

VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING AND MOBILITY DIVISION
INSTRUCTIONAL AND INFORMATIONAL MEMORANDUM

GENERAL SUBJECT: Transportation Planning Activities	NUMBER: IIM-TMPD-4.0
SPECIFIC SUBJECT: Public Participation / Public Involvement in Transportation Planning Studies	DATE: 8/15/2019
	SUPERSEDES: N/A
APPROVAL:	Marsha Fiol State Transportation Planning Director Approved August 15, 2019

EFFECTIVE DATE: Effective for all studies that are initiated after 8/15/2019

This memorandum applies to: All transportation planning studies carried out by or administered by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) as well as planning studies administered or managed by others in cooperation with VDOT.

IMPORTANT Abbreviations and Definitions:

Abbreviations:

APN Arterial Preservation Network
CTB Virginia Commonwealth Transportation Board
DRPT Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation
IIM Instructional and Informational Memorandum
MPO Metropolitan Planning Organization
PDC Planning District Commission
R/W right(s) of way
STARS Strategically Targeted Affordable Roadway Solutions
STIP Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
SYIP Six-Year Improvement Program
TDM Transportation Demand Management
TIP MPO Transportation Improvement Program

VDOT Virginia Department of Transportation
VPI virtual public involvement

Definitions

Local Resident: A person who resides in the study area that may be impacted by a proposed transportation improvement. (A local resident may also be referred to as a stakeholder)

Locality: A "Locality" or "local government" means a county, city, or town as the context may require. (The Code of Virginia - § 15.2-102.)

Planning Studies: This term includes all activities to collect and analyze information and data, determine needs, evaluate transportation alternatives, identify solutions and estimate the costs for transportation improvement recommendations. This includes any activities, facility operational analyses, or evaluations of transportation alternatives prior to the assignment of a project UPC. For the purposes of this IIM, the terms the plan or the study are interchangeable and refer to any study that is conducted or administered by VDOT.

Plan Manager or Study Manager: The VDOT staff person designated to manage a transportation planning study from inception to completion. The plan or study manager will work with the appropriate District staff representatives, the Locality and others to develop the framework for the study process. The study manager is responsible for ensuring (1) that the study addresses any issues that may arise, and (2) the work proceeds on time and within budget. As stated in a previous section, in this IIM, the terms the plan or the study are interchangeable and refer to any study that is conducted or administered by VDOT.

The Public: This term refers to local residents and other stakeholders who may have a vested interest in the planning study and the recommendations.

Public Participation / Public Involvement Process: This includes meetings are held to share information with the public on the planning process for transportation improvements and to receive their input or comments on issues relating to traffic congestion, safety concerns, access, and the need for improvements. It also includes other communication approaches such as local newsletters and online platforms for sharing information and receiving input from stakeholders. These methods also allow the public to provide comments on any proposed transportation improvement recommendations.

Stakeholder: This term includes; local residents, property owners, and business owners, state and local elected leaders, homeowner associations, civic groups, advocates for transportation modes, as well as people who use the travel corridor regularly and may be impacted by the proposed transportation

improvement.

Virtual Public Involvement: This refers to online techniques that transportation agencies can use to inform the public and receive feedback on studies, projects or issues of concern. These strategies create efficiencies in how information is disseminated and how input is collected and considered, which can potentially accelerate planning and project development processes.

PURPOSE / SCOPE / REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this Instructional and Information Memorandum (IIM) is to ensure that all planning studies performed by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT) provide opportunities for participation by the local residents or stakeholders who may be impacted by any proposed transportation improvements.

Whenever detailed planning studies and improvement recommendations are developed on specific highway locations or longer travel corridors, local residents, and other stakeholders such as; local business owners, land owners, representatives of the highway users, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian advocates; freight shippers and freight service providers; public agencies; transportation service providers for the elderly and disabled; and other interested parties are encouraged to participate at public meetings that are held as part of the transportation planning process. Stakeholders may also participate through an online virtual public involvement (VPI) site.

Public participation meetings are held to (1) explain the purpose and need for the planning recommendations and receive any input from the attendees at the initiation of the study, and (2) provide opportunities to review and comment on the technical analysis and preliminary recommendations. This process will result in the development of more reliable scopes of work, schedules and cost estimates. (Projects funded through sources, such as SMART SCALE, may have fewer opportunities for refinement of project scopes, schedules and cost estimates after they are programmed into the SYIP.)

VDOT is committed to providing reasonable notice and opportunity for the public to review, comment and participate in the planning and programming of transportation improvements consistent with requirements of federal regulations 23 CFR 450, as well as state laws and policies. (See the REFERENCES Section below.)

It is noted that the VDOT and DRPT have jointly established the public participation in the transportation planning and programming of highways, rail and public transportation projects as part of the CTB's review of needs to include in the SYIP. See:

[http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/resources/Public Participation in Transportation Planning and Programming Process.pdf](http://www.virginiadot.org/projects/resources/Public_Participation_in_Transportation_Planning_and_Programming_Process.pdf)

PROCEDURES:

VDOT's goal is to provide local residents and other stakeholders with opportunities to express their views on transportation needs and recommendations for improvements on specific locations or on longer corridor planning studies. This IIM outlines opportunities for the public to provide their comments on transportation improvement recommendations that may have an impact on their travel patterns or access to their property. The Study Manager may refer to VDOT's Public Involvement Manual to ensure that the public involvement process is adequate for a given study. The manual is available at:

[http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/LocDes/Public Involvement Manual.pdf](http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/LocDes/Public_Involvement_Manual.pdf)

During the planning for transportation improvements, VDOT will hold public meetings to: (1) outline the purpose and need for a proposed study, (In many cases local residents and other stakeholders can help define the need for an improvement), (2) to share information and receive comments on the results of technical analyses and preliminary recommendations, and (3) present the final recommendations and receive any further input from the public. Additionally, the Locality may also offer an opportunity for public comment at a public hearing that is held as part of adoption of the study recommendations and inclusion in the Locality's comprehensive plan.

The Study Manager will provide public involvement opportunities for input from stakeholders on all transportation planning studies, regardless of their size. Public participation may be handled by both holding public meetings and by providing a platform to convey information and receive input online. The virtual public involvement (VPI) site should be available throughout the planning process but the Study Manager will set a 'cut-off' date for receiving comments prior to the final document being presented to the Locality for adoption or to VDOT for approval.

When the Study Manager determines that the study will be limited to a few intersections (example: less than 3 intersections) and limited R/W is to be acquired, public involvement may only need to include notifying the Locality of the study, requesting their input and then meeting initially with the adjacent land owners and stakeholders to discuss the needs and seek their input before developing the scope of work. For these small studies, the meeting notices may be sent by US Mail to those who may be impacted by the proposed improvements. Following the data collection, analysis and development of draft recommendations, the study team should again notify the Locality and discuss the results, before meeting again with the same stakeholders to seek their comments on the recommendations.

Larger planning studies will require notification of a much wider audience and providing accommodations for the participation of a larger stakeholder group. The study manager will work with the Locality and VDOT's district staff to ensure that the citizens and stakeholders are given notice of the planned public meetings and connections to the VPI (virtual public involvement site).

For all planning studies, the District Communications Director should assist in sending meeting notices to the localities, sending public service announcements to local media outlets, including the notice on VDOT's webpage, contacting local civic groups, as well as placing notices in local newsletters and on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook. (**Note:** Paid media advertisements are not normally a part of the public notification for transportation planning studies.)

All public meeting notices should be posted at least 15 calendar days prior to the date of the meeting. As a best practice, public comments may also be received online through the VPI concurrent with the public meeting. To keep the study on schedule, timely results of the meeting is essential, so a five (5) day window should be open following each meeting to allow written comments to be mailed and received by the Study Manager. All information received will be evaluated to determine if any changes to the recommendations are needed and all comments and questions are addressed. If changes to the study recommendations are required, the study team will collaborate with the Locality on the final recommendations and the participants of the public meetings will be notified as appropriate.

If the study recommendations are to be included in the Locality's comprehensive plan, a public hearing will be held by the Locality, separate from the Council or Board of Supervisors meeting, and the appropriate legal notice of the public hearing will be posted by the Locality. **Note:** Records of the public participation meetings will be included as an appendix in the study report.

Selecting Meeting Locations

The public participation meetings should be held in a school, library or other public building if possible. Alternative sites such as a community or recreational center may also be suitable for these meetings. However, all public meeting locations must meet ADA accessibility requirements so that persons with disabilities can attend. The District Communications Director and representatives of the Locality should have a list of the possible meeting sites and can assist in choosing a meeting site.

Meeting Materials

Displays showing the study termini or intersection/interchange locations must be provided along with a statement of the purpose and need for improvements. (These may be mounted on display boards or shown via video displays.) The displays for the

first meeting must show current conditions and feature information such as traffic volumes, traffic operations and crash information. For subsequent meetings, future conditions featuring information such as future year traffic projections and an analysis showing the future operations (No-build and other alternatives) must be displayed. Meeting materials will also be provided online for comments. **Note:** The Study Manager will review all display materials for accuracy and consult with the appropriate ADA for approval, prior to their use at the meetings or placing them online.

Photos or videos of congestion at critical intersections along with an analysis of operations will help stakeholders understand how the existing conditions may be relieved. Recommendations for improving intersections should be displayed as conceptual plans or renderings on aerial photography. These displays will help in showing how the recommendations will function and how they will impact the adjacent properties. In certain cases, the Study Manager may require 3-D illustrations or animated renderings to better educate the public on the recommendations. Proposed concepts that are new to the local stakeholders such as innovative intersections should be presented with educational materials such as “How to Navigate” brochures, videos and 3-D illustrations. More information on innovative intersections can be found at: <http://www.virginiadot.org/innovativeintersections/>

Meeting handouts and comment sheets should be provided to better inform the citizens and to provide a standard means for collecting comments from the attendees. However, the Study Manager should consider making tools available to allow for public meeting attendees to provide feedback through the VPI (virtual public involvement) to standardize responses. The Study Manager may consider other options for the meeting materials in VDOT’s Public Involvement Manual. http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/LocDes/Public_Involvement_Manual.pdf

All materials for the public participation meetings and presented online must be reviewed and approved by VDOT’s Study Manager. The review should be coordinated with the District staff and the Locality prior to sharing the materials with the public. This review is to ensure accuracy of the material and consistency with VDOT’s policies and goals for transportation plans.

Documentation:

Accurate records must be kept of all communications and correspondence over the course of the study. This includes all emails, texts, and other online communications. Additionally, records will be kept on all meetings including the time the meeting began and ended, a list of the attendees, a record of both written and oral comments and other input received during the public participation meetings. All of this information will be included in the study report.

After the recommendation is included in the Six Year Improvement Program, and the design is initiated, the study and all of the information gathered through the public participation will be passed on to the project design team. The design project manager will have this input to help in determining the scope of the project.

APPLICATION:

These procedures will be applied in all future transportation planning studies that are initiated after the date this IIM. Opportunities for public participation will be included in the scope of work whether the study is developed by VDOT staff or consultant services. Following the guidelines of this IIM will provide many opportunities for public participation in VDOT's transportation planning. Having a strong base of public support for a transportation plan will help ensure that the recommendations are good candidates for financing through SMART SCALE, HSIP and Revenue Sharing.

REFERENCES

Statute References: Applicable Statutes

- § 33.2-214. A. The Board shall have the Power and duty to... coordination of such rail and public transportation plans with highway programs, B... Traffic regulations, (7) Policies and operations, (8) Cooperation with other agencies and local governments, (9) (b) To monitor....coordination of such rail and public transportation plans with highway programs, (16) Subject to compliance with applicable federal regulations, the Commonwealth Transportation Board shall establish a plan for identification and acquisition of rights-of-way that may be needed within the corridors designated on the Statewide Transportation Plan.
- § 33.2-241. Connections over shoulders of highways for intersecting commercial establishment entrances.
- § 33.2-245. Comprehensive highway access management standards.
- § 33.2-353. Commonwealth Transportation Board to develop and update Statewide Transportation Plan
- § 15.2-2223. Comprehensive plan to be prepared and adopted; scope and purpose.
- § 15.2-2224. Surveys and studies to be made in preparation of plan; implementation of plan.
- § 15.2-2230 Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed every five years.
- § 15.2-2232 Legal Status of the Plan

VDOT Policy

Stakeholders are encouraged to provide their opinions, comments, and suggestions on transportation needs at the annual meetings held in each District by the CTB as part of the process for updating the SYIP.

Public Involvement Procedures Reference: VDOT's Public Involvement Manual

http://www.virginiadot.org/business/resources/LocDes/Public_Involvement_Manual.pdf

Federal Highway Administration

Public Involvement: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/vpi/

Federal Regulations 23CFR 450

§450.210 Interested parties, public involvement, and consultation.

(a) In carrying out the statewide transportation planning process, including development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP, the State shall develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.

(1) The State's public involvement process at a minimum shall:

(i) Establish early and continuous public involvement opportunities that provide timely information about transportation issues and decision making processes to individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, providers of freight transportation services, and other interested parties;

(ii) Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP;

(iii) Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan and STIP;

(iv) To the maximum extent practicable, ensure that public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(v) To the maximum extent practicable, use visualization techniques to describe the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan and supporting studies;

(vi) To the maximum extent practicable, make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information;

(vii) Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input during the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and STIP;

(viii) Include a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services; and

(ix) Provide for the periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all interested parties and revise the process, as appropriate.

(2) The State shall provide for public comment on existing and proposed processes for public involvement in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP. At a minimum, the State shall allow 45 calendar days for public review and written comment before the procedures and any major revisions to existing procedures are adopted. The State shall provide copies of the approved public involvement process document(s) to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes.

(3) With respect to the setting of targets, nothing in this part precludes a State from considering comments made as part of the State's public involvement process.

(b) The State shall provide for nonmetropolitan local official participation in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP. The State shall have a documented process(es) for cooperating with nonmetropolitan local officials representing units of general purpose local government and/or local officials with responsibility for transportation that is separate and discrete from the public involvement process and provides an opportunity for their participation in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP. Although the FHWA and the FTA shall not review or approve this cooperative process(es), the State shall provide copies of the process document(s) to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes.

(1) At least once every 5 years, the State shall review and solicit comments from nonmetropolitan local officials and other interested parties for a period of not less than 60 calendar days regarding the effectiveness of the cooperative process and any proposed changes. The State shall direct a specific request for comments to the State association of counties, State municipal league, regional planning agencies, or directly to nonmetropolitan local officials.

(2) The State, at its discretion, is responsible for determining whether to adopt any proposed changes. If a proposed change is not adopted, the State shall make publicly available its reasons for not accepting the proposed change, including notification to nonmetropolitan local officials or their associations.

(c) For each area of the State under the jurisdiction of an Indian Tribal government, the State shall develop the long-range statewide transportation plan and STIP in consultation with the Tribal government and the Secretary of the Interior. States shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with Indian Tribal governments

and Department of the Interior in the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the STIP.

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