

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

## **1 Need for Public Involvement**

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC), as the agency responsible for transportation activities, makes public participation and communication a priority to ensure transportation improvements in southern Nevada meet the needs of southern Nevadans. The RTC is committed to providing comprehensive information and to eliciting public comment on its plans and programs. This ensures that there is a high level of community understanding.

SAFETEA-LU requires that there be a Citizen Participation Plan “developed in consultation with all interested parties.” SAFETEA-LU defines "Interested Parties" as:

- Citizens
- Affected public agencies
- Representatives of Public Transportation Employees
- Freight Shippers
- Private [including Non-Profit] Providers of Transportation
- Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
- Representatives of Users of Pedestrian Walkways and Bicycle Transportation Facilities
- Representatives of the Disabled
- Providers of Freight Transportation Services
- Other Interested Parties

To accomplish this consultation as well as consultations on the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (RTP/TIP), “interested parties [shall] have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan.” These opportunities include public meetings and must involve “visualization techniques to describe plans.” Plans must also be published electronically on the web.

Many RTC projects require an in depth environmental review under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). These requirements include public involvement. For instance, at the beginning of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, the scope of potential issues surrounding the project must be identified in conjunction with the public. When the purpose and need of the project are drafted, as alternatives are developed and when Draft EIS is prepared, the public is offered other opportunities to review the project. It is RTC policy that public involvement is carried out as required.

The primary citizen participation outreach activities used by the RTC include:

- Public hearings and meetings conducted as required and appropriate,
- Surveys offered on the web and at transportation fairs,
- Project-specific advisory groups,
- Public comment periods, and
- Ongoing activities, such as the RTC website, transportation fairs, participation in the other agency outreach activities, media relations, and special events.

## **2 Public Participation Strategies**

Outreach opportunities during plan development and formal public comment periods can include public meetings, advisory committee reviews, surveys, direct mail pieces and door-to-door canvassing in areas affected by the project, public notices, media briefings and interviews, and timely events such as formal ceremonies and informal information fairs. This variety of approaches ensures that public involvement is continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive.

### **2.1 Board of Commissioners**

As established by state law, the governing body of the RTC is made up of two elected officials each from Clark County and the most populous incorporated jurisdiction in Clark County and one from each of the remaining incorporated jurisdictions. The City of Las Vegas is currently the most populous incorporated jurisdiction. The Director of the Nevada Department of Transportation participates in a non-voting capacity. All meetings of the Board of Commissioners are publicly advertised and open to public participation. While the Board may not take action on any item not on the advertised agenda, the public may raise issues at the end of the meeting during the citizen participation period. Issues raised in this way may be placed on a succeeding agenda.

### **2.2 Advisory Committees**

Federal citizen participation requirements have heightened the need for Advisory Committees. Collectively, the membership includes opportunities for “citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, ... representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled ...” specified in SAFETEA-LU.

Formal public notice is provided for all committee meetings. All meetings are open to the public in accordance with the State of Nevada Open Meeting Law (NRS Chapter 241). Committee agendas and agenda backup materials are available to the public on the RTC web site. Public comment on products of the planning process is accepted in either written or oral format at the RTC and at all committee meetings.

When an item is presented to a Committee, RTC staff make note of any comments or questions from Committee members and the general public. As a formal public hearing, the full meeting is recorded on audio tape from which minutes are written. When questions or comments cannot be answered or addressed immediately, the topic can be placed on the agenda for the next meeting. The Nevada Open Meeting Law does not allow Committees to take action on any item that is not on the agenda.

### 2.2.1 Transportation Access Advisory Committee

The Transportation Access Advisory Committee (TAAC) members are appointed for two years. In addition, at its discretion, the RTC periodically solicits membership applications to fill TAAC vacancies. Each RTC Commissioner is entitled to appoint one member. All other members are appointed in an at-large capacity by the Commissioners at a public meeting. Initially thought of as addressing issues related to paratransit and access to transit by the elderly and disabled, the TAAC has developed into a group that advises on the RTP and TIP as it is developed and adopted. Members represent not only the elderly, disabled, transit and paratransit users; but minorities, low-income, users of walkways, and representatives of social service agencies. Thus the TAAC alone fills the role that the Citizens Advisory Committee and the TAAC formerly filled together.

When new members are appointed, each is offered an opportunity to attend one of two training sessions designed to provide new and existing members with background information on the purpose and functioning of the TAAC. Members are provided with background materials including information about the RTC, TAAC policies and procedures, an explanation of the Nevada Open Meeting Law, an RTC staff directory, meeting schedule, acronyms and abbreviations used in the Committees' work, an annual report, and a current bus schedule.

As part of the regular work of Transportation Access Advisory Committee (TAAC), it receives reports on projects underway at the RTC. The TAAC participated in development of the Goals, Objectives, Policies and Measures of Effectiveness that guide the RTC. Typically, the RTP topics are heard two at a time and members' comment are elicited. During the public comment period, the RTP is presented as a whole for their review and comment prior to adoption.

RTC recognizes the contributions of its TAAC members. Members have special badges that they wear to the meetings. Members completing their terms are given certificates of appreciation whether or not they are leaving the TAAC. The TAAC may choose to celebrate in other ways as long as these events are included in regular public meeting notifications, so that the requirements of the Nevada Open Meeting Law may be met.

### 2.2.2 Agency and Stakeholder Committees and Subcommittees

A description of the Executive Advisory Committee, its Subcommittees and their memberships are displayed in Table 1 with other regularly scheduled and publicly noticed committees. All members may designate another individual in their place.

**Table 1: EAC, Its Subcommittees, and Other Stakeholder Committees**

<b>Name – Responsibilities</b>	<b>Membership</b>
Finance Committee – Agency budgetary and financial issues	Three RTC Commissioners

Name – Responsibilities	Membership
Executive Advisory Committee – Formulating recommendations to the Commission on all non-personnel matters including administration, planning, and technical issues; transit, street and highway funding; operational matters and other items as requested by the Commission.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTC member entity Public Works directors,</li> <li>• The land use planning agency director of each RTC member entity, and</li> <li>• Director of the Nevada Department of Transportation (NDOT) or designee</li> </ul>
Operations Subcommittee – Traffic management and roadway operations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTC member entity Traffic Engineers.</li> <li>• The NDOT District Traffic Engineer</li> <li>• Each law enforcement agency in Clark County</li> <li>• Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation (FAST) (ex officio)</li> </ul>
Specifications Subcommittee – Uniform Standards Specifications for Public Works Construction Offsite Improvements and the Uniform Standard Drawings	RTC Member entity Public Works Directors
Metropolitan Planning Subcommittee - Transportation planning and programming issues that require more investigation and analysis before they are submitted to the EAC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RTC Member entity land use planning directors.</li> <li>• NDOT Chief of Program Development Office</li> <li>• Clark County Department of Air Quality and Environmental Management</li> <li>• Clark County Department of Aviation</li> <li>• Each firm operating public mass transit services in the Las Vegas metropolitan planning area under contractual arrangements with the RTC</li> <li>• Urban goods/freight transportation industry</li> <li>• Taxicab or private motor carrier industry</li> <li>• Clark County School District</li> <li>• Bureau of Land Management in Nevada</li> </ul>
Operations Management Committee (FAST) – Recommends policy, establishes operational procedures and principles, and monitors the day-to-day operations of the Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation (FAST).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Traffic Engineer from each RTC member entity.</li> <li>• The NDOT District Traffic Engineer</li> <li>• Each law enforcement agency in Clark County</li> <li>• Freeway and Arterial System of Transportation (FAST) (ex officio)</li> </ul>
Utility Coordination Committee – Infrastructure improvements construction coordination to reduce inconvenience and delays to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Representative of each of RTC member entity</li> <li>• Valley utilities</li> <li>• RTC staff</li> </ul>

Name – Responsibilities	Membership
Bus Shelter/Bench Advisory Committee – Bus stop facility improvements and maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Appointee from each RTC member entity served by RTC transit</li> <li>• Nellis AFB</li> <li>• Office of the State Attorney General</li> <li>• Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department</li> <li>• Transportation Research Center, UNLV</li> </ul>
Transportation Advisory Board – Economic stakeholders provide their perspective on transportation issues and projects	Representatives from the gaming industry, labor, real estate development, community advocacy, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce, and the Las Vegas Convention and Visitors Authority

### 2.2.3 Ad Hoc and Topical Committees

Topical work groups and ad hoc Committees are established to assist on specific planning tasks and functions. Such groups meet for a limited period to address a particular project or plan, or over the long term to address particular on-going transportation issues. While RTC forms and manages most of these committees, others are on-going efforts of other agencies or non-profit organizations. Examples of work groups and ad hoc committees include the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Services Plan steering committee, the Alternate Mode Working Group, the I-15 Coordination group, the monthly RTC/NDOT Liaison meetings, and corridor study technical working groups. The number of meetings, group make up, and extent of involvement depends entirely on the magnitude and nature of the on-going activity, project, plan or study. The membership of these committees includes experts on the relevant committee topic and/or representatives of affected groups.

## 2.3 Public Comment Opportunities

### 2.3.1 Hearings/Meetings

The RTC plans and conducts public meetings and hearings to provide citizens with the opportunity to give input and receive information on transportation projects and policy changes. These hearings are usually held during a public comment period and are advertised in a variety of local print publications. Outreach to minority publications is an element of the public advertisement procedure. Outreach to Native American groups is an ongoing element of public involvement activities that is conducted in cooperation with NDOT.

Several formal public hearings are conducted prior to RTC approval/adoption of transportation plans, plan revisions, the TIP, substantive TIP amendments and accompanying air quality conformity determinations, the Public Participation Plan, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance documents, and recommendations for transit fare and/or service changes. These hearings are held as part of the agenda for the RTC and advisory groups as appropriate. Notices of the public hearings are posted in accordance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

At least one informal public meeting is held for the RTP/TIP and Public Participation Plan update and, as appropriate, for other plan revisions. The only topic of these public hearings is the subject plan or plan revision compliance document. Notices of these public meetings are published in local newspapers of general circulation including those directed at minority communities. Special exhibits are prepared to convey various aspects of the subject of the meeting. Staff members are available to answer questions. Citizens may comment during the public meeting either in writing or verbally for recording. A court reporter is normally present to take oral comments. Comments are compiled into the meeting minutes. As appropriate, other public meetings are held at various convenient locations throughout the Valley to encourage participation.

The final public hearing for document adoption is held at or prior to a regular RTC meeting following the close of the public comment period. Notice of the public hearing is published in local newspapers of general circulation and posted in accordance with the Nevada Open Meeting Law.

### **2.3.2 Web Site**

The RTC web site, [www.rtcnv.com](http://www.rtcnv.com), is another outlet for citizens to receive information on the RTP/TIP and make comment. Documents are posted on the web site during the public comment period and can be downloaded for review. Comments can be provided directly on the website's plan comment page. Visitors can also ask to be contacted on specific issues as change occurs.

### **2.3.3 Public Comment**

Prior to development of the Public Participation Plan and the RTP, public comment must be solicited concerning important elements of these plans. In particular, initial development of the Public Participation Plan included eliciting opinions on optimal communications strategies. A business reply postcard was sent to interested parties and distributed throughout the community with particular emphasis on places serving minorities, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities. It was also distributed at all events supported by the RTC. This same card included a short list of transportation issues with a request to identify the most important from among them or by providing an "other" on the space provided. The card was available in English and Spanish.

At the time of publication of the Draft Public Participation Plan, 72 comment cards had been received. The cards offered "Newspapers", "E-mail", "Letters to your home", "Radio", "RTC Website", and "TV" as answers to "How would you like us to communicate with you about transportation and transit?" There was no "Other" response offered. Of those responding, television ads, mail, and e-mail ranked about equally as means of contact preferred by respondents. No comments were received during the public comment period.

Members of the public were also queried about "What transportation issues are most important to you?" The response list was "Traffic congestion," "New roads," "Too many roads in the same area under construction at the same time," "Traffic signs, cones and

barrels up but no work being done,” “traffic signal coordination,” and “Other.” Results from this effort and the ongoing outreach will provide priorities to the RTP.

Since March, 2006, NDOT has offered a survey through its website. Included on the survey is the zip code of the respondent, so RTC could extract the 166 Clark County respondents. To increase the response rate, RTC notified residents who asked to be kept informed of RTP and TIP activities that the survey was available. Of most relevance to the RTP and TIP were questions related to key transportation issues and proposed solutions. Not surprisingly, almost three quarters of respondents believe that there is not sufficient capacity on local roadways. Asked for solutions, about 30 percent viewed additional roadways as being an answer to congestions while more than 40 percent mentioned better transit and about 20 percent mentioned bicycles and/or intelligent transportation systems. More than half ride a bicycle to work or for recreation. Clearly, the general public is looking to more than lane miles to address congestion and, given that two-thirds of respondents are willing to change their driving habits to reduce the number and length of their trips, it is likely that many are willing to try another mode.

An additional source of information was provided by an on-board transit survey. While the data from these almost 7,000 surveys continues to be mined for information, it is clear that low income riders and those who say they are minorities are no less satisfied with their transit service than others. Almost half of riders would prefer more frequent service. Bringing transit and riders closer to one another is also important as the vast majority of riders walk or bike only two blocks or less to access the bus.

A minimum 45-day comment period is provided prior to RTC approval/adoption of RTPs, their revisions, TIPs, substantive TIP amendments, and Public Participation Plans. The Public Participation Plan is included in the RTP and must be adopted prior to advertisement of the RTP for public comment. A minimum 30-day public comment period is provided prior to RTC approval/adoption of other substantive products of the planning process, including major investment analyses, corridor studies, transit fare or service changes, short range transit plans, bike/pedestrian plans and conformity determinations.

TIP amendments are subject to the public comment and hearing process even when they meet the following criteria and are, therefore, considered non-substantive actions:

- Defined by the U.S. EPA as exempt from regional mobile source air quality pollutant emissions analysis;
- Are shown to have no impact on the fiscal reasonableness of the TIP; and
- Are shown not to cause a delay in the implementation of any travel demand management measures.

The public comment period begins on the date that the document is available for public distribution. Notice of the opening of the public comment period and the availability of the document(s) for review is published in local newspapers of general circulation. These newspapers include those serving minority communities. Notices will also be e-

mailed and mailed to persons requesting notification by these means. Instructions for acquiring the document and making comments are provided in the notices. Each document is also available on the agency website. A comment form is provided as part of the website. The staff responsible for the document receives the comments and is required to respond to each and every comment whether or not changes to the document are made.

If the final document differs significantly from the one which 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, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised document is made available. In these instances, the comment process is identical to that of the original comment period. This process differs from the Environmental Impact Statement process in that this second comment period occurs only in the event of significant changes to the document.

### **2.3.4 Comment Summary**

The RTC prepares a written summary and report on the disposition of any and all comments received during the public comment period and at the public hearings. The report on public comments is included in the final document and is also made available separately upon request.

### **2.3.5 Non-substantive Actions**

A non-substantive action is a minor revision to an RTP that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. This type of revision does not require public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

TIP amendments are subject to the public comment and hearing process even when they meet the following criteria and are, therefore, considered non-substantive actions:

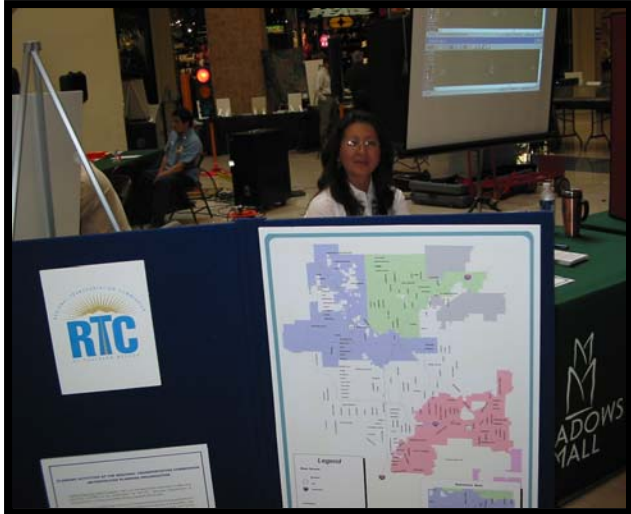
- Defined by the U.S. EPA as exempt from regional mobile source air quality pollutant emissions analysis;
- Are shown to have no impact on the fiscal reasonableness of the TIP; and
- Are shown not to cause a delay in the implementation of any travel demand management measures.

### **2.3.6 Process Review**

The RTC periodically reviews its public involvement process to assure its effectiveness in providing full and open access to all parties. These procedures are also reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration to assure the process meets federal requirements.

### 3 Ongoing Public Information Activities

As part of its normal public outreach activities, the RTC has developed a full range of public information activities designed to involve Clark County residents in transportation planning. Such activities are also directed at encouraging use of public transportation, involvement in car and van pools, and travel by alternate modes. They also provide additional outlets for plan information and solicitation of public comment.



#### 3.1 Transportation Fairs

Held on weekends at area malls, RTC Transportation Fairs are designed to provide information about Las Vegas Valley transportation projects that are either in progress or planned for the near future. More importantly, these events provide an opportunity for community members to express concerns to and receive answers from RTC and member entity staff.

This unique and proactive participation effort takes the transportation message literally to the streets, covering diverse geographic areas and capturing all income levels. The fairs are advertised, publicly posted and offer both Spanish and sign language interpretation when requested. It is estimated that, depending on foot traffic and other events, up to 2,000 people may visit a Transportation Fair.

#### 3.2 Neighborhood Planning Meetings

RTC Staff plan and coordinate various neighborhood planning meetings, each with a specific topic of discussion. These are in addition to the public meetings held as part of Committee and Regional Transportation Commission meetings. The open forum, informal meetings are typically held in the late afternoon at public venues such as community centers and libraries. Each is advertised and publicly posted. Comments are accepted in writing or verbally as recorded on tape. Comments may also be offered after the meeting by e-mail or regular mail.

Neighborhood meetings are also held in conjunction with specific projects and studies even when they are not required. In this instance, a meeting or series of meetings is held in the subject area. These meetings are advertised and posted as for a meeting held at the RTC building. In addition, people living near the proposed project are sent invitations describing the topic and the place, time and date of the meeting. If the meeting is held as part of an Environmental Impact Statement process, all requirements for timing and notification of the National Environmental Policy Act are met.

### **3.3 Joint Meetings with Other Regional Entities**

RTC staff often sets up public outreach displays and materials at public meetings sponsored by NDOT or other local government entities. As local government entities update their plans or hold public meetings concerning particular projects, RTC may be invited to provide staff and materials that may be of interest to attendees. These activities have been successful in meshing land use and transportation issues at a neighborhood level by providing information and a forum for community members to voice concerns, opinions and suggestions. They provide a wider audience for RTC plans and programs than might otherwise be attracted.

### **3.4 “On the Move” Television Show**

The RTC created the “On the Move” television show to keep citizens up to date on transportation issues in the Las Vegas Valley. Produced monthly, this award-winning show is re-broadcast numerous times on Clark County Channel 4, City of Las Vegas Channel 2, Boulder City Community Channels 4 and 27 and Laughlin Channel 20. Schedules may be found on the RTC website.

### **3.5 Web Site**

The RTC web site, [www.rtcsonthernnevada.com](http://www.rtcsonthernnevada.com), is another outlet for citizens to receive information. This site is constantly being updated. Those who visit the site have the opportunity to purchase bus passes online, join Club Ride Commuter Services, and download planning documents and youth education materials.

### **3.6 Media Relations**

Members of the media are critical to getting messages and information to the public. Relationships and coordination with media representatives throughout the stages of a project or campaign helps to ensure that project and plan information is received by citizens. The RTC maintains ongoing communication with the media through various means, including media advisories, press releases, reporter and editorial briefings and informal communication.

### **3.7 Special Events**

The RTC participates in various events within the community to increase public awareness and involvement in transportation and air quality issues. These events include Bike-to-Work activities, Try Transit Week and Club Ride activities.

## **4 Plan Outcome**

The outcome of the strategies and activities provided for in this Public Participation Plan is intended to improve the RTP, TIP, and all other plans, programs and projects contemplated by the RTC. The communication afforded by an open planning process encourages more reasonable and achievable plans, programs and projects, allows better prioritization strategies and increases public awareness of agency activities.