



WACCAMAW
R E G I O N A L
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION

January 2015

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

WRCOG	Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments
GSATS	Grand Strand Area Transportation Study
RPO	Rural Planning Organization
RLRTP	Rural Long Range Transportation Plan
SCDOT	South Carolina Department of Transportation
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
RPWP	Rural Planning Work Program
MAP – 21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21 st Century
RLRTP	Rural Long Range Transportation Plan
SAFETEA – LU	Safe Accountable Flexible Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
PPP	Public Participation Plan
ALOP	Annual List of Obligated Projects

INTRODUCTION

The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments (WRCOG) Rural Planning Organization's (RPO) policy is to support and encourage public participation and to adhere to the principles of Environmental Justice in the rural planning process. The RPO's public participation policy is designed to ensure opportunities for the public to express its views on transportation issues and to become active participants in the decision-making process.

I. BACKGROUND

The Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments (WRCOG) is a public agency created by the counties of Horry, Georgetown, and Williamsburg, and the cities of Andrews, Atlantic Beach, Aynor, Briarcliffe Acres, Conway, Georgetown, Greeleyville, Hemingway, Kingstree, Lane, Loris, Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, Pawleys Island, Stuckey, and Surfside Beach, as enabled by state planning law. The agency was organized in 1969 and has been providing planning, management and technical assistance to its member governments and local transit service providers since its inception. WRCOG has also been charged with the responsibility for staffing the area-wide transportation planning organization since its creation. WRCOG is also accountable for the rural portions of the three-county region. The municipalities that fall into the rural sector are: Andrews, Aynor, Greeleyville, Hemingway, Kingstree, Lane, Loris, and Stuckey.

WRCOG's primary decision making body is the Policy Committee, also called the Board of Directors, which is comprised of citizens and local elected officials representing the WRCOG regional governments. Currently there are 25 members representing the counties and their constituents. This Board meets regularly to establish policies and evaluate the needs for the region.

In addition to its own technical staff, the RPO has a standing advisory committee referred to as the Rural Technical Committee. The Technical Committee is made up of state, county and city planning and engineering staff, which provide technical expertise in the development of transportation plans and programs for the rural area.

The Committee, or Board, may also appoint ad hoc committees (working groups) to oversee rural planning projects or studies. The RPO staff consists of a director, two professional planners, a GIS specialist, and an administrative secretary. On an ongoing basis the committees, along with the staff, provide recommendations to the Board regarding short and long range planning, implementation of projects and related issues. The Board and each of its advisory committees operate under bylaws approved by the Committee.

The rural area is defined by the three-county region which is not contained within the GSATS boundary. The rural portion is bordered by the North Carolina state line to the North; the southern limit of

Georgetown and Williamsburg counties to the South; from the SC 701 Corridor to the west and a portion of the City of Conway.

The principal responsibilities of the RPO include the development and maintenance of a Rural Long Range Transportation Plan (RLRTP), a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a Rural Work Program (RWP), and related planning studies and projects deemed necessary to address transportation issues in the RPO area. Local transportation needs are re-evaluated annually. Based on this evaluation, project priorities are established and made part of the RPO TIP. This information is forwarded to the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) for inclusion into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

By Federal law, all multi-modal transportation improvement projects must be included in and be consistent with (to the maximum extent feasible) the RPO's RLRTP in order to be eligible for Federal funding. Therefore, the RPO RLRTP is the primary plan that guides all federally funded transportation improvements in the rural area.

II. GOVERNMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

Transportation planning at the statewide level should incorporate or consider various factors or objectives. The most recent transportation act, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), retains the eight planning factors contained in the previous transportation act, SAFETEA-LU. These include:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation; and
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Additionally, RPOs are required to develop and adopt a long-range transportation plan and a transportation improvement program. In developing these documents, by federal statute, a reasonable opportunity for the public to comment must be provided.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

A. General Guidelines

The WRCOG Public Participation Process (PPP) is intended to provide direction for public participation activities to be conducted by the WRCOG RPO and contains the vision, goals, objectives, and techniques used by WRCOG for public participation. As noted earlier, WRCOG has been designated by the SCDOT to serve as the RPO for the three-county region. Therefore, in its public participation process, WRCOG will strive to:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdictional concerns).
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the RL RTP, TIP, RPWP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects, and conduct open public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered. Such access would also include, if necessary, the conversion of the key planning documents into Spanish (or other languages).
3. Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to, the approval of the RL RTP, TIP, RPWP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects. If the final draft of any transportation plan differs significantly from the one available for public comment by the RPO and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen, there shall be an additional opportunity for public comment.
4. Respond in writing to all applicable public input. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan (including the financial plan) as a result of the public participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan.
5. Solicit the needs of those traditionally under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to minorities, elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency, and low-income households.
6. Provide a public comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of the RPO Public Participation Plan for the groups listed in Item 1 above. Notice of the 45-day comment period will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation, minority

community newspapers, and various other publications prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period and on WRCOG's website. Notice will also be mailed to the entire RPO mailing list prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period.

7. Provide a public comment period of not less than 30 calendar days prior to adoption of the RL RTP, TIP, RPWP, Transit Development Plans, any amendments or updates, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.
8. Coordinate its Public Participation Process with statewide Public Participation Processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs.
9. Periodically review the Public Participation Process to ensure it provides full and open access to all. Portions of the process which are found not to meet the needs of the constituency will be revised.

B. Public Participation Plan Vision, Goals & Policies

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

Goal 1: 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. WRCOG shall maintain an up-to-date database of contacts including at a minimum the following persons:
 - Federal, state, 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.)
 - Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
 - Representatives of Users of Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation
 - Representatives of the Disabled
 - Local Media
 - Homeowners' Associations
 - Civic Groups
 - Special Interest Groups
 - WRCOG Area Public Libraries (for public display)
 - Individuals expressing an interest in transportation planning activities.

- B. WRCOG shall, when feasible, electronically send and/or mail meeting announcements (invitations) to the WRCOG contact list or to targeted groups notifying them of upcoming activities.
- C. WRCOG shall employ visualization techniques to depict transportation plans. Examples of visualization techniques include: charts, graphs, photo interpretation, maps, use of GIS, artist's renderings, physical models, and/or computer simulation.

Goal 2: WRCOG shall keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis.

- A. WRCOG shall make all publications available to the public via internet, staff office, and employ visualization techniques to describe transportation actions as part of the RL RTP.
- B. Staff shall be available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours, at the request of interested groups, with reasonable notice.
- C. WRCOG shall maintain a Transportation section on the WRCOG website.
 - 1. The website shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current information available.
 - 2. The website shall, at a minimum, contain the following information:
 - Current RPO Staff contact information (i.e. name, title, mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail)
 - Meeting calendars and agendas
 - Brief descriptions of current projects
 - Work products and publications (TIP, RL RTP, RPWP, Bylaws, and PPP)
 - Links to related agencies (e.g. SCDOT, Williamsburg County Transit and COAST RTA)

Goal 3: WRCOG shall encourage the participation of all citizens in the transportation planning process.

- A. Target audiences shall be identified for each planning study conducted by the RPO, including residents, business and property owners and those traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations, including but limited to low income and minority households, within the study area.
- B. WRCOG shall, whenever feasible, hold public meetings at a scheduled time, location, and building facility convenient to potentially affected citizens.

- C. WRCOG will provide an additional opportunity for public comments, if the final RL RTP or TIP differs significantly from the version that was initially made available for public comment.

Goal 4: WRCOG shall strive to continuously improve public participation.

- A. WRCOG shall continuously evaluate public participation techniques, according to the procedures contained in this Public Participation Plan.
- B. The Public Participation Plan shall be reviewed and adopted, with revisions if necessary, at least every three (3) years.

Goal 5: WRCOG shall participate in public participation activities for individual transportation improvement projects from the planning phase through construction.

- A. WRCOG shall actively assist SCDOT, local governments and transportation agencies in the development and implementation of public participation techniques for planning and other studies, including Major Investment Studies and Project Development and environmental studies.

IV. CURRENT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the RPO. An effective public participation process is characterized by techniques and procedures that enable citizens to become well informed. This section contains descriptions of public participation tools of which WRCOG currently uses and may use in the future. These tools are as follows:

Charrettes

Description: Charrettes are typically intense, possibly multi-day meetings involving municipal officials, planning officials and local residents. A charrette is instrumental in identifying key issues early, promotes joint ownership of the solution and attempts to diffuse traditional confrontation between stakeholders.

Activities: Project specific meetings, corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies and workshops.

Consultation

Description: Consistent with MAP - 21 regulations encourage more cooperative planning between WRCOG and appropriate agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities

that are affected by transportation within the WRCOG area. To coordinate the planning function to the maximum extent practicable, such consultation will entail comparing RL RTPs and TIPs as they are developed with the plans, maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies. This consultation will include, as appropriate, contact with the following groups: State, local, Indian Tribal, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, consideration, and historic preservation. The RPO maintains an open consultation policy, whereby any private citizen or entity responsible for transportation in the WRCOG area may contact WRCOG and be included in the consultation process.

Activities: Public hearings/meetings, copies of this plan on the WRCOG website (for viewing/downloading purposes), meetings with WRCOG Staff.

Direct Mailings

Description: Direct Mailings are used to announce upcoming meetings or activities or to provide information to a targeted area, group of people, or the media. Direct mailings are usually letters, but can be post cards or fliers. An area may be targeted for a direct mailing because of potential impacts from a project. Groups are targeted that may have an interest in a specific issue, for example avid cyclists and pedestrians may be targeted for pathways and trail projects.

Activities: Project-specific meetings, workshops, open houses, corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

E-mail Announcements/Internet Message Boards

Description: Meeting announcements and RPO information would be e-mailed to interested persons that have submitted their e-mail addresses to WRCOG staff. Interactive message boards may be used to facilitate discussion and solicit public comment regarding specific RPO projects or issues.

Activities: Corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies, regular meetings, public hearings, workshops, open houses, and other major RPO activities.

Legal Advertisements

Description: SCDOT requires a minimum thirty (30) day advertisement of any public meeting where a decision could be made that would make a significant change to an existing plan or program. Ads are published to solicit public comment and/or review of the requested change or plan update. The ads provide a description of the meeting agenda, including contact information.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, project priority process, major TIP amendments, updates of the RL RTP and RPWP, and other major RPO activities.

RPO Master Database

Description: Staff maintains a master database of all contacts, both business and public, on a continuous basis. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. The database is used for maintaining up-to-date committee membership lists and lists of individual with a special interest in WRCOGs' activities including the media and public interest groups. Membership mailing lists generated using the databases are provided to the public, municipalities and other agencies upon request. The database will be used to establish and maintain a list of e-mail contacts for electronic meeting notification and announcements.

Activities: The database is used to enhance other public participation activities.

RPO Website

Description: The RPO website is found within WRCOG's website, under the link "Transportation, Planning." The site provides basic information about WRCOG, the RPO process, WRCOGs members, and staff contact information. RPO publications and work products, such as the RPWP, TIP, RL RTP, PPP, ALOP, and the WRCOG Board recent minutes, agendas and meeting notices are available for downloading from the site. Also, citizens are able to submit comments and sign up to be added to the distribution lists maintained by WRCOG. The site provides many links to other transportation related sites from the local to the national level. The site is maintained and updated by WRCOG staff. The website address is www.wrcog.org/transportation-planning/.

Activities: The site is used to promote regular and special meetings, planning studies, publications and work products.

Public Informational Meetings

Description: These are public meetings that are generally open and informal, with project team members interacting with the public on a one-on-one basis. Short presentations may be given at these meetings. The purpose of public informational meetings is to provide project information to the public and to solicit public comment.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, project priority process, certification review, RL RTP update, and other major RPO activities.

Public Notices

Description: The WRCOG Board of Directors meeting schedule is published on an annual basis.

Activities: Regular monthly meetings, other public meetings.

Small Group Meetings

Description: During projects such as planning studies, meetings are held with small groups that have an interest in the project. Meetings could be with homeowners or neighborhood associations, civic groups, special interest groups, or other groups of affected or interested parties.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, and other RPO activities.

Title VI & Environmental Justice Review

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and activities on the basis of race, color, and national origin. In 1994, Presidential Executive Order 12898 directed every Federal agency to make Environmental Justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." In complying with the aforementioned federal laws and policies, the RPO's Environmental Justice initiatives will strive to involve the potentially affected public. This effort consists of WRCOG staff activities designed to develop partnerships with, and enhance the participation in the transportation planning process, by groups and individuals of "traditionally underserved" communities. These communities include minorities, low income, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Staff activities include, but are not limited to, WRCOG staff participation in groups and coalitions serving within these communities, targeted communications with local media outlets, conducting meetings at times and locations that are accessible to transit dependant or non-driving individuals when possible, and publication of RPO documents in non-technical, accessible formats when needed. The goal of the RPO's is to ensure that all citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, income status, national origin, age, gender, disability, marital status, or political affiliation, have an equal opportunity to participate in the RPO's decision-making process.

Description: WRCOG will take reasonable steps to ensure that all persons, including those with a disability or language barrier, have meaningful opportunities to participate in the transportation planning and programming process, and will strive to address environmental justice issues at all stages of the planning process. This includes implementing the following strategies to reduce participation barriers for under-served groups and engage them in the decision-making process:

- Representatives of minority, disability, low-income and limited English proficiency groups will be identified and included in RPO mailings.
- Key planning documents will be translated and public notices broadcasted for Spanish-speaking populations upon request.
- Whenever possible, meetings will be held at locations accessible to persons with disability, bus riders, and bicyclist and that are convenient to neighborhoods with a concentration of minority and low-income persons.

- Where meeting facilitators are used, WRCOG will seek to use persons that represent the diversity of the community and/or have expertise in working with under-served groups.
- Translators/interpreters will be provided for meetings, if requested.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, RL RTP update and other major RPO activities.

Visualization

Description: WRCOG recognizes that an important element to public participation is to provide the public, when possible, visual as well as written descriptions of transportation projects. Through visual imagery, the complex features of proposed transportation plans, policies, and programs can be portrayed at appropriate scales—region, local, project architecture, etc.—and from different points of view. To this end, WRCOG will utilize various visual and architectural design techniques, some of which may include: sketches, drawings, artist renderings, aerial photography, mapping, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive geographical information system (GIS), GIS-based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation and computer simulation.

Activities: Planning Studies, TIP amendments, and other RPO activities.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICIES AND GUIDELINES

A. Public Document Review, Comment, and Approval Policies

Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Accessibility
Rural Long Range Transportation Plan	3 Meetings (1/ county) at different times	30 Days	Internet, WRCOG Office, Public Libraries
Transportation Improvement Program	3 Meetings (1/ county) at different times	30 Days	Internet, WRCOG Office, Public Libraries
Rural Planning Work Program	3 Meetings (1/ county) at different times	30 Days	Internet, WRCOG Office
Public Participation Plan	3 Meetings (1/ county) at different times	45 Days	Internet, WRCOG Office, Public Libraries

B. Public Document Amendment Review, Comment, and Approval Policies

Program Amendment Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Accessibility
Rural Long Range Transportation Plan	As requested	30 Days	Internet & WRCOG Office
Transportation Improvement Program	As requested	30 Days	Internet & WRCOG Office
Rural Planning Work Program	As requested	30 Days	Internet & WRCOG Office
Public Participation Plan	As requested	45 Days	Internet & WRCOG Office

C. Public Meeting Guidelines

Open Meetings	Location	Time	Accessibility
WRCOG Board of Directors	WRCOG Office -or- Other Regional Facility	7:00 PM Monday (monthly)	ADA accessible building; translation and other special needs upon request
Technical Committee	WRCOG Office -or- Other Regional Facility -or- Via Conference Call	10:00 AM Various days Monday to Friday	ADA accessible building; special needs upon request
Ad Hoc Working Group	Various Regional Facility as decided by the Group -or- Via Conference Call	Various times and days	ADA accessible building; translation and other special needs upon request

VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION

Other techniques for future consideration include:

Annual Newsletter

Description: RPO (WRCOG) staff produces an annual newsletter that is distributed to citizens, municipalities, media and other agencies. Citizens are added to the distribution list by their own request.

Opportunities to request being added to the list occur during public meetings hosted by WRCOG on the WRCOG web site and when citizens contact WRCOG staff. Each issue of the newsletter includes staff contact information, upcoming meeting schedules, the WRCOG web site address, project highlights, and current planning project status reports. When appropriate, information regarding significant transportation issues, RPO awards, and other one-time activities are also included.

Activities: The newsletter is used to report planning studies, publications and work products from the past year.

Comment Forms

Description: Comment forms are often used to solicit public comment on specific issues being presented at a workshop or other public meeting. 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 being 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 on websites to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or website.

Activities: Public workshops, open houses, hearings, and other meetings, general RPO activities.

Fact Sheets

Description: Fact Sheets can be used to provide summary information regarding RPO policy, programs and projects. Fact sheets can be distributed at public meetings, on the WRCOG website, and in public places such as libraries and community centers. Individuals and special interest groups can request fact sheets directly from the WRCOG staff office.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies, project priorities process, updates to the RL RTP and TIP and other RPO activities.

Press Releases

Description: Formal press releases are sent to local media (newspaper, TV and radio) to announce upcoming special meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the RPO or their committees.

Activities: Specific corridor or other planning studies, workshops, open houses, public hearings, and other special RPO activities

Surveys

Description: Surveys are used when very specific input from the public is desired. A survey can be used in place of comment cards to ask very specific questions such as whether a person supports a specific alignment in a corridor study. Surveys are also used to gather technical data during corridor and planning studies. For example, participants may be asked about their daily travel patterns.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies and other planning studies.

Project-specific Web Sites

Description: For individual projects, such as corridor studies, that are typically performed using consulting services, project-specific web sites are often used. These sites are used when project information is too extensive to be included on the WRCOG site. Project web sites can contain study area maps, meeting announcements, descriptions of potential alternatives, comment forms, user surveys and project team contact information.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies and major RPO projects.

Project-specific Newsletters

Description: For individual projects, such as corridor studies, that are typically performed using consulting services, newsletters are often used to address specific project issues. These newsletters are mailed to targeted residents, elected officials representing that area, businesses and property owners in the area that are expected to be impacted by a particular study. Information regarding upcoming project meetings, alternatives being proposed in the area, and other project news is reported in these newsletters.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies or major RPO activities.

Other Newsletters

- Description: When project-specific newsletters are not used, articles may be prepared for publication in other newsletters produced by municipalities, homeowners' associations, church groups, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the project. These articles are subject to the publication dates and space restrictions of the individual publishers.
- Activities: Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

Formal Public Hearings

- Description: These are public meetings used to solicit public comment on a project or issue being considered for adoption by the RPO. Hearings provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments to the RPO or another decision-making body.
- Activities: RL RTP and TIP updates, corridor studies, project development & environmental studies, and other planning studies as needed for other RPO activities.

Government Access Television

- Description: The local cable network provider as part of basic cable service maintains local channels of government and business advertisements. Government Access Television can broadcast rolling message scripts and regular and special meetings, both live and pre-recorded, as well as short informative programs about departmental activities or projects of interest to the entire population.
- Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, regular RPO activities.

Posters and Fliers

- Description: Posters and fliers are used to announce meetings and events and are distributed to public places such as city halls, libraries and community centers for display. The announcement may contain a brief description of the purpose of a meeting, the time(s) and location(s), and contact information. Posters and fliers may be used to reach a large audience that cannot be reached using direct mailings and/or newsletters.
- Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, regular and special RPO activities.

VII. EVALUATION METHODS, PERFORMANCE GOALS, AND IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES

In order to determine the effectiveness of the public participation tools, they must be evaluated and compared to established performance goals. The typical methods for evaluating the effectiveness of public participation tools are surveys and quantitative statistical analysis. This section briefly describes evaluation methods to be used by WRCOG. For each public participation tool, performance goals and methods for meeting those goals have been identified.

Surveys: Surveys typically consist of short, specific questions regarding public participation tools that are ongoing or that were used on a specific project. Surveys can be conducted in person, by phone, mail or e-mail. Face-to-face and telephone surveys provide quick responses and can be used when a respondent's answer may lead to a follow-up question. For example, respondents may be asked if advertisements are an effective notification tool. If the response is no, the surveyor can ask the respondent why advertisements are not effective and also what other tools they would prefer. In person and telephone surveys can target specific areas or groups or can be random sampling. Mail surveys may be used to provide written record of respondent's answers. Mail-back surveys can be distributed at meetings, inside other publications, or by mailing directly to potential respondents. Respondents can be a targeted group, such as members of special interest groups or residents of specific areas, or they can be randomly generated. Return postage for mail surveys typically can be pre-paid by the RPO, or can be the responsibility of the respondent. E-mail surveys, like mail surveys, provide a written record of responses. Unlike mail-back surveys, there is little to no reproduction or distribution cost to the RPO to send out the surveys, and little to no cost to respondents to return a response. To use e-mail surveys, it is necessary to have e-mail addresses for the targeted respondents, and random distribution is not really an option. Surveys will be used to evaluate citizens' responses on the effectiveness of the tools.

Statistical Analysis: Statistics can be used to determine the "return on the investment" of producing public participation tools. For example, the number of persons attending an activity can be compared to the number of persons that were notified of the activity. This type of evaluation can be an indicator of whether or not the tools used for public participation are actually reaching the intended audience, or which tools had a greater response rate. Statistical analysis will be used to evaluate survey responses and most tools' rates of success will be compared with evaluation measures.

WRCOG (RPO) continually strives for improved public participation. Improvements should be made to increase public awareness and to improve the quantity and quality of information provided to the public. The decisions made by WRCOG affect the entire population, both residents and visitors. Therefore, seeking public input on those decisions is vital to the success of WRCOG as the organization responsible for transportation planning. Within one month after the completion of an activity or at milestones during an activity, evaluation of public participation tool should occur. Each time a public participation evaluation is performed, a list of improvement strategies should be identified for implementation. If improvement is needed for an ongoing public participation task, a reasonable completion date should be established. If improvement is needed for one-time activities, such as corridor studies, the improvement should be implemented where appropriate on future activities.

RESOLUTION

of the

WACCAMAW REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION 2015- 3

SUMMARY:

This Resolution approves the *RPO's Public Participation Plan, 2015*. Upon approval and the required forty five day comment period, this document replaces the public participation process adopted in 2007.

PREAMBLE:

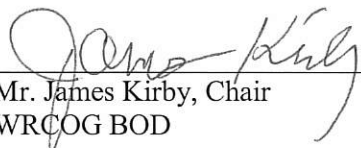
WHEREAS, the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments' Board of Directors is an advisory and decision making body for issues affecting transportation planning in the rural portions of Georgetown and Horry counties and all of Williamsburg County;

WHEREAS, the *Rural Planning Organization's Public Participation Process* was adopted in 2007; and

WHEREAS, it is necessary and beneficial to amend the PPP to update public participation techniques, Title VI information and, reflect the latest transportation legislation (MAP-21) and applicable guidance;

NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the Waccamaw Regional Council of Governments' Board of Directors:

The *Rural Planning Organization's Public Participation Plan, 2015* as attached hereto is approved.


Mr. James Kirby, Chair
WRCOG BOD

4-13-15
Date


Ms. Sarah P. Smith, Executive Director
WRCOG

4-13-15
Date