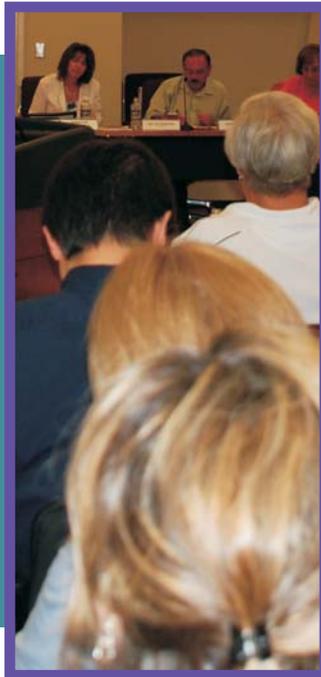


PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



April 2010

DRGO
DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

THE DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning

Adopted April 21, 2010

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Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning

Table of Contents

1. Introduction	1
DRCOG Public Involvement Goals	1
2. Public Involvement Policy	4
DRCOG Public Involvement Policy	4
Federal and State Mandates	5
3. DRCOG’s Planning Process and Public Involvement.....	8
Planning Process	8
DRCOG Committee Structure.....	9
Policy Action Process and Agency Integration	12
Key Planning Activities	14
4. Public Involvement Methods	20
5. Documentation, Distribution and Notification	26
Documentation.....	26
Distribution and Notification	27
6. Review of Public Participation Process	28
Review of 2008 and 2009 Activities.....	28
Future Measurements and Reviews.....	30
Appendix A	35
Federal Regulation on MPO Public Involvement Process.....	35
Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency.....	36
Low-Income Communities and Minority Communities	37
Disabled Populations.....	38
Appendix B Adopting Resolution (to be provided upon adoption)	

List of Tables

Table 1 Key Planning Activities and Public Involvement Methods	15
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List of Figures

Figure 1 Transportation Planning Process.....	8
Figure 2 DRCOG MPO Committee Structure.....	9

1. Introduction

This report documents the actions to be carried out by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to ensure that opportunities exist for the public to be involved in transportation planning activities, pursuant to 23 CFR part 450.316 of Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming; and 40 CFR part 93.105(a) Conformity to State or Federal Implementation Plans of Transportation Plans, Programs, and Projects.

The report also serves as the statement of transportation public involvement policies adopted by the DRCOG Board of Directors. Public participation in transportation planning activities is vitally important to the DRCOG Board. The adopted policies in this report specifically apply to development of products of the regional transportation planning process. Project-level public involvement procedures and practices are defined by agencies that implement projects.

Minor administrative and informational edits to non-policy sections of this document will be made on occasion. Changes reflecting major policy changes within this document will go through the complete public review and Board adoption process.

DRCOG Public Involvement Goals

The fundamental goal of public involvement is to assure that the decisions regarding a proposed plan or product are made only after the public is aware of and has the opportunity to comment and participate on the proposal. Transportation planning decision-makers must consider concerns of all those who may be affected by a proposed product.

The specific goals of the DRCOG public involvement process are as follow:

Goal 1: Present Information to the Public

- DRCOG is responsible for providing information to the public.
- DRCOG staff will present information about the regional planning process, including the sources of funding and impacts of regional planning decisions.
- DRCOG staff will inform the public about the role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the committee structure of DRCOG.
- Staff will explain the specific tasks and goals of DRCOG, as well as related tasks that are not in the MPO's authority to perform.
- Information will be presented in non-technical terms to help the public clearly understand this information and meaningfully participate in DRCOG's decision-making process.

Goal 2: Solicit Public Input

- DRCOG will gather representative input from the public to identify mobility needs, desires, issues and concerns.
- DRCOG will continuously seek public involvement and facilitate the involvement of those potentially affected by or interested in a decision.
- DRCOG will continuously seek public involvement throughout transportation planning processes, though specifically targeted at the beginning of transportation planning processes, at key decision points, and when final product drafts are issued.

- The DRCOG Board members have direct contact with the public (as they are elected by the public to represent them) and should reflect their concerns to DRCOG staff.
- Staff will closely monitor public input received through major project development and corridor studies.

Goal 3: Enhance Information Flow between the Public and Decision-Makers

- DRCOG staff is responsible for compiling public issues, comments and concerns into complete and concise documents for presentation to the decision-makers.
- DRCOG staff will meet with elected officials from local governments across the region to share public concerns that have been expressed.
- DRCOG staff will schedule and organize meetings or hearings where the public can present concerns to the staff or Board.

Goal 4: Consider Public Concerns in Decision-Making

- The Board members will consider the public concerns that are presented to them by the staff as well as those presented to them by individuals at public meetings and through public comment periods.
- DRCOG staff will consider public concerns as draft planning documents are prepared.

2. Public Involvement Policy

DRCOG Public Involvement Policy

Public involvement is vital to DRCOG. It helps provide the DRCOG Board of Directors the broadest spectrum of relevant information available before decision-making and offers the public an opportunity to raise concerns that can be considered along with discussion of technical, political and economic merit.

The Board of Directors welcomes early and continued public involvement in developing the agency's regional policies and plans. DRCOG seeks to establish an attitude and an atmosphere that encourage public reflection, reaction and discussion of the wide-ranging issues with which it is involved.

Of particular importance in the pursuit of public involvement is the identification of audiences, which would be affected by or have a business or other affinity with the issues under consideration. All views should be heard and their participation likewise encouraged. In this context, minority views include not only ethnic groups but others whose perspectives may not be fully reflected by larger segments of the public.

It is the intent of the DRCOG Board to actively solicit the comments and engage the interests of the public through the participation process. The Board must balance the public's needs, concerns, and desires with the Board's responsibilities and visions for the future of the region.

In adopting this policy, the Board also directs the DRCOG staff to incorporate appropriate activities to make public communications and outreach a part of the agency's overall planning activities. In addition to required public hearings, other such activities might include:

- Task forces or advisory committees,
- Public meetings and workshops,
- Presentations and discussions with special interest organizations,
- Forums or conferences,
- Opinion polls and surveys,

- Focus groups and interviews, and
- Use of the media and reports to disseminate information.

Federal and State Mandates

Federal regulations require a public participation component to the metropolitan transportation planning process. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law in 2005. DRCOG is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Denver region. DRCOG implements SAFETEA-LU through plans and programs that consider all modes of transportation, and which are "*continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate*" [SEC. 1203(a)(4)]. In addition to the "3C" process listed above, SAFETEA-LU emphasizes the broadening of public participation to include stakeholders who have not traditionally been involved. Transportation planning under SAFETEA-LU must be performed in conjunction with state and local officials, transit operators and the public.

Further, Metropolitan Planning Organizations are responsible for conducting the locally-developed public participation process as required by the Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450.316, 49 CFR part 613). The legislation requires that the metropolitan planning process "*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 Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP)*" [23 CFR part 450.316]. Additional MPO public involvement requirements and criteria are specified in Appendix A.

There are also public involvement requirements at the state level. The public records law of Colorado states that all public records shall be open for inspection by any person at reasonable times (Colorado Revised Statutes 24-72-201). Public records include all writings made, maintained or kept by the state or any agency, institution or political subdivision for use in the exercise of functions required or authorized by law or administrative rule or involving the receipt or expenditure of public funds.

Addressing Participation of All Interested Parties and Population Groups

DRCOG's public involvement process provides the opportunity for full and fair participation of all interested parties and populations in the transportation planning process. Examples of interested parties include:

- Local elected officials
- Users of public transit
- Users of bicycle and pedestrian facilities
- Representatives of the disabled community
- Residents and property owners
- Business community
- Private transit providers
- Interest groups, including environmental and aging
- Freight shippers and carriers
- State and federal elected and appointed officials
- News and other media

In addition, DRCOG's public involvement process fully adheres to the principles and guidance outlined in the following federal actions:

- Low-Income Communities and Minority Communities:

Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations Executive Order 12898 promotes non-discrimination in federal programs affecting human health and the environment. It ensures that minority and low-income communities have an opportunity to participate in matters relating to transportation and the environment. More information about Executive Order 12898 can be found in Appendix A.

DRCOG and its partner agencies ensure that opportunities are provided and encouraged for these communities to participate in both long-range planning and short-range study and design phases for specific projects.

- Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP):

Executive Order 13166 ensures that programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and do not discriminate on the basis of national origin. More information about Executive Order 13166 can be found in Appendix A.

- Americans with Disabilities Act:

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires that disabled communities be involved in the development and improvement of transportation services. More information about ADA can be found in Appendix A.

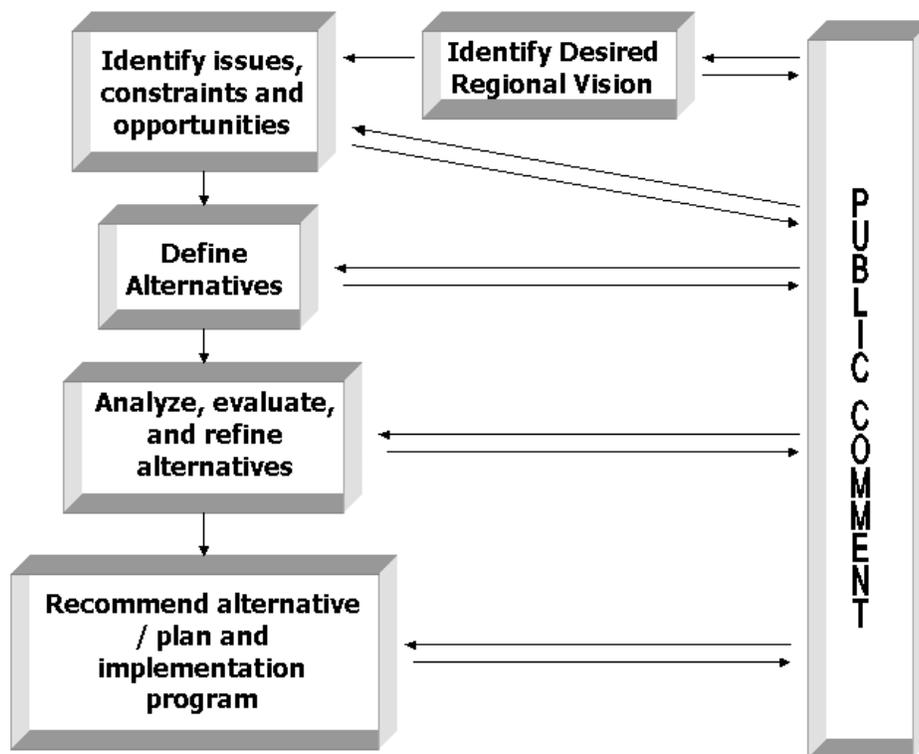
3. DRCOG's Planning Process and Public Involvement

Planning Process

The regional transportation planning process involves a number of varied activities including the preparation of regional plans, transportation improvement programs, corridor studies, environmental studies and administrative documents. Public interest will vary considerably by geography and magnitude of the issues. Thus the regional public involvement process should not be rigid. The process should instead recognize the differences in public interests and provide opportunities for involvement to meet those needs. DRCOG typically follows the transportation planning process displayed in Figure 1 for long-range regional plans, corridor and project studies, and short-range transportation improvement programs.

Figure 1

Transportation Planning Process

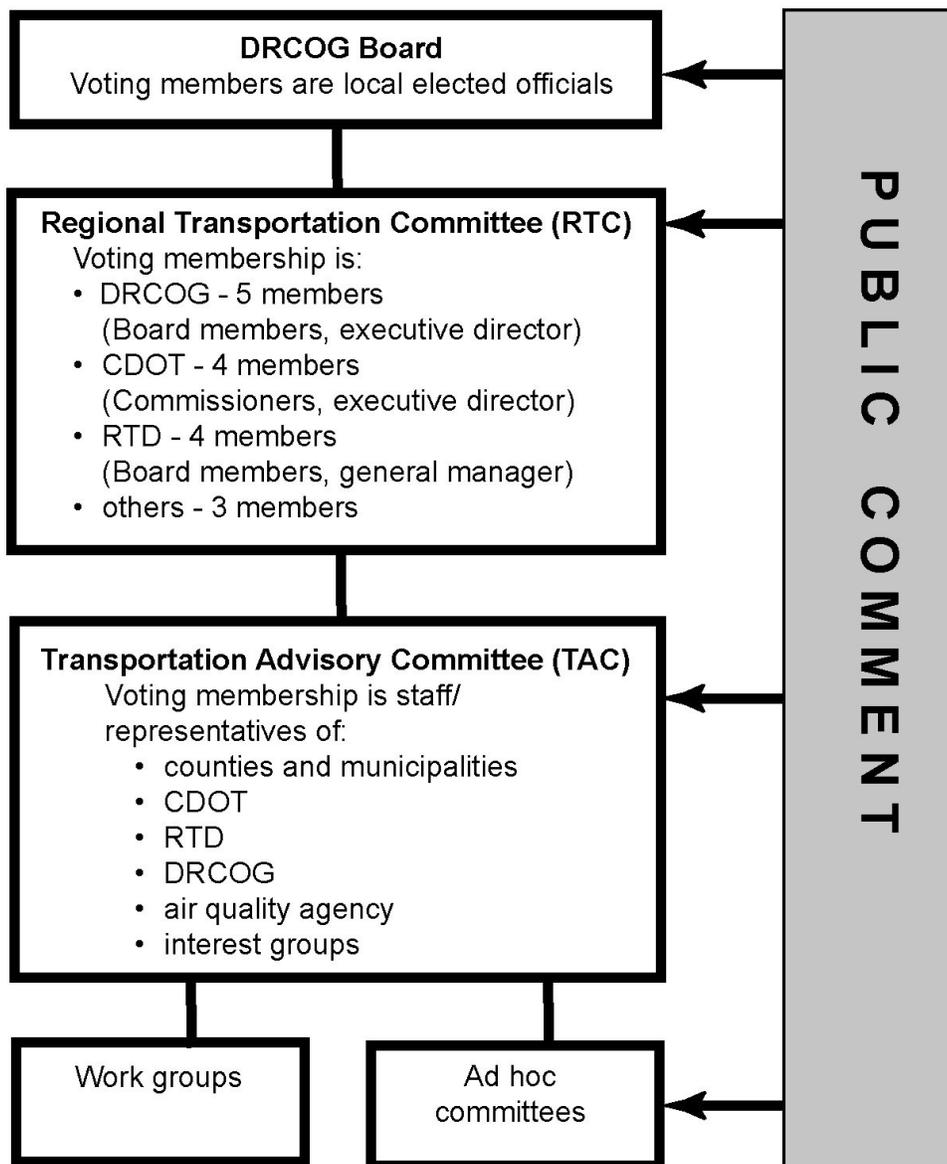


DRCOG Committee Structure

The Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) process in the Denver region has been established in a Memorandum of Agreement between DRCOG, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Regional Transportation District (RTD). The base DRCOG committee and public comment structure is displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

DRCOG MPO Committee Structure



The DRCOG Board of Directors is comprised of more than 50 local elected officials who each hold one vote on the Board on behalf of their local governments. Each board member also has a designated alternate. Two permanent committees assist the DRCOG Board of Directors with transportation policy decision-making. The Regional Transportation Committee (RTC) prepares and forwards policy recommendations to the DRCOG Board of Directors. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) reviews work of the transportation process and advises the RTC. Ad hoc committees and work groups are also established for short durations to assist on specific planning tasks and functions. The membership of these short-term committees includes experts on the relevant committee topic and/or representatives of affected groups.

Regional Transportation Committee

The RTC is composed of:

- Five members of DRCOG, including the chair, vice chair, two other members of the Board of Directors, and the executive director;
- Four members of CDOT, including three Denver metropolitan area transportation commissioners as well as the executive director;
- Four members of RTD, including three members of the RTD Board of Directors as well as the general manager; and
- Three other members, appointed by the RTC chair annually, upon unanimous recommendation of the executive directors of DRCOG and CDOT, and the general manager of RTD.

The RTC considers the actions of the TAC and makes recommendations to the DRCOG Board. The public may attend RTC meetings and provide comment. Agendas and background information are provided on the DRCOG Web site prior to all committee meetings

Transportation Advisory Committee

There are 29 members of the TAC. TAC membership includes representatives from:

- Local counties and municipalities;
- DRCOG;
- CDOT;

- RTD;
- Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC);
- Environmental interests;
- Freight interests;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and non-motorized transportation interests;
- Aging community interests;
- Non-RTD transit interests;
- Aviation interests;
- Business/economic development interests; and
- FHWA / FTA.

The TAC reviews work of the transportation process and provides advice and recommendations to the RTC on transportation plans and improvement programs. The public may attend TAC meetings and provide comment. Agendas and background information are provided on the DRCOG Web site calendar prior to all committee meetings.

Public Comment Period

The public is encouraged to attend committee meetings and/or contact representatives with comments and concerns. A public comment period is included in all meetings of the Board, RTC, TAC and ad hoc committees. The DRCOG Web site contains a calendar of meeting dates and associated agendas.

DRCOG transportation planning process meetings – standing meeting times and dates

Transportation Advisory Committee	1:30 p.m.	4th Monday
Regional Transportation Committee	8:30 a.m.	Day before the Board
Board of Directors	6:30 p.m.	3rd Wednesday

Policy Action Process and Agency Integration

Major Policy Action Process

The DRCOG policy action process is designed to ensure the Board of Directors has ample opportunity to consider all aspects of the issue or action in question including the views of the public. Such major actions are associated with a:

- New or amended Regional Transportation Plan (RTP);
- New or amended Transit Element or Pedestrian and Bicycle Element documents;
- New Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or amendment affecting air quality conformity; and
- Air quality conformity determination document.

Major policy actions include the following steps related to the solicitation and consideration of public comments:

- 1) The chair of the DRCOG Board sets a public hearing date that allows at least a 30-day period for review of documents before the public hearing. The 30-day notice may be waived by the Board Chair in the event of new federal or state legislation, or emergency relief, that necessitates prompt action by the MPO. In such circumstances, every effort will be made to provide a minimum of 15 days notice.
- 2) After setting the public hearing date, a legal notice of the hearing is published in the Denver Post at least 30 days in advance of the public hearing (or at least 15 days in unique cases to respond to federal legislation requiring immediate action). Notices may also be published in other newspapers. The notice includes the time, date and location of the public hearing as well as how the document/material can be reviewed. The document, as well as the public hearing notice, is made available on the DRCOG Web site (www.drcog.org).
- 3) The public has the opportunity to provide comment until the day of the public hearing. (Occasionally the comment period is extended beyond the hearing.) Those who want to

Speak at the public hearing can contact the Administrative Assistant, submit written comments before the public hearing, or post comments online. Written and online comments receive the same consideration as comments made at the public hearing. Such comments must include the name of the person submitting them. Anonymous comments will not be included.

- 4) A formal public hearing is conducted. The public can testify on the subject document. Individuals are normally allowed a maximum of 3 minutes to testify. Action on the policy document is then typically scheduled for the next regular meeting of the Board.
- 5) DRCOG staff prepares a written summary of the comments presented at the hearing and received via email, Web site, letter or phone during the comment period. Staff responses are provided. The summary of public comments and staff responses is provided to the TAC, RTC, and the Board prior to their next regular meetings.
- 6) After considering public comment and DRCOG staff response, TAC recommends an action to RTC.
- 7) After considering public comments, DRCOG staff responses, and the TAC recommendation, the RTC recommends an action to the Board.
- 8) After considering all comments and recommendations, the DRCOG Board takes action.
- 9) The summary of public comments and responses is included in the final published policy document or made available as a separate document.

Agency Integration

The Denver regional transportation planning process, and its corresponding public participation process, is a coordinated approach among DRCOG, RTD and CDOT. The three agencies prepared a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining their plans for communication, collaboration and coordination in transportation processes in 2001, fulfilling the requirements of

23 CFR 450.314. The document, *Transportation Planning in the Denver Region*, which outlines coordination efforts of the three agencies, augments the MOA and was approved in 2004 and last revised in 2009.

There is additional integration between DRCOG and RTD on fixed-guideway transit improvements planned for the region. State law requires that the MPO shall approve each fixed-guideway component part or corridor separately, including the financing method and the technology selected, before federal funding can be distributed. DRCOG also hosts a public hearing to solicit comments and concerns about fixed-guideway transit proposals.

Additionally, staff from CDOT, DRCOG, RTD, RAQC, the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) FTA, FHWA, and EPA meet to provide integration among the agencies. This “agency coordination team” (ACT) reviews the transportation planning activities of each agency and coordinates the Unified Planning Work Program planning activities and timing with the individual agency planning activities. Consultation will also be conducted as appropriate with federal, state and local resource agencies responsible for land management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. Specific air quality coordination tasks are conducted under the title of the Interagency Coordination Group (ICG). The ICG often meets in conjunction with the ACT to address specific air quality conformity planning topics.

Key Planning Activities

The framework described in Table 1 identifies types of planning products, the most appropriate agency responsible for the public involvement activity and the usual methods for obtaining public involvement. Additional methods to obtain public input may be used if needed. It should be noted that agendas for all DRCOG committee meetings are posted on the DRCOG Web site calendar, and offer a period to receive public comments.

Table 1**Key Planning Activities and Public Involvement Methods**

Activity	Responsibility	Opportunities and Methods
Metro Vision Plan and Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan	DRCOG	Public interest forums at key points throughout the development process; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing and comment period before adoption and amendment; Staff outreach to communities and organizations using workshops, presentations, questionnaires, Web site techniques, etc.
Transit Element & Pedestrian/Bicycle Element	DRCOG	Ad hoc committees or work groups; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; solicitation of comments and input announced via Web site and email notification; public hearing and comment period before adoption.
Strategic Plans or Topical Programming Documents	DRCOG	Stakeholder and practitioner workgroups; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; Posting of draft documents on Web site prior to committee discussion and Board action.
Transportation Improvement Program	DRCOG, Local Governments, CDOT, RTD	Project sponsor conducts public outreach in communities regarding specific projects; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing before adoption of new TIP or a TIP amendment requiring conformity finding; Posting of all amendments on Web site prior to committee discussion and Board action.
Major Corridor/ Sub-area Studies	CDOT, RTD, DRCOG, Local Governments	Task forces/committees and public meetings in the study area; Meetings conducted in affected neighborhoods; other outreach efforts (e.g. newsletter, Web site, comment forms).
Project Development	Implementing Jurisdiction	Task forces/committees and/or public meetings in the project locale at key decision points.
Conformity of the RTP and the TIP	DRCOG	DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing on draft conformity finding.
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	DRCOG, CDOT, RTD	Periodic Transportation Forums to identify key planning tasks; DRCOG committee review and recommendation.

Metro Vision 2035 Plan

Metro Vision 2035 is the Denver region's long-range plan to manage growth. It addresses future development, transportation needs and ways to preserve environmental quality. Metro Vision 2035 encourages communities to work together for regional cooperation by providing a framework for addressing common issues while respecting the visions of individual communities. It was adopted by the DRCOG Board in December 2007.

Public involvement opportunities were offered throughout the preparation of Metro Vision 2035. They will also be conducted as part of future plan assessments and updates. Such opportunities will include hearings, workshops, questionnaires, speaking engagements, comment periods at meetings and Web site interaction. Public involvement plans outlining specific activities and dates are prepared in association with major updates to Metro Vision.

Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP)

The Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan is the long-range, transportation plan for the Denver region. It represents the vision for a multimodal transportation system that will serve the region through 2035. It also includes a Fiscally Constrained Plan that identifies transportation improvement projects of various travel modes that are financially feasible for at least the next 20 years. The MVRTP reflects future projects throughout the entire region. The current 2035 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (2035 MVRTP) was adopted in December 2007.

Opportunities for public and resource agency involvement are provided around key decision points in the planning process. The document, *Summary of Public Involvement Activities Associated with the Regional Planning Process and the 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan*, describes in detail activities conducted and input received from the public. This input provided the basis for the 2035 MVRTP. In both 2008 and 2009 two formal public comment periods and hearings were conducted in association with amendments to the plan.

Public involvement plans outlining specific activities and dates are prepared in association with major updates to the MVRTP. Public involvement efforts will also be conducted as part of future annual plan assessments and amendments.

Regional Plan Element Documents

Specialized plan elements are prepared to further define certain long-range topic areas of the Regional Transportation Plan. Examples include the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Element of the 2035 MVRTP* (2009) and the *Transit Element of the 2035 MVRTP* (to be amended 2010). Upon adoption, specialized plan elements become part of the overall Regional Transportation Plan.

Public involvement opportunities are provided through ad hoc committees, work groups, open houses, forums, and comment periods during TAC, RTC, and DRCOG Board meetings. Public hearings are held for new documents and major updates before DRCOG Board action.

Strategic Plans or Topical Programming Documents

These documents are prepared to further define certain short- or long-range funding program areas of the Regional Transportation Plan or the TIP. Examples include the *Regional TDM Strategic Plan*, the *Regional ITS Strategic Plan*, and the *Traffic Signal System Improvement Program*. Public involvement opportunities are provided through comment periods during TAC, RTC, and DRCOG Board meetings.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a document that programs transportation improvements to be funded in the region over a six-year period. Local governments, CDOT, RAQC, RTD, and other eligible sponsors propose projects to be included in the TIP. Projects considered for the TIP must be identified in or be consistent with the MVRTP. Project sponsor are responsible for providing appropriate public involvement opportunities during the project development stage before projects are submitted for the TIP. Sponsors must also involve the public after a project is included in the TIP (e.g. during final studies or design). Within the development of the TIP, DRCOG staff convenes workshops to

assist with TIP policy guidance. Staff from eligible TIP sponsors are invited to provide input. The draft TIP document is the subject of a public hearing. The hearing also serves as part of the public comment process for the elements of the RTD Transit Development Program (program of projects) that are included in the TIP.

The TIP is amended frequently. All policy amendments to the TIP will be announced via a special notice on the Web site that will encourage comments at DRCOG committee and Board meetings. A public hearing will be held regarding those amendments requiring a new air quality conformity finding.

Major Corridor / Sub-area Studies

Corridor and sub-area studies are local in concern yet often have impacts on larger areas. They vary significantly in size and level of effort. The largest scale corridor studies are often conducted as Environmental Assessments (EA) or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) that lead toward environmental clearance actions. Other large-scale studies may be conducted as “corridor optimization studies” or as “planning and environmental linkage” (PEL) studies. Such studies normally have very extensive public outreach and input efforts that attract a significant number of participants. The agency charged with conducting the specific study is responsible for conducting public involvement activities. DRCOG staff is actively involved and monitors the public involvement outcome of many of these studies to help identify broad issues, concerns, desires, etc. that might be relevant to regional planning activities. Opportunities to integrate DRCOG public outreach efforts via corridor study venues are also pursued.

Projects

The project sponsor is responsible for involving the public in efforts during planning and design phases for specific local transportation projects. DRCOG staff monitors studies and public input received for major projects.

Conformity

DRCOG must find conformity with State Air Quality Implementation Plans before it can adopt or amend the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan or the Transportation Improvement Program. Public involvement is crucial to the conformity process, since this determination affects what types of projects can be included in the MVRTP and TIP. Public comment periods and hearings are conducted for the DRCOG Board and for the State Air Quality Control Commission.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes all metropolitan transportation planning and transportation-related land use and air quality planning activities regardless of funding source for the coming year, addressing the planning priorities facing the DRCOG region. The UPWP identifies tasks that will be accomplished using federal transportation planning funds. DRCOG, CDOT and RTD participate in the activities of the annual UPWP, which describes planning tasks to be performed, identifies funding sources, and describes other major transportation planning activities by partner agencies and local governments.

4. Public Involvement Methods

A variety of techniques can be used to provide information and solicit public comment. As noted earlier, specific techniques for major planning products are defined at the time such documents are being prepared. And every year, new techniques for public involvement are created. Some examples of public involvement methods are briefly described below.

Web site

The DRCOG Web site (www.drcog.org) serves as the digital reception area, calendar, library, training center, and public input venue. It is easily available to the public 24 hours per day at home or work, in libraries, on mobile devices, or at other public sites.

Improvements are continually made to the DRCOG Web site to keep the public informed about planning activities and to offer a means to provide comments. The Web site contains timely information such as hearing announcements, a calendar of meetings, agendas, and meeting summaries. Also, there are Web pages devoted to particular topical resources, products, reports, plans, data, and activities of transportation planning and operations.

Ongoing efforts to improve and maintain the Web site include:

- Improved design and layout;
- Improved navigation to access documents, data, etc;
- Interactive maps and displays for providing information to the public;
- Discussion boards;
- Archives of meeting agendas, summaries, and videos of key meetings;
- Interactive questionnaires or surveys; and
- New Web technology applications for greater public interaction

Community and Public Places Outreach

To reach a larger audience or specific target audience, informational tables or displays may be set up at the following types of sites:

- Shopping malls;
- Large retail establishments;
- Libraries and community centers; and/or
- Community festivals or events, etc.

Staff can be available to provide information to the public and to receive comments.

Informational Brochures or Newsletters

Informational brochures and newsletters are often produced by DRCOG to encourage communication between the regional community and the program staff. This helps to ensure that information regarding current activities and news about the region is shared throughout the region. Brochures and newsletters are prepared for major plan updates, provide an overview and basic information to the public and direct readers toward additional resources, including the DRCOG Web site.

Mailing Lists

Mailing list databases help an agency organize and update its public communications. Lists may include telephone numbers, fax numbers and/or email addresses to help contact the public. Using mailing lists, DRCOG reaches an audience with announcements of upcoming events, meeting invitations, newsletters, summary reports and other information about its activities.

DRCOG updates its mailing list at the start of a major planning process. DRCOG may also create a targeted mailing list for a survey. The DRCOG master mailing list includes nearly 6,000 members of the public and organizations, all of whom receive the DRCOG newsletter. About 2,000 people and organizations receive specific transportation notifications.

Media Strategies

Media strategies inform the public about projects and programs through newspapers, radio, television and videos, billboards, posters and variable message signs, mass mailings of brochures or newsletters, and distribution of fliers. Promotional brochures or fliers can be used in direct mail campaigns or through a full-size newspaper supplement explaining the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan. Briefing reporters and editorial boards of both newspaper and broadcast media with background on a project or program prepares them to cover the topic in an objective and fair manner.

DRCOG may prepare press releases and media packets at the 'kick off' of the planning process of such major endeavors as the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan.

Minority and Low-Income Community Strategies

DRCOG staff is proactive regarding public outreach to potential low-income communities and minority communities. Example methods to obtain input are:

- Targeted mailings and questionnaire distribution;
- Speaking requests to organizations and interest groups;
- Participation on corridor studies and compilation of local comments;
- Spanish language questionnaires; and
- Frequent contact with local government planners, staff and elected officials who have day-to-day contact with their constituents.
- Monitoring of local projects, studies, and outreach efforts conducted in minority or low-income neighborhoods.

Piggybacking on Other Efforts

DRCOG staff has set up public outreach displays and materials at public meetings or corridor study offices administered by CDOT, RTD or local governments. Staff may also take advantage of opportunities to potentially interact with the public through the activities of the DRCOG

RideArrangers Program or other entities. A wider audience is often directly reached through these efforts, especially those in low-income communities and minority communities.

Public Hearings and Formal Comment Periods

A public hearing is a more formal event than a public meeting. Held prior to a decision point, a public hearing and associated comment period gathers community comments and positions from all interested parties for the public record and as input into decisions. Public hearings are required by the federal government for many transportation documents. Additional hearings may be held during the transportation planning and project development process at the discretion of the sponsoring organization. Public notices in a general circulation newspaper cite the time, date and place of a hearing. During the public comment period, the agency accepts questions and provides clarification. Subject documents become available to the public when notice of a hearing is given; or, in special circumstances, the notice states when the subject documents will be available. Even in special circumstances every effort will be made to assure all documents are available at least 15 days prior to the hearing.

At a minimum, DRCOG hosts public hearings before the adoption of the Metro Vision Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program and their corresponding conformity statements, and other key planning documents. DRCOG staff prepares summaries of all comments received during the review period and presents them to the DRCOG committees and Board.

All DRCOG-hosted public hearings are wheelchair accessible. DRCOG will accommodate and provide services for persons with other disabilities when provided notice before the hearing. Hearings are held at venues that are centrally located and accessible by good transit service. DRCOG's office, which meets all criteria, is used for most hearings.

Public Interest Forums / Meetings / Workshops

Public forums and meetings disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion, and get feedback from the community. They are often hosted at more than one key point in the

process to develop specific planning documents. They are often tailored to specific issues or community groups and are either informal or formal. Such forums or meetings may include the following:

- Poster sessions;
- Open houses / interactions periods;
- Activities to engage public input;
- Formal presentations;
- Question and answer periods;
- Brainstorming sessions;
- Small break-out groups; and
- Charettes.

DRCOG addresses the Americans with Disabilities Act by ensuring that all DRCOG-hosted public forums and meetings are wheelchair accessible. Also, DRCOG will accommodate and provide services for persons with other disabilities when provided notice before the forum or meeting.

Outside Presentations and Speakers Bureau

DRCOG staff is routinely contacted by local and regional interest groups, professional organizations, and sub-regional governmental and business (e.g. chambers of commerce) groups requesting staff to speak to and listen to their members at meetings. The DRCOG Web site will be updated to further advertise this offer for DRCOG staff to attend interest group meetings, for example in the style as a Speakers Bureau.

DRCOG Board Short Courses

DRCOG staff routinely conducts “short courses” on transportation planning and Metro Vision planning in the Denver region. On a pilot basis these short courses will be opened to the public.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys are useful for gathering public feedback on general or specific topics. A series of questions relating to a particular topic may be administered to a wide array of people in both English and Spanish. Surveys can be administered in person at public meetings and gatherings, through the mail, over the telephone, and/or on the Web.

Other Techniques

DRCOG staff will employ visualization techniques such as maps, pictures, and/or displays to promote improved understanding of existing or proposed transportation plans and programs.

DRCOG has developed an interactive computer tool called MetroQuest that allows policy makers, business leaders and the general public to visualize alternative future scenarios for our region through pictures, maps, and charts. MetroQuest can be presented off-site at public and organizational venues or at events at the DRCOG offices. Interested persons may also use MetroQuest online or view previous presentations on DRCOG's Web site:

(<http://www.drcog.org/index.cfm?page=MetroQuest>).

DRCOG has also supported the efforts of the Transit Alliance's Citizens' Academy. The academy educates citizens and community leaders about the importance of transit services, how to support projects, and how transit projects and services are implemented. More than 200 people have "graduated" from the academy since 2007.

Work Groups

These groups are assigned a specific task, with a time limit for reaching a conclusion or producing a draft document, subject to ratification by official decision-makers. The membership of these groups often includes local people or representatives from interest groups, appointed by elected officials or agency executives. Agency staff people are frequently assigned to provide technical support.

5. Documentation, Distribution and Notification

All documentation pertaining to transportation plans and programs is available for public review and comment. This chapter describes the type of documents available and how they are distributed. It also identifies procedures DRCOG follows to notify the public of the documents, meetings and other information.

Documentation

DRCOG produces policy documents via adopting resolutions, technical reports, white papers, consultant reports and popular reports. These provide written documentation of the policies, plans, programs and planning activities of the transportation planning process.

DRCOG plans, reports, meetings, agendas and meeting summaries are available on the DRCOG Web site at www.drcog.org

Policy documents are prepared first in draft form and then published in final form after adoption by the Board of Directors. DRCOG will make drafts of policy documents available for public comment at least 30 days prior to any public hearing on the subject. Drafts of the Public Involvement Plan will be available at least 45 days prior to a public hearing. Public comments received on the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program will be summarized and included with the policy document along with responses and the disposition of the comments.

DRCOG may publish technical and other reports after acceptance by the Transportation Advisory Committee or other committees, as appropriate. These reports will be available upon their completion. In addition to published reports, DRCOG maintains unpublished technical information in support of its planning efforts.

Summaries are prepared of all meetings of DRCOG committees and the Board. These are available upon request from DRCOG or on the DRCOG Web site. DRCOG prepares written responses to comments made at public hearings one week before Board action. DRCOG will also provide documentation of key decision points in a planning process through the public outreach of that process.

For major updates to the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan, a separate summary document of public involvement activities and input received is produced. It is available to decision-makers and the general public on the DRCOG Web site.

Distribution and Notification

The public may request to own or view all reports developed and compiled by DRCOG. Most publications can be downloaded and printed from the DRCOG Web site. The public may also view unpublished technical information at the DRCOG offices. DRCOG publications not on the Web site may be free of charge or cost a nominal fee.

Draft policy documents are available at DRCOG's office and on the DRCOG Web site. Libraries in the region have access to the DRCOG Web site for viewing or downloading documents.

DRCOG informs the public about the agency's actions or activities through its newsletter, *Regional Report*. This newsletter is mailed to nearly 6,000 individuals and organizations. In addition to the newsletter, DRCOG distributes advanced notices regarding pending policy actions and decisions to regional, community and minority media. Public hearings are advertised in Denver's daily newspaper.

DRCOG will maintain a comprehensive mailing list of elected officials, public officials, special interest groups and others to ensure the wide distribution of documents. This list is used for its bimonthly newsletter and to selectively inform the public of upcoming meetings and other events pertaining to the transportation planning process and products. Various DRCOG email lists will be consolidated and expanded. This provides an additional mechanism to notify the public of timely events and activities.

DRCOG will prepare a weekly listing of public meetings scheduled under its auspices. This listing is posted at the DRCOG offices and on the DRCOG Web site. These meetings are all open to the public. Public comment periods are provided for during meetings of DRCOG committees.

6. Review of Public Participation Process

The public participation efforts of DRCOG are routinely measured and reviewed to evaluate past results and if needed make changes for future efforts.

Review of 2008 and 2009 Activities

- Events
 - Ten Public Hearings (Received testimony from 400+ people/organizations)
 - Three Plan amendment cycles;
 - Joint Interim Conformity Determination;
 - Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) adoption;
 - American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) project proposals;
 - Two RTD FasTracks Annual Reviews;
 - Federal Planning Certification Review; and
 - Pedestrian and Bicycle Element of the 2035 MVRTP amendment.
 - Twenty-five MetroQuest workshops (see previous description). The workshops had over 700 attendees. The following is a list of sample locations where MetroQuest was presented:
 - A business group (Vectra Bank Business for Breakfast)
 - A church group (Littleton United Methodist Church Men's Club)
 - A city council (Lakewood)
 - A community zoning and planning committee (Capitol Hill United Neighborhoods Zoning Committee)
 - A middle school (Pitt-Waller 8th Grade Class)
 - A non-profit business organization (Downtown Denver Partnership)
 - A non-profit public-private partnership (Transportation Solutions Board of Directors)
 - A transportation and development group (Transit Alliance Citizens Academy)
 - Non-profit organizations (City Club of Denver, Jefferson County Sertoma Club, Kiwanis Club of Denver)

- Political organizations (Jefferson County Democrats, League of Women Voters)
 - Public work departments (Arapahoe County and Denver)
 - Colleges (Red Rocks Community College Faculty, Wartburg College “Metropolis” Class)
 - Various DRCOG Events (Metro Vision Short Course, Commissioners Workshop, RideArrangers Breakfast Forum)
 - Other Events (National Community Planning Month in Lakewood, Red Rocks Community College Earth Day Celebration, Denver Green Festival)
- Forums/interest groups/workshops including:
 - Two regional sustainability cafes (70+ attendees per session)
 - Several presentation to business groups (e.g., Globeville/Swansea/Elyria, six regional and sub-regional chambers of commerce)
 - Several presentations to professional organizations (e.g., Women’s Transportation Seminar, Institute of Transportation Engineers)
- Monitoring of public input received on corridor studies (examples)
 - I-25 North EIS
 - I-70 East EIS
 - US-6/Wadsworth EA
 - US-36 Corridor EIS
 - East Corridor Rail EIS
 - Gold Line Rail EIS
 - North Metro Rail EIS
 - I-225 Rail EE
 - Northwest Corridor Rail EE
 - Southeast and Southwest Extension EE’s
- Web page products
 - Enhancements to design/layout, navigation, and accessibility
 - Access to more resources, reports, data, and up-to-date information

- E.g., Regional Sustainability page, Congestion Mitigation Program page, Corridor Data, Maps, and Studies page, and Public Involvement page
- Provided links to Web sites of important local government, partner agencies, and other resources
- Improved methods for public input and feedback
 - Public has provided more than 200 comments via Web site public input pages

Future Measurements and Reviews

Every four years DRCOG's planning process is reviewed and certified by FHWA/ FTA to ensure DRCOG is meeting Federal requirements as an MPO. In addition a self-certification review must be conducted following the adoption of a new Transportation Improvement Program. The public participation processes of DRCOG are an important part of these reviews. As part of the self-certifications, and for its own monitoring purposes, DRCOG will continue to periodically measure and review the public participation process, considering the following items:

- Measurements of the level of activity of and response to specific public involvement strategies. These include:
 - Web site activity – hits, downloads, submission of comments, etc.
 - Emails and phone calls received
 - Number of and attendance at speaking engagements with the public and elected representatives, including noting those specifically with low-income communities, minority communities and groups, organizations of the disabled, and senior groups.
 - Number of and attendance at public hearings and meetings.
 - Amount and timeliness of information materials on the web
 - Validity and accuracy of mail and email lists
- Compilation and acknowledgement of any complaints lodged regarding the public involvement process
- Assessment of the value of the public input to decision-makers
- Assessment of the need for new strategies or adjustments

- Determination if changes or amendments are necessary to the *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document.

The DRCOG public participation process has improved as a result of such past assessment and review efforts. For instance, greater efforts are now made to monitor corridor studies that solicit valuable input from low-income and minority communities. This has resulted in more information being provided to DRCOG decision-makers. Every year, improvements are made to the DRCOG Web site. There is more information provided to the public, and more opportunities to provide input on specific transportation topics.

Appendix A

Federal Regulation on MPO Public Involvement Process

Appendix A

Federal Regulation on MPO Public Involvement Process

23 CFR 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. Electronic Code of Federal Regulations: Page 23 of 46

<http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/textidx?c=ecfr&sid=7f5985b5d2fe301f3fd5a6f537e6b...> 8/25/2009

(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.

Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, was signed by President Clinton on Aug. 11, 2000 and published in the Aug. 16, 2000 Federal Register, Vol. 65, No. 159. Together this law, with Title VI, ensure that programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin.

Goals.

The Federal Government provides and funds an array of services that can be made accessible to otherwise eligible persons who are not proficient in the English language.

- The Federal Government is committed to improving the accessibility of these services to eligible LEP persons, a goal that reinforces its equally important commitment to promoting programs and activities designed to help individuals learn English. To this end, each Federal agency shall examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency.
- Each Federal agency shall also work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance (recipients) provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries. To assist the agencies with this endeavor, the Department of Justice has today issued a general guidance document (LEP Guidance), which sets forth the compliance standards that recipients must follow to ensure that the programs and activities they normally provide in English are accessible to LEP persons and thus do not discriminate on the basis of national origin in violation of title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, and its implementing regulations.
 - As described in the LEP Guidance, recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

Federally Conducted Programs and Activities.

- Each Federal agency shall prepare a plan to improve access to its federally conducted programs and activities by eligible LEP persons. Each plan shall be consistent with the standards set forth in the LEP Guidance, and shall include the steps the agency will take to ensure that eligible LEP persons can meaningfully access the agency's programs and activities.
- Agencies shall develop and begin to implement these plans within 120 days of the date of this order, and shall send copies of their plans to the Department of Justice, which shall serve as the central repository of the agencies' plans.

Federally Assisted Programs and Activities.

- Each agency providing Federal financial assistance shall draft title VI guidance specifically tailored to its recipients that is consistent with the LEP Guidance issued by the Department of Justice. This agency-specific guidance shall detail how the general standards established in the LEP Guidance will be applied to the agency's recipients. The agency-specific guidance shall take into account the types of services provided by the recipients, the individuals served by the recipients, and other factors set out in the LEP Guidance.
- Agencies that already have developed title VI guidance that the Department of Justice determines is consistent with the LEP Guidance shall examine their existing guidance, as well as their programs and activities, to determine if additional guidance is necessary to comply with this order.
- The Department of Justice shall consult with the agencies in creating their guidance and, within 120 days of the date of this order, each agency shall submit its specific guidance to the Department of Justice for review and approval. Following approval by the Department of Justice, each agency shall publish its guidance document in the **Federal Register** for public comment.

Consultations.

- Agencies shall ensure that stakeholders, such as LEP persons and their representative organizations, recipients, and other appropriate individuals or entities, have an adequate opportunity to provide input.
- Agencies will evaluate the particular needs of the LEP persons they and their recipients serve and the burdens of compliance on the agency and its recipients. This input from stakeholders will assist the agencies in developing an approach to ensuring meaningful access by LEP persons that is practical and effective, fiscally responsible, responsive to the particular circumstances of each agency, and can be readily implemented.

Low-Income Communities and Minority Communities

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, was signed by President Clinton on Feb. 11, 1994 and published in the Feb. 16, 1994 Federal Register, Vol. 59, No. 32. Together, this law and Title VI promote non-discrimination in federal programs affecting human health and the environment, and provide minority and low-income communities access to public information and an opportunity to participate in matters relating to transportation and the environment.

The Executive Order is not only oriented toward project level decision-making in engineering and design phases, but also toward long-range and project programming activities. MPO self-certification reviews conducted by the FHWA and FTA in metropolitan areas stress the public participation efforts with potential environmental justice communities.

Through the regional planning process, DRCOG and partner agencies will thoroughly analyze the three fundamental environmental justice principles. The principles are:

- To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, of programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations;
- To ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
- To prevent the denial of, reduction of, or significant delay in the receipt of transportation benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Disabled Populations

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires involving 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
Adopting Resolution

DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

STATE OF COLORADO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION NO. 10, 2010

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING DOCUMENT.

WHEREAS, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization, is responsible for carrying out and maintaining the continuing comprehensive transportation planning process designed to prepare and adopt regional transportation plans and programs; and

WHEREAS, the urban transportation planning process in the Denver region is carried out through cooperative agreement between the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Regional Transportation District, and the Colorado Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that each Metropolitan Planning Organization prepare a document that outlines public involvement policies and efforts; and

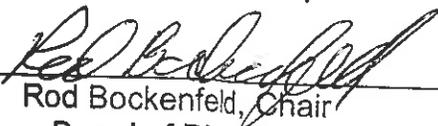
WHEREAS, the document *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* was prepared, which incorporates Board policy, describes methods and procedures, and responds to state and federal regulations pertaining to public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the draft *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document was the subject of an advertised 45-day public comment period and a public hearing on March 17, 2010, and

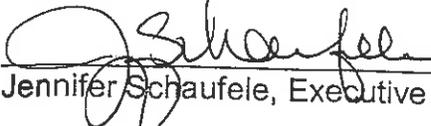
WHEREAS, the Regional Transportation Committee has recommended adoption of the *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Denver Regional Council of Governments hereby approves the *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document dated April 21, 2010 as the policy plan for the conduct of public involvement activities associated with the regional transportation planning process.

RESOLVED, PASSED AND ADOPTED this 21ST day of April, 2010 at Denver, Colorado.


Rod Bockenfeld, Chair
Board of Directors
Denver Regional Council of Governments

ATTEST:


Jennifer Schaufele, Executive Director



DRCOG
DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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