

# **KOKOMO/HOWARD COUNTY GOVERNMENTAL COORDINATING COUNCIL (KHCGCC)**

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN & PROCEDURES**

### **PURPOSE**

This policy establishes a process for obtaining input from and providing information to the public concerning agency programs, projects, and program funding in order to ensure the public is informed and has the opportunity to provide the KHCGCC (hereafter referred to as “the Council”) with input so plans can reflect the public’s desires. The MPO will maintain a Participation Plan that is adopted by the Policy Committee or Board. The plan will include coordination with the INDOT participation process. This process is followed during the development of the Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. The KHCGCC TIP participation process will serve to meet the City of Kokomo’s public participation requirements. The Council will review and update this plan every three years. Various federal and state laws and regulations require that an agency, such as the Council, conduct public participation programs to ensure that the public is involved and that community concerns are addressed. For example, planning of mass transit capital projects, development of short range service policies and plans, and fare policy and structure changes to public transportation require public participation. The Indiana Department of Transportation and the Indiana Department of Environmental Management and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) also have public information components that require an agency such as the Council to conduct public participation programs to ensure that the public is involved and that community concerns are addressed. A significant component of the Council’s mission is a strong commitment to public participation and involvement to include all residents and stakeholders in the regional planning process.

*The Council shall engage in a public collaborative planning process; recommendations from that process shall be made available and considered for integration into the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). A procedure to carry out this process including a method of addressing and responding to recommendations from the public shall be adopted.*

### *Social Equity and Environmental Justice*

Ensuring the meaningful involvement of low income, minority, disabled, senior, and other traditionally underrepresented communities is a key component of the Council’s public participation activities. The Council is consistent with federal and state environmental justice regulations and guidance. The Council conducts outreach consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (nondiscrimination) and reflects the principles of social equity and environmental justice. Social equity means ensuring that all communities are treated fairly and are given equal opportunity to participate in the planning and decision-making process, with an emphasis on

ensuring that traditionally disadvantaged groups are included. Environmental justice means ensuring that plans, policies, and actions do not disproportionately affect low income and minority communities.

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGY**

The MPO makes every effort to involve individuals or groups who might be interested in its work, particularly the disabled, transportation workers, businesses that provide transportation, people who walk, run or bike for recreation or transportation, businesses, labor organizations, homeowners, senior citizens, military personnel, environmentalists, students and educators, as well as people dependent on or underserved by transit in the planning process.

The MPO also consults with state, local, planned growth, economic development and environmental protection agencies. Airport operations, freight movements, recipients of human service transportation funding, governmental agencies, federal land management agencies, and non-profit organizations that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) to provide non-emergency transportation services round out the list of groups the MPO consults.

The Kokomo Howard County MPO has adopted the following objectives to ensure it has a proactive and meaningful public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continued public involvement in developing regional transportation plans and programs. These objectives are:

- dissemination of information to educate the public and promote understanding of the region's potential needs
- expansion of constituency by increasing public and private sector and intergovernmental communications, and by reaching out to people who are traditionally underserved in the region
- ample opportunity for participation in the decision-making process for regional plans and programs.

### **A. Overall Public Participation Process – *The following are the Council's general policies for public participation for major planning initiatives.***

1. The Council's Public Participation/Involvement Program is designed to inform and involve the region's residents in the decision-making process on issues involving transportation.
2. The Public Participation/Involvement Program seeks to involve all citizens, including, but not limited to: low income households, Hispanic, African American, Asian, Native American, senior, and other communities, persons with disabilities, as well as community and civic organizations, public agencies, business groups and associations, environmental organizations, and other stakeholders. As part of this process the Council will request comments from these stakeholders through mailings and/or a Citizens Advisory Committee on certain projects or studies.
3. The Council's policy committee meetings provide the public forum and decision point for significant regional issues. The Council's Committee Members usually hold one policy committee meeting monthly: a Policy Committee Meeting the first Thursday, following the first Wednesday, of even months of the calendar year. Meetings are held in the Mayor of Kokomo's conference room. During these meetings, Policy Committee Members adopt plans, allocate transportation funds, review transit plans, note transit fare changes, and

establish policies and develop programs that are used by local governments as well as other public and private organizations.

4. The Council's Public Participation/Involvement Program shall comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Public meetings will be held in buildings, rooms, or locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities; additional special accommodations for attendees at public meetings can be made if requested prior to meeting date.
5. The Council's Public Participation/Involvement Program is carried out as an integrated work element of the agency's Statement of Work and Budget. Included are part of other programming, development, and implementation processes such as the Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan, the Regional Comprehensive Plan, Regional Short-Range Transit Plan, TIP, Environmental Impact Reports, transit capital project development, project construction, transit service or fare changes, corridor studies, and other projects.
6. The Council shall proactively seek and promote public participation in the Council's workshops and public hearings, as well as participation and attendance at committees, working groups, and task forces. The Council shall follow local, state, and federal guidelines for posting public meeting and hearing notices unless otherwise stated in this policy. Depending upon the specific project, the Council shall endeavor to hold meetings at times that can attract as many participants as possible, including evenings and weekends and at locations in communities throughout the region. The Council shall endeavor to hold these meetings in locations that are accessible by public transit whenever possible.
7. The Council shall inform the public in a timely manner about regional issues, actions, and pending decisions through a number of efforts. As needed or required, the Council shall post public notices in the area's largest newspaper of general circulation for publication of legal notices. Other publication and distribution efforts can include mail distribution to residents, agencies, and city/county governments, the Council Web site, and e-mail lists. As needed, the Council also shall distribute press releases and media alerts to local and regional area print and broadcast media.
8. The Council, or the appropriate governing body, shall provide 15 calendar days public notice for public hearings on major planning studies, the Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan, the TIP, the Regional Comprehensive Plan, Regional Short Range Transit Plan, Environmental Impact Reports, transit capital project development, transit fare changes, corridor studies, and other projects.
9. The Council shall use its Web site to provide the public with useful and timely information including meeting schedules. Plans and environmental documents; reports and other publications; demographic profiles and certain data downloads; and interactive mapping applications may be added as needed.
10. The Council conducts periodic public opinion surveys as part of the outreach and citizen participation component of Council's work program. These surveys shall be designed to include the region's residents in the regional planning process and to keep Council officials aware of issues that are of concern to the people who live here.
11. The Council will endeavor to respond to general comments received by phone, fax, letter, or e-mail within 10 business days of receipt. Comments shall be routed to the Council staff person who is responsible for that issue. Comments may be responded to in writing (e-mail or letter) or may be resolved with the initial phone call. Some comments may need to be resolved by another agency or jurisdiction at which time the stakeholder or citizen is referred to the appropriate entity. When a comment is submitted as part of a

public review process (e.g., a plan or environmental report) the comment and response will be logged into a database. Comments, concerns, and responses received as part of a public review process shall be included in the final plan or report.

12. The Council will ensure the proposed Program of Projects (POP) provides for coordination of Section 5307 public transportation projects with transportation projects assisted with other federal sources. Proposed POP will be in consultation with interested parties, including transportation providers. Public notices will provide sufficient detail, and in such a manner, as to afford affected citizens, private transportation providers, and local elected officials reasonable and adequate opportunity to examine the proposed program and to submit comments on it and on the performance of the grantee. The public notice will be published in the general circulation newspaper in the service area of the grantee and will indicate where citizens can examine the proposed program and budget in detail and submit comments on the proposed program and the performance of the grantee.

The KHCGCC will consider comment and views received, including those of private transportation providers, in preparing the final POP.

The final POP will be available to the public. If the proposed POP is not amended, a statement that the proposed program will be the final program will be included in the final document.

**B. Development Planning – *Planning, environmental, preliminary engineering activities on major capital projects.***

1. Council shall follow current federal and state regulations regarding public involvement processes and procedures. Council shall develop public involvement programs tailored to meet specific project needs which address the unique challenges presented by each project. Programs shall be developed using the joint Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration (FHWA/FTA) guidelines titled “Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making.”
2. The public involvement program shall set objectives, identify people to be reached, develop public involvement strategy, and define specific outreach techniques.
3. The public involvement program shall be developed so that critical community concerns and technical issues are identified in the study. The issues need to address the engineering, environmental, economic, and financial analyses that respond effectively to community needs and preferences and satisfy local, state, and federal environmental clearance requirements.
4. To facilitate community participation, lists of individuals, agencies, and organizations shall be developed for distribution of agency materials. These lists will include persons who have indicated an interest in transportation planning projects during previous public information efforts and/or focused on the specific project. Project information would be distributed to the persons on this list in conjunction with public meetings and workshops, to solicit comments and recommendations.
5. Environmental documents shall be prepared in accordance with requirements of

the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), as appropriate, and in coordination and consultation with various federal, state, and local agencies, and with elected officials, community leaders, organizations, and other individuals from the neighborhoods and communities potentially affected by the proposed action. Coordination and public involvement shall be achieved through a variety of means, such as formal public hearings and meetings, circulation of draft documents, mailings, focus group meetings, workshops, and individual/group contacts.

6. Formal scoping meetings, public hearings, and/or other meetings during the comment period and environmental document certification shall be held in accordance with the requisite environmental document. As required, meetings shall be announced in local publications and on KHCGCC's Web site. Persons and organizations on the project mailing list also will be notified. Council shall *endeavor* to hold public meetings in locations accessible by public transit.
7. Council shall require those responsible for projects to prepare and distribute appropriate notices and communications to comply with NEPA requirements.
8. A public information program shall be developed to inform the community of factors related to the project. The information program may include briefings for the media, informational meetings, presentations to include community and professional associations and educational institutions, business groups and associations, environmental organizations, and other public forums.
9. A project working group may be organized to review and comment on the project to build understanding and identify support for feasible alternatives. This group may consist of various elected officials/staff, community and neighborhood organizations, business organizations, property owners, and other stakeholders and interested parties. This group would be formed to provide comment and guidance regarding technical issues, review study alternatives and evaluation results, and provide community input regarding the alternatives. This iterative process would allow for identified issues and concerns to receive follow-up responses. Meeting summaries of project working group activities shall be produced. Meeting notices, agendas, and/or other information shall be posted to KHCGCC's Web site.
10. Other public input opportunities include Council Policy and Technical Advisory Committee meetings and meetings of the Citizen Advisory or Steering Committees for specific projects. Other opportunities for public participation are at working group meetings, general public meetings, and presentations to planning and community groups.

**C. Design and Construction – *Design and construction of capital projects.***

1. For all federally funded capital improvement projects with significant community impacts, Council shall provide, or require to be provided, opportunities for members of the public to provide input and express concerns. The Council will inform the public of progress, as well as safety and community impacts in the event of construction.
2. Council shall, or require to be provided, public meetings at key stages of project development and implementation in the area(s) being impacted. The location of the meetings shall depend upon the geographic location of the project. Meetings

concerning all other projects shall be held in a location easily accessible to the public. Council shall *endeavor* to hold off-site public meetings at locations accessible by public transit.

3. Council shall solicit input from the representatives of interest groups of the local population, such as community groups, planning groups, business groups and associations, business improvement districts, environmental organizations, neighborhood associations, and senior and disabled riders. These stakeholders will be consulted during the design and construction of capital projects.
4. Council shall work to advise the public regarding actual and perceived disruption during construction of capital projects by distributing informational, educational, and public information materials, and by using other traditional community notification tools.
5. Council shall endeavor to meet citizen concerns as they arise and attempt to resolve those concerns.
6. For all projects requiring environmental review under NEPA, such as major capital improvement projects, Council shall provide, or require to be provided, opportunities for members of the public to provide input and comply with all related legal requirements.
  - 6.1 Council shall solicit input from the representatives of interest groups of the local population, such as community groups, planning groups, business groups and associations, and neighborhood associations.
  - 6.2 Council shall incorporate public input into project planning and development where practical and feasible.
  - 6.3 Council shall hold, or require to be held, a public hearing to seek public comment whenever required under NEPA.
    - 6.3.1 Published notifications for such hearings shall be published in the area's largest paper of general circulation for publication of legal notices. Notices also may be published in regional or community newspapers to reach the affected area.
    - 6.3.2 Any item subject to a public hearing will be listed and described in a published agenda, which shall be posted at least 72 hours in advance of the meeting and on KHCGCC's Web site.
    - 6.3.3 Public hearings shall be conducted by COUNCIL, or a designated third party, at the published date, time, and place. The public hearing will allow for interested parties to be heard. The COUNCIL also will consider any written comments that were forwarded to its Committees or COUNCIL prior to the hearing.

#### **D. Transit Fare, Service and Route Changes**

1. Transit Service Planning & Service and Fare Setting policies are handled by the appropriate governing bodies for said services as noted below. This section of the policy is designed to inform and involve public transit riders, stakeholders, and the general public about proposed changes in transit service.

- Fare Changes of any amount will be approved by the Board of Public Works.
- Major Service reductions are defined as any reduction in service miles or hours exceeding twenty-five (25%) percent of the total service miles or hours provided.
- Major Route Modifications are defined as any fixed-route transit service change that exceeds twenty-five (25%) of the round-trip mileage of a route.

All Service and Route related modifications that fall under the twenty-five (25%) threshold are considered routine and minor, and are not subject to these procedures. Public information and involvement programs for service changes would also fall under adopted ordinances by the City of Kokomo.

- 1.1. A public hearing will be held by Council or the responsible service provider, for transit service, route or fare changes. The public hearings will be held in a convenient and easily accessible location, or in the general geographic area of the affected public at a special meeting to be advertised at least 15 calendar days prior to said meeting or hearing. Notice will also be required of any formal action taken by the governing bodies of the transit services noted above. Public meetings shall be held at a time and location that is accessible by users of public transit.
- 1.2. Public notices will be posted on all affected public transit vehicles within the affected area at least 15 calendar days prior to the public hearing and will include a description of the proposed service, route or fare change, the date, time, intent and location of the public hearing, and the deadline for written, e-mail and phone comments from the public. The notices will be posted to the KHCGCC's Web site.
- 1.3. Print notice of public hearings will be provided at least 15 calendar days prior to the public hearing meeting date in the area's largest newspaper of general circulation or in the affected area(s) if needed, including appropriate minority and community publications. The public hearing notice will include a description of proposed service, route or fare changes, the date, time, intent, and location of the public hearing, and the deadline for written, e-mail, and phone comments from the public.
- 1.4. A Council or governing body report (as appropriate) will be completed and available for public review at least 72 hours prior to the public hearing and posted to the KHCGCC Web site.
2. After a service, route or fare change is approved by the appropriate governing bodies:
  - 2.1. The public will be notified via news release(s)
  - 2.2. Public notices will be posted on all affected transit vehicles at least 15 calendar days prior to changes going into effect and posted to the Council Web site.
3. Council shall follow federal Title VI and environmental justice requirements when implementing transit service or fare changes.
  - 3.1. Residential, employment, and transportation patterns of low-income and minority populations shall be identified so that their needs can be identified and addressed, and the benefits and burdens of transportation investments can be fairly distributed. Council shall endeavor to involve the affected communities in evaluating the benefits and burdens of

transportation investments.

- 3.2. Council shall evaluate and - where necessary - improve the public involvement processes to eliminate participation barriers and engage minority and low-income populations in transportation decision making.

**E. Interagency Consultation**

1. Council shall coordinate with statewide public participation processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.
2. Council shall participate in consultation meetings with all required federal and state planning partners, such as environmental partners, other affected MPOs (if needed) and appropriate or needed local partners for MTP and TIP development or amendments.
3. Council engages in “consultation” with federal, state, regional planning organizations (MPOs), and appropriate or needed local partners prior to making decisions, taking actions, or implementing programs that may impact their communities.
  - 3.1. “Consultation” is the active, affirmative process of: (1) identifying and seeking input from appropriate planning bodies, community groups, and individuals; and (2) considering their interests as a necessary and integral part of the decision-making process.

Adopted this 31<sup>st</sup> day of July, 2017

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Presiding Chairman, KHCGCC Policy Board

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Attest: Policy Board Member