

Public Participation Plan

Since transportation plans and decisions affect travel costs and quality of life for every citizen of every community in the RFATS region, active public participation in the planning and decision-making process is critical to RFATS' goals and mission.

With this in mind, RFATS has established a Public Participation Plan which actively encourages the community to provide input into the transportation planning process. The plan is regularly reviewed for improvement opportunities, and was most recently updated in June 2016. One of the principal goals of the plan is to ensure that the planning process is open to all who would participate, including the following populations:

- Regional commuters to and from the urbanized areas of York and Lancaster counties to Charlotte.
- Local commuters within the urbanized areas of York and Lancaster counties and their population centers.
- Student populations from local colleges and universities.
- Elderly, disabled, minority, and disadvantaged residents.
- Commercial / industrial enterprise activity, including freight.
- All non-commuting travelers.

The type of transportation presently used by the majority of these populations is the single passenger automobile. Other groups currently use commercial trucks, limited express bus service to and from the Charlotte Transportation Center, demand response transit service, vanpool arrangements and some bicycle/pedestrian facilities.

Rapid development of the metropolitan area is generating growing traffic and other transportation demand that will require significant focus and supporting improvement planning in order to ensure the continued reliability of the transportation system for both people and goods movement. These conditions impact every community in the RFATS region. Continued prosperity and quality of life will require a substantial increase in local transportation investment and greater diversity in the planning and funding of different types of transportation improvements.



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN: VISION, GOALS & OBJECTIVES

The vision for public participation is that the public will be actively engaged in and receive information on the transportation planning and project development process in a convenient and timely manner. To this end, the following goals and policies have been established.

Goal I. To actively engage the public in the transportation planning process according to the policies contained in Federal and State law, as well as in the RFATS Public Participation Plan.

- A. RFATS will maintain a current database of contacts and/or interested parties that includes:
 - Federal, state and local agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, land use management, natural resources, and historic preservation
 - Elected officials
 - Local government staff
 - Transportation agencies (freight, port, airport, transit, etc.)
 - Organizations/agencies representing users of public transportation
 - Organizations/agencies representing those with special needs
 - Local media
 - Homeowners associations
 - Libraries (for review of public documents)
 - Interested members of the general public
- B. RFATS will, whenever feasible, electronically send meeting notices to all interested parties (RFATS Contact List and/or Targeted Group Mailing, etc.).
- C. RFATS will employ visualization techniques to illustrate transportation plans/projects. Examples of visualization techniques include charts, graphs and maps.

Goal II. RFATS shall keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis.

- A. RFATS will make publications and work products available to the public.
- B. RFATS staff will be available to provide general and project specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours when deemed appropriate and with reasonable notice.
- C. RFATS will maintain an accurate website with current transportation planning and project activity descriptions/summaries, including:
 - Updated list of Policy Committee members
 - Current schedule for RFATS meetings and events
 - Public display ads and notices
 - Copies of the Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, Public Participation Plan, and other documents/studies
 - Opportunity for public comments
 - Interactive mapping (currently available via ArcGIS Online)
- D. RFATS will maintain and update social media accounts with current planning and project activity.

Goal III. RFATS shall encourage the participation of all citizens in the transportation planning process.

- A. RFATS uses its Public Participation Communications Venue matrix (**Figure 2.1**), which lists the stakeholder groups and communication media (both direct and indirect), to maximize the opportunity for the public to influence transportation/transit choices in the RFATS region.

Figure 2.1: RFATS Public Participation Communication Venues

| | Public Events | Personal Interviews | Senior Centers | Public Facility Contact | Targeted Bulk Mailings | Mass Media | Newsletters (Neighborhood Empowerment, etc.) | Websites | Newspapers including Latino, etc. | Organization meetings | Community town hall meetings | RFATS Citizens Advisory Committee |
|--|---------------|---------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|------------|--|----------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Residents – General Public | • | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Minority – Disadvantaged Citizens | • | | | | | | • | • | • | | | |
| Housing Authorities | • | | • | • | | | | • | | | • | |
| Neighborhood Organizations | • | | • | • | | | | • | • | | | |
| Churches, Faith-Based Organizations | • | | • | | | | | • | • | | | |
| ESL Groups | • | | • | | | | | | | | | • |
| Council on Aging – Special Needs | • | | • | | | | • | • | | | | • |
| Chamber of Commerce | • | | | | | | • | • | | | | • |
| Economic Development Organizations | • | | | | | | • | • | | | | • |
| Homebuilders Association | • | | | | | | • | • | | | | • |
| Education Organizations | • | | | | | | | • | • | • | | • |
| Freight Movement (i.e. SC Trucking Association) | | | | | | | | | | | | • |

Goal IV. RFATS will strive to improve public participation by continuously monitoring and evaluating the public participation techniques contained in this plan.

- A. The Public Participation Plan will be reviewed at least every three (3) years.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

An effective public participation process is ongoing, and characterized by techniques and procedures that enable citizens to become well informed. This section contains descriptions of public participation tools that RFATS currently uses and proposes to use in the future:

- Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
- Community Town Hall Meetings
- Consultation
- Legal Advertisements and Display Ads
- Brochure
- Surveys
- Direct Mailings / Postcards
- E-mail Notifications / Announcements
- Comment Forms
- Media / Press Releases
- Small Group / Public Meetings
- Personal Interviews
- Community Based Public Events / SC Visitors Center
- Title VI and Environmental Justice Outreach
- Visualization
- Social Media
- Responding to comments or questions (written, telephone, meetings)
- Comment Forms
- MPO and Local Government Websites

To support participation by persons with limited English proficiency, a translation tool is provided on the RFATS website which translates text on the webpages into more than 70 different languages, including Spanish. RFATS also works with the York County International Center to address other requests for translation.

Public Participation Activities for the 2045 LRTP

Stakeholder Outreach

Comprehensive outreach to all stakeholder groups was undertaken during the development of the 2045 LRTP, beginning in summer 2016 and concluding with the final public hearing at the May 19, 2017 Policy Committee meeting. A representative sample of those contacted includes the following:

- Local governments
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Environmental Protection Agency

- Freight providers, including rail companies
- Employers and York County Chamber of Commerce
- Transit agencies/providers
- South Carolina Department of Transportation
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
- Transportation disadvantaged
- Educational institutions
- Bicycle/Pedestrian organizations

Community Meetings

Four community meetings were held in late summer/early fall 2016 in the City of Rock Hill, Town of Fort Mill/City of Tega Cay, panhandle of Lancaster County, and the Lake Wylie area to discuss the process for updating the LRTP and to seek input and information from all interested parties and stakeholders in identifying area transportation needs and priorities. Common themes from the meetings included the following:

Improvements to Existing Roadway System (e.g., Road Widening; Dedicated Turning Capacity)

- Sutton Road – should be widened to improve roadway efficiency
- India Hook Road – additional turning capacity needed
- US 521 – additional lanes and increased capacity from access roads
- NC 49 – need for an additional bridge crossing
- Increased turning capacity between access roads and Celanese Road
- Additional lanes on US 21
- Improvements to traffic signalization to smooth the flow of traffic



Public Transit Availability

- Extension of LYNX Blue Line, either to Carowinds or further into York County
- More direct bus routes into Charlotte with limited stops and increased hours of operation
- Expanded transportation choices that operate after regular working hours

Congestion Management (Priority Areas)

- Celanese Road Corridor
- SC 160
- SC 160 / Hensley
- NC 49
- Gold Hill Road / Access Points at I-77
- PM congestion noticeably worse than AM congestion

Accessibility and Transportation System Needs

- New Catawba River Bridge – additional system capacity needed to increase accessibility to surrounding areas and to address current and projected congestion levels
- Development of additional collector roads that provide relief to high traffic corridors and provide additional travel options between points

Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements

- Growing expectation that bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure should be included in proposed roadway improvements
- Safety concerns regarding connectivity and accessibility to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure

Growth Management and Planning

- Concerns about current road capacity being able to accommodate recent population and development growth
- Importance of anticipating the impacts of future growth, and planning transportation systems with adequate capacity to accommodate projected growth

Review of Comments and Development of Draft Project List

Staff assembled all of the information gathered during the public outreach process and reviewed this information with the Technical Team, CAC, and the Policy Committee during the initial stages of developing a draft project list.

RFATS Committees

RFATS has several committees that not only contribute directly to the policy-making process but also serve as a means of public and stakeholder involvement. The committees include:

Policy Committee – The primary function of the Policy Committee is to prioritize and plan for the transportation needs of the RFATS region. It is made up of elected officials from the cities of Rock Hill and Tega Cay, the Town of Fort Mill, York and Lancaster counties, a State Senate and House representative, the SC DOT Commissioner, as well as the Tribal Chief from the Catawba Indian Nation.

Technical Committee – The primary purpose of the Technical Team is to assist the Policy Committee in addressing more technically-oriented transportation questions and provide recommendations on various RFATS plans and programs. The Technical Team is composed of staff from each of the local communities within the RFATS region, as well as the Catawba Regional Council of Governments, SC DOT, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and the SC Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC).

Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) – The primary function of the CAC is to ensure that public participation is an active part of the planning process. A second important objective of the CAC is to seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system. The Citizen's Advisory Committee is composed of representatives of each of the RFATS municipalities as well as special needs, minority, and at-large members. This committee is established by the RFATS Bylaws and typically meets on a quarterly basis, or as needed.

Interagency Consultation Committee (IAC) – The primary purpose of the IAC is to promote cooperative coordination and review in ensuring that all transportation plans, programs and projects adopted by RFATS properly conform with the purpose of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards in the RFATS region. The Interagency Consultation Committee includes staff representation from

RFATS, as well as SCDOT, FHWA, the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

RTP Adoption Process

The adoption process for the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan involved a multi-stage evaluation and review effort that included Interagency Consultation with a variety of Federal and State partners. During the period from October 2016 through March 2017, the RFATS Technical Team and Citizen's Advisory Committee thoroughly reviewed all three LRTP documents (Long Range Plan, Air Quality Conformity Report and Transportation Improvement Program) and provided additional comments.

On April 21, 2017, the RFATS Policy Committee granted preliminary approval of a public review draft and authorized a 30-day public comment period. Draft LRTP documents were then posted on the RFATS website as well as on the websites of all RFATS communities. Notice of the opportunity for public review was then published in the *Rock Hill Herald*, *Lake Wylie Pilot*, *Fort Mill Times* and *Carolina Gateway* (the general circulation newspapers for the area), providing information regarding the availability of the LRTP documents for public inspection as well as information on how to submit input for presentation to the Policy Committee prior to final approval.

On May 19, 2017 a public hearing was held at the Rock Hill Operations Center, where copies of the draft 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan, Air Quality Conformity Report and TIP were made available. At this hearing, RFATS staff presented a report on these documents and then invited public input and written comments. Following the public hearing, an RFATS Policy Committee meeting was held in which staff requested final approval and authorization to submit the 2045 LRTP to the U.S. Department of Transportation for further review and approval.