

Introduction

What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?

Transportation infrastructure and operators serve the needs of travelers across a region. They span and link communities over wide areas. A problem at one location, like a bridge closure or traffic tie-up, can spill over into surrounding areas and hamper the movement of many travelers. On the other hand, improvements like a new overpass or rail station can have widespread benefits beyond the area immediately surrounding the facility.

Recognizing this reality, the federal government in the early 1970s required urbanized areas of the country – areas with more than 50,000 people that constitute distinct “commuter sheds” – to establish formal planning bodies for transportation planning, called Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs. The job of these MPOs is to plan transportation improvements from a regional perspective, oversee investment of federal funds in the region and serve as a forum for achieving regional consensus on these issues. Specifically, an MPO plans all federally funded transportation investments for its region, and serves as a forum where local officials, public transportation providers and state agency representatives can come together and cooperatively plan to meet the region's current and future transportation needs. Input from the public and stakeholders is a critical part of this decision-making as well.

Over the years, the requirements for MPOs have been refined and expanded through reauthorizations of the federal transportation law and related regulations. The most recent federal transportation bill, entitled the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires MPOs to update and expand their public participation plans to increase the opportunities for agencies, elected officials, transportation providers, businesses, shippers, residents, commuters and all other interested parties to review and provide input to transportation decision-making.

What is the NJTPA?

The North Jersey Transportation Planning Authority (NJTPA) is the MPO for the 13 counties in northern and central New Jersey – a region with over 6.5 million in population. The NJTPA oversees approximately \$1.2 billion a year in federal transportation investments in this 13-county region. The NJTPA is one of three MPOs in New Jersey, and its region represents 75 percent of the population of the state. The region's transportation network supports people traveling millions of miles each day on road, rail, foot, bike and ferry.

The Board of Trustees of the NJTPA is made up of elected officials representing the 13 counties and the cities of Newark and Jersey City. The 13 counties and two cities are referred to as “subregions” of the NJTPA region. In addition, the Board includes as voting members the New Jersey Department of Transportation (NJDOT), NJ TRANSIT, the Port Authority of NY & NJ, a Governor's representative, and a Governor-appointed citizens' representative. Many other interested agencies and organizations provide input to the Board on a regular basis. The Board and its standing committees meet regularly and these meetings are publicized and open to the public.

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In addition to the Board, the NJTPA has a professional Central Staff of planners, economists, programmers and engineers whose job it is to understand the complexities of the region, not just in terms of transportation, but also air quality, economic development, land use and the environment. Their specific work products are described in more detail below under Goal #6. There is much more information on these products and the NJTPA itself in its *Citizen's Guide to Transportation Planning in Northern New Jersey* and on its Web site at www.njtpa.org.

Public Participation and the NJTPA

Why is the NJTPA's work important to northern and central New Jersey residents, businesses and visitors?

Transportation affects everyone's quality of life and livelihood. Residents, workers, commuters, businesses, recreational travelers, emergency services, employers, educational institutions, health care providers, tourism sites, freight transporters, pedestrians, bicyclists, and people with special needs *all* depend on a highly functional network of roads, trails, sidewalks, transit and paratransit services, bridges, ports and airports to get people and goods where they need to go. The NJTPA is *the* transportation planning leader and technical and informational resource for the people of northern and central New Jersey. It conducts and/or coordinates transportation planning in the region and oversees funds for all types of transportation infrastructure and services. Through its network of partners, the NJTPA prioritizes federal transportation funding from a regional perspective. In its unique position, the NJTPA balances the diverse and complex needs of this densely populated and extensively traveled region with the reality of fiscal constraints, to make wise decisions with long lasting value to a wide variety of users. The NJTPA has a challenging set of responsibilities. *It has an additional challenge of getting the message out to a broad audience about the breadth and importance of its work.* This is one of the purposes of this document and its strategies for outreach.

Why is public input important to the NJTPA?

The NJTPA is a public agency representing the people of northern and central New Jersey. Transportation planning is a complex undertaking – on its own and as it relates to economic development, the environment and land use. *The NJTPA needs input from a broad array of stakeholders and the public in order to make the best decisions for the region.* The need for this input is not limited to elected officials and those in the transportation profession who already participate in this important conversation. The NJTPA is also committed to seeking input from those not typically involved in the transportation planning process. The needs of low-income and minority residents, the disabled, individuals with limited English and low literacy, seniors, and students are also important to the NJTPA. *Public participation is one of the key factors in the NJTPA's achieving its success as an MPO.*

How can you get involved?

There are many ways you can influence the transportation planning decisions that will shape the future. Here are a few:

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- Ask to be included on the NJTPA's mailing list by calling 973-639-8400, faxing 973-639-1953, or by e-mailing njtpa@njtpa.org to receive newsletters, publications, updates and other information.
- Attend meetings of your county's transportation board or committee. The NJTPA or your county's planning department can provide you with contact information.
- Visit the NJTPA Web site at www.njtpa.org to keep abreast of meetings, schedules and public comment periods and to review and download reports and other information,
- Use the Web site to sign up for the agency's "e-list" to receive meeting notices, agendas and other information automatically via e-mail.
- Attend NJTPA Board meetings (held every other month) and committee meetings (held on alternate months). A calendar is posted on the NJTPA Web site.
- Request a speaker for a meeting of your community organization, club or school.
- Visit designated State Documents Depository Libraries and other select libraries throughout the region which keep major NJTPA documents on file. A complete list of these libraries can be found on p. 12.

Public Participation Mission and Goals

The NJTPA commits to the following mission with regards to public participation:

- To be the *leader in engaging the public* in a continuing discussion of northern and central New Jersey transportation planning issues.
- To treat the *public as partners* in defining and refining a vision for northern and central New Jersey that matches transportation services and facilities with the need for economic growth, environmental protection, growth management and improved quality of life.
- To seek public input into decision-making about how to *prioritize funding* for transportation services and facilities.
- Promote greater opportunities for the *public to access the NJTPA Board* members.

In undertaking this public participation mission, the NJTPA seeks to fulfill the following goals:

1. Provide adequate opportunities to engage in *meaningful two-way discussions* between the NJTPA and the public about transportation planning issues.
2. Promote *more direct dialogue between the Trustees and the public-at-large* to enhance the public's influence on regional transportation planning and decision-making.
3. Use a range of tools that promote timely, *innovative and informative two-way education* between the NJTPA and the public.
4. Make continuous efforts to *engage a diverse and wide-ranging representation* of those who live, work and travel within northern and central New Jersey.
5. *Evaluate and upgrade*, on a periodic basis, the public participation efforts of the NJTPA to ensure that public involvement has a demonstrable impact on the transportation planning and decision-making process in the region.

6. Maintain both the *letter and spirit of federal and state laws*, regulations, and guidelines regarding public participation responsibilities of MPOs.

The specific strategies and outcomes for these six goals are described below. These six goals will serve as a guide for the NJTPA to use in developing public participation strategies and tools for its various planning efforts and studies.

Strategies and Outcomes

Goal #1: Provide adequate opportunities to engage in *meaningful two-way discussions* between the NJTPA and the public about transportation planning issues.

Strategies:

- **Meetings**

The NJTPA's Board of Trustees and three standing committees – Planning and Economic Development, Project Prioritization, and Freight Initiatives – meet bi-monthly and are open to the public. The meetings are publicized through mailings, paid public notices, media advisories and the NJTPA Web site. The schedule and agendas for these meetings are available on the NJTPA Web site. The meetings are held during the day at the NJTPA headquarters in Newark. (Goal #6 includes more detailed information about these meetings and other product-specific meeting opportunities.)

To augment these efforts, the NJTPA will make its Central Staff available for meetings throughout the region, when it is deemed appropriate, and work with the subregions and Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) to seek opportunities for greater public participation at the subregional level. For corridor-level studies, it will examine the needs of particular communities to determine the best times of day, days of the week, meeting locations, and language in which a meeting should be conducted to maximize participation.

For corridor-specific projects, as appropriate, the NJTPA will also seek to meet with elected officials including municipal representatives and members of the State Legislature to understand their constituent concerns and get their input into the planning process.

- **Media**

The media is an efficient way to educate the public about relevant NJTPA activities as deemed appropriate. To this end, the NJTPA will look to use local newspapers and radio public service announcements as avenues to publicize meetings. It will reach out, when appropriate, to editorial boards of large and small newspapers that publish in English and Spanish to help educate readers on the complex challenge of planning transportation for northern and central New Jersey.

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- **The Internet**

More and more of the general public use the internet as one of their chief means of communicating. The NJTPA will take advantage of this technology by using e-mail and electronic documents to disseminate project information and promote availability of products, meeting opportunities, and data about transportation trends in the region. The NJTPA Web site, www.njtpa.org, includes data, reports, project summaries, upcoming products and meeting announcements in a user-friendly and interactive format. The NJTPA Web site is designed to meet all federal and state accessibility criteria.

- **Outreach to Those Without Internet Access**

There are still many residents of the region without access to the internet, due to a variety of reasons including economic circumstances, language barriers, discomfort with technology and low literacy. To better engage these individuals in this important dialogue, the NJTPA will seek opportunities to use its mailing list to disseminate information to community centers, libraries, senior centers, and English as Second Language (ESL) centers as appropriate.

Outcomes:

- More engaged members of the public, elected officials and other stakeholders in the NJTPA planning process.
- A Central Staff and Board of Trustees more fully engaged with the public.
- More understanding by the public of the importance of the NJTPA's work.
- More trust and credibility in the transportation decision-making process by the public.
- A better chance to build consensus around tough decisions for the region.

Goal #2: Promote *more direct dialogue between members of the Board of Trustees and the public-at-large to enhance the public's influence on regional transportation planning and decision-making.*

Strategies:

- **Speaking Engagements**

The NJTPA Central Staff will seek out opportunities for members of the Board of Trustees to participate at transportation conferences, meetings of interest groups and other relevant groups on regional transportation and planning issues.

- **Subregional Meetings**

The NJTPA will promote the role of Trustees at subregional meetings, including regular meetings of Transportation Coordinating Committees and Advisory Boards, as well as meetings for area-specific corridor studies and other project-specific studies.

- **Media**

The NJTPA will expand efforts to involve local media in reporting major work programs such as the Transportation Improvement Program, as well as subregional events and meetings, ranging from project ribbon cuttings to local transportation meetings.

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Outcomes:

- A stronger connection between the public and the members of the NJTPA Board of Trustees.
- Heightened awareness of the NJTPA at the subregional and local levels.
- A greater degree of public influence on transportation planning and decision-making in the region.

Goal #3: Use a range of tools that promote timely, *innovative and informative two-way education* between the NJTPA and the public.

Strategies:

- **Publications**

The NJTPA seeks to become *the* lead technical and informational resource for transportation planning in the region. In addition to its Web site, it produces a number of publications examining regional transportation planning issues and describing its products in easy to understand language with accessible graphic representations of information. Its publications may include biennial reports; periodic newsletters to provide updates on activities and issues; general brochures and fact sheets on the NJTPA's functions, services and data resources; and news releases and media advisories on significant NJTPA activities and decisions.

To achieve the above-stated goal, NJTPA will explore innovative methods to distribute these publications to a broader audience. It will continue to translate select documents into Spanish, such as the *Citizen's Guide to Transportation Planning in Northern New Jersey*. And it will look to display as much information as possible in simple graphics for ease of understanding.

- **Visualization**

The federal government specifically requires MPOs to use visualization tools to enhance communication of complex information. The NJTPA Web site already is home to the NJTPA Online Transportation Information System, or NOTIS, which offers citizens an interactive online tool to search and map a wide range of information about transportation projects in the region. As appropriate, the NJTPA will incorporate into its presentations and its Web site expanded use of geographic information system (GIS) mapping techniques. This will allow meeting participants and visitors to the Web site to better understand their region's existing transportation network, demographics, and areas of concern such as levels of congestion. The NJTPA will also examine expanded use of simulation software to demonstrate the impacts of potential future investments and scenarios in a clear, understandable manner.

- **The Internet**

As stated in Goal #1, more and more people depend on the internet to communicate quickly and efficiently with a broad audience. Beyond traditional home and office computers, people are carrying personal digital assistants. Wireless internet connection

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areas are becoming increasingly widespread and reliable. The NJTPA Web site already has a mechanism where people can easily sign on to its mailing list, provide feedback and express concerns. To achieve Goal #3, the NJTPA will continue to examine how best to use its Web site, e-mail, and emerging internet technologies to present information and seek comments from the public.

- **Surveys & Focus Groups**

The NJTPA periodically performs surveys – some of the entire region and some specific to a certain corridor or project – to gather updated information on concerns and issues surrounding transportation. The NJTPA will continue to use this technique for information gathering. At each survey opportunity, the NJTPA will request from respondents their contact information – particularly e-mail addresses – to continue to expand its mail and e-mail lists for future communications. In addition, the NJTPA will use focus groups as deemed appropriate to gather input.

Outcomes:

- A better informed public.
- A more fully informed Central Staff and Board of Trustees.
- Broader distribution of NJTPA data and project information.
- Identification of the NJTPA as *the* source of technical and informational resources.
- More public awareness of the NJTPA’s mission and products.

Goal #4: Make continuous efforts to *engage a diverse and wide-ranging representation of those who live, work and travel within northern and central New Jersey.*

Strategies:

- **Improved Outreach to All Interested Parties**

While it is recognized that it is often difficult to engage the interest of the “average person” in long-term transportation planning, outreach efforts should result in a broader spectrum of input from stakeholders and the public.

The NJTPA maintains an extensive mail and e-mail list. As part of this effort to update its Public Participation Plan, it has done a thorough analysis and augmentation of the list to include the groups identified in SAFETEA-LU. These include: citizens; affected public agencies; representatives of public transportation employees; planning groups; freight shippers; providers of freight transportation services; private providers of transportation; representatives of users of public transportation; representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities; representatives of the disabled; professional organizations; labor unions; and agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations. In addition, it has identified a list of Hispanic and African-American stakeholder organizations and ethnic media to augment this list. Anyone who participates in an NJTPA event or contacts the Web site will be asked if they wish to have their contact information added to the NJTPA database for future communication.

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In addition, the NJTPA will look to partners such as the subregions and Transportation Management Associations (TMAs) to expand its list of contacts. The NJTPA will explore communication through other existing channels, such as community leaders and organizations, to broaden its reach.

- **Outreach to Those With Limited English and Low Literacy**

As described above, the NJTPA will continue to provide selected translated materials to non-English speaking participants, as appropriate, and will use increasingly more graphic and visualization techniques to communicate information more effectively to the low literacy population. Select materials for outreach may be published in Spanish, while materials may be developed in other languages as appropriate for corridor and area-specific studies.

- **Outreach to Seniors and the Disabled**

The aging and disabled have unique transportation needs. As the population of seniors increases, their mobility needs for services beyond the traditional automobile will increase as well. When appropriate, the NJTPA will partner with paratransit providers and the state's Department of Health and Human Services and county-level Offices on Aging to better include this population in transportation decision-making. This coordination will be reflected in the development of the Coordinated Human Services Regional Transportation Plan.

- **Low-income and Minority Populations**

In addition to the techniques described above, the NJTPA will expand its minority media list and mailing list for expanded outreach opportunities.

- **Municipal Officials and the State Legislature**

It is critical that the NJTPA have feedback from municipalities and members of the State Legislature on local citizen issues and concerns regarding significant projects and programs in their region. The NJTPA will work with its subregional networks, such as Transportation Coordinating Committees, to gather such feedback for area-specific studies and other issues as warranted.

Outcomes:

- Greater levels of participation by stakeholders and the public.
- Greater opportunity for special needs groups to participate.
- More representative input into the planning process.
- Greater opportunity for municipal input into the NJTPA process.
- More interactive relationship between the NJTPA and the State Legislature.

Goal #5: *Evaluate and upgrade, on a periodic basis, the public participation efforts of the NJTPA to ensure that public involvement has a demonstrable impact on the transportation planning and decision-making process in the region.*

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Strategies:

- **Quantitative Metrics**

There are a number of quantitative measurement tools that the NJTPA will consider in evaluating the effectiveness of achieving the goals of this Public Participation Plan. The following metrics will be tracked by the NJTPA's Public Affairs Staff throughout the fiscal year and used as input into an annual evaluation of stated goals in the UPWP reporting structure:

Goal #1

- Number of comments received
- Number/type of meetings held or participated in by the NJTPA
- Number of meeting participants
- Number of press releases issued
- Number of media outlets contacted to publicize meetings and products

Goal #2

- Number of presentations/speaking engagements by Board of Trustees members on behalf of the NJTPA
- Amount of coverage by local media outlets

Goal #3

- Number of Web site hits
- Number of publications produced and disseminated

Goal #4

- Mailing list size and breadth
- Size of e-mail list
- Number of people signing up for mail and e-mail list

- **Qualitative Metrics**

Many aspects of what makes public participation successful or unsuccessful cannot be tracked by quantitative measures. Nevertheless, it is equally important that the NJTPA periodically review the results of its outreach efforts and how well public participation informs its planning process by asking the following questions which will be tracked by the NJTPA's Public Affairs Staff throughout the fiscal year and used as input into an annual evaluation of stated goals in the UPWP reporting structure:

- How valuable are the comments received in informing the specific product or study in question?
- What direct, identifiable impact does public involvement have on the planning process and regional transportation decision-making?
- Has the NJTPA been effective in helping the public understand the planning process?
- What more can/should the NJTPA be doing to further involve the public?

- **Adapting the Techniques**

As it evaluates itself using the measurement tools above, the NJTPA will also need to look at expanding use of effective techniques and adapting those that work less well to better suit the needs of the region. For area-specific studies, the best techniques often

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will depend on the community in question, so the NJTPA will be flexible in its approaches. To this end, it will maintain a record of outreach activities for particular projects and studies in specific parts of the region and continually look to replicate the most successful of those efforts.

The NJTPA will also partner with the subregions, as well as with NJDOT and NJ TRANSIT to share information on outreach techniques – both those that have been successful, and those that have not been as effective.

- **Periodically Revisit the Plan**

As previously stated, the goals of this plan will serve as guidelines for each major NJTPA effort described in this document. On a periodic basis, the NJTPA will re-evaluate and revise this Public Participation Plan as needed to make sure the mission and goals remain the right ones for the organization and that the strategies included to meet the goals are those with proven success.

Outcomes:

- Recognition of how input shapes the outcome of products and studies.
- Tracking of enhanced outreach techniques at the regional and subregional level.
- Opportunities to revisit and refine techniques.
- Involvement of the entire Central Staff in promoting effective public participation.

Goal #6: Maintain both *the letter and spirit of federal and state laws, regulations, and guidelines regarding public participation responsibilities of MPOs.*

Strategies:

- **General Requirements for the NJTPA**

Meetings of the NJTPA Board of Trustees and its standing committees are open to the public. Opportunities for public comment are provided prior to the Board of Trustees vote on action items. A general public comment period is provided as well.

The Central Staff makes minutes of these meetings available to the public upon request, and they are placed on the NJTPA Web site.

In compliance with the American with Disabilities Act, the NJTPA holds all public meetings in locations that are accessible to the physically handicapped and that are accessible to public transportation where feasible.

In accordance with the New Jersey Open Public Meetings Act, adequate notice of NJTPA Board meetings is advertised in regional daily newspapers including *The Star Ledger*, *The New Jersey Herald*, *The Record*, *The Jersey Journal*, *The Courier News*, *The Times Observer*, *Home News Tribune*, and the *Asbury Park Press*. The notice is also posted on the bulletin board of the Secretary of State in Trenton and in the county clerk's office of the county hosting the meeting.

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In order to inform all interested parties, a schedule of NJTPA Board meetings is sent to the NJTPA general mailing list as well to a listing of representative agencies, interest groups and stakeholders in January of each year. A schedule of meetings is also posted on the NJTPA web site.

Members of the public and interested organizations can request inclusion on the NJTPA's mailing list to receive notice and agendas for upcoming meetings. These requests can be made by e-mail, telephone, fax or mail. In addition, members of the public and interested parties can use the NJTPA Web site to join the agency's "e-list" to receive meeting notices, agendas and other information automatically via e-mail.

Materials distributed to the Board of Trustees for each meeting are available upon request prior to the meeting, and additional copies are available at the meeting.

Members of the media are reminded about upcoming meetings and alerted to items of particular interest.

Public documents produced by the NJTPA are available upon request. Reasonable public access is provided to NJTPA data and policy information. Fees to recover costs may be charged for data requests.

The NJTPA maintains a library of current and past public documents that can be reviewed by the public during regular working hours.

Applicable Federal and State laws govern access to other files and documents maintained by the NJTPA. Such requests can be made in writing to the NJTPA Executive Director.

To the extent possible, the NJTPA shall coordinate its public involvement and consultation processes with the statewide transportation planning efforts of the NJDOT.

- **Major NJTPA Work Products**

The following major work products of the NJTPA planning process are subject to specific public participation requirements. Some of these requirements flow from federal regulations, while others are particular to the NJTPA's procedures.

- **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

A key NJTPA function is developing and updating the region's Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). This long-range plan is a blueprint for 25 years of transportation investment. It is a critical document, because all federally funded transportation projects in the region must flow from the plan. The plan can only contain projects that the region can reasonably expect to afford over the life of the plan. The NJTPA updates the plan every four years. In developing the plan, the NJTPA meets extensively with its planning partners – cities, counties and state agencies – throughout the region. *The public plays a key role in putting together this important document as well.*

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- **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) lists all projects for which federal funds will be spent. *Developing this list with public input allows the NJTPA Board to set priorities among the region's many transportation projects.* That in turn allows the agency to get the maximum benefit from available federal and state transportation dollars. The TIP covers a four-year span and is updated every year.
- **Conformity Determination**

The federal government has designated the NJTPA region as a “non-attainment” area for national air quality standards. Regulations require that the NJTPA annually demonstrate that the projects contained in the TIP and RTP will have a net positive impact on air quality and will comply with the goals of the New Jersey State Implementation Plan (SIP) to achieve air quality standards. To demonstrate “TIP/SIP conformity,” the NJTPA uses computer modeling to estimate emissions impacts of projects. The Conformity Determination is performed annually in conjunction with development of the TIP. A new Conformity Determination may be required when the RTP or TIP is amended, depending on the exact nature of the change.

Public participation for the above major work products includes the following steps:

- Hold at least one public meeting, workshop, or forum.
- Institute a 30-day comment period on the draft documents listed above during which written comments can be submitted.
- Place notification in the legal section of the regional daily newspapers listed above. The notification will include information on how to obtain copies of documents, any public meetings, workshops or forums scheduled, the schedule for the public comment period, how to submit written comments and a Central Staff contact for additional information. Notification will also be placed on the NJTPA Web site with an option for submitting comments via e-mail.
- Provide notification to a listing of representative interest groups, stakeholders, and agencies in the region.
- Post documents on the agency's Web site.
- Distribute documents to select State Documents Depository Libraries and other libraries throughout the region. These libraries are:
 - Bloomfield Public Library
 - East Brunswick Public Library
 - East Orange Public Library
 - Elizabeth Free Public Library
 - Hunterdon County Library
 - Jersey City Public Library
 - Johnson Free Public Library

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- Linden Free Public Library
 - Monmouth County Library
 - Morris County Library
 - Newark Public Library
 - North County Branch Library
 - Ocean County Library
 - Paterson Free Public Library
 - Phillipsburg Public Library
 - Plainfield Free Public Library
 - Ridgewood Public Library
 - Somerset County Library
 - Sussex County Library System
 - Warren County Library
 - Wayne Public Library
 - Woodbridge Public Library
- A summary of oral and written comments received during the course of the above procedures are furnished, with responses and Central Staff summaries, to the voting members of the NJTPA Board of Trustees prior to their taking action to finalize the work product. The complete comments and staff summaries with responses are made available to the public upon request and posted on the NJTPA Web site.
 - If a final major work product differs significantly from the one made available for public comment by the NJTPA, an additional opportunity for public comment is provided. A summary report including the disposition of significant comments is made part of the final document. This report will include documentation of any direct impact of public comments and other public participation activities on the planning process and the final product.
 - All documents are on file and available for public review during regular office hours at the NJTPA offices.
- **Amendments to RTP or TIP**

An amendment to the RTP is required when a project is added or deleted or there is a major change in policy contained in the document. An amendment to the TIP is required when a project is added or deleted, or there is a major change in the project's scope. Public participation for an amendment to the RTP or TIP (except in the case of Expedited TIP Amendments, see below) will include the following steps:

 - Institute a 30-day comment period on the draft amendment during which the public can submit written comments;
 - Place notification of the proposed action in the legal section of the regional daily newspapers. Notification will include information on the public comment period, how to submit written comments and an agency contact for additional information. Notification of the comment period and

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the relevant documents will also be placed on the NJTPA Web site with an option for submitting comments via e-mail.

- Provide similar notification to interest groups in the region. For amendments involving location-specific projects/studies, the mayors of affected municipalities will receive notification as well.
- Distribute the document under consideration to the NJTPA's designated libraries.
- A summary of oral and written comments received during the course of the above procedures shall be furnished, with responses and staff summaries, to the voting members of the NJTPA Board of Trustees prior to their action. The complete comments and staff summaries with responses will be made available to the public upon request.

○ Expedited TIP Amendments

- An expedited TIP Amendment occurs if either:
 - A project is being deleted from the TIP because of completion in a prior fiscal year or it is subsumed in a larger project, or
 - A project can neither be initiated by the end of the federal fiscal year (September 30) nor the 60-day grace period that ends on November 30, and must therefore be amended into the first year of the TIP. These projects, referred to as "transitional projects" are included in an appendix to the TIP each year.

Public participation procedures for expedited TIP amendments include:

- A 10-day public comment period on the proposed TIP amendment.
- Notice posted on the NJTPA Web site and legal notices placed in the regional newspapers.
- A letter stating that the TIP amendment is being considered is mailed to the list of representative agencies and interest groups, as well as appropriate local officials and interest groups, prior to its consideration by the NJTPA's Project Prioritization Committee. The letter includes a project description and a copy of the amendment, TIP page, and instructions on how to comment. A summary of comments along with staff responses are provided to the NJTPA Board of Trustees prior to their vote on the amendment.

● **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

The UPWP summarizes the transportation planning activities of the NJTPA staff, its member agencies and other transportation agencies in the region. It covers a two-year period, and is updated annually. An important section of the UPWP is the Project Development Work Program (PDWP). The PDWP is the schedule of all project planning, scoping and preliminary design work conducted in the region during a given fiscal year. The PDWP authorizes and schedules work to evaluate the need for proposed projects and develop alternative conceptual designs and routes. When this project development work is completed, a project becomes eligible for inclusion in the TIP.

Review of the PDWP is an excellent opportunity for the public to have input into

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NJTPA's decision-making process at a relatively early stage, before its funding is committed. Like the rest of the UPWP, the PDWP is updated annually.

Public Participation for the UPWP and PDWP includes the following:

- Distribute the documents to representative groups and stakeholders for review and comment.
- Advertise the documents' availability in the regional newspapers listed above.
- Post the documents to the NJTPA Web site for review and comment.
- Distribute the documents to the libraries in the NJTPA region listed above.

• **Public Participation Plan**

The Public Participation Plan was drafted in consultation with interested parties. To prepare this Plan update, interviews were conducted with Central Staff, subregional representatives, and members of the Board of Trustees. As required by SAFETEA-LU, there was a 45-day comment period for its review from February 23 to April 9, 2007.

NJTPA sought input for this Public Participation Plan in the following ways:

- Notice of the Plan's availability was published in local newspapers.
- The Plan was made available on the agency's Web site and at local libraries.
- A summary of the plan was translated into Spanish and made available at local libraries.
- A post card announcing the availability of the draft Plan was sent to the entire mailing list. Copies of the draft Plan were made available by upon request.
- Three stakeholder roundtables were held to obtain input. One stakeholder roundtable was specific to Hispanic Stakeholders.
- Two public meetings were held.
- The final draft plan and comments received were presented to the Planning and Economic Development Committee, and the final plan, reflecting any additional input from the actions above, was presented to the Board of Trustees for their adoption.

• **NJTPA Requirements for Public Participation at the Subregions**

As part of the NJTPA's annual subregional transportation planning program, the subregions are given federal funds to institute procedures for providing opportunities for local public input into transportation planning activities funded through the NJTPA.

Specifically, funding is provided to the subregions to actively foster citizen awareness and encourage citizen input on transportation issues, projects and programs. Stakeholders, other subregional and agency staff and local officials should be included.

To achieve meaningful public participation, each subregion must have in place a mechanism or forum for the open exchange of views and information. In particular, the subregions should facilitate public outreach on a wide range of issues, including transportation needs, projects, safety concerns and coordinated land use and

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transportation studies. Some examples are: transportation committees; special outreach efforts; community support through the media; law enforcement groups; business groups; chambers of commerce and other civic organizations; and public relations efforts. These subregional public outreach efforts will include regular meetings of groups such as Transportation Advisory Boards or Transportation Coordinating Committees. In addition, NJTPA Central Staff will coordinate with the subregions regarding meetings for NJTPA corridor studies or major work products as appropriate. Also included is coordination with municipal governments and the public in support of NJTPA plans and proposals.

The NJTPA offers support to the subregions to help them establish and enhance public participation mechanisms.

- **Best Practices**

To prepare this updated Public Participation Plan, the NJTPA has looked to other MPOs to determine best practices in engaging and informing the public and has incorporated many of those techniques into this document. It will periodically monitor best practices in order to maintain a high and effective level of public participation.

Outcomes:

- A public participation process fully in compliance with SAFETEA-LU and relevant regulations.
- Consensus around long-term planning direction and project funding choices.
- Well-informed Central Staff, subregional representatives and Trustees.
- The NJTPA serving as a leader in implementing best practices for public participation.
- Established and ongoing partnerships for working together in the future.