



Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Participation Plan



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Introduction

The Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization (IMPO), designated to receive federal transportation funding from the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration, is required to develop and adopt a public participation process. The actions and processes described in this document apply to projects done by the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Organization in conjunction with the work done by the transportation committees of the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council (IRTC). The standards for this process are to be found in Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450, Section 316.

In general, the federal regulations cited above require a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTPs) and Indianapolis Regional Transportation Improvement Programs (IRTIPs).

Specific requirements include:

- Providing timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
- Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- Providing a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
- Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and IRTIPs, and providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development;
- Making public information available in an electronically accessible format and means (such as the internet);
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes by including written and oral comments received on the draft LRTP or IRTIP as a result of the public involvement process, as an appendix of the LRTP or IRTIP;
- Remaining consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal assistance; and
- Identifying actions necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and Presidential Executive Order 12898, Environmental Justice

To meet these standards, this Public Participation Plan includes the methods for public outreach shown below.

- Include those who are underserved, by means of public forums and surveys;
- Opportunity for public comment at all public meetings;
- Making information available easily to the public;
- Public notification of meetings by public media, direct mail, and electronic mail (as appropriate);

- Appropriately scheduled public meetings;
- Opportunity for public comment on key decisions;
- Timely and forthright response to public comments; and
- Regular review of the public involvement process itself.



The goals of this process are:

1. Involve the public in all phases of the planning process.
2. Obtain understanding of transportation needs, especially of the underserved.
3. Make information available to the public.
4. Provide timely and adequate notice to the public about meetings and plans.

The emphasis of this process is on early involvement of the public in the planning process, in order to obtain input and insight before key decisions are made.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

The effectiveness of any plan depends on its ability to successfully meet the expectations of the public. As such, plans and policies need to be revisited and reviewed periodically to determine if the public's needs are being addressed in an effective and efficient manner. In order to ensure the effectiveness of this plan, the public must be kept informed of activities of the IMPO. The public must be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development and review of public policy through the use of presentations, press releases, mailings, public meetings, and other public outreach activities.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL: The public involvement process for transportation planning shall provide complete information, timely public notice, and full access to key decisions; and shall support early and continuing involvement of the public.

Objective 1-Public Access: The public shall be provided timely notice and appropriate access to information about transportation plans, issues, and processes.

Policy 1.1 All plans and documents shall be made available in an electronic format for the public to review at the IMPO website (www.indympo.org). Copies of the draft LRTP and IRTIP will be available in the IMPO's office and on the IMPO's website. Flyers announcing the 30 day public review and comment period and the availability of the draft LRTP will be posted at Marion County public libraries and selected public libraries and local government offices throughout the Indianapolis MPA.

Policy 1.2 Attempts will be made to employ visualization techniques to describe LRTP and IRTIP. These may include the following formats: project location maps, photographs, narrative project descriptions, charts, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and sketches. Staff will continue to monitor and investigate developing technologies to improve the IMPO's visualization process.

Policy 1.3 Notice and agendas of all IMPO IRTC Committee meetings shall be available to the public on the IMPO website at least three days before they occur with the exception of emergency meetings when less time is allowed under the Open Door Law (Indiana Code 5 -14-1.5).

Policy 1.4 All meetings and workshops of the IMPO will be open to the public except as allowed by the Open Door Law.

Policy 1.5 In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings or individuals with limited English proficiency should contact MPO staff at least three working days prior to the scheduled meeting in order to accommodate their needs.

Objective 2-Public Outreach: Opportunities shall be created for the public to be informed about issues, plans, and projects under consideration by the IMPO, particularly those who may be identified as “traditionally underserved,” and to ensure full and fair participation in the transportation decision making process.

Policy 2.1 Information pertaining to the adoption, or amendment of all IMPO transportation plans shall be available at least seven days prior to the date of the final action with the exception of emergency meetings when less time is allowed.

Policy 2.2 IMPO staff shall inform the public about issues and proposals under their consideration through public meetings, presentations, mailings, press releases, or other techniques during the development of each of the transportation plans, programs, or projects for which the IMPO is responsible.

Policy 2.3 IMPO staff will continue to develop and maintain an Interested Citizens/Agencies list for the purpose of disseminating information about transportation plans, policies, and activities. The Interested Citizens/Agencies list, while comprehensive, will be especially geared to reach those low-income and minority populations that have traditionally been underserved in the transportation planning process.

Policy 2.4 IMPO staff shall review the Public Participation Plan on a biannual basis.

Policy 2.5 IMPO staff shall consult with stakeholders through correspondence that utilizes the continuously updated Interested Citizens/Agencies mailing/email list.

Objective 3-Public Input: The solicitation, compilation, and consideration of public input shall be an integral part of the IMPO decision-making process.

Policy 3.1 MPO staff shall offer opportunities for public comment to the adoption of the transportation plan or program for which it is responsible, including the LRTP, IRTIP, or substantive amendments thereof. Notices of such meetings will be distributed through the Interested Citizens/Agencies email list as well as the area media. Meeting notices will also be posted on the IMPO website, www.indympo.org.

Policy 3.2 Those plans and programs that require extended review periods will allow for written comments to be submitted directly to the IMPO. This includes the LRTP, the IRTIP, the Public Participation Plan, and any other plan with extended review periods. All

comments received as well as a response to each comment will appear as an appendix to the applicable plan or program. IMPO staff will notify the public of extended review periods that are required by state or federal guidelines and will provide specifics regarding how to comment on those plans or programs.

Policy 3.3 Those members of the public wishing to address comments to the Indianapolis Regional Transportation Council Policy Committee or any committee thereof will be given the opportunity to comment at the regular public meetings.

Public Involvement Procedures

Public Participation Plan

The development, adoption, and amendment of IMPO transportation plans and programs shall be subject to the public participation plan. The public participation plan will be monitored and reviewed on a biannual basis to evaluate effectiveness. It is hoped that the directives of this plan will result in well attended public meetings, local news coverage of programs, and more public interest in transportation issues within the region. A public comment period of 45 days shall be provided prior to the adoption or amendment of the public participation plan per federal guidelines.

Outreach

Notices of meetings, descriptions of products, and invitations to public meetings will be routinely sent to the following groups.

- Private providers of transportation services
- Traffic agencies
- Ridesharing agencies
- Parking agencies
- Transportation safety agencies
- Traffic enforcement agencies
- Commuter rail operators
- Airport and port authorities
- Freight companies
- Railroad companies
- Environmental organizations
- Neighborhood associations
- Local Health Departments
- Other City, County, and Municipal departments
- Advocacy Groups
- Interested citizens
- Public Schools
- Private Schools
- Parochial Schools
- Charter Schools
- Organizations representing the interests of:
 - Elderly people
 - Minority populations

- Transportation agency employees
- Users of various modes of transportations
- Persons with disabilities
- Economically disadvantaged persons
- Others underserved by the transportation system

This Interested Citizens/Agencies list will be continually examined for inclusiveness and usefulness. A calendar of the regular meeting times will be sent to the organizations on this list as well as to news and media organizations.

Open Meetings

The meetings listed on the IMPO website are open for the public to attend. In addition, the meetings of the committees (IRTC Policy Committee & Administrative Committee) will provide an opportunity for the public to comment on the items listed in the meeting agenda. The regular meetings of the committees will be posted on the IMPO website and are open to the public. All meeting notifications/cancellations will be posted on the IMPO website and at the IMPO office.

Public Involvement in Planning Projects

As particular planning or programming projects arise, a specific participation process may be developed that is appropriate for the project. Examples of such projects are, the LRTP, substantial amendments to that plan, the IRTIP, and major metropolitan transportation investment studies. The participation processes for planning or programming projects will include the following specific measures as well as other actions.

A formal public meeting or public comment period will be offered at IRTC policy meetings. The public will have an opportunity to comment before the adoption of the LRTP or the IRTIP during which the public may comment verbally at the public meeting or in writing to the IMPO office.

Public Input and Comment on Important Decisions

If the IRTC Technical Committee and/or IRTC Policy Committee is preparing to adopt a major transportation policy or adopt what they consider to be a significant amendment to the LRTP or the IRTIP, then it shall be identified as such and public review and comment will be solicited.

Availability of Information

IMPO staff will make written materials available to the IRTC Committees and to the public upon request. When appropriate, a charge may be levied for copies of publications. The charge will cover the cost of production and, if applicable, the cost of mailing the materials. All such materials are available for viewing at the IMPO office at no cost. LRTPs and IRTIPs are always posted on the IMPO website for public review and comment.

Staff Presentations

Staff will make presentations to requesting organizations about transportation issues and activities where appropriate.

Notifications

All documents seeking public comment will be posted on the public notices page of the MPO website <http://www.indympo.org/news/pages/publicnotices.aspx>

Other methods of notification may also be utilized, including but not limited to:

- Press releases
- Public notices in the newspaper
- Email correspondence to Interested Citizens/Agency List
- Email correspondence to members of the MPOs committees, task forces and workgroups, as appropriate

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The transportation needs and opinions of persons with disabilities shall be included on our transportation planning process. The planning process will be made accessible to such persons as per the regulation provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Public Involvement for New LRTP

The public is given an opportunity to review the new draft LRTP, including the associated Air Quality analysis, during a 30-day comment period. The comment period is announced in the public notice section of the Indianapolis Star and on the IMPO's website.

- Copies of the draft LRTP are made available on the IMPO's website and at libraries throughout the region, as well as at selected local government offices in the Indianapolis Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).
- The IMPO staff accepts public comments in writing, via e-mail, in person or via phone. All significant public comments, or a summary of like comments and responses to all public comments will be included in a summary memorandum provided to and discussed with both the IRTC Technical Committee and Policy Committee prior to approval. All comments received during the designated 30-day comment period pertaining to the draft LRTP, as well as the public comment summary memorandum are included in the Appendix of the final LRTP.

Public Involvement for LRTP Amendments or Updates

The public is given an opportunity to review the annual amendments or updates to the LRTP, including the associated Air Quality analysis, during a 15-day comment period. The comment period is announced in the public notice section of the Indianapolis Star and on the IMPO's website.

Long Range Transportation Plan - IRTC Approval

After the reviewing agencies have approved the LRTP and Air Quality Conformity Analysis, and the public has had time to review and provide comments, and those comments have been included in the final document, the IRTC Technical and Policy committees are asked to approve the document. This approval should happen simultaneously among the MPO governing boards in the non-attainment/maintenance areas. Once the boards have approved the document, it will be submitted to USDOT for formal interagency consultation and issuance of the federal conformity finding. This 30-45 day formal conformity consultation process may be expedited if requested.

Public Involvement for New IRTIP

The public is given an opportunity to review the draft IRTIP, including the associated Air Quality analysis, during a 30-day comment period. The comment period is announced in the public notice section of the Indianapolis Star and on the IMPO's website.

- Copies of the draft IRTIP will be available in the IMPO's office and on the IMPO's website. Flyers announcing the 30 day public review and comment period and the availability of the draft IRTIP will be posted at Marion County public libraries and selected public libraries and local government offices throughout the Indianapolis MPA.
- Public comments. The IMPO staff accepts public comments in writing, via e-mail, in person or via phone. All significant public comments, or a summary of like comments and responses to all public comments will be included in a summary memorandum provided to and discussed with both the IRTC Technical Committee and Policy Committee prior to approval. All comments received during the designated 30-day comment period pertaining to the draft IRTIP, as well as the public comment summary memorandum are included in the Appendix of the final IRTIP. If comments received during the designated comment period affect a significant change to the content of the IRTIP, a second public comment period of 7 days may be held.

Public Involvement for Formal IRTIP Amendment

- A public comment period of at least 7 days will be provided. This public comment period will end prior to the next regularly scheduled IRTC Policy Committee meeting. The public comment period will be advertised in the Indianapolis Star and on the IMPO's website, and draft amendments will be posted on the IMPO's website for review by the public.
- The IMPO staff will provide the IRTC Technical and Policy Committees with a Public Comment Summary memorandum at least one week prior to the date of the Technical and Policy Committee meetings.
- The IRTIP amendment will be approved by the IRTC Policy Committee at its regularly scheduled quarterly meeting. These meetings are open to the public and are posted on the IMPO's website in advance of the meeting.
- The approved amendment will be posted on the IMPO's website within 7 days after approval by the IRTC Policy Committee.

Public Involvement for an Administrative IRTIP Amendment

No public review is required for administrative amendments of the IRTIP. Administrative amendments are approved by the IMPO Executive Director under authority of the IRTC Policy Committee. Administrative amendments are minor in nature; yet still require an amendment as opposed to a modification. Administrative amendments may be approved for exempt projects where public involvement on the overall project has already taken place. An example of this type of amendment includes but is not limited to:

- Construction phase is programmed in current IRTIP and preliminary engineering or right-of-way phases were overlooked and need to be added to the IRTIP.
- Project from a previous IRTIP and needs to be amended into the new version of the IRTIP.
- INDOT preservation projects (AQ exempt) that do not involve ROW acquisition

All administrative amendments will be posted on the MPO's website.

Public Involvement for IRTIP Administrative Modification

No public review is required for administrative modifications of the IRTIP. However, all modifications will be posted on the IMPO's website.

Public review of IRTIP emergency amendment

- A public comment period of at least 7 days will be provided. The public comment period will be advertised in the Indianapolis Star and on the IMPO's website, and draft amendments will be posted on the IMPO's website for review by the public.
- Any public comments received will be provided to the Committee in a summary memorandum prior to their vote.
- Emergency amendments will be provided to members of the Technical and Policy Committees and final action will be taken by the Administrative Committee at their regularly scheduled meeting.

For further information on IRTIP amendments and modifications, please see the Policies and Procedures Manual at http://www.indympo.org/About/Documents/MPO_Policy_and_Procedure_Manual_2010.pdf

Contact

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