

Introduction

Purpose of Chapter

This chapter describes RFATS' Public Participation Plan, summarizes the public involvement that was carried out during development of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and summarizes the key themes that were raised. It also lists the goals that were developed in response to that input.

Relevance to the Transportation System and the Plan

RFATS policy is to support and encourage active public participation throughout the transportation planning process. The MPO has therefore adopted a public participation policy in order to ensure that specific opportunities exist for the public to offer input and provide feedback as active participants in the decision-making process.

Public Participation Plan

RFATS has established a Public Participation Plan which actively encourages the community to provide input into the transportation planning process. The plan was amended in May 2010. One goal of the plan is to ensure that the process is open to all who would participate, including the following populations:

- Daily work commuters between the RFATS Study Area and Charlotte,
- Local work commuters within the RFATS Study Area,
- Student populations from local colleges and universities,
- Elderly, handicapped, minority, and disadvantaged residents,
- Commercial and industrial enterprise activity, including freight, and
- Non-commuting travelers.



RFATS Goals and Policies for Public Participation

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 this Public Participation Plan.

- A. RFATS will maintain a current database of contacts and/or interested parties:
- Federal, state and local agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources and historic preservation,
 - Elected Officials,
 - Local Government Staff,
 - Transportation Agencies (freight, port, airports, transit, etc.),
 - Organizations/agencies representing users of public transportation,
 - Organizations/agencies representing those with special needs,
 - Local Media, and
 - Homeowners' Associations.
- B. RFATS will (when 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, photographs, 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 accuracy on its website and social media with current transportation planning and project activity descriptions/summaries.
- D. RFATS will provide current and accurate information to the websites of member municipalities, including the city of Rock Hill, the city of Tega Cay, the town of Fort Mill, Lancaster County and York County.

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

- A. RFATS will utilize a “Public Participation Communications Venue” matrix, which lists the stakeholder groups and communication mediums (both direct and indirect), to provide the greatest opportunity to influence the transportation/transit choices in the RFATS Study Area.

Goal IV: RFATS shall 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 years.

Public Participation Techniques

Public participation takes many forms, and RFATS uses a wide range of methods and media to enhance the public’s participation in the process. RFATS currently uses and proposes to use in the future a combination of the following outreach techniques:

- Citizens Advisory Committee
- Community Town Hall Meetings
- Consultation
- Legal Advertisements and Display Ads
- Brochure
- Surveys
- Direct Mailings / Postcards
- Email Notifications / Announcements
- Social Media
- Comment Forms
- MPO & Local Government Website(s)
- Media/Press Releases
- Small Group / Public Meetings
- Personal Interviews
- Community Based Public Events / SC Visitors Center
- Title VI & Environmental Justice
- Visualization



Source: RFATS Public Participation Plan, Amended 05-28-2010

Public Participation Activities for the 2035 LRTP

Stakeholder Outreach

Comprehensive outreach to all stakeholder groups was undertaken over the 2012 summer announcing the initiation of the 2035 LRTP update as well as requesting their input and participation. A representative sample of those contacted includes the following:

- Local Governments,
- Federal Highway Administration,
- Environmental Protection Agency,
- Freight and Rail Providers,
- Employers and York County Chamber of Commerce,
- Transit Agencies/Providers,
- South Carolina Department of Transportation,
- Federal Transit Administration,
- South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control,
- Transportation Disadvantaged,
- Educational Institutions, and
- Bicycle/Pedestrian Organizations.

Community Meetings

Three community meetings were held (City of Rock Hill, Town of Fort Mill, Lake Wylie Area) discussing the process for updating the LRTP as well as requesting input and information from all interested parties and stakeholders in identifying area transportation needs and priorities. Common themes from the meetings include the following:

Road Widening (i.e., Additional Lanes; Dedicated Turning Capacity)

- Mt Gallant Road – Widen from Celanese Road to Hwy 274
- Sutton Road – Should be widened to improve roadway efficiency; growth management
- Doby's Bridge Road – Development Pressures; Proximity of School Locations
- India Hook Road – Widen to four lanes

Bicycle / Pedestrian Needs

- Bike Lanes / Paths – Longer distances; improved connectivity

- Sidewalks – Particularly in Nations Ford High and Sugarcreek Elementary Areas

Congestion Management (Priority Areas)

- Celanese Road Corridor
- SC 160
- SC 160 / Hensley
- Regent Pkwy Area
- Gold Hill Road / Access Points at I-77

Transportation System Needs

- New Catawba River Bridge – Should be restored to active consideration; growth management
- Traffic Circles – Should be used more often to improve safety and efficiency

Public Transit

- More service options / availability to access employment centers in York County
- Additional public transit needed for seniors and individuals with special needs

Disadvantaged People and People with Special Needs

As part of a targeted outreach effort to transportation-disadvantaged people and people with special transportation needs, RFATS staff met with the York County Interagency Coalition, a group primarily comprising the area's human service agencies. At this meeting, staff distributed a survey requesting their assessment of the existing transportation system and a list of the transportation needs and priorities for those they serve.

Common themes from the survey included the need for increased public transportation options, employment-related transportation choices, and transit options that operate after regular business hours.

Review of Comments and Development of Draft Project List

Staff assembled all of the information gathered during the public outreach process and reviewed the information with the Study Team, CAC, and Policy Committee during the initial stages of developing a draft project list. At the March 2013 meeting of the Policy Committee, the draft project list was endorsed and then made available at the Rock Hill City Hall and public library as well as the project website (www.rfatsmpo.org) for review and comments.

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 in their own right. The Committees are:

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

Study Team /Technical Committee – The Study Team is composed of staff from each of the local communities within the RFATS Study Area, as well as the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), and the Catawba Regional Council of Governments (CRCOG). The primary purpose of the Study Team is to assist the Policy Committee in addressing more technically-oriented transportation questions and provide recommendations on various RFATS programs.

Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) – 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 subcommittee is incorporated in the RFATS Bylaws and meets at least once per year, or as needed. 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.

Interagency Consultation Committee – The Interagency Consultation Committee includes staff representation from RFATS, as well as the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC) and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The primary purpose of the Interagency Group is to ensure that cooperative coordination and review is undertaken in addressing 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 Study Area.

Goals and Objectives

Introduction and Overall Goal

The 2035 LRTP is guided by the following goals and objectives. These goals and objectives are based on comments received during the public involvement process and endorsed by the RFATS Citizens Advisory Committee and Policy Committee.

The overall goal of the LRTP is to develop plans and strategies that promote an efficient and effective transportation system for all users in the RFATS Study Area.

Highway System Goals

- Enhance mobility by improving existing roads and corridors and street connectivity.
- Maintain and protect the existing transportation system and components and require maximum efficiency and utilization of existing arterials.
- Explore improvements to the street network that will most effectively handle capacity deficiencies.
- Protect existing corridors and reserve future rights-of-way affected by both public and private development.
- Provide a safe transportation system that will focus on reducing crashes at problematic intersections and providing better facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Encourage opportunities to engage freight providers in operational and transportation system upgrade planning.

Congestion Management Goals

- Continue to support the ongoing Congestion Management Process and fully integrate congestion measures and strategies into the project selection process.

- Continue to improve traffic signalization timing in jurisdictions throughout the Study Area.
- Encourage the incorporation of access management strategies on major roads and corridors and require development to provide adequate internal circulation and connectivity to maximize linkages with other nearby development.

Transportation Alternatives Goals

- Implement transit plans and strategies that encourage a more comprehensive transit system and accommodate more riders.
- Implement land-use policies to encourage transit supportive development patterns along the rapid transit corridor.
- Seek public support and funding sources needed to implement long range transit projects.
- Incorporate pedestrian and bicycle accommodations in planned improvements to roads and corridors.
- Incorporate bicycle facilities/lanes in state and local maintenance and pavement marking projects where feasible.
- Pursue strategies and funding for a coordinated and comprehensive network of sidewalks and bicycle routes throughout the Study Area.
- Require developments to provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities and connections.

Environmental Goals

- Continue to apply strategies that would improve air quality for the Study Area and result in ozone attainment status.
- Continue to seek ways to promote better integration of land use and transportation planning that will support sustainable growth patterns and maximize the transportation system.
- Encourage more efficient and compact growth in urban areas away from environmentally-sensitive areas.
- Minimize environmental impacts of the transportation system with proper planning and preservation techniques of the area's natural features.
- Promote a transportation system that includes equitable options for low-income and minority populations.

Public Outreach and Awareness Goals

- Continue to seek ways to educate and inform the RFATS Study Area citizens about the MPO transportation planning process and goals and encourage their participation.
- Utilize visualization techniques to illustrate and inform the public about transportation projects.
- Educate the public regarding funding needs and resources to finance a long range plan.

Adoption Process

The adoption process for the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan involved a multi-stage evaluation and review effort that included Interagency Consultation with our Federal and State partners throughout this process. Additionally, the RFATS Study 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 comments / suggestions as well.

On April 26, 2013, the RFATS Policy Committee granted preliminary approval of a public review draft and authorized a 30-day public comment period. It should be noted that the draft LRTP documents were then posted on the RFATS website as well as on the websites of all RFATS communities. A notice of public review was then advertised in the Rock Hill Herald newspaper (the general circulation newspaper for the RFATS Study 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 31, 2013 a public hearing was held in the City of Rock Hill Manchester Meadows that included copies of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, Air Quality Conformity Report and Transportation Improvement Program. 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 2035 LRTP to the US Department of Transportation for further evaluation and approval.

Summary of Key Points

- Federal and state legislation requires that the public have an opportunity to participate in transportation decisions. RFATS has fulfilled this requirement with an active public participation program.
- As part of the 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan, RFATS took a number of steps to ensure consideration of the public's views, including updating the public participation plan, developing and contacting a comprehensive listing of stakeholders, utilizing a variety of methods to involve the public, and considering public comments in developing the list of transportation projects.
- The overall goal of the LRTP is to develop plans and strategies that promote an efficient and effective transportation system for all users in the RFATS Study Area. This is reflected in the more detailed goals as listed above. These are based on comments received during the public involvement process, and were endorsed by the RFATS Citizens Advisory Committee and Policy Committee.