan for it.

This stage is completed when the group has drafted a mutually-acceptable solution to the problem or challenge identified in the “Defining the Task” stage, as well as an accompanying implementation plan.

#### **4. Implementing Decisions**

The primary objective of the “Implementing Decisions” stage is to obtain formal approval for the changes the group proposed during the discussion in the previous stage (“Making Choices”). If the model is being used to develop a long-range transportation plan, for example, this stage involves taking the recommended draft plan to the MPO Board for final adoption. If the TIP were being updated, the prioritized projects recommended for implementation would be presented to the MPO Board for approval.

The first step in this final stage of a collaborative planning process is to present the proposed solution to decision makers for ratification. Often, a representative subgroup of stakeholders who participated in the collaborative process will “walk the proposal through” the approval process to demonstrate the multi-sectoral support that the proposal enjoys. Providing that decision makers (along with the full range of stakeholders) have been adequately represented in the collaborative process, ratification of a consensus-based plan is usually a pro forma process.

This stage is completed when the desired results of the solution proposed in the last stage can be documented.

### **D. INSTITUTIONALIZING COLLABORATIVE PLANNING AND DISPUTE RESOLUTION SYSTEMS**

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In general, this document has described the ad hoc use of public involvement and collaborative planning processes. However, some of the current pioneering efforts in public participation and consensus building involve the institutionalization of such processes. For example, the Southern California Association of Governments is currently looking to develop a “built-in” system for both collaborative planning and consensus-based dispute resolution (see page 19).

The benefit of institutionalizing collaborative decision making systems is that MPO staffs are able to mobilize and initiate a collaborative process much more quickly when it is needed than if they were using these approaches on an ad hoc basis. Ad hoc use of collaborative plans slows down the process due to the time needed to get decision makers’ authorization to use an unusual approach, to raise necessary funds, to find and hire a process designer and/or facilitator, and to develop procedures. When such processes are institutionalized, on the other hand, decision makers have typically already:

- Approved procedural protocols, defining when and how such a process can be used;
- Established a timely funding mechanism; and
- Pre-qualified a pool of facilitators.

Using a collaborative process is then just a matter of staff getting approval to use a known procedure, obtaining a facilitator, getting stakeholders' agreement to participate, and tailoring existing rules to the circumstances of the particular situation.

## CHAPTER IV

# Evaluating the Success of Your Collaborative Planning Process

Including an evaluation component in a collaborative planning process is important in order to allow an MPO to make necessary adjustments as the process progresses and to improve subsequent efforts. Any evaluation should be based on what have been identified as the goals and objectives for the project. Once the objectives have been devised, criteria that will be used to measure the MPOs' achievement should also be identified. The more measurable the objectives are, the easier it will be to evaluate the progress made toward achieving them. However, it can be challenging to make objectives for a collaborative process quantifiable, and a qualitative assessment of progress is also valuable.

### A. SUCCESS INDICATORS

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One measure of success in a collaborative process may be an adopted plan. However, relying on this as the sole measure of success can have a negative effect by motivating participants to reach an agreement regardless of its value. Thus, care must be taken in choosing the variables by which the MPO will measure success so that the selection does not undermine the intent of the collaborative effort.

There are a range of beneficial outcomes that may emerge from a collaborative process besides an adopted plan that should not be overlooked in assessing the success of the process. These include an agreement concerning the process for addressing a problem, clarification of issues and perspectives through joint analysis, an agreement to disagree, and improved working relationships. In addition to whether or not an agreement is reached, an MPO might consider the following items in evaluating success:

- Length of planning process;
- Cost of planning process;
- Whether the plan is challenged and if so, costs associated with the challenge;
- Quality of plan (e.g., measured by projects actually implemented and integration of projects across all transportation modes);
- Stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with the process used to develop the plan;
- Stakeholders' levels of satisfaction with the contents of the plan;
- Impact on working relationships (e.g., between the MPO and the public, between the MPO and other agencies, between the MPO and local elected officials);
- Impact on MPOs credibility; and,

- Impact on MPO staff's morale and efficiency.<sup>4</sup>

## **B. METHODS OF MEASURING SUCCESS**

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MPOs have used a variety of methods to measure the success of the process developed including:

- Mail-in responses distributed as newsletter inserts;
- Evaluation forms filled out by participants;
- Special meetings to discuss accomplishments midway through the process;
- Open comment periods scheduled throughout the process;
- Peer review panels made up of transportation experts (including consultants, professors, State and local officials, and neighboring MPOs) brought in to comment on draft process design; and
- Oversight committees comprised of representative samples of participating stakeholders.

Other possible evaluation methods include an analysis of press coverage afforded the collaborative process, a questionnaire, interviews, and/or an analysis of data in the MPO's files.

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<sup>4</sup> These variables were adapted from a presentation by Dr. Craig McEwen of Bowdoin College, which was sponsored by the Administrative Conference of the U.S. in September, 1993.

## Conclusion

ISTEA and the CAAA provide the foundation for improving mobility and air quality. The Acts address early, active, meaningful, and inclusive public participation, and support the building of partnerships between State and local government officials, politicians, and communities. MPOs are currently experimenting with a variety of new strategies to reach out to the communities they serve. Given the diversity and complexity of transportation issues MPOs face when developing participatory opportunities, a single approach does not apply to all.

This report allows MPOs to explore the collaboration-public involvement continuum to develop an understanding of strategies for various levels of participation. The public participation approaches currently being used throughout the country demonstrate that many MPOs have the skills to develop inclusive and collaborative transportation planning processes. MPO staffs can use the four-stage consensus building model to develop their citizen involvement efforts, and learn how to respond to the many challenges that occur when attempting to make collaboration work. The needs of MPOs vary by population size, region, air quality status, and professional staff size.

ISTEA and the CAAA created new roles for government agencies and the public. Under the changes provided in these acts, transportation stakeholders can assume a new role in defining transportation planning systems that affect their mobility and quality of life. MPOs and local governments are responsible for educating the public and providing them with opportunities for meaningful input in the planning process. The flexible application of the principles provided in this document should assist MPOs and local governments to develop a more inclusive and collaborative process that produces viable, financially sound, and implementable plans reflecting broad public support.

# Resources

## GLOSSARY

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**Attainment Area**-An area considered to have air quality at least as good as the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) health standards used in the Clean Air Act.

**Non-attainment areas** are areas considered not to have met these standards for designated pollutants. An area may be an attainment area for one pollutant and a non-attainment area for others.

**Carbon Monoxide**-CO for short. A gas without color and odor which is toxic because too much of it can dangerously reduce oxygen in the bloodstream.

**Conformity**-Process to assess the compliance of any transportation plan, program or project with air quality control plans. The conformity process is defined by the Clean Air Act.

**U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT)**-The principal federal funding agency for transportation planning facilities and programs. Includes FHWA and FTA.

**Enhancement Activities**-Refers to activities conducted which enhance the transportation system. Examples of such activities include provision of facilities for pedestrians or cyclists, landscaping or other scenic beautification projects, historic preservation, control and removal of outdoor advertising, archeological planning and research, and mitigation of water pollution due to highway runoff.

**Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)**-Agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation which funds highway planning and programs.

**Federal Transit Administration (FTA)**-Agency of the U.S. Department of Transportation which funds transit planning and programs.

**Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA)**-Authorization Act that restructured funding for highway and transit programs. ISTEA authorized increased levels of highway and transit funding and provided an enlarged role for regional planning commissions/MPOs in funding decisions. The Act also provides criteria to be met in establishing comprehensive regional long-range transportation plans.

**Long-range Plan**-a twenty year plan, now needed at both the metropolitan and state level, which must consider a wide range of social, environmental, energy and economic factors in determining overall regional goals and how transportation can best meet these goals.

**Metropolitan Planning Organization**-The organization with lead responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. MPOs are established by agreement of the Governor and units of general purpose local government which together represents 75 percent of the affected population or an urbanized area.

**Ozone**-Human-made ozone is created when hydrocarbons and nitrogen oxides from car exhausts and certain industrial emissions react in the presence of strong sunlight. Reduction of ozone produced from "mobile source emissions" (motor vehicles) is a major objective of the region's air quality plan.

**Public Participation**-The active involvement of the public in the development of transportation plans and improvement programs. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) indicates that state departments of transportation and MPOs “shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the development of the long-range plan and TIP.”

**State Implementation Plan (SIP)**-Documents prepared by the state and submitted to EPA for approval. SIPs identify state actions and programs to implement designated responsibilities under the Clean Air Act.

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**-This is a work-plan which must be developed at both the state and metropolitan levels. The TIP is a short-range program which must cover a minimum of three years for a metropolitan area and two years for a state. Projects listed in the TIP address the goals of the long-range plan and lists priority projects and activities for the region.

**Urbanized Area**-Area with a population of more than 50,000 meeting U.S. Census Bureau density standards. Includes a central city and surrounding areas meeting set size or density criteria.

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These publications provide substantive guides to conducting consensus building processes. Carpenter and Kennedy is book length and provides detailed advice. Solving Community Problems by Consensus provides a summary and short case

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This book explores difficult negotiation situations.

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American Bar Association  
Commission on Mental and Physical  
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1800 M Street, NW  
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National Association of Regional Councils  
1700 K Street, N.W., 13th Floor  
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(202) 457-0710

National Institute for Dispute Resolution  
1901 L Street, NW Suite 600  
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National Institute on Disability and  
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National League of Cities  
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Program for Community Problem Solving  
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Project Action  
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# APPENDIX

## CASE STUDIES

### A. BANNOCK PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND THE SHOSHONE-BANNOCK INDIAN TRIBES

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The Bannock Planning Organization (BPO) is the MPO for the Pocatello, Idaho area. It covers a 221 square mile non-attainment area for PM-10 in southeast Idaho. The urbanized area boundaries consist of the corporate limits of the City of Pocatello and the City of Chubbuck, Idaho. Other jurisdictions within the MPO region include Bannock County, Power County, the City of Inkom, and the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. The population of this area is approximately 65,000 people. The MPO Policy Board is comprised of representatives from Bannock County, Pocatello and Chubbuck, and the Pocatello Urban Transit Director.

Cooperation and coordination are key factors stressed by ISTEA in developing plans and programs in metropolitan areas. BPO is working to address these factors in incorporating the various local jurisdictions, the general public, and the Shoshone-Bannock Indian Tribes living on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation into the planning process. One of the most important developments in adapting its planning process to become more inclusive is to seek a working relationship with the Tribes in conducting transportation planning activities.

#### ***ISTEA and Tribal Involvement***

With respect to tribal lands within metropolitan boundaries, Section 450.312 (l) of the joint metropolitan planning regulations indicates that “where a metropolitan planning area includes Federal public lands and/or Indian tribal lands, the affected Federal agencies and Indian tribal governments shall be involved appropriately in the development of transportation plans and programs.” FTA and FHWA have responded to questions concerning the nature of tribal involvement in MPO planning activities by stressing that “such involvement allows all participants to coordinate plans and programs under consideration by the various implementing agencies and that it is important for states and MPOs to recognize and be sensitive to tribal customs and to the nationally recognized sovereignty of tribal governments. As a result, tribal governments should be actively sought for participation as independent government bodies rather than specific minority groups.” ( quoted from FHWA/FTA Questions and Answers on Public Involvement in Transportation Decision Making)

BPO and the tribes are seeking to clarify how this participation and interaction should work by embarking on an effort to establish a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). If successful, the MOU will be an agreement that specifies the terms of the working relationship between the MPO and the Tribes. In the past, BPO has dealt with federal and state organizations in transportation, and traditionally the Tribes have dealt with federal organizations through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) or directly, with no interaction between the Tribes and the MPO. In working toward this MOU, BPO and the

Tribes are trying to create an informative environment where two sovereign entities can exchange information about activities and collaborate, when possible, in transportation planning efforts in the region. The strategy to initiate the development of the MOU consists of several activities described below. These activities include an educational workshop to discuss how each organization operates, a training and consultation workshop on collaborative transportation planning, and a kick-off meeting to reach agreement on how the MOU talks will be structured.

### ***Education Workshop About Organizational Procedures and Customs***

The purpose of this workshop was to educate BPO and the Tribes about their respective lawmaking, planning, and decision making processes pertaining to transportation. Participants included staff members from each organization as well as representatives from the BIA, the Idaho Transportation Department (ITD), and the Idaho Department of Environmental Quality. The workshop was important in providing the general understanding necessary to develop a range of issues that would be open for discussion in subsequent talks on a range of subjects. Also, understanding how BPO and the Tribes interact with other federal, state, and local agencies involved in the planning process was important in realizing how and when various ISTEA-related tasks were conducted and how they may differ between the two organizations. Various customs embedded in tribal culture were also discussed including land use definitions, employment rights, and the operation of the Tribal Business Council in making transportation decisions. The workshop provided an excellent forum for discussing operational issues, customs, and concerns and provided the foundation necessary to proceed down the path toward a mutually-agreeable MOU.

### ***A Training and Consultation Workshop on Collaborative Transportation Planning***

As an interactive primer to shape subsequent MOU-related discussions, BPO and the Tribes attended a one and a half day training workshop, provided by the Program for Community Problem Solving. The purpose of the workshop was to provide technical guidance concerning the development of collaborative planning processes, negotiation, and facilitation skills. Exercises involving how to design and implement effective collaborative planning processes were woven into examples involving cross-cultural dynamics. Opportunities were provided to apply these exercises to issues discussed during the previously-held educational workshop.

### ***Organizational Kick-off Meeting for MOU Development Process***

The day after the training workshop, an organizational kick-off meeting was held to discuss how to structure upcoming discussions between BPO and the Tribes regarding their working relationship. Participants included BPO, Tribal, and ITD staff and a representative from the Program for Community Problem Solving who facilitated discussions. The participants developed shared procedural understandings involving the following topics in developing an overall structure for conducting the future talks.

- Purpose of Negotiations;
- Desired Outcome;
- Agenda for Negotiations and Order of Topics for Discussion;

- People to be Invited to Participate;
- Structure of the Discussions;
- Schedule;
- Ground Rules to Maximize Constructive Environment;
- Meeting Support Needs; and
- Formal Action Once Consensus on MOU is Reached.

The group was able to work through each of the issues, establishing the framework necessary to continue the MOU-related talks.

In general, using workshop forums to establish a greater understanding about their respective organizations enabled BPO and the Tribes to better define issues and concerns that should be a part of future talks. Both face a myriad of different planning regulations in developing plans and programs, and each interacts with different federal agencies in different ways. The educational workshop helped clarify some of the similarities and differences in operations and the training session introduced skills and concepts to be used in determining how to work together in the future.

## **B. OHIO-KENTUCKY-INDIANA REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS**

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The Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI) is the MPO for the Cincinnati tri-state area. In OKI's planning region, the Eastern Corridor is one of the several heavily traveled, congested areas that needs further study to determine how its transportation needs can be addressed more effectively. The Corridor is located in a 20-square mile area, including parts of 14 municipalities and six townships in three counties. For this area, the long-range plan proposes major investments for both commuter rail and highway expansion. ISTEAs indicate that Major Investment Studies (MIS) should be conducted to address these kinds of proposals.

### ***ISTEA Provisions for MIS***

As described in guidance provided by FTA and FHWA, a MIS is a subset of the overall metropolitan region transportation system planning process. It involves conducting subarea analyses in congested corridors that have been identified in the region-wide planning process. These analyses are intended to provide more thorough planning and to help local officials evaluate various alternatives that may address the needs in a particular corridor with the ultimate result being a recommended alternative for implementation. The MIS provides decision makers with more analytical information earlier in the planning process so that more informed decisions can be made sooner and more effectively.

Concerning public involvement, the joint metropolitan planning regulations indicate that the MIS include:

- a cooperative and collaborative process to establish a range of alternatives to be studied, and factors to be addressed.
- a proactive public involvement process that provides opportunities for the public and

various interests to participate.

Fulfilling the MIS provisions in the Eastern Corridor will help OKI develop potential solutions for an area with a contentious history in addressing transportation concerns. Over the years, many of the proposals to alleviate congestion in this area have not generated widespread local agreement among the various jurisdictions that would enable implementation. Various political, environmental, and land use concerns have hindered progress. By developing more effective public involvement strategies as a part of the MIS effort, OKI believes that it will be more likely that consensus may be reached concerning the most appropriate strategies to address the deficiencies in the transportation system.

### ***RFP for Public Involvement in MIS***

OKI has developed a Request for Proposals (RFP) for the Eastern Corridor that stresses the need for proactive public involvement and collaborative decision making from the beginning of the effort. Key relevant portions of the RFP are provided below as examples for MPOs and others to consider.

### ***Eastern Corridor MIS Objective***

This MIS is undertaken as the result of planning that shows the need for a major investment to improve east-west mobility through the Eastern Corridor. Beginning without bias toward any particular mode or project, the MIS will involve the affected public in identifying potential solutions, reducing the number of alternatives to be studied, and selecting the preferred alternative. The MIS is to be conducted through a collaborative decision making process aimed at enabling stakeholders to reach consensus concerning a solution. The primary objective of the Eastern Corridor MIS is to select a financially feasible, publicly acceptable alternative for improving east-west mobility through the area.

### ***Public Involvement Elements***

The Eastern Corridor MIS is to be conducted through an open participatory process in which public involvement will be proactive, public opportunities for receiving information and providing comments will be provided early on and frequently, and key decisions will be made through a collaborative process involving the area's numerous and diverse stakeholders. Given the historic and persistent lack of consensus in the Eastern Corridor on transportation issues and solutions, effective public involvement is critical for developing a solution with broad-based support.

Efforts to secure involvement will be targeted to stakeholders, who are entities or individuals that could be significantly affected by the study's recommendations or could significantly influence implementation. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to, federal and state transportation agencies, transit agencies, special transportation interests (e.g. freight shippers, bicycle organizations, disabled community), county engineers, planning commissions, local officials, environmental organizations, neighborhood representatives, chambers of commerce, and the general public.

Through different processes, efforts will be made to inform and involve a core group of stakeholders, other interested stakeholders, the public-at-large, and OKI committees. At the beginning, the consultant will present stakeholders with an overview of the MIS process that includes a draft process design for public involvement during the study. The

consultant will modify the draft process design based on stakeholder comment.

The core group of stakeholders, which will be a cross-section of stakeholders identified through a collaborative process, will be the most involved in the study. Other interested stakeholders will also be provided frequent opportunities for involvement, and the public-at-large will be kept informed and offered opportunities to comment on major decisions before they are finalized. At major milestone points, the consultant will make OKI's Intermodal Coordinating Committee and Executive Committee aware of the study's progress and key issues. Throughout the MIS, the consultant is expected to provide education so that stakeholders understand what is being asked of them and why, and to provide information with clarity and thoroughness for both technical and non-technical participants. For example, the consultant will work closely with stakeholders to develop a preliminary set of major investment alternatives for consideration. The consultant will then develop relevant technical and financial information for each alternative and explain to the stakeholders how this information can be used in a screening process to evaluate the various alternatives.

### ***Three Phases to Complete MIS***

The MIS will be developed in three phases. The first phase will deal with mobility problems and conceptual alternatives for improving mobility. The consultant will work with stakeholders to develop a set of preliminary major investment alternatives. These alternatives will then be presented to the public-at-large as a basis for making additions, deletions, and modifications.

In the second phase of the study, the conceptual alternatives will be reduced to no fewer than six and no more than eight for further study. The consultant will work with stakeholders to reduce the number of alternatives and to refine the definition of each selected alternative. The selected alternatives will then be presented to the public-at-large and subsequently modified to reflect public input.

In the third phase, a preferred alternative will be selected after the consultant has developed relevant technical, environmental, and financial information for each alternative and presented it in a screening process involving the stakeholders and the public-at-large. Stakeholders will be involved in determining the evaluation criteria for use in selecting the preferred alternative, as well as selecting alternative for further study.

The consultant will designate a Community Involvement Specialist to be directly involved throughout the duration of the MIS. Consultant responsibilities for public involvement will include, but not be limited to, designing and participating in meetings, presenting information, preparing meeting agendas, minutes, materials for presentations, outreach activities, documentation of and response to public comment, and a comprehensive record of public involvement efforts and outcomes throughout the MIS process.

In general, as indicated above, OKI has launched a MIS with a strong public involvement emphasis, which it feels will provide an excellent opportunity for involving a greater number of people more effectively in resolving a controversial transportation problem that has grown during the last 30 years.

### **C. East West Gateway Coordinating Council**

The East West Gateway Coordinating Council is located in St. Louis, Missouri. The

Council is the designated MPO for the St. Louis metropolitan area; it is a bi-state MPO that serves the city of St. Louis, four counties in Missouri and three counties in Illinois. The MPO also serves approximately 94 city and municipal governments throughout the region. Due to the fragmentation of authority in the metropolitan area, soliciting input from community and private sector groups represents a difficult challenge to the MPO. During development of their long-range plan, the MPO staff designed a three-tier public involvement process designed to ensure that all stakeholders had an opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process.

The public participation component designed by East-West Gateway was unique in that the MPO staff created a process that truly reflected the input of its citizens. After each phase of the long-range planning process, staff held joint committee meetings to allow citizens to comment on progress. Participants from the citizens advisory committees were also appointed to sit on the MPO's Policy Committee, which was responsible for developing the policies that direct the MPO's long-range planning process. The advisory committees represented a cross-section of the region's population, including participation by members of the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, a variety of youth organizations, the American Association of Retired Persons and the Near Southside Employment Coalition (which primarily provides assistance with employment to African Americans living in the St. Louis area).

### ***Three Part Public Involvement Process***

The three components of the public involvement process included public information, public participation, and community conversation components. As a part of the **Public Information** component, special newsletters, issue papers and press releases were distributed to the general public to keep the public informed of progress in development of the long-range plan. During the **Public Participation** component, participation was carried out through the three citizen advisory committees, which included approximately 190 individuals. Through participation on one of the three committees, the public provided input throughout the planning process. The third component, **Community Conversation**, consisted of small and large community events sponsored by the MPO which brought a wide range of individuals with an interest in mobility together to exchange ideas. This component allowed the community to express their various view points on how the transportation planning process operated. Community input was used to direct the staff's future transportation planning efforts. In addition, four citizen representatives were appointed to the Long-range Plan Policy Committee.

### ***Kickoff Conference***

As the first step in development of its long-range plan, the Council sponsored a long-range plan kickoff conference in October of 1992 called **Transportation Redefined: New Partnerships, New Directions for the Year 2015**. The theme, "Transportation Redefined," represented the Council's effort to "use the transportation system as a vehicle for meeting economic, social and environmental goals." The purpose of the conference was to provide all stakeholders with an interest in the transportation system an opportunity to influence development of the plan. More than 300 people attended the day-long event. The morning session focused on identifying current conditions in the region, and involved two panel discussions moderated by a consultant. The first panel represented the consumer's perspective. Representatives of various transportation consumer groups described their interest in the transportation system and how the

transportation system effected them as consumers. The second panel represented the provider's perspective. Representatives of transportation provider agencies discussed their roles in the St. Louis region. The afternoon session consisted of three concurrent workshops, which focused on each of three issues which ultimately evolved into individual citizen advisory committees. The sessions were facilitated by Council staff.

## ***Citizen Advisory Committees***

Conference attendees interested in providing input during the development of the long-range plan were encouraged to sign up for one of the citizen advisory committees being developed. The three committees included:

- The Transportation, Employment and Community Services committee. This group explored the importance of transportation as a community service and link to full employment. The members discussed issues such as the mobility needs of groups who are transit-dependent.
- The Transportation, Land Use, and the Environment Committee. This group focused on defining specific issues related to long-range transportation planning in a number of different areas, including land use and development; urban and neighborhood design; the preservation and efficient use of existing facilities and corridors; and alternative systems (e.g., bicycle paths).
- The Transportation and the Regional Economy Committee. This group assisted in clarifying how to target transportation improvements whose overall economic effects are beneficial to everyone. To achieve this, the group attempted to identify the range of economic issues that the region will face in the future in relation to the transportation system being designed.

MPO staff members developed a long-range transportation plan schedule of actions and activities for the committees. The schedule identified proposed activities from January through April 1993. The month of May was set aside for staff to finalize results from the CAC effort, and meetings were proposed for June and July to discuss and review drafts of the plan.

To assist in designing a series of issues, a Problem/Issue Identification Exercise was designed by the staff to identify transportation issues of concern to the public. Each committee member was asked to list ten regional transportation issues, not specific projects, that concerned them. Each citizen committee meeting consisted of a series of targeted questions pertaining to the issues assigned to each group; questions were provided to participants prior to each meeting. The staff used the questions to drive the meeting. The information was then synthesized by the staff into a variety of proposals based on the specific questions discussed. At the following meeting, the participants validated the proposals and prioritized them through a voting technique. During the final meeting, the group provided feedback on the results and discussed what the other groups had done. The Council recently completed a series of joint CAC meetings to review the draft long-range plan and to discuss how it would be presented to the general public.

## ***Informational Efforts***

As a part of the MPO's effort, the East-West Gateway public information section has generated a number of informative media items which have been disseminated to the

public. The documents include:

- **Talking the Talk**, a pocket guide to the language of transportation planning. The objective of the guide is to break down language barriers that commonly exist between planners and laymen who are becoming involved in the process.
- A **Transportation Redefined** newsletter is published periodically to update the public on the progress made in development of the long-range plan.

## **Conclusion**

The process developed by East-West Gateway was designed to allow maximum public involvement by allowing for varying levels and types of input. At this time, East-West Gateway has received input from a wide variety of groups who traditionally do not participate in the transportation planning process. The public is very excited about ISTEA and the opportunities the legislation has provided for increased public input into the transportation planning process. Mr. Gil Peters, a representative for the trucking association, summed it up when he said, "Before ISTEA I would have never thought about sitting at the table with a bicycle advocate. ISTEA has encouraged groups with conflicting interests to listen to other points of view."

## **D. SOUTHWESTERN PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

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The composition of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission's (SPRPC) region creates a particularly challenging environment in evaluating and making transportation decisions. Key factors include: the huge land area with inherent urban/suburban/rural competing interests; the complexity of the transportation system due to rugged terrain, river valleys, numerous bridges, tunnels, and waterways; the loss of population and jobs over the past fifteen years, and the corresponding needs for economic development through improved access; and, the need for reduction of future vehicle emissions to attain clean air standards.

### ***Established New Partnerships***

SPRPC has reorganized since ISTEA to include four additional members on the Commission who previously did not have authority to vote on critical transportation issues. In addition to the existing board members, there will now be two transit operators, an additional representative from the City of Pittsburgh and a person from the Governor's office.

SPRPC established working groups for the truck, air cargo, and railroad industries to allow these stakeholders to provide input on transportation issues and problems they are experiencing. The SPRPC staff also sponsored a workshop on freight and air cargo handling. In the future, the working groups will meet collectively around projects and plans.

SPRPC has established a good working relationship with the Port Authority. The two agencies have had a long history of involvement at a variety of different levels. The

agencies participate on a Transit Operators Committee and work together on transportation studies. Coordination also takes place during TIP and LRP development and day-to-day staff activities. The Port Authority conducts Major Investment Studies for transit projects and the MPO staff participates on the Port Authority's technical committees.

## ***Long-Range Plan Development***

"Choosing a Future" Kick-off Conference. SPRPC initiated their long-range plan public involvement effort by providing community and business leaders with an opportunity for early involvement in developing the long-range plan. In November of 1992, SPRPC held a two day conference entitled "Choosing a Future" to provide private sector leaders an opportunity to comment on and revise four concepts provided by SPRPC as starting points in developing long-range planning options for the region. Participants were selected by the Transportation Plan Policy Committee and MPO staff. As a part of this process, the group broke down into smaller discussion groups to review the concepts. The discussions were facilitated by SPRPC staff and transportation professionals from area agencies.

The Long-range Planning Process. In examining public involvement in the region, the development of the long-range plan provides the best example of efforts undertaken by SPRPC thus far. The staff considered the long-range planning process to be much more structured than during development of the TIP. The long-range plan development process operated under the leadership of the Transportation Policy Plan Committee (TPP). The TPP is a forty person leadership committee whose members include senior representatives from the region's public, private and nonprofit sectors. The TPP committee generally meets monthly, but additional sessions are scheduled as needed. The committee accepted recommendations from a variety of committees and subcommittees which included a Technical Finance, Public Relations, Environmental, Forecast, and a Citizen Committee as well as special committees (e.g., the Working Group for Community Development).

During development of the long-range plan, the staff under the direction of the TPP assessed the needs and goals of the region and initial regional development options were defined. Fiscal limit projections are developed. Educational workshops were sponsored for the public. Technical analyses of the alternatives were conducted prior to their being presented to the public for review. Based on the comments from the public and local elected officials, the preferred elements from the alternatives were selected to be included in a draft plan. The public then reviewed and commented on the preferred plan option. A working plan was adopted in October 1993.

Staff Facilitation Training. As a part of its public involvement strategy, SPRPC hired a nationally recognized facilitator to provide senior level staff with training in facilitation. The two day training program was designed to enhance staff communication skills in working with the public. Staff facilitation skills are utilized during Policy Committee meetings, special meetings and conferences.

Use Of A Public Relations Consultant. SPRPC hired a public relations consultant to direct the staff effort in developing strategies and preparing various forms of media materials to increase the visibility of the MPO among the many communities it serves and to encourage participation by the public during the development of the long-range plan. As a part of the public involvement effort, the consultant developed written materials (brochures, informative newsletter, etc.) to educate the public as to who the

MPO is and what role the public has an opportunity to assume in shaping the regional plan. Media generated for public consumption included:

- Who We Are, What We Do,
- The Transportation Partnership News; and,
  
- Editorials included in local papers, such as the *Pittsburgh Business Times*, prepared by the executive director of SPRPC.

Neighborhood Working Group on Community Development. As a part of the long-range planning effort, the Neighborhood Working Group on Community Development was formed. The working group is a coalition of community development professionals and volunteers whose purpose is to address policy affecting community development through education and advocacy activities. SPRPC co-sponsored a forum developed by the working group entitled "Open Forum on Transportation for Liveable Communities" with the Pittsburgh Department of City Planning. The goals of the Forum were to encourage widespread and diverse attendance and determine whether the attendees could reach a common ground or viewpoint with respect to the regional transportation plan.

The Surface Transportation Policy Project and SPRPC staff provided technical assistance to the Forum planners. A professional facilitator was hired to lead the process and to insure that no biases were represented. A three-step process was used which asked the attendees to:

- Rank the 15 ISTEA criteria;
- Break down into small discussion groups to prepare a list of do's and don'ts for transportation planning, of which the top three were selected by vote; and
- Break into small groups again to evaluate the four transportation plan options and identify what they considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of each alternative.

The Forum was attended by seventy-five people. According to Mrs. Rebecca Flora, Executive Director of the South Side Local Development Company, "The process demonstrated that a real citizens participation process can lead to real conclusions in a short time frame, and it does not have to be painful unless you are afraid of losing control of the outcome."

## **Conclusion**

Despite additional refinements needed to make SPRPC's process more inclusive, many of the stakeholders interviewed were excited about the potential for change in the transportation planning process. Ms. Gale McGloin of the Citizens League of Southwestern Pennsylvania indicated that the public involvement element of the long-range planning process was not as inclusive as she would like it to be, but the positive affect of this legislation is that "it is forcing people to consider things differently. Ms. McGloin is hopeful that, "once all of the players are around the table they will be forced to, at minimum, consider other projects and broaden their perspective."

The staff is also using different kinds of media and publishing information in layman's terms. Mr. John Warren of the Ohio River Basin Environmental Council feels that what is going on now is much better than the way things operated in the past. He stated that, "there has to be consciousness raising in order to make the public understand the spill-

over effects projects have. Educating the public is the only way to get people to think about the big picture. People are excited about having something in place that raises possibilities for improvements and change in the future. ISTEA sets us on course in a positive direction.”

Despite the positive reception this new legislation has received by many, some people are skeptical in the region about the commitment of Congress to support ISTEA. Some respondents expressed concern that many local politicians think Congress will not support the enforcement of ISTEA, therefore, they are not taking the legislation seriously. The majority of respondents believe that it is too early in the process to determine whether ISTEA will be a success.

## **E. ADA PLANNING ASSOCIATION**

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Ada Planning Association is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization located in Boise, Idaho and is responsible for transportation planning in Ada County. The MPO is made up of Ada County Highway District; Ada County; the cities of Boise, Eagle, Garden City, Kuna and Meridian; Boise Auditorium District; Boise Independent School District; Meridian Joint School District and Boise State University. Because the urbanized area population is less than 200,000, ISTEA indicates that the staff should work cooperatively with the state DOT to develop the long-range plan and transportation improvement program.

The Ada Planning Association adopted a public involvement process in December 1985. The staff has utilized a variety of creative strategies to involve the public in the transportation decision making process. Recently, there have been three major transportation related projects involving significant input from the public: The 2010 Regional Plan Update, Boise Visions, and The Bench/Valley Transportation Study. In implementing these projects, the Ada staff have utilized a variety of outreach techniques which included working with the media, conducting town meetings (some televised live), and conducting public surveys.

### ***2010 Regional Transportation Plan Update***

During development of the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan, the MPO used two public involvement processes, one for the rural areas and another for the urban/metro area.

Rural Long-range Planning Process. The process for the rural areas was initiated through a request to the mayor of each rural area to develop a transportation task force and appoint six to eight members. The participants were made up of elected officials, local citizens, school representatives, and the private sector.

The process consisted of four meetings:

- During the first meeting, the group was provided an overview of the transportation planning process by representatives from the MPO, the highway district, and the state DOT;
- During the second meeting, the group was asked to develop a list of proposed projects that they would like to see implemented;
- During the third meeting, criteria were established to rank the projects. The group visited all of the proposed project sites in a bus. State and county highway

engineers determined that approximately eighty percent of the projects identified could be completed immediately because they were minor maintenance projects. The twenty percent of the projects proposed which were long-range in nature would be considered for inclusion in the regional plan; and,

- During the final stage of the process, proposed projects were submitted for inclusion in the plan.

Each of the rural governments felt that the process was impressive and it has been continued on an annual basis for the past four years.

Urban/Metro Area Process. The public involvement process for the urban/metro area was initiated by selecting locations for two sets of town hall-type meetings. There were a total of eight meetings, four at each of the two locations. At each of the eight meetings, the process consisted of brief staff presentations designed to provide the participants with a progress report and provide information necessary to direct the particular session, a break out into small group discussions and a closing session consisting of all participants. The staff attempted to divide representatives of community/interest groups into different groups to create a conversation with diverse perspectives. The meetings, each sponsored by local elected officials, were attended by highway, county and district commissioners. A media specialist was hired to advertise the meetings, and develop written materials for elected officials and the public. Prior to the initiation of the process, facilitation training was provided to the MPO staff, state DOT, and Ada County highway district staff.

The urban/metro process was conducted in four parts:

- During stage one, the planning staff graphically depicted the anticipated impact the projected population growth would have on the existing regional transportation system and identified the expected deficiencies. Each participant was provided with a blank map to identify the location of potential projects. The participants were broken up into approximately six small groups of six people each, which were facilitated by staff;
- During stage two, the proposed projects were compiled and displayed in the front of the room. Each participant was given three dots of varying colors to prioritize the projects. The staff subsequently summarized project priorities based on the public's input. Based on this list of projects, the staff developed four alternatives. The four alternatives consisted of a "do nothing" alternative, a "maximum" alternative, a "balanced" alternative, and a "minimum" alternative;
- During stage three, the four alternatives and related costs were presented. The participants divided into small discussion groups to choose an alternative, or build their own, based on the four alternatives developed earlier in the process. The full group was reconvened to discuss the recommendations together;
- A final public hearing was held to present the recommendations.

## ***Boise Visions***

During the Fall of 1989, the mayor of the City of Boise initiated the development of a planning process to prepare Boise for the next twenty years. Mayor Kempthorne wanted the effort to involve as many people as possible. To ascertain what issues the public considered Boise to be facing, the mayor sponsored a citizen survey later entitled "Boise Futures." Almost fifteen hundred people responded to the survey. The three major

issues of concern identified by the public were growth, transportation and education. Eighty-five percent of respondents also indicated support for the use of user fees for transportation system development.

Based on the response from the survey, the mayor created a **Boise Visions Steering Committee**.

Twenty working committees were created and a mission statement was adopted. Ada Planning staff sent out 500 invitations between September and October 1990 seeking participation on the working committees. Over 400 people actively participated. Each subcommittee was assigned the following tasks:

- Define the goals and objectives of the committee;
- Prepare a committee report by Spring 1991; and,
- Edit and revise their section of the integrated report prepared by the Staff.

The draft document was disseminated for public comment between Fall 1991 and the end of that year. The draft report was disseminated in variety of ways:

- At a luncheon sponsored by a local organization attended by several hundred people;
- Printed excerpts in a special supplement of Boise's newspaper the Idaho Statesman—Opportunity for comments was provided through inclusion of a clip-out coupon;
- A series of town meetings, the first one televised live; and,
- A series of articles on Vision reports and records printed in the Idaho Statesman.

The final document, **Boise Visions**, was distributed during the summer of 1993. It is anticipated by the Boise Visions Steering Committee that the report will direct future planning efforts in a manner that is evident to the public.

New Transportation Funding Mechanisms. As a result of the "Boise Futures" survey conducted by the Mayor in 1989, citizens expressed an interest in creating user fees and impact fees to pay for transportation projects. Subsequently, the Ada County Highway District proposed an increase in vehicle registration fees which was overwhelmingly supported by the citizens. The additional money generated from the fee will fund transportation projects. In addition, the public voted for an impact fee on new developments constructed in the region.

## ***Bench/Valley Transportation Study***

The Bench/Valley Transportation Study was initiated in 1993. The ongoing-study is sub-regional in nature, and has been considered the initial effort in developing the 2015 regional transportation plan. The study was designed to develop an alternative to the Curtis Road Bench access route first recommended during the 1950's. Citizens in the adjacent neighborhoods have been fighting variations of this project since. The controversy stems from the fact that the proposed extension places a principal arterial within the platted areas of two subdivisions. During the 1993 review of the TIP, the Curtis Road Extension project was considered once again. The Manorwood Neighborhood Preservation Committee successfully garnered support from state and U.S. congressmen to convince the City Council to vote against approving the project. In response, the Study

was initiated. The cost of the Study was projected to be \$1.25 million, of which \$200,000 will be spent on public involvement. The staff anticipated that approximately twelve to fourteen neighborhoods will participate in the study.

Citizen Involvement Approach. The planning staff hired a public involvement specialist to develop their public involvement process. The consultant drafted a detailed scope of work outlining the role of community and private sector groups during the study. As a part of the process, public involvement training was to be provided by the consultants to planning agency staff members to educate them on how to communicate with the public.

The framework developed for the public involvement process included:

- Identifying private sector stakeholders;
- Identifying public/agency stakeholders;
- Sponsoring focus group meetings;
- Convening a Citizen's Advisory Committee; and,
- Sponsoring an early public involvement meeting.

Private sector stakeholders were identified to test project concepts, understand historical concerns, test messages developed by the CAC, and to act as a sounding board over the life of the project. Public/Agency stakeholders were selected to improve community support from key leaders. The representatives were to act as endorsers of the work being done. Three focus group sessions were held to test the process and information that would be disseminated at neighborhood meetings. Additional focus group meetings are to be held later in the process prior to the public informational meetings and "public hearings." A citizen's advisory committee was formed to assist in defining the scope of the project and to serve as a sounding board. The neighborhood groups will be used to help define the options for transportation within the study area and to help define the impacts each one of the options present. Finally, formal public involvement meetings will be held throughout the process to monitor the public's perspective on how the project is evolving. As a part of the process the consultant will:

- Update staff communications training;
- Create attractive advertising concepts that build public interest in the need to attend hearings;
- Create displays that provide the public with the appropriate amount of educational information to help draw out their thoughts and concerns; and,
- Complete a follow-up critique session that reflects the input and recommendations of the public to the project.

The role of the consultant during this project will consist of the provision of the following services:

- Appear before standing community groups to advise them as to the current status of the project and to take questions;
- Continuously seek opportunities that will showcase and highlight the value of the Bench/Valley Study project to the community and the region; and
- Provide a continuous flow of information to the area media about the project.

It is anticipated that this project will be completed in 1995. The MPO hopes to apply the techniques developed during this process during the development of the 2015

Transportation Plan.

Grassroots Participation. Boise enjoys a great deal of input from grassroots organizations. The citizens in Boise are very active in that people tend to be members of several committees. Boise is beginning to grow tremendously; the vacancy rate is less than one percent for rental units. People want to control growth, and they feel that by becoming active in the planning process, their voices will be heard. There appears to be a greater focus on regional issues as opposed to the “Not in My Backyard” syndrome found in many parts of the country.

## **Conclusion**

In the past, the public has felt that Ada Planning Association and the county highway district staff have not been responsive to the concerns of the public. According to Mrs. Renee Quick, from an east end neighborhood group, both the agencies are making an effort to change. Mrs. Quick indicated that “most citizens have noticed the change in the planning process and increased public input.” She is reluctant to get too excited because, it is her impression that, “roadway interests continue to dominate.”

Mrs. Debbie Ruggles, Director of Boise Urban Stages (BUS), the area transit provider, expressed her opinion that “the process is a success locally and regionally, but it cannot truly be considered a success as long as the state continues to have the final decision. The MPOs are raising expectations, but, in many areas, they still do not have the authority to make the final decision during project selection for the transportation improvement program.”

Ada Planning Association’s leadership during the development of transportation planning projects such as the 2010 Regional Transportation Plan, Boise Visions, and the Bench/Valley Transportation Study demonstrate the staff’s commitment to providing meaningful involvement by community and private sector groups in the transportation decision making process. The creative planning techniques used by the staff to involve the public can serve as a model for other MPOs.

## **F. SANTA BARBARA GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

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In 1989, the City of Santa Barbara, California, recognized the fact that the population and building boom of the 1980’s had stretched the community’s water system, traffic management capacity, and affordable housing supply to their limits (Plotz, 1992). Yet, the notion of growth management was very controversial. Realizing that a general plan update was essential, the City Council asked the community development department to undertake a public participation program that would result in a plan update that the community would find acceptable. The Council went a step further and appointed a subcommittee to monitor and advise the department on this high visibility project.

The community development department developed a pamphlet describing four alternative growth scenarios, and distributed this throughout the city. The department then hired a consultant to work with staff in designing a comprehensive strategy for involving the citizenry in selecting and fleshing out one of these alternatives. The result was a year-long process that included:

- Education TV programming;
- Interactive workshops;

- A televised town meeting;
- Interviews;
- An economic study group;
- Community forums;
- A City Council work session;
- A local business symposium; and
- A land use simulation game.

Special efforts were made throughout this process to include black and Hispanic members of the community. Bilingual materials were sent to households with Hispanic surnames. City staff got the word out by visiting Hispanic churches and holding a community workshop at a Latino community center. The city broadcast a bilingual television program explaining the process being used to update the general plan; the program was aired daily for two weeks. City staff also conducted a survey of Hispanic and black business people and community leaders to identify issues of particular concern to them.

All told, 8,000 residents watched the televised town meeting. A public information package was sent to 35,000 homes and the mailing list for the project newsletters contained 6,000 names. Two thousand citizens attended forums and workshops.

City planners sequestered themselves with all of this input, and did not re-emerge until they had the outline of the general plan update. This was reportedly a fairly simple task because the public's ideas for limited growth had been clear.

The Planning Commission held a round of public meetings to get the public's response to the staff's work, and then approved the plan. The City Council then held a final round of public meetings and it, too, passed the update. For good measure, the Council asked the voters to approve an initiative to incorporate the growth management strategies into the city's charter. This elicited well-funded resistance from development interests, but the citizens approved the initiative with 56 percent of the vote. Implementation has been very smooth, and growth management is no longer as controversial as it once was in Santa Barbara.

City staff and the consultant attribute the success of this effort to two things:

1. The level of resources invested in educating the public about the issues so that public input could be well-informed; and
2. The fact that the city was willing to be flexible about the citizen involvement program, making modifications to it in an iterative fashion. The entire effort cost approximately \$400,000 including consultant and staff time, publications, and incidental expenses.

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