

2007 Public Participation Plan for Transportation Planning in the Baltimore Region

As the Chair of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, I cannot stress how valuable the members of this board find public engagement in the transportation planning process. In carrying out our mission, we, the members, make transportation-related decisions affecting everything from the vitality of our regional economy to the daily lives of our citizens. For that reason, public guidance and advice are a central consideration in the allocation of millions of dollars to transportation projects here in the Baltimore region.

The purpose of the BRTB Public Participation Plan is to set forth the standard expectations and procedures for public involvement in this region's transportation planning process. This document similarly presents opportunities for the BRTB to expand and enhance public engagement as needed to support our decision making processes.

Public involvement starts with you. I invite all our partners and stakeholders to become involved in transportation planning in the Baltimore region. It is only through your involvement that we can truly create a regional transportation agenda that is meaningful from Bel Air to Annapolis to Columbia, Westminster, Towson, Odenton, and Baltimore City.

Your comments, questions, and advice on how to improve this process are welcome! Send us a note at www.baltometro.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carl Balsler". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

*Carl Balsler
BRTB Chair*

I . I n t r o d u c t i o n

Transportation has a tremendous impact on a wide range of regional activities and institutions. Transportation makes it possible for us to get where we want to go as well as to enjoy products and services from all over the world. It is a driving force behind our region's economic health and ability to grow. In the Baltimore region, this vast transportation system includes the Port of Baltimore, Baltimore Washington International Thurgood Marshall Airport, light rail, Metro, beltway, bus services, sidewalks, bike paths, and any of the many local or state roadways we drive on each day.

The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) is designated by the federal government as the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), charged with coordinating transportation planning for the Baltimore metropolitan region. The BRTB is responsible for developing plans and programs that distribute most federal transportation funds to transportation projects in the region. This includes roadway construction and maintenance projects, as well as bus, rail, pedestrian, and bicycle projects.

Allocating transportation dollars for specific projects or programs is a huge responsibility. BRTB officials consider a number of federal requirements, such as the need to conform to federal air quality standards, in their decision making. In addition, they also must work with limited transportation funding made available by federal, state, and local resources to pay for projects.

The advice and input of a wide range of stakeholders is critical to making good transportation decisions. Stakeholders include individuals and groups alike. They include citizens, business leaders and business groups, environmental and civic organizations, advocacy groups that represent the needs of the underserved/under-represented - including low income, minority, elderly, and disabled populations. Each of these stakeholders has a different perspective, a different set of transportation needs and interests that the BRTB hears and considers during transportation decision making.

The process and the methods used by the BRTB to inform the public about transportation issues and involve them in the transportation planning process is called public involvement. Public involvement is required by federal law guiding metropolitan transportation planning. However, it is also a valued tool used by the BRTB to ensure that investments made by state and local governments utilizing public dollars are meaningful, meeting the needs of the public and other stakeholders.

Purpose of the BRTB Participation Plan

This Participation Plan contains the guidelines and expectations for public involvement during transportation planning activities and processes used by the BRTB. In particular, this plan outlines the procedures, tools, and expectations for outreach and education to the public on transportation issues. It also includes the techniques that will consistently be used to engage members of the public in the BRTB's transportation planning process. The desired outcome is a process that is both engaging to the public as well as informed by public input.

II. About the BRTB

The BRTB is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Baltimore region, the organization responsible for providing regional transportation policy and overseeing the federal transportation planning process. This process encourages full and fair participation from the public.

The ten members of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board are made up of the chief elected officials from each jurisdiction in the region. In addition, the Board includes the Secretaries of the Maryland Departments of Transportation, Environment, and Planning.

One of the key missions of the BRTB is to develop, promote, and ensure implementation of a regional long-range transportation plan. This regional plan presents the transportation goals and policies that frame transportation decision making in the region, as well as strategies and projects that are to be implemented in the region over a twenty year period.

To meet its mission, the BRTB engages in a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process that addresses a number of federal planning process functions.

These functions include air quality conformity, transportation equity, and planning for the various transportation modes (bicycle, pedestrian, freight, transit, etc). Public involvement is a key part of that process.

The BRTB includes elected officials from the cities of Annapolis and Baltimore, and the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, and Howard.

III. Guiding Principles and Federal Regulations

BRTB Public Involvement Principles

This Participation Plan assists the BRTB in carrying out its mission by providing an open process that offers complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and support for early and continued involvement of stakeholders. This plan lists the activities and procedures that are applied to provide public access to the planning process.

In particular, the BRTB believes that:

- Public involvement is an important element of a high quality transportation planning process, not a simple “add on” to meet federal requirements;
- Effective transportation planning must include the participation of those whose everyday lives are critically affected by how they are able to get to work, home, school, stores, and services;
- It is essential to ask for public participation, not just wait for it. It is essential to respect and seriously consider input that is received, not just collect it;
- Informing and educating the public about transportation planning issues and the transportation planning process is key to obtaining good quality public input; and
- Additional emphasis should be placed on involving persons and groups typically under-represented in transportation planning or with special transportation needs, including low-income, minority, elderly, and disabled populations.

Federal Regulations Guiding Public Involvement: SAFETEA-LU

In addition to the principles highlighted above, new proposed federal regulations emerging from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) require the BRTB, as the MPO for the Baltimore region, to do the following in regard to public involvement*:

- Provide adequate public notice of activities, particularly as it relates to the BRTP and TIP;
- Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about issues and the process;
- Employ visualization techniques in the planning process for the BRTP and TIP;
- Offer information in electronically accessible formats;
- Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input on the BRTP and TIP;
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved;
- Provide additional opportunity for public comment on the BRTP and TIP, if significant changes are made to document originally released for review;
- Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes; and
- Periodically review the Participation Plan for effectiveness.

** The full text of relevant Metropolitan Planning regulations can be found in Appendix B.*

The principles and activities described above are intended to apply to and involve all community and business interests. However, the proposed regulations specifically cite the following groups that the BRTB, as the MPO, will engage with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process:

- Citizens;
- Affected public agencies;
- Representatives of public transportation employees;
- 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;
- Agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations;
- Providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than Title 49, U.S.C. Chapter 53; and
- Other interested parties.

This Participation Plan includes activities and procedures designed to meet the principles and regulations defined above. In addition, there is a set of additional tools that the BRTB will employ as needed to help ensure that these principles are adhered to. These are listed in Chapter V.

The following plan identifies those activities and procedures that provide opportunities for public involvement for each of the BRTB's major transportation planning responsibilities.

I V . P a r t i c i p a t i o n P l a n

Access to Information

The BRTB places a great deal of importance on providing members of the public with easy access to complete and timely information on the transportation planning process. Our public information program includes a number of regularly published newsletters and documents, distributed both electronically as well as by U.S. Mail. Additionally, the BRTB periodically develops materials supporting a specific planning activity.

Employing Visualization Techniques

Information published by the BRTB will incorporate images, photos, graphics, and other means of visually describing transportation issues and alternatives as a strategy for promoting public understanding of the material being presented. These approaches are consistent with the SAFETEA-LU requirement to incorporate “visualization” of transportation material into public involvement.

Electronically Accessible Formats

It is the policy of the BRTB that all documents available to the public will be provided in alternative formats for qualified individuals with disabilities, upon request. In addition, the web site will be accessible to and usable by individuals with vision impairments.

BMC Web Site – www.baltometro.org

The core tool used by the BRTB to disseminate information on the transportation planning process can be found on the web site operated by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. Information on the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board and transportation planning can be found by clicking on “Transportation Planning” on the web site’s home page.

The Transportation Planning web site includes standard information on the transportation-planning process, as well as up-to-date information on current activities and events including:

- BRTB Committees and Advisory Groups – Learn more about the BRTB committees, read the minutes of past meetings, and review agendas for upcoming meetings.
- BRTB Plans and Major Activities – See what documents are out for public review.
- Calendar – Find out about upcoming BRTB committee meetings and what will be discussed. Other activities of the BRTB and the Baltimore Metropolitan Council are also listed.
- Transportation Planning Agency Partners – Get information about the agencies that impact our regional transportation planning process.
- Technical processes and activities – Get details about activities such as socio-economic forecasting, travel demand forecasting, and air quality forecasting.
- Documents – Check out our extensive library of electronic and print documents produced by the BRTB.

Additional information about public involvement and the planning process can be found in the “Get Involved” section of the BMC web site. This section also includes a comment form, where the public can post comments and read what others have written.

Online Translation Tool

In an effort to make the wealth of information available on the BMC web site accessible to as many people as possible, an online translation tool has been incorporated into the site. The free service, powered by AltaVista’s Babelfish program, allows users to choose from 12 additional languages – Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, Italian, Greek, German, French, Dutch, and two Chinese translations. The translation service is available by clicking the link at the bottom left on each page of the BMC web site.

B'More Involved and Other E-Newsletters

BRTB produces a number of electronic newsletters. The main e-newsletter is B'More Involved, designed to provide readers with helpful information on transportation planning, citizen involvement, and environmental justice. The purpose of the e-newsletter is to encourage awareness and public involvement in transportation planning and other related activities at both the regional and local levels. Other e-newsletters include:

- BikePed Beacon (Bicycle and pedestrian planning, news, and events)
- Environmental News Brief (Air quality, watershed protection, and other environmental issues)
- MD Moves (Freight planning, news, and events)
- Transit (Name coming soon)
- Management and Operations (Name coming soon)

Mailing list

To receive the BRTB Notes or one of our electronic newsletters, please visit www.baltometro.org and click on "publications" or contact the Public Involvement Coordinator at 410-732-0500 x1047 or mhaines@baltometro.org.

BRTB Notes

BRTB Notes is a periodic print publication of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board. This newsletter, published 4-6 times each year, features articles on transportation research, projects, and programs in the Baltimore region. This publication is also available online.

Regional Information Center

The Regional Information Center is a library operated as a partnership between the Baltimore Metropolitan Council and the Enoch Pratt Free Library (Baltimore City's public library system). The collection includes regional and urban planning materials with a focus on local demographic information, economic development, transportation planning, land use and environmental issues. In addition, all documents posted for public review are available in print at the Regional Information Center.

The Center is open to the public by appointment only between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. on weekdays.

For those unable to visit the RIC during these hours, there are a number of other ways information can be obtained without having to visit the RIC in person. For example, the RIC catalog of materials will soon be available via the internet and can be accessed online by any individual or librarian at any library in the region. Individuals wishing to review a document from the RIC are able to borrow the document from their local library via Interlibrary Loan. Further, the RIC librarian is available via telephone and e-mail to answer questions and provide data or other information.

Contact the RIC for information or to schedule an appointment, call 410-732-9570, fax 410-732-9488, or e-mail ric@baltometro.org.

Getting Involved: Public Meetings

The BRTB holds dozens of meetings each year for its members and subcommittees to address technical transportation issues and to deliberate on the strategies, projects, plans, and programs that the BRTB oversees in any given year.

General Guidelines for BRTB meetings and activities

The following guidelines specifically address the ways in which the public can be informed about and involved in BRTB meetings and other activities:

Adequate and Timely Public Notice

- *BRTB and Committee Meetings* - The BRTB and its subcommittees provide adequate notice of meetings subject to the Maryland Open Meetings Law. Public notice of the date, time, location, of all BRTB meetings are provided 30 days prior to the meeting. Agendas for each meeting is posted on the BMC web site 10-14 days prior to the meeting. For those without access to the BMC web site the list is also available in alternative formats upon request.
- *Special events or meetings* - Every attempt will be made to provide 30 days public notice for all other meetings or events of the BRTB.

Meeting Locations and Times

Meetings of the BRTB and its committees are held at various times and locations. Most meetings of the BRTB and its committees are held at the BMC offices, located in Baltimore City, and accessible by bus, car, bicycle, walking, and boat. The following is the current policy for meeting times:

- **BRTB Meetings:** 11 months of the year the BRTB meets at 9 a.m. at BMC.
- **BRTB Meetings with Elected Officials:** These meetings offer the chance for the public to speak directly with the elected officials that serve on the BRTB. Meetings are held once per year at 5:00 p.m. at BMC.
- **BRTB Committee Meetings:** See schedule of standard meeting dates and times on page 9.
- **Public Meetings on Plans and Programs:** During public review and comment periods, the BRTB will host public meetings to accept questions and public comments for the record.

Every effort will be made to accommodate extended hours (for example: 3 to 8 p.m.) for all public meetings related to the long and short range transportation plans, as well as any corresponding major amendments. If unable to accommodate, meetings will be held at 7 p.m.

Locations for these public meetings will be held at various locations, depending on the topic:

- Long-range plan – Meetings will be held in each jurisdiction.
- Short-range plan (TIP) – A meeting will be held at BMC.
- Major amendments for the long-range plan or TIP – A meeting will be held in the jurisdiction that is impacted, or BMC if regional in nature.

Efforts will be made to hold meetings in transit accessible and convenient locations to ensure maximum attendance. When possible, the BRTB will work to hold meetings in areas that are traditionally underserved.

- **Other meetings and special events** – On occasion, the BRTB hosts additional meetings and

How to find out about BRTB meetings and events

Notification of BRTB and subcommittee meetings, public hearings, public comment and review periods, and special events are provided in the following ways:

- BMC web site – Log onto www.baltometro.org and click on calendar.
- Mail and e-mail lists – To receive meeting notifications, contact the Public Involvement Coordinator (mhaines@baltometro.org or 410-732-0500 x1047) or log onto www.baltometro.org, click on “contact us” to join any of the BRTB mail/e-mail lists.
- Press releases – Press releases are sent to area newspapers about public comment and review opportunities, special meetings, etc.
- Advertisements – Public review and comment periods related to major planning activities are advertised in *The Baltimore Sun*.

public events. These meetings are scheduled at various times, including weekends, at transit accessible and convenient locations.

Access to Information about all Committee Meetings

All meetings of the BRTB and subcommittees shall be governed by the Maryland Open Meetings Act and the Maryland Public Information Act. Some portions of meetings may be closed to discuss sensitive budget, finance, personnel, or homeland security issues.

A list of BRTB committees and their standard meeting dates, times, and locations are listed below. Agendas for these meetings are made available ten to fourteen days prior to the meeting. The minutes and all materials presented at these meetings are also public record.

Committee	Standard meeting day and time	Location
Baltimore Regional Transportation Board	Monthly, 4 th Tuesday at 9 a.m. or 4:30 p.m.	BMC
Baltimore Regional Operations Coordinating Committee	Bimonthly, 10 a.m.	Meeting location rotates
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Group	Bimonthly, 1 st Wednesday at 1 p.m.	BMC
Citizens Advisory Committee	Monthly, 1 st Wednesday at 5:30	BMC
Cooperative Forecasting Group	Bimonthly, 3 rd Wednesday at 10 a.m.	BMC
Freight Movement Task Force	Quarterly, 3 rd Thursday at 9 a.m.	BMC
Interagency Consultation Group	Monthly, 1 st Wednesday at 8:30 a.m.	BMC
Management & Operations Partnership	Quarterly, 2 nd Monday at 9:30 a.m.	Meeting location rotates
Technical Committee	Monthly, 1 st Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.	BMC
Traffic Signal Subcommittee	Quarterly, 2 nd Monday at 10 a.m.	Meeting location rotates
Travel Analysis Advisory Group	Bimonthly, 3 rd Tuesday at 9:30 a.m.	BMC

NOTE: All meeting dates and times are subject to change. Please call 410-732-0500 or visit www.baltometro.org to confirm.

Access by Persons with Disabilities

All meetings of the BRTB will be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Getting Involved: Citizens Advisory Committee

A committee of particular importance to public involvement is the Citizens Advisory Committee. The mission of the CAC is to provide independent, region-oriented citizen advice on a variety of issues, as well as to promote public awareness and participation on the regional transportation planning process.

This committee is comprised entirely of citizens, community representatives, and other interested individuals. A BRTB liaison also participates. The BRTB conducts an application process for persons interested in serving on the CAC. Those interested in serving should contact the Public Involvement Coordinator at 410-732-0500 x1047 or mhaines@baltometro.org.

All CAC meetings are open to the public and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Guidelines for BRTB Meetings

The following procedures specifically address public participation at BRTB meetings:

Public Participation at BRTB Meetings

The BRTB holds monthly meetings at which members discuss current activities and events. A public participation opportunity is provided to address BRTB on any issues related to the transportation planning process. This public participation opportunity is conducted at the beginning of each meeting for up to 15 minutes. Should any major issues arise that require additional time, the Chair will take appropriate actions to extend the time limit. Public comment is also allowed for any item being voted on. A guide for making comments to the BRTB is found in Appendix D of this document.

BRTB Agenda Items

All items on which the BRTB act upon through a resolution (Action Items) will be placed on the agenda prior to Informational Items. It will be at the discretion of the Chair to alter the order of agenda items in order to accommodate special circumstances. Agendas for all BRTB and BRTB committee meetings are made available on the BMC web site at least 10-14 working days prior to the meeting date.

BRTB Action Items

Unless there are special, extenuating circumstances, no Action Item will be added to the agenda once the agenda has been mailed to the general public.

CAC Participation in Agenda Items

The Citizens Advisory Committee Chair is provided seating and may participate in the discussion of all agenda items.

Did you know?

The BRTB is supported by more than a dozen committees and advisory groups, addressing a wide range of topics from freight to homeland security to bicycle and pedestrian access. The committees offer an important means for the BRTB to consult with specific stakeholders and agency partners, including members of the public, on specific issues related to their mission.

Members of the public interested in attending committee meetings can check the web site at www.baltometro.org and click on "Transportation Planning" for a list of committees, their membership, purposes, and schedules. All meetings held by committees and advisory groups are open to the public.

Members of the public are encouraged to attend committee meetings or to call the Public Involvement Coordinator at 410-732-0500 x1047 to find out how to become involved.



Having Your Say: Public Review and Comment

The BRTB encourages public comments and provides the public with a variety of ways of voicing their opinions and sharing their ideas. Comments are welcome at any time.

In addition, the BRTB holds specific public review and comment periods for items such as the long-range transportation plan and short range transportation improvement program. At times the BRTB also holds special public comment periods for review of items such as the travel demand model. Details about these public comment periods and guidelines are listed below:

General Comments

Comments may be provided at any time in the following ways: in writing (mail, e-mail, and fax), online using the public comment form on the BMC web site, and verbally during the public participation opportunity of a regularly scheduled BRTB meeting.

Comments Related to Documents Posted for Public Review

Public comments on any documents posted for public review and comment may be provided in the following ways: in writing (mail, e-mail, and fax), online using the public comment form on the BMC web site, verbally at a public meeting (if applicable), and during the public participation opportunity of a regularly scheduled BRTB meeting occurring within the review and comment period.

Consideration and Response to Public Input

The BRTB recognizes and values public input and, therefore, will review each comment submitted. Members of the public are encouraged and welcome to share their thoughts on any topic at every BRTB meeting, as well as to send their comments in writing at any time for BRTB review and consideration.

For comments submitted during a public review and comment period, a response will be sent to the author prior to a final vote on the document. All comments received using the methods detailed above will also be documented as part of the public record.

Public Comment Periods

A key opportunity for the public to share their innovative thoughts and ideas is during public review and comment periods.

A review and comment period of at least 45 days for the Participation Plan will be held. A review and comment period of at least 30 days will be held for the long-range plan, short-range transportation improvement program, and other documents open for public review. In addition, if any significant changes are made to either of these documents, an additional 30-day review and comment period will be held.

Public comments will be accepted no later than three working days after the public review and comment period ends.



Thinking locally

In addition to being involved in the regional process, another great way to have your voice heard is to participate at the local level, as jurisdictional plans feed into the regional and state planning processes.

Notification of Public Review and Comment Period

- **Announcements** - All public review and comment periods will be announced to the public in a variety of methods. For all public review periods, announcements are posted on the BMC web site, placed in the B'More Involved e-newsletter, and sent to interested parties on the BRTB mailing list. The mailing list includes the interested parties listed on page 4. When possible, announcements are also placed in BRTB Notes newsletter if timely.
- **Press releases** are sent to area newspapers and interested parties about public comment and review opportunities. The BRTB may also at times post announcements in additional area newspapers. In addition, advertisements are placed in *The Baltimore Sun* (the primary print/online news outlet in the region) for public review periods related to major activities such as the long and short-range transportation plans (draft documents and major amendments) and any major changes to the Public Participation Plan.
- **BMC web site** – All documents released for public review are made available for download on the BMC web site. Notification is included on the BMC home page as well as in the "What's New" section.

- **Print Documents** - All documents posted for public review are made available in print at the Regional Information Center. For public review periods related to major activities such as the long and short-range transportation plans (draft documents and major amendments) and any major changes to the Public Participation Plan, the BRTB will expand availability of print documents to a number of area libraries and planning offices in each jurisdiction in the region.

Public Comment: Plans and Programs

The following outlines specific procedures for public involvement related to plans and programs created by the BRTB.

In addition to seeking public review and comment, the BRTB coordinates with statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes. Primary coordination occurs through the work of the BRTB and its committees. Additionally, BRTB members and BMC staff work on an ongoing basis to promote public involvement in appropriate local planning processes.

Notice for each of these public review and comment periods is given according to standard procedure as outlined under the "Notification of Public Review and Comment Period" section on page 11. For all public review periods, comments can be submitted by e-mail, mail, fax, or online using the public comment form on the BMC web site.

Key documents released for public review and comment
 The BRTB holds specific public review and comment periods for a variety of documents. Here are a few key ones:

- Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan (Long-Range)
- BRTB Transportation Improvement Program (Short-Range)
- Air Quality Conformity Determination

Planning for the long-term: Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan

The BRTB is responsible for developing and updating a long-range transportation plan that defines the transportation policies and investments to be implemented over a minimum of twenty-years. This plan, the Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan (BRTP), is updated at least every four years, as required by federal law.

The process of developing the BRTP requires early and continuing public involvement. Prior to initiating the long-range planning process, the BRTB develops a specific program for public involvement during the plan process. This program is developed in consultation with key stakeholders and members of the public, particularly persons representing low-income, minority, disabled, and other targeted populations as appropriate.

Typically the program includes a wide array of opportunities to become informed about and involved in the plan development process, such as a kick-off open house or interactive public meetings held at major milestones of the planning process. In addition, the program may combine a wide range of additional tools for public education on transportation issues, and involvement and consultation during the planning process.

Public Review and Comment

A 30-day public review and comment period will be held on the draft BRTP. During this time public meetings will be held in each jurisdiction in the region.

Notice will be given according to standard procedure, however, additional activities or methods of disseminating the draft BRTP may be implemented. A plan and/or schedule of these additional activities will be posted on the BMC web site.

Major Amendments

Several actions can prompt a major amendment, such as the addition or deletion of a capacity project. When this occurs, an additional 30-day review and comment period, as well as a public meeting, will take place. This meeting will be held in the jurisdiction that is impacted or at BMC if regional in nature.

Planning Transportation Improvements: Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identifies state and local transportation projects that will receive federal money for one or more phases of the project over the next five years. Opportunities to comment on the proposed TIP document and amendments to the TIP are as follows:

First Draft TIP

Prior to the release of the entire draft document, a database that details all TIP projects is made available on the BMC web site for a 30-day public review period.

Final Draft TIP

The final draft TIP will be made available in hard copy at various libraries, local government planning offices, the BMC offices, and on the BMC web site for a 30-day period. A public meeting to accept comments on the final draft TIP will take place at BMC prior to the end of this comment period.

Major Amendments

Both the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration identify a number of actions (i.e., the addition of a new capacity project, major change in funding, etc) that would prompt a major amendment. A full list of these actions is listed in the TIP document, available on the BMC web site. A major TIP amendment will prompt an additional 30-day review and comment period, as well as a public meeting. This meeting will be held in the jurisdiction that is impacted or at BMC if the amendment is regional in nature.

Air Quality Conformity Determination

As the MPO for a region that is not currently reaching federal air quality standards, the BRTB is required to go through the process of transportation conformity every time there is a new transportation plan, program or federally-funded project. This analysis, called a Conformity Determination, accompanies any new TIP and B RTP. A 30-day public review and comment period on the conformity document, as well as a public meeting, coincides with approval of each TIP and B RTP.

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) articulates a set of planning activities and studies to be conducted by BRTB over a given year. The BRTB provides the public with the opportunity to review and comment on a draft UPWP. Notice will be given that the draft UPWP is available on the BMC web site and in print at the BMC offices for a 30-day period.

Participation Plan

The Citizens Advisory Committee will take responsibility for annually reviewing and drafting proposed changes if needed. All proposed changes will be reviewed and formally voted on by the CAC and then submitted to the BRTB for consideration.

Upon completion of the draft plan, the BRTB will make the draft available on the BMC web site for a 45-day public review and comment period. Print copies will be also made available at a number of area libraries in each jurisdiction in the region, as well as the planning offices in each jurisdiction. Additionally, the federally identified list of "interested parties" (page 7) will also have an opportunity for input and comment.

Access for All

The BRTB recognizes and values the diversity within the region. It also recognizes the importance of including those individuals and groups who have been traditionally underserved. As such, the BRTB has outlined the following guidelines for engaging people with disabilities and individuals with limited English proficiency.

Accommodations for Persons with Disabilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is landmark civil rights legislation ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and telecommunications. The BRTB and its Subcommittees are fully committed to the spirit and intent of the ADA legislation. In order to facilitate participation by people with disabilities, the following guidelines and activities apply:

- All public meetings and formal events of the BRTB will be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Additional accommodations will be provided on an as-needed basis.
- All public notices of BRTB events will state that accommodations for qualified individuals with disabilities will be provided upon request. One-week notice is required for provisions of appropriate auxiliary aids and services.
- All documents available to the public will be provided in alternative formats for qualified individuals with disabilities, upon request.
- The web site will be accessible to and usable by individuals with vision impairments.
- The telephone number of the Maryland Relay Service will be included on all agendas and materials for public review of the BRTB.
- A list of resources for auxiliary aids and services will be developed and maintained.

Involving Persons with Limited English Proficiency

The Baltimore region is a diverse community that includes a wide array of ethnic communities and people, many with limited skill with the English language. The BRTB is currently developing a plan for outreach and involvement with persons with limited English skills. This plan includes an analysis to determine language needs of the targeted population. It also includes strategies for announcing meetings, document translation, oral communication, and other communication needs during the regional transportation planning process.

In addition to the development of a LEP plan, the BRTB currently is making information on its web site available in 12 additional languages. The free service, powered by AltaVista's Babelfish program, allows users to choose from Spanish, Russian, Portuguese, Korean, Japanese, Italian, Greek, German, French, Dutch, and two Chinese translations. The translation service is available by clicking the link at the bottom left on each page of the BMC web site.

Questions?

If you have questions about the transportation planning process, this plan, or would like more information about how you can become involved, contact one of these staff members and we'll get you connected with the right people or get you the information you are looking for.

- Transportation Division Director
410-732-9566
hbloom@baltometro.org
- Manager of Plan & Policy
410-732-9572
raris@baltometro.org
- Public Involvement Coordinator
410-732-0500 x1047
mhaines@baltometro.org



V. Public Involvement Toolbox

There are three general categories of potential public involvement strategies that the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) can use. These strategies can enhance public involvement for a specific activity or assist BRTB in meeting specific public involvement goals.

The first category includes **outreach strategies**. These strategies can assist BRTB in maximizing their outreach and reaching the largest and widest audience possible. These strategies can also assist in reaching traditionally underserved and non-participating communities and populations.

The second category is **information and education** strategies. These strategies include those methods that can best provide information on the transportation planning and process to the public and educate citizens. This information should be simple, convenient, and interesting.

The third category is **involvement** strategies. These strategies include those that assist in making participation easy and convenient for the public so that it can be an ongoing relationship. By making participation easy and convenient, the BRTB can increase the quality and amount of involvement they receive.

As often as possible, information published or presented by the BRTB will incorporate images, photos, graphics, and other means of visually describing transportation issues and alternatives as a strategy for promoting public understanding of the material being presented.

These strategies will be reviewed and modified as needed. Strategies that best increase outreach, information, education, and involvement will continue to be used. Strategies that do not increase outreach, information, and education will be altered or discontinued.

Maintain up-to-date mailing list

Maintain mailing list to include all current and potential stakeholders. Stakeholders include general public; environmental, health, neighborhood, citizen, and civic organizations; traditionally underserved communities; and affected public agencies.

Partner with others that influence/conduct outreach

Create partnerships with a wide range of outreach professionals, community groups, jurisdictions, and agencies. Utilize these resources to publicize activities and events to reach broader audience and/or take leadership role in public participation efforts in their area.

Build relationships with stakeholders

Build relationships with stakeholders to maintain a dialogue on transportation and to garner continued interest in process.

Seek out/build relationships with traditionally underserved community leaders and non-traditional participants.

Identify and meet with organizations and community leaders who represent non-participating low-income and minority populations. The purpose is to build relationships and earn trust with groups and leaders as well as identify strategies to bring traditional non-participants into the planning process.

Meet in convenient and accessible locations for optimal attendance

Hold meetings, activities, and other public involvement events at various geographic locations at which the targeted populations congregate including community centers, fairs and festivals, churches, and other popular destinations. Meetings located on transit lines are most accessible.

Develop an outreach and education program

Produce such materials as pamphlets, brochures, and workshop outlines that can be used in various presentations and for distribution. Some of the materials can target non-traditional participants. Periodically review and update materials.

Maintain and promote a speaker's bureau

Work with the Citizens Advisory Committee to establish a Speaker's Bureau, standard presentation, and training process. Train BRTB members, staff, and other volunteers to present information to educate different groups about the MPO process and other relevant topics.

Publicize BRTB activities

Create a media strategy to publicize BRTB activities through B'More Involved, the BMC web site, newsletters, and other media. Provide media with periodic updates of BRTB activities as well as press releases to announce public review and comment periods for major transportation planning products and activities.

Maintain a web site

Provide information on BRTB activities, meetings (including agendas and minutes), newsletters, and draft documents under review. Provide an opportunity for the public to provide input and formal comments through a questionnaire posted on the web site and e-mail links.

Produce and distribute newsletters

Produce and distribute electronic and paper newsletters to include timely information on targeted topics related to transportation planning and public participation activities. Include related column in BRTB newsletter.

Use visualization techniques

Use visualization, interactive, and other graphic techniques to enhance understanding of transportation issues and decisions.

Conduct information workshops

Host workshops on specific transportation planning topics or general process. Provide opportunity for involvement through interactive exercises, comment sheets, and/or verbal comments.

Hold open houses

Present information buffet-style at tables and exhibits around the room. No fixed agenda or formal presentation. Provide opportunity for involvement through interactive exhibits, exercises, comment sheets, and / or verbal comments.

Hold public meetings

Disseminate information and provide a setting for formal public comment or discussion at appropriate intervals in the BRTP and TIP development processes. BRTB members are in attendance to listen to and discuss public comments and concerns.

Conduct interactive workshops and meetings

Use interactive activities, games, tours, and other techniques to illustrate and discuss transportation issues, projects, and needs in a meeting setting.

Conduct surveys

Gather information on people's perceptions, preferences, and practices.

Conduct focus groups

Conduct small group discussions used to gather perspectives, insights, and opinions on a single topic. Such groups usually consist of no more than 12 participants.

Establish a Public Involvement Subcommittee of the Citizens Advisory Committee

Work with the Citizens Advisory Committee to review, evaluate, and improve upon public involvement techniques and outreach efforts.

Appendix A: Federal Requirements

Public involvement in metropolitan transportation planning has long been a federal requirement. Federal law includes a number of specific requirements and performance standards and expectations for state departments of transportation and MPOs during transportation planning. This core set of requirements and performance standards have been amended and reinforced through additional transportation and environmental legislation, and related regulations and orders addressing environmental justice and persons with disabilities. The specifics of these requirements are outlined below.

SAFETEA-LU

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users was signed into law in August 2005.

Transportation planning under SAFETEA-LU must be performed in conjunction with state and local officials, transit operators, and the public. MPOs are particularly encouraged to consult or coordinate with planning officials responsible for other types of planning activities affected by transportation, including planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movement. [23 USC 134(g)(5)].

SAFETEA-LU also emphasizes the broadening of public participation to include stakeholders who have not traditionally been involved. Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and the disabled are specifically included in SAFETEA-LU as parties to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning process.

Finally, the BRTB must develop a participation plan in consultation with interested parties that provides reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment on its process.

Code of Federal Regulations

MPOs are also accountable for conducting the locally-developed public participation process as required by the Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) / Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Metropolitan Planning Regulation.

The legislation requires that the metropolitan planning process must “include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans” and TIP’s [23 CFR part 450.316(b)(1)].

Relevant excerpts of the Code of Federal Regulations can be found in Appendix B of this document.

Outreach to Traditionally Underserved Communities and Individuals

Executive Order (EO) 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low Income Populations, was signed by President Clinton in February 1994. The EO reinforced the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focused federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low income communities.

The BRTB is guided by the three guiding principles of EP 12898:

To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low income populations.

To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.

To prevent the denial, reduction of or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, was signed by President Clinton in August 2000. EO 13166 required federal agencies and any other entities that receive federal funds via grants, contracts, or subcontracts to make their activities accessible to non-English speaking persons. Persons with limited English proficiency are those with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited English fluency, communicate in that primary language if they are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service, or benefit in federally funded programs and activities.

EO 12898 and 13166 are directed at project level decision making in the engineering and design phases for projects as well as long range and project programming activities.

Disabled Populations

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires coordinating with disabled communities in the development and improvement of transportation services. Planners, engineers, and builders must provide access for the disabled at sidewalks and ramps, street crossings, and in parking or transit access facilities. Persons with disabilities must also be able to access the sites where public involvement activities occur as well as the information presented.

Appendix B: Excerpts from the Code of Federal Regulations

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act

The following are relevant metropolitan planning regulations under SAFETEA-LU. For full regulations see www.fhwa.dot.gov/safetealu.

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, 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 with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

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

(viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;

(2) Governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

Federal Register / Vol. 72, No. 30 / Wednesday, February 14, 2007 / Rules and Regulations

§ 450.322 Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan.

(i) The MPO shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, 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 with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan using the participation plan developed under § 450.316(a).

(j) The metropolitan transportation plan shall be published or otherwise made readily available by the MPO for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.

23 CFR § 450.324 Development and content of the transportation improvement program (TIP).

(b) The MPO shall provide all interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed TIP as required by § 450.316(a). In addition, in nonattainment area TMAs, the MPO shall provide at least one formal public meeting during the TIP development process, which should be addressed through the participation plan described in § 450.316(a). In addition, the TIP shall be published or otherwise made readily available by the MPO for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web, as described in § 450.316(a).

Appendix C: Transportation Lingo

The following is a list of terms used in this document and in the transportation planning process.

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
BMC	Baltimore Metropolitan Council
BRTB	Baltimore Regional Transportation Board
BRTP	Baltimore Regional Transportation Plan
CAAA	Clean Air Act Amendments (of 1990 and other years)
CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
MDOT	Maryland Department of Transportation
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTA	Maryland Transit Administration
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TETF	Transportation Equity Task Force
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
US DOT	United States Department of Transportation
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency

Appendix D: Making Public Comments at BRTB Meetings: A Brief How To Guide

At the beginning of each meeting of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB), members of the public have an opportunity to make comments. This is a very important, regular, on-the-record opportunity to be heard by BRTB members.

This How To Guide gives you a series of questions that will help you determine if making comments at BRTB meetings is your most effective strategy for getting your message heard, and will give you hints about how to make the most impact.

You can think through these questions yourself, discuss with other interested individuals or groups, or contact our Public Involvement Coordinator at 410-732-0500 x1047 to discuss them.

WHAT DO YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH BY MAKING COMMENTS AT A BRTB MEETING?

Possible Responses

- v I want to share information with the BRTB. Before doing this, you should figure out if the Board members are already aware of your information. If so, do they need to hear it again? There may be value in repeating information to emphasize a position or opinion, but it also may come across as repetitive and unnecessary.
- v There's an action I want the BRTB to take. This is likely to be the most effective use of this technique. For example, you want the BRTB to include or take out a particular project from a Plan or Program, or you want them to hear a new idea or concept (e.g., the recent list of transportation control measures that the Baltimore Regional Partnership asked the BRTB to consider).
- v I want to discuss an issue with the BRTB. The opportunity for public comment at a BRTB meeting is much more of a formal hearing structure than an informal dialogue format. The BRTB members will hear your comments but, with a full agenda to follow, they are not likely to engage in much discussion.

ARE YOU SURE YOU'RE TALKING TO THE RIGHT PEOPLE? DOES THE BRTB HAVE THE AUTHORITY TO DO WHAT YOU'RE ASKING THEM TO DO?

Possible Responses

- v Yes. You want the BRTB to consider your comments on a Long-Range Plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or some aspect of either of those documents.
- v No. If you are concerned about a change in bus service or perhaps the site of a future service, you should be aware of two facts: first, the BRTB is not responsible for operating different services. If bus service, for example, is the issue, the MTA is responsible and you should contact them. Second, the BRTB is not responsible for project planning. Once a project has been approved to take place (the BRTB's role), the how and where become the responsibility of the local jurisdictions or the state.

ARE THERE OTHER STRATEGIES YOU MIGHT USE TO ACCOMPLISH YOUR PURPOSE?

Possible Responses

- v Yes, I can talk with BRTB members on a one-to-one informal basis. Taking advantage of informal opportunities for discussing issues can be very effective. In fact, discussing issues on an informal basis with BRTB members should lay the groundwork for any formal testimony that you give.
- v Yes, I can participate at committee and subcommittee meetings. A great deal of work that supports the BRTB's decisions goes on at various committee and subcommittee meetings. Observing these meetings, asking questions and making comments can be a good way to get your ideas across.
- v Yes, I can submit written comments. Written comments work for some participants but not all. If you can submit written comments, you'll be on the record, and you'll receive a written response, too. Again, though, don't overuse this opportunity or it will lose its effectiveness.

- v No, this is the best strategy to accomplish my purpose. If the public participation opportunity at the BRTB meetings is truly the best strategy for you, make sure you consider these guidelines:
1. Figure out what you want the BRTB to do. Have something specific in mind. If you don't, your comments will have much less impact.
 2. Use the public participation opportunity wisely. In other words, make sure you are making comments at times when they will make the most impact. If you overuse this opportunity, your comments will be much less effective.
 3. Do your own evaluation. If you have presented comments a number of times, look back over those times and try to determine if you've made an impact. If it's difficult to figure out, ask one or more BRTB members to talk to you about when your comments had the biggest impact on them.
 4. Be creative. Reading from a sheet of paper is a standard way of presenting comments. Work on grabbing the members' attention by showing maps, passing around a report that supports your position, passing around pictures of a problem area or service, or bringing others in to testify with you. Make sure you are prepared to pass around copies of handouts. Twenty-five copies is a good number to bring.
 5. Understand the power of numbers. An individual testifying on behalf of an organization will almost always have more impact than a single individual. If you don't belong to an organization, bring in others who support your position to testify, too.
 6. Check in with Public Involvement staff. If you're unsure what you want the BRTB to do, or how best to present your information, check in with the Public Involvement Coordinator who can give you some tips.