

As adopted by the RTAC on 2/3/06

**Cape Fear Area Rural Planning Organization
Public Participation Plan**

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Cape Fear Area Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) Public Involvement Plan (Plan) is to provide guidance and policy in engaging the public in the transportation planning process. The Plan has the following objectives:

- Create a well-informed public that contributes to transportation decision-making in a meaningful way
- Engage the public early and continuously in the transportation planning process
- Develop a public education program on Cape Fear Area RPO activities
- Assist the Cape Fear Area RPO in developing specific transportation projects that reflect the interest and needs of the region
- Gain the support and trust of the public
- Satisfy the requirements of N.C.G.S. § 136-212 regarding duties of an RPO

The Plan is not intended to preempt any public involvement activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) or any local governments within the Cape Fear Area RPO region.

II. Forms of Public Involvement

A. Public Outreach

Public outreach is the process of informing the public about the transportation planning process, specific transportation projects, and activities of the Cape Fear Area RPO. Typical public outreach strategies include, but will not be limited to, the following:

B. Identification of Stakeholders

A stakeholder is any person or group who is affected by a transportation plan, program, or project. Stakeholders may include:

- . The general public
- . Business/industry organizations
- . Environmental organizations
- . Neighborhood/community organizations
- . Public agencies
- . Civic organizations
- . Transit providers
- . Motor freight carriers
- . Taxicab companies

Stakeholder groups will be identified and will be included on a mailing list for notices of public hearings, workshops, etc.

C. Press Releases

Cape Fear Area RPO will periodically issue press releases detailing significant actions of the RPO. These actions may include:

- . Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- . Adoption of Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- . Selection of officers
- . Adoption of Project Priority List

All public meetings will be announced ten days before the meeting date by one or more of the following means: media release, published advertisements in regional newspapers, flyers to neighborhood association and mailing list participants, and other appropriate notification means. Additional efforts will be made when major plans, projects and/or events are scheduled. In compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act, meetings will be held in wheelchair-accessible meeting rooms at facilities with accessible parking. Assistance will be available to aid the hearing and/or verbally impaired to participate at public meetings. Anyone wishing to attend a public meeting who requires the assistance of a sign language expert is requested to notify the Cape Fear Area RPO seven days before the meeting so arrangements can be made to provide signing services.

Appendix A contains a list of media contacts that will receive press releases.

D. Posting of Draft and Final Planning Documents

Copies of draft and final versions of all planning documents will be made available at the following libraries in the Cape Fear Area:

- Brunswick County Public Library
- Pender County Public Library
- Columbus County Public Library
- New Hanover County Public Library
- Southeastern Community College Library
- Cape Fear Community College (Pender Branch) Library
- Brunswick Community College Library
- University of North Carolina-Wilmington Library

E. Presentation to Civic Organizations

Presentations will be made to interested civic organization on Cape Fear Area RPO activities, the transportation planning process in general, or specific transportation projects. Cape Fear Area RPO staff and/or NCDOT staff will make presentations.

F. Public Input

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- Special efforts will be made to encourage participation by ethnic, minority, low-income groups, disabled and elderly citizens in the transportation planning and decision making process. "To facilitate such involvement, community organizations representing these populations will be requested to give input and guidance into removing barriers to participation. Press releases to media organizations targeting minority and ethnic populations will be utilized to announce public participation opportunities.
- In addition to called public meetings, all Cape Fear Area RTAC and RTCC meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for the public to comment. The Cape Fear Area RTCC meets odd-numbered months on first Wednesday at 10 a.m., The RTAC meets odd numbered months the Friday of the week following the RTCC meeting at 10:30 am. Both committees meet at Brunswick Community College's Leland Training facility at the corner of US 74/76 and Enterprise Dr.

G. Public Comment at RPO Meetings

Cape Fear Area RPO meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for public comment.

H. Public Hearings

Prior to taking formal action on specific planning documents the RTAC will hold public hearings. These actions may include:

- . Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- . Adoption of Comprehensive Transportation Plan
- . Amendment to Long-Range Transportation Plan
- . Adoption of Highway Project Priority List

III. Schedule of Public Involvement

A. Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

- **Planning Documents** - All documents, resolutions, meeting minutes, etc. adopted by the Cape Fear Area RPO are kept at the Cape Fear Area Council of Governments office at 1480 Harbour Drive, Wilmington, NC. These documents will be made available for public review upon request.
- **Meetings** - Regular meetings of the Cape Fear Area RPO's Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) and Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) are open to the public, and will include opportunity for public comment. Notification of the meetings will be sent to news media in the region.
- **Public Hearings** - Notification of all public hearings held by the Cape Fear Area RPO will be sent to news media in the region at least three days before the meeting.

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- **Press Releases** - All press releases issued by Cape Fear Area RPO will be sent to news media in the region.

B. Public Involvement for Specific Activities

Public involvement strategies will vary depending on the particular issue or project for which public comment is desired. Typical actions for specific activities of the RPO may include, but are not limited to:

1. Comprehensive Transportation Plan
2. Workshops
3. Public Hearings
4. Posting of Draft and Final Document
5. Presentations to Civic Organizations
6. Prioritization of Projects for Recommendation to State's TIP
7. Specific Projects/issues
8. Press Releases
9. Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
10. Surveys

IV. Response to Public Input

Public involvement may be documented in a variety of ways. Any public comments received during a meeting of the Cape Fear Area RPO's RTCC or RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Also, any comments received during a public hearing held by the RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Comments received during workshops, open houses, or presentations to civic organizations will be summarized, presented to the RTCC and RTAC, and kept on file. Results of surveys will be compiled, summarized, presented to the RTCC and RTAC, and kept on file. Public comments may be included as appendices in formal documents or plans for which they were made. The RTCC or RTAC will direct RPO staff to respond directly to public comments via letter/email.

V. Appendix A

The following media outlets shall be sent any news releases, notices of public hearings, notices of committee meetings or other information thought to be of value or interest to the public.

Newspapers

State Port-Pilot, Southport
Brunswick Beacon, Shallotte
News-Reporter, Whiteville
Pender Post, Burgaw
Topsail Voice, Topsail Beach
Star-News, Wilmington
The Tribune, Tabor City
Sun-News, Myrtle Beach
Pender Chronicle, Burgaw
Topsail Advertiser, Topsail Beach

Television

WECT-TV, Wilmington
WWAY-TV, Wilmington
WJKA-TV, Wilmington
WILM-TV, Wilmington

Radio

WHQR-FM Wilmington
Sea Comm Media (Wilmington Radio Stations)
Cumulus Broadcasting (Wilmington Radio Stations)
WTXY-AM Whiteville
WWIL AM & FM Wilmington

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