

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization (SJATSO)

Adopted April 15, 2010

The *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users* (SAFETEA-LU), as well its predecessor legislation the 1998 *Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century* (TEA-21), requires that the St. Joseph Area Transportation Study Organization (SJATSO), the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the St. Joseph metropolitan area, adopt a proactive public involvement process that provides:

1. Complete information;
2. Timely public notice;
3. Full public access to key decisions; and,
4. Supports early and continuing involvement from the public.

The planning process must address public involvement when developing or modifying transportation plans, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and when preparing Alternative Access Studies, Location Studies, or Major Investment Studies (Studies).

This document contains the adopted public involvement policies of the MPO.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION

Public Notification Timeframe

Document	Public Notice Timeframe
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	45 Days
Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	45 Days
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – <i>full update</i>	30 Days
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - <i>amendments</i>	14 Days
Major Studies	30 Days
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	30 Days

Significant Changes

Any significant modification or amendment to the Public Participation Plan requires a forty-five (45) day public comment period. A significant change or addition to a major Federal Transit Administration funded project, a major Federal Highway Administration funded project, or the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) in general requires a forty-five (45) day public comment period. The public comment period will be advertised in a press release and by publication in a newspaper of general circulation. In addition, targeted organizations and agencies shall be informed of the public comment period through individual letters.

Limited English Proficiency Services

The MPO will attempt to provide adequate services for Limited English Proficiency populations given 24 hours advanced notice. The MPO will make every effort to provide

interpreter services at the Technical Committee and Coordinating Committee meetings by request. Interpreter Services include foreign language and the hearing impaired.

Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) amendments shall be provided a fourteen (14) day public comment period. Any full update of the TIP document shall have a thirty (30) day public comment period. Full updates will be on a 2-year cycle. Any other policy or amendment requiring a public comment period prior to adoption by the MPO shall be provided a thirty (30) day public comment period. The public comment period shall be advertised through the distribution of a press release only. All public notifications shall contact or utilize the following entities:

1. Local newspaper(s);
 - A. St. Joseph News-Press
 - B. Savannah Reporter
 - C. Kansas Chief
2. Local television and radio stations;
 - A. Public Access Channel
3. The Internet.
 - A. MPO Website
 - B. St. Joseph News-Press online web banner
 - C. Social Networking Sites
4. Local Transit Agency
 - A. Public notices on busses and information on dynamic message boards (coming soon)
5. Local Library Systems
 - A. Rolling Hills Library
 - B. St. Joseph Public Library Districts
 - C. Doniphan County Library Districts

Advertisement Content

Any press release/advertisement will contain:

1. A general description of the proposed policy, project, amendment or official action;
2. Where information on the policy, amendment or official action can be reviewed or obtained;
3. When the public comment period begins and ends;
4. Where comments on the policy, amendment or official action can be submitted;
5. When and where the discussion and/or public hearing on a proposed action is scheduled; and,

6. The specific dates and location for the review and recommendation by the MPO Technical Committee;
7. The specific dates and location for the review and adoption by the MPO Coordinating Committee; and,
8. The name, title, and telephone number of a specific contact person.

REVIEW COMMITTEE

The MPO will establish a temporary review committee to periodically (or at least every three years) to evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Program, corresponding with the update of the LRTP. Steering Committees that are established for the LRTP update will also serve as the Review Committee. The Review Committee will make recommendations concerning the development of and modification to transportation plans, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the preparation of Studies on specific projects (when project sponsors provide the appropriate information for review and recommendation), and various MPO policy and procedural changes. The role of the review committee will be to provide public involvement in addition to the processes outlined in the Public Notification section above.

The review will include contacting by mail or telephone all organizations and groups identified to determine if they desire to continue to receive public notification. An organization or group can only be removed from the list if requested in writing, by telephone, or if there is difficulty locating an organization with their given address and telephone number. Removal of an organization or group by their request or the addition of other organizations or groups can be done without public review of amendments to this policy as outlined previously.

The review will also include the annual self-evaluation report generated by MPO staff, using the evaluation criteria included in this document.

For those interested in the general process of the technical committee and coordinating committee, including voting procedures, a copy of the MPO By-Laws are available on the website at <http://www.stjoemo.info/mpo.cfm>

PUBLIC EDUCATION

Pamphlets

The MPO will prepare and distribute pamphlets that provide a general overview of the processes for developing and modifying transportation plans, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the rationale for preparing Studies for a specific project (with assumed financial assistance from project sponsors for project related information). This information can be provided in Spanish (the largest minority in the metropolitan area) or sight impaired individuals upon request. Audio assistance devices are available upon request for hearing impaired individuals, as well as interpreters. The requirement is that alternative format information requests, or hearing assistance support, requests shall be made at least twenty-four hours in-advance.

Each pamphlet shall include at a minimum:

1. Defining Transportation Plans, the TIP, and various Studies;
2. How Transportation Plans, the TIP, and Studies are developed;
3. How Transportation Plans and the TIP are modified,
4. What opportunities the public will have to be involved with the development of Transportation Plans, the TIP, and a Study; and
5. How the public can access the technical and policy information used to develop Transportation Plans, the TIP, and a Study.
6. Create an ongoing program for the TIP that regularly solicits comments and becomes a vehicle for people to know to look for on a reliable schedule.

Pamphlet Distribution

The pamphlets, and future editions, will be distributed, at a minimum, to the organizations and groups identified. In addition, pamphlets shall be available to the public at:

1. The offices of the Public Works & Transportation Department of the City of St. Joseph, the Planning Departments of Buchanan & Doniphan Counties; the Buchanan, Doniphan and Andrew County Road Departments; Missouri and Kansas Departments of Transportation, the cities of Savannah, Wathena, KS, and Elwood, KS, Village of Country Club; Rolling Hills, St. Joseph Public and Doniphan County Library Districts.
2. On the Internet; and,
3. Video and audio spots produced for public service announcements on local radio, television, and public access channels.

The MPO staff will be available to make presentations on the information contained in the pamphlets to the organizations and identified, or any other group that requests a presentation.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The MPO shall follow a public policy goal of ensuring that adverse human or environmental effects of governmental activities do not fall disproportionately upon minority or low-income populations. Environmental Justice became federal policy in 1994 when President Clinton signed Executive Order 12898, which directed all major federal agencies to ensure that the spirit of the order is reflected in all of their activities.

Environmental Justice (EJ) means that transportation system changes such as roadway improvements shall be studied carefully to determine the nature, extent, and incidence of probable impacts, both positive and negative.

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations was issued to ensure that all federally funded transportation-related programs, policies, or activities having the potential to adversely affect human health or the environment involves a process that explicitly considers the impacts on minority and low-income populations. These effects include, but are not limited to:

- Bodily impairment, infirmity, illness, or death;
- Air, noise, water pollution, and soil contamination;
- Destruction or disruption of manmade or natural resources;
- Destruction or diminution of aesthetic values;
- Destruction or disruption of community cohesion or a community's economic vitality;
- Destruction or disruption of the availability of public and private facilities and services;
- Vibration;
- Access;
- Adverse employment effects;
- Displacement of persons, businesses, farms, or nonprofit organizations;
- Increased traffic congestion, isolation, exclusion, or separation of minority or low-income individuals within a given community or from the broader community; and,
- Denial of, reductions in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits of U.S. DOT programs, policies, or activities.

The focus of EJ is on whether adverse impacts are borne primarily by or have greater severity for minority or low-income populations than the general population. For the purposes of EJ the U.S. Department of Transportation defines low-income as "a person whose household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines." Minority includes persons who are African-American, Hispanic, Asian American, Native American, or Alaskan Native. If a disproportionately adverse impact, or lack of access, is shown to be affecting these populations, the activity should not be carried out using federal funds unless:

- Alternative approaches or further mitigation measures that would avoid or reduce the disproportionate effect are not practicable; and,
- A substantial need exists for the program, policy, or activity, based on the overall public interest and alternative approaches that would have less adverse effects on protected populations either would:
 - A. Have other adverse social, economic, environmental, or human health impacts that would be more severe, or
 - B. Involve increased costs of extraordinary magnitude.

In order to assure compliance with the EJ standards and to assure that the public has access to full information concerning human health and environmental impacts, the MPO and its member agencies shall conduct the following four actions early in the project development process:

- A. Identify and evaluate environmental, public health, and interrelated social and economic effects;

- B. Propose measures to avoid, minimize, and/or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse environmental and public health effects and interrelated social and economic effects, offsetting benefits on opportunities should be provided to enhance communities, neighborhoods, and individuals whenever permitted by federal law and policy;
- C. Consider alternatives when they would enable disproportionately high and adverse impacts to be avoided and/or minimized; and,
- D. Provide sufficient public involvement opportunities, including soliciting input from affected minority and low-income populations, in considering alternatives.

LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANS - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

A public involvement plan (PIP) will be developed in conjunction with the update of the Long Range Transportation Plan. The LRTP Steering Committee is charged with the re-evaluation of the preceding PIP and may make changes to any and all facets it deems necessary to support and carry out the work of the Committee.

SAFETEA-LU requires the MPO to develop and utilize a “participation plan” that provides reasonable opportunities for all interested parties to comment upon the LRTP and the TIP. The Public Involvement Plan will be developed in consultation with interested parties in conjunction with the update of the LRTP, which will provide reasonable opportunities for the dissemination of information, input, and feedback.

Public Notification
45 Days

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

To develop a more effective Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the MPO will have an open public involvement process that provides for the continuing and early involvement of the public in the development and amendment of the TIP.

Full Update of the TIP

The full update of the TIP will be on a 2-year cycle. This update will include the submission of projects and an update to the narrative portion of the plan. The Off-Year TIP cycle will include project submittals and amendments only, changes to the narrative will not be necessary.

Amendment Schedule

The MPO will provide written notice to agencies that have previously submitted projects to the MPO, or other entities that have requested information. The notice shall include information concerning the transportation issues and processes used in developing a TIP submittal. This notice will provide the information required to propose projects for inclusion in the TIP, the project scoring and selection criteria, and the timetable to be followed. MPO staff will be available to give these agencies and groups any assistance they might require in developing projects for submittal for the TIP. The amendment timeline is as follows:

- A. April Meeting: Projects submitted from December through March
- B. August Meeting: Projects submitted from April through July

C. December Meeting: Projects submitted from August through November

Agencies submitting projects for inclusion in the TIP will include written documentation of the public involvement procedures used by that agency in selecting projects to include in the TIP and/or for federal funding, e.g., projects for which FTA Section 5307 funding is sought. If written or oral comments that question the need, scope or scheduling of TIP projects or that proposes alternative projects are received during the TIP preparation process, the submitting agency will submit a summary, analysis and report on the disposition of the comments which will be made a part of the approved TIP.

Public Involvement Process

The TIP process is designed to be as clear and consistent as possible. In an effort to become more transparent to the public, a tri-annual amendment schedule will take effect on the months listed above. Each amendment month will provide ample communication measures whether an amendment has been filed or not. Via a regular, scheduled public involvement process, using multiple media outlets, the public will become accustomed to being able to find information on a regular schedule, in a reliable location, and via their preferred media source. The list of communication measures are listed on page 1 and include a regular:

- A. Press Release
- B. Internet posting to MPO website and Social Networking Site
- C. Mail-out to local libraries
- D. Public Notice on Transit Buses
- E. Local Public Access Channel spot
- F. Online New-Press Web Banner

****Any change in the project while the project is open for public comment shall be re-solicited for 14 days.***

Amendments

Amendments to the TIP may include:

- A. Any addition or deletion of a project to the TIP;
- B. A significant change in the scope of work or cost for a project in the TIP (10% or higher in cost, length or type change).

Administrative -Non-amendment changes to the TIP can be done using a simplified public involvement procedure. Such changes only require that notice of the change be included in the published agenda of the MPO Technical Planning Committee and Board of Directors meetings where the change will be considered. Non-amendment changes to the TIP include:

- A. The movement of existing projects within the four years of the current TIP, except that financial constraint shall be maintained,
- B. A change in funding source that is not cross-modal, e.g., when a transit project's funding is changed from FTA Section 5309 to FTA Section 5307,

- C. A change in funding priority that is not cross-modal; or,
- D. Other changes that do not affect the overall dollar value of the project by more than fifteen (15) percent of the total cost.

Emergency Amendments

Emergency amendments will be considered on an as needed basis. To be considered an emergency, the project sponsor must request a TIP amendment outside of the regularly scheduled amendment month. Sponsor must also provide sufficient documentation to warrant the emergency request. The amendment is still required to go through the regular review and approval process.

Public Involvement Noticing

The approved TIP will be available for review at the locations listed below:

1. The offices of the Public Works & Transportation Department of the City of St. Joseph, the Planning Departments of Buchanan & Doniphan Counties; the Buchanan, Doniphan and Andrew County Road Departments; Missouri and Kansas Departments of Transportation, the cities of Savannah, Wathena, KS, and Elwood, KS, Village of Country Club; Rolling Hills, St. Joseph Public and Doniphan County Library Districts.
2. On the Internet; and,
3. Video and audio spots produced for public service announcements on local radio, television, and public access channels.

Public Notification

14 Days (amendments)

30 Days (full update)

MAJOR STUDIES - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Public Involvement Plan for preparing a major Study is intended to provide a pro-active, early, and continuous process that is tailored for each Study and includes the public in the analysis of alternatives and selection of the best alternative.

A Study may be required for major metropolitan transportation investments. A major metropolitan transportation investment means a high-type highway or transit improvement of substantial cost that is expected to have a significant effect on capacity, traffic flow, level of service, or mode share at the transportation corridor or sub area scale. Consultation among the MPO, Missouri Department of Transportation, Kansas Department of Transportation, City of St. Joseph (transit operator), FHWA, FTA, and any other reviewing agencies may lead to the designation of other proposed improvements as major investments beyond the examples listed below. Examples of such investments could generally include but are not limited to:

1. Construction of a new partially controlled access (access allowed only for public roads) principal arterial, extension of an existing partially controlled access (access allowed only for public roads) principal arterial by one or more miles,

2. Capacity expansion of a partially controlled access (access provided only for public roads) principal arterial by at least one lane through widening or an equivalent increase in capacity produced by access control or technological improvement, construction or extension of a high-occupancy vehicle (HOV) facility or a fixed guideway transit facility by one or more miles;
3. The addition of lanes or tracks to an existing fixed guideway transit facility for a distance of one or more miles; or
4. A substantial increase in transit service on a fixed guideway facility.

For this purpose, a fixed guideway refers to any public transportation facility, which utilizes and occupies a designated right-of-way or rails including (but not limited to) rapid rail, light rail, commuter rail, busways, automated guideway transit, and people movers. Projects that generally are not considered to be major transportation investments include but are not limited to:

- A. Highway projects on principal arterials where access is not limited to public roads only,
- B. Small scale improvements or extensions (normally less than one mile) on principal arterials with the primary goal of relieving localized safety or operational difficulties,
- C. Resurfacing, replacement, or rehabilitation of existing principal arterials and equipment;
- D. Highway projects not located on a principal arterial; and
- E. Changes in transit routing and scheduling.

Public Involvement Process

When any implementing agency or the MPO intends to prepare a major Study, the public involvement process described below will be followed at a minimum. The sponsor agency shall meet with MPO staff prior to formulation of the PIP for consultation and coordination to include:

1. A notice of intent to prepare a Study will be advertised in a local newspaper at least fourteen (14) days prior to any significant action on a project. The public notification process described above will be initiated with the inclusion of other groups and citizens in the local area affected by the Study.

The staffs of the implementing agency and the MPO will use a pro-active approach for contacting local groups and citizens, including contacting local churches, PTAs, neighborhood watch committees, other neighborhood organizations and other local news agencies.

The notice of intent will contain a general description of the Study and announce the time and location of a meeting to determine the extent of the analysis and agency and public roles in the cooperative process.

2. A summary document of the results of the initial meeting that establishes the cooperative process shall be prepared and distributed at a minimum to all agencies, organizations and citizens that express an interest in the Study. Public notification, as described above, will announce the availability of the summary document. The summary document will also be announced on the Internet.

The summary document will contain at a minimum:

- A. The name, address, and telephone number of the agency initiating the Study;
 - B. The range of alternatives to be studied;
 - C. A summary of comments from the initial meeting;
 - D. The name, address, and telephone number of the agencies and consultant, if applicable, that will be involved in the analysis of each alternative; and,
 - E. A general schedule for the study and the locations and times throughout the Study that the public will be able to access technical and policy information related to the Study.
3. When key milestones are reached or an interim analysis document is released, public notification, as described above, will be sent with the inclusion of other agencies, organizations and citizens that expressed an interest in the Study.
 4. A 30-day comment period will be required when an interim analysis document is released. If written and oral comments raise new material issues, which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen from the public involvement process, there will be an additional 30-day public comment period. A presentation to the Technical or Coordinating Committee of the MPO shall also be required at this juncture.
 5. Public notification, as described above, will be provided at least 14 days before all public meetings. Any meetings that involve key decision points regarding the scope or scheduling of the Study or selection of a final alternative shall be public.
 6. The release of the draft Study, a 30-day comment period and the date, time and location for a public hearing shall be announced through the public notification process, described above, with the inclusion of any other groups or citizens that expressed an interest in the Study.
 7. A public hearing will be held on the draft Study after the 30-day comment period. If written or oral comments that question the data, assumptions, projections or the selected investment are received during the comment period and the public hearing on the draft Study, a summary, analysis and report on the disposition of the comments will be made a part of the final Study. A final presentation shall also be made to the Technical Committee and Coordinating Committee for approval of the final recommendations of the Study.

8. There will be an additional 30-day public comment period if the final Study contains data, assumptions or projections that:
 - A. Affect the selected investment,
 - B. Differ from the draft Study which was made available for comment; or,
 - C. Raise new material issues that interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen from the public involvement process.

If written or oral comments that question the data, assumptions, projections or the selected investment are received during the additional comment period, a supplemental document will be prepared containing a summary, analysis and report on the disposition of the comments and incorporated into the TIP.

Public Notification
30 Days

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM – PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes the scope and budget for the work tasks and transportation planning activities of the MPO staff for the coming year. The UPWP is updated annually and endorsed by the MPO. The following advertising procedures will be utilized to ensure adequate public review of the draft UPWP document:

1. Local newspaper(s);
 - A. St. Joseph News-Press
 - B. Savannah Reporter
 - C. Kansas Chief
2. Local television and radio stations;
 - A. Public Access Channel
3. The Internet.
 - A. MPO Website
 - B. St. Joseph News-Press online web banner
 - C. Social Networking Sites
4. Local Transit Agency
 - A. Public notices on busses and information on dynamic message boards (coming soon)
5. Local Library Systems
 - A. Rolling Hills Library
 - B. St. Joseph Public Library Districts
 - C. Doniphan County Library Districts

Public Notification
30 Days

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

It is important to ensure that a diverse group of citizens are aware of the activities carried out within the Metropolitan Area. At the basic policy level, the MPO will consistently promote the common goal of exploring new and innovative ways of communicating to the public, targeting a varied audience and taking strong measures to contact Title VI/EJ populations. The following activities will be carried out and recorded on an annual basis as a way of measuring public involvement effectiveness:

1. Provide information through additional electronic means
Action Step: *Submit Press Releases to Cable TV channels 4 times per calendar year*
Action Step: *Explore the feasibility of various social networking websites for up-to-date information.*
Measure: *Report "hits" on websites, document and press coverage that has been published due to press releases, track followers on social networking sites.*
2. Enhance the MPO Website and make it more user-friendly
Action Step: *Keep website up to date with information and eliminate any redundant information.*
Action Step: *Provide MPO link on all published documents to encourage more active participation on website.*
Measure: *Provide a "hit tracker" to log users of the website*
3. Contribute more information to public transportation users
Action Step: *Post information on buses and Digital message boards. Providing material will be regarded as a successful measure of this activity.*
Measure: *Provide an awareness question to the "on-board survey" card pertaining to the PPP awareness.*
4. Create a TIP program that regularly provides a mechanism for sharing project updates that people come to recognize as a reliable source of information.
Action Step: *Administer regularly scheduled TIP amendments, on a quarterly basis and report those to the public whether there are projects or not. This consistency will provide a better following of interested citizens. The public involvement process for this action is provided on page 1.*
Measure: *Provide documentation of quarterly press releases and any published stories, record web "hits" during quarterly amendment updates.*

Reporting

A report will be drafted on an annual basis to assess the effectiveness of the public involvement measures. The report will be included in the Technical and Coordinating Committee Agendas.

Coordination

The MPO, the Missouri Department of Transportation and the Kansas Department of Transportation will coordinate through regular consultation their metropolitan public involvement process with the statewide public involvement process to enhance public consideration of issues, plans and programs and to reduce redundancies and costs.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACT AND AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT

The MPO will ensure that the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are met and that appropriate actions are taken during all phases of public involvement to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. In addition, an attempt will be made to seek out representation for both the MPO and the Citizens Review Committee from segments of the population who are traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13166**IMPROVING ACCESS TO SERVICES FOR
PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY****Section 1. Goals.**

The Federal Government provides and funds an array of services that can be made accessible to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language. The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English. To this end, each Federal agency shall examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency. Each Federal agency shall also work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance (recipients) provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. To assist the agencies with this endeavor, the Department of Justice has today issued a general guidance document (LEP Guidance), which sets forth the compliance standards that recipients must follow to ensure that the programs and activities they normally provide in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and its implementing regulations. As described in the LEP Guidance, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

For more information: <http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/eolep.htm>

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898**FEDERAL ACTIONS TO ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN
MINORITY POPULATIONS AND LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS****Section 1–1. Implementation.**

1–101. Agency Responsibilities. To the greatest extent practicable and permitted by law, and consistent with the principles set forth in the report on the National Performance Review, each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States and its territories and possessions, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Commonwealth of the Mariana Islands.

For more information: <http://www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/eo/eo12898.pdf>