



April 30, 2008

To: Citizen Advisory Committee
From: Kathi Wiederhold
Subject: Item 5.b: Public Participation Plan

Action Recommended: Information and discussion; provide feedback to the Citizen Advisory Committee and staff regarding recommendations for public involvement.

The Citizen Advisory Committee has completed its first annual evaluation of the Public Participation Plan, hereafter called the Plan. Overall, the committee is pleased with the Plan and public involvement efforts that have occurred over the past year. While the committee does not recommend any changes to the Plan at this time, it is presenting nine general recommendations for continuing improvements to public involvement, listed in Attachment A. These recommendations came out of a broader discussion on public involvement that arose during the process of conducting the Plan evaluation.

Background

The Citizen Advisory Committee began its evaluation of the Plan at the December 5, 2007, meeting and continued at the January 16, February 20, March 19, and April 16, 2008 meetings. The committee considered a number of pieces of information in conducting the evaluation of the Plan:

- Public involvement for the recent update of the Regional Transportation Plan as a way to examine the usefulness of the Public Participation Plan.
- A summary report on how well the outreach over the initial year met the evaluation measurements, performance objectives, and methods to meet the objectives in the Plan.
- Presentations from and roundtable discussion with local staff from MPO partner jurisdictions regarding public outreach they conduct for local transportation planning activities and programs.

Conclusions

The committee spent considerable time discussing the evaluation of the Plan and struggling with the broader question of how to reach more members of the public about transportation planning. The following points summarize the conclusions reached by the committee during the evaluation:

1. The MPO Public Participation Plan was followed when conducting public outreach for the Regional Transportation Plan.
2. The public is most interested in having meaningful input at a point in the planning process which allows for meaningful changes to be made, for example, to projects on the project list. This opportunity largely occurs during the local planning processes and during the environmental review for a project, not at the MPO Regional Transportation Plan level. The project lists in the Regional Transportation Plan are generated from the local plans, thus projects have already undergone public input during the adoption of the local plans. The public should be given a comprehensive picture that includes all of the agencies involved and that emphasizes the opportunities to get involved early on.
3. The first year of implementing the Plan was a good start towards conducting public outreach for the key MPO products in a way that meets the requirements in the Plan. There is room to improve in the future.
4. The committee reflected that it was clear from the presentations from local MPO partner staff that there were multiple opportunities for public involvement throughout the process for the vast majority of local planning activities and projects.
5. The local process is not doing an adequate job of making it clear to the public what the issues are, how they affect people, and that now is the time to be involved.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendations Regarding Public Involvement