



Public Involvement Plan DRAFT

METROPLAN ORLANDO is in the process of updating its Public Involvement Plan. This process includes input from the organization's advisory committees throughout the month of January and a public comment period lasting 45 days. This document will be updated to reflect comments during the 45-day period.

The Public Involvement Plan will be considered as an action item by the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board on February 10, 2010.

Anyone interested in commenting on the draft Public Involvement Plan can provide feedback by:

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- Phone: Cynthia Lambert, 407.481.5672 x320
- In writing:

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Comments must be received by February 9, 2010.

About METROPLAN ORLANDO

METROPLAN ORLANDO is the metropolitan planning organization for Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties – the Orlando urban area. As a regional transportation planning organization, METROPLAN ORLANDO provides the forum for local elected officials and transportation experts to work together to improve mobility for Central Florida residents, businesses and visitors.

Transportation planning received its principal thrust in urban areas across the nation as a result of the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act, which required certain studies and planning efforts in all urban areas containing a central city with a population of 50,000 or more. The new transportation planning process was to follow "3C" federal guidelines: Continuing, Comprehensive and Coordinated.

The Orlando Urban Area Transportation Study began in 1965 under the guidelines of the 1962 Federal Aid Highway Act. Due to the rapid rate of growth in the Orlando urban area, the original transportation study developed in 1965 has been updated several times to reflect the area's population growth. The Orlando Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization was formally created in 1977 to specifically study the transportation issues that affect the Central Florida area and to oversee the development of an effective regional transportation system.

In August of 1997, the Orlando Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization changed its name to METROPLAN ORLANDO to stress the importance of regional cooperation and to strive for excellence in planning a balanced transportation system.

METROPLAN ORLANDO Board

In accordance with Florida Statute 339.175 (2)(a), METROPLAN ORLANDO's Board consists of 19 voting members and six non-voting members. Non-voting members include the chairpersons of each of the METROPLAN ORLANDO advisory committees, a liaison from the Florida Department of Transportation and a representative from the Kissimmee Gateway Airport.

The board is ultimately responsible for implementing the transportation planning process in the three-county area and includes elected officials from Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties, the largest cities in the region and representatives from the region's transportation operating agencies. The board meets monthly to discuss issues and make informed decisions about future transportation projects, initiatives and improvements, thus providing leadership for a continuous and comprehensive transportation planning process.

The make-up of the board, as designated by the Governor of Florida and by Interlocal Agreement, includes:

- Orange County (6)
- City of Orlando (2)
- City of Apopka (1)
- Seminole County (2)
- City of Sanford (1)
- City of Altamonte Springs (1)
- Osceola County (1)
- City of Kissimmee (1)
- LYNX (1)
- Orlando-Orange County Expressway Authority (1)
- Greater Orlando Aviation Authority (1)
- Sanford Airport Authority (1)

Metropolitan planning organizations, such as METROPLAN ORALNDO, are required by federal law to develop and adopt a **Long Range Transportation Plan**, a **Transportation Improvement Program** and a **Unified Planning Work Program**.

The **Long Range Transportation Plan** identifies transportation improvements necessary to maintain adequate mobility and to accommodate growth forecasted through the next 20 years. The current Long Range Transportation Plan includes projects through the year 2030. This plan was established through a comprehensive identification of highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and goods movement transportation needs and policies – using innovative technical analysis and public input.

The **Transportation Improvement Program** is a document METROPLAN ORLANDO develops each year. This plan assigns available funding to specific projects for the following five-year period.

The **Unified Planning Work Program** is created every other year and forecasts a two-year period. The document provides a planning work program for each year, identifying the transportation planning budget and related activities for the metropolitan area.

As part of the planning process, federal law requires organizations like METROPLAN ORLANDO to "... provide the public, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment..."

By directing its efforts according to the structure of the public involvement program, METROPLAN ORLANDO takes an aggressive approach to informing and, most importantly, involving the public in the planning process. This Public Involvement Plan includes objectives, strategies and measurement tools for the public involvement program. As identified in this plan, METROPLAN ORLANDO is committed to presenting transportation-related information using strong visualization techniques to ensure that content is clear, concise, and easy to understand. METROPLAN ORLANDO relies heavily on its Web site, www.metroplanorlando.com, to provide easy access to information via electronic publication of the organization's activities, plans, and upcoming meetings.

METROPLAN ORLANDO Committees

Prior to making decisions, the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board receives recommendations from several advisory committees, including the Citizens' Advisory Committee, the Transportation Technical Committee, the Municipal Advisory Committee, and the Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Committees meet monthly. Reports by committee chairpersons are included in monthly METROPLAN ORLANDO Board meetings, providing a greater level of assurance that transportation decisions are technically viable and consider public input, consider impacts on smaller municipalities, and are bicycle/pedestrian friendly.

Committees include:

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizens' Advisory Committee ensures the public has the opportunity to review and evaluate all proposed transportation plans and programs. Composed of representatives appointed from local counties, cities and municipalities, the committee members provide input and recommendations to the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board on behalf of the communities they represent.

Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee

The Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee guides and promotes the development of a bicycle and pedestrian-friendly transportation system. Members are appointed by local governments and the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board.

Transportation Technical Committee

The Transportation Technical Committee reviews and evaluates all transportation plans and programs from a technical standpoint. Composed of transportation planners and engineers appointed by local governments and the region's transportation operating agencies, the Transportation Technical Committee makes recommendations to the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board based on technical sufficiency, accuracy and

completeness of all plans and programs. The input of the Transportation Technical Committee enables the board to have a technical viewpoint prior to making decisions.

Municipal Advisory Committee

Due to the limited number of seats on the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board, only the most populated cities in the three-county area are directly represented on the board. Created by METROPLAN ORLANDO in 2001, the Municipal Advisory Committee ensures the views of mayors of cities and towns are a part of the transportation decision-making process. METROPLAN ORLANDO is the only MPO in the state with a Municipal Advisory Committee.

Other Committees

As the designated planning agency for the region, METROPLAN ORLANDO provides staff support to the Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board. This board coordinates the transportation needs of the disadvantaged in our community, including individuals with physical and economic challenges along with senior citizens facing mobility issues. The Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board reviews price and service levels, safety concerns, eligibility and other pertinent issues.

The METROPLAN ORLANDO Board also receives input from several other groups, including the Long Range Transportation Plan Subcommittee, Land Use Subcommittee, Plans & Programs Subcommittee, Management & Operations Subcommittee, the Central Florida Clean Air Team, and Community Traffic Safety Teams.

Another key advisor to the METROPLAN ORLANDO Board is you. Through a comprehensive public outreach program, Central Floridians are encouraged to participate in the process by learning more about planning and providing feedback.

Public Involvement Requirements

METROPLAN ORLANDO develops this public involvement plan in consultation with all interested parties, describing explicitly the procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes as they relate to:

- a) Providing adequate notice of public participation activities;
- b) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- c) Using visualization techniques;
- d) Making public information available on www.metroplanorlando.com;
- e) Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- f) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received;
- g) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households;
- h) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final plan differs significantly than the version made available for public comment;
- i) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes;
- j) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

METROPLAN ORLANDO adheres to the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination in any program receiving federal assistance.

The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration encourage metropolitan planning organizations to establish performance standards that include:

1. Early and continuous public involvement;
2. Reasonable public availability of technical and other information;
3. Collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria, and mitigation needs;
4. Open public meetings where matters related to transportation policies, programs, and projects are being considered; and
5. Open access to the decision-making process prior to closure.

Public Involvement Objectives and Strategies

Goal: Build strong community involvement and support for transportation projects.

Objective #1

Increase public involvement in community outreach activities by completing at least two community outreach events per month.

Strategies

1. Develop an interactive polling feature for community events to encourage conversation and survey participation.
2. Re-launch METROPLAN ORLANDO speakers bureau to incorporate features from the *Community Conversations* program developed during outreach for the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan.
3. Incorporate specialized surveys in meetings and events, where appropriate.
4. Partner with related transportation agencies for broader outreach.

Measurement

Community Transportation Survey Results, Participation Log

Objective #2

Increase Web site activity on www.metroplanorlando.com, encouraging broader outreach and involvement.

Strategies

1. Develop a plan to redesign and re-launch www.metroplanorlando.com, including potential interactive tools to make electronic public participation more effective.
2. Include links to the Web site on all media and community email notifications.
3. Provide a feedback option, such as question of the month, to encourage more frequent visits.
4. Incorporate a link to www.metroplanorlando.com on an increased number of partner and community Web sites.

Measurement

Web site statistics, Number of links on partner/community Web sites

Objective #3

Integrate 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan into public outreach strategies and tools, providing outreach and education specifically related to smart growth, transit, and air quality.

Strategies

1. Incorporate features from the *Community Conversations* program developed during outreach for the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan into speakers bureau events.
2. Feature principles central to the 2030 Long Range Plan in outreach materials such as the annual report, newsletters, and Web communications.
3. Coordinate education and outreach with the Citizens' Advisory Committee, ensuring broad, tri-county outreach to community groups in Central Florida.

Measurement

Participation Log, Newsletter/Web site/Collateral content

Objective #4

Increase press coverage on the transportation planning process and principles central to the planning process, achieving at least eight print articles and six broadcast stories each year.

Strategies

1. Develop and distribute targeted press releases on key events/activities related to the planning process.
2. Provide transportation briefings for new journalists in the region.
3. Create targeted media pitches for transportation-focused reporters in the three-county area.
4. Utilize community calendars for public involvement activities.
5. Develop broader outreach with community-based newspapers.

Measurement

Media clips, Press Releases

Objective #5

Meet all federal and state requirements for public involvement, including notification and public hearing requirements.

Strategies

1. Execute public hearings prior to board adoption of Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan
2. Post each meeting notice, as required by federal and state law.
3. Provide board members with comments received by the public during public hearings.
4. Post meeting notices and related documents on www.metroplanorlando.com in a timely manner.

Measurement

Public Involvement Checklist

Public Involvement Tools

Public involvement is an everyday activity at METROPLAN ORLANDO. Our overall goal is to involve the public in long-term transportation planning so future transportation projects reflect the needs and desires of the community. Public involvement is part of regularly repeated activities, such as the annual Transportation Improvement Plan process and Long Range Transportation Plan updates. In addition, public involvement is encouraged throughout the entire year.

This section contains descriptions of public involvement tools and techniques currently used by METROPLAN ORLANDO to meet the objectives in this plan. These “Tools of the Trade” are broken into different sections: Web Site, Committees, Collateral, Notification, Public Comment, Media Relations, and Community Outreach.

Web Site

METROPLAN ORLANDO Web Site

The site was re-designed in 2004 to include information about the transportation planning process, board and committee members, meeting times, agendas and contact information. The site has been expanded to include information about specific projects undertaken by METROPLAN ORLANDO. Bicycle, pedestrian and trail information and event schedules are also included. Planning documents, such as the Transportation Improvement Plan, are available for downloading from the site. Downloads also include presentations and research conducted by or for the organization. The site provides many links to other transportation-related sites from the local to national level. The Web site contains a page in Spanish with information about how to obtain more information in the Spanish language. In addition, the site allows citizens to sign up for the quarterly newsletter via e-mail. Press releases are posted on the site to assist members of the media. The Web site contains a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed so that journalists and other interested persons can receive updates as soon as they are posted in a feed reader format. The meeting and event calendar and the newsletter sign-up are constant features on the homepage. The top blue box on the right is the most current press release. The other two blue boxes on the right are used to call attention to timely topics and meetings. The navigation bar on the left expands as users click on various sections for easier navigation.

Public Notification

The meeting and event calendar is consistently one of the most visited sections of the Web site. In addition to stating time and location information, the calendar includes links to meeting agendas and supporting materials. These agendas are posted at least three days prior to the meeting. METROPLAN ORLANDO posts notices for any public meeting where a decision could be made or that may be attended by more than one board member to comply with Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law.

Committees

Citizens' Advisory Committee

The Citizens' Advisory Committee includes representatives from each county and city encompassed by METROPLAN ORLANDO. Members of the Citizens' Advisory Committee are appointed by the jurisdiction in which they live or work. The committee plays a major role in community outreach activities. The Citizens' Advisory Committee gives continuous feedback on future projects and offers a valuable perspective on METROPLAN ORLANDO plans and procedures. Committee members are encouraged to speak to citizens in their communities to learn how their neighbors feel about transportation issues. Members are then asked to relate these comments and concerns at committee meetings. Also, Citizens' Advisory Committee members are asked to be on the lookout for opportunities for METROPLAN ORLANDO to get connected in their communities. Members are often invited to attend events in their communities as METROPLAN ORLANDO representatives along with members of the staff.

Collateral

METROPLAN ORLANDO Newsletter

METROPLAN ORLANDO produces a quarterly newsletter that is distributed to citizens, elected officials, business leaders, media and other agencies. Citizens are given the opportunity to be added to the distribution list at their own request during community events and through the organization's Web site. Each issue of the newsletter includes contact information, upcoming meeting schedules, the Web site address, project highlights, and current planning project status reports. Newsletter stories also include updates about significant transportation issues, public hearing announcements, and important actions taken by the Board.

Brochures

METROPLAN ORLANDO produces a wide range of brochures. These brochures include: an explanation of the purpose of a metropolitan planning organization and how citizens can get involved; steps a person can take to contribute to cleaner air; an overview of the paratransit program; safety accident checklist explaining the Move It! campaign; safe cycling practices; and bike/trail maps in the area. The informational METROPLAN ORLANDO brochure is also produced in Spanish. In addition, METROPLAN ORLANDO keeps partner brochures on hand for distribution, including Federal Highway Administration bilingual pedestrian safety messages, LYNX brochures and commuter rail brochures, to name a few.

Annual Report

METROPLAN ORLANDO also produces an annual report at the end of each year. The annual report summarizes accomplishments and previews the year to come. In addition, the annual report also serves as an informational piece and is distributed all year at community events to raise awareness of METROPLAN ORLANDO.

Logo

A logo representing METROPLAN ORLANDO is used to identify products and publications of the organization. The logo helps the public become familiar with the different activities METROPLAN ORLANDO supports by providing a means of recognizing the organization. The logo is used on all publications, including those developed by consultants working on METROPLAN ORLANDO sponsored projects.

Notification

Master Database

METROPLAN ORLANDO staff maintains and continuously updates a master database of all contacts, both business and public. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. Various mailing lists are kept current through the database. The database is also used to establish and maintain a list of e-mail contacts for electronic meeting notification and announcements. Keeping such a comprehensive database enhances outreach by allowing staff to pull targeted distribution lists for various activities.

Legal Advertisements

METROPLAN ORLANDO regularly advertises Board meetings and public hearings in a variety of publications, including the region's major daily newspaper, the Orlando Sentinel, along with La Prensa, a newspaper serving the Hispanic community, and The Orlando Times, a newspaper serving the African American community.

Display Ads

These advertisements are used on an as-needed basis to promote special meetings, such as Long Range Transportation Plan workshops. They are typically published in a newspaper section, rather than the legal advertisement section, in order to reach a larger audience.

Public Comment

Public Hearings

These public meetings are used to solicit public comment on a plan or issue being considered by METROPLAN ORLANDO. Hearings provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments. Public hearings are recorded and transcribed for the record. A summary of comments is then provided to METROPLAN ORLANDO Board members. Large maps along with simulations and videos are also displayed at public hearings to help the public visualize projects.

Market Research

Statistically valid public opinion research is conducted on behalf of METROPLAN ORLANDO every other year by an external organization. The research is used to gauge public interest in legislative issues, funding sources and solutions to transportation issues. The findings are used to help the organization adjust goals and tactics and to embark upon new projects. Market research is an excellent way to hear a wide variety of opinions from members of the community who do not typically attend public hearings or events.

“Send a Comment”

The METROPLAN ORLANDO Web site contains a “send a comment” option on all meeting, public hearing and event listings. This allows members of the public to send in comments or questions even if they are unable to attend scheduled functions.

Comment Forms

Comment forms are used to solicit public comments at METROPLAN ORLANDO meetings or public hearings. Comment forms can be very general in nature, or can ask for very specific feedback. For example, a comment form may ask for comments on specific alignment alternatives considered during a corridor study, or may ask for a person's general feelings about any aspect of transportation. Comment forms can also be included in publications and Web sites to solicit input.

Surveys

Surveys are used mainly at community events to obtain general input from the public on transportation matters. Questions might ask demographic information along with what the respondent believes is the most critical transportation issue facing the community. Surveys are also used to gather specific technical data during planning studies. For example, in conducting the Freight Safety Report, truckers were surveyed on what immediate changes they would like to see along their routes.

Media Relations

Press Releases

Press releases are sent to local media (newspaper, TV and radio) to announce upcoming meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by METROPLAN ORLANDO. Press releases are also posted on www.metroplanorlando.com. The Web site contains a Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feed so that journalists and other interested persons can receive updates as soon as they are posted in a feed reader format.

Press Kit

Press kits are given out to members of the media who are not very familiar with METROPLAN ORLANDO. Typically, the kit consists of a folder with information about the organization such as the annual report, latest newsletter, transportation tip sheet, and public affairs staff business cards. The goal of the press kit is to give each journalist background information about METROPLAN ORLANDO.

Media Briefings

The idea behind a media briefing is to take the story to the journalist. Each year, METROPLAN ORLANDO schedules time with the Orlando Sentinel Editorial Board to address key transportation issues in the three-county area. Also, METROPLAN ORLANDO schedules media briefings during regularly scheduled editorial meetings at broadcast stations in the market. The purpose of the briefing is to provide information and resources to local journalists, who at times have expressed difficulties in covering complicated transportation-related stories.

Community Outreach and Partnerships

Festivals/Events

METROPLAN ORLANDO regularly participates in community festivals and events throughout the three-county area. Usually METROPLAN ORLANDO reserves a table or booth at the events. Participating in community events allows METROPLAN ORLANDO to reach a broad base of people who might not come into contact with our organization or staff otherwise. Surveys are handed out to solicit input and to build the newsletter database.

Chambers of Commerce

METROPLAN ORLANDO is active in several Chambers of Commerce in the three-county area. This includes specialized chambers which focus on representing specific communities, such as the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce and the African-American Chamber of Commerce. This “tool” raises the recognition of METROPLAN ORLANDO among key stakeholders.

Speakers Bureau

METROPLAN ORLANDO regularly schedules staff members to speak about transportation issues in community settings. This positions staff members as transportation experts and encourages audiences to contact METROPLAN ORLANDO when they have transportation planning questions.

Clean Air Team

The Clean Air Team was created in 1999, with METROPLAN ORLANDO as a founding member. The Central Florida Clean Air Team is a broad-based coalition of government, health, utility,

transportation and business organizations that are committed to improving air quality in our community. The team engages in many community activities throughout the year. For example, each year, the team gives a Clean Air Award to a business or organization that demonstrates an outstanding interest in cleaner air. Clean Air Student Awards are given out at county science fairs in Orange, Osceola and Seminole Counties to students whose projects demonstrate an interest in clean air. The Clean Air Team also oversees a public awareness campaign in May, which is nationally designated as Clean Air Month.

Conclusion

METROPLAN ORLANDO will complete a formal update of the Public Involvement Plan every three years to keep up with the latest outreach tools and trends. Every year, METROPLAN ORLANDO staff will review the goals, objectives, strategies, and tools enumerated in the plan to ensure effectiveness of public involvement activities. A summary of this review will be included in the appendix of the public involvement plan.