Chapter II
Public Involvement

Public involvement is solicited and strongly encouraged in the coordinated metropolitan transportation planning process. Increasing communication among citizens, elected officials, and staff permits stakeholders to work together to achieve desired goals and objectives. The public involvement process emphasizes the importance of involvement from all levels of government to individual citizens. When the public is involved, the direction and content of the planning efforts are more likely to address the wide range of issues that impact decision makers. Involving the public during the planning phase of any project should reduce the time and cost of project implementation.

The North Central Texas Council of Governments (NCTCOG) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) hold public meetings as part of their public involvement process. Public input opportunities are held during development and update of the Transportation Improvement Program/Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (TIP/STIP) along with individual project implementation, which ensures compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process. The TxDOT public involvement process also ties into a statewide process overseen by the Texas Transportation Commission. Assurance of adequate local input is required prior to final approval by the Commission.

In February 2015, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC) adopted a revised NCTCOG Transportation Public Participation Plan. The Public Participation Plan is consistent with provisions in the Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). These procedures require that a public meeting on the draft TIP be conducted at least 30 days prior to RTC approval, which includes a 30-day written comment period. Additional components of the Public Involvement Process include reasonable public access to technical and policy information, open public meetings, and explicit consideration and response to public input. The public notification form is available at all public meetings to allow interested individuals the opportunity to receive notification of future public meetings. A copy of the current NCTCOG Public Participation Process is provided in the following pages of this chapter. Public meeting notices, minutes and presentations can be found online at http://www.nctcog.org/trans/outreach/meetings/archives.asp.
During development of the 2017-2020 TIP, public meetings were held to obtain a consensus of the constituency served by the program. Draft project listings were presented to the public at Public Meetings held on March 15, 16, and 21, 2016, in Carrollton, Arlington, and Grapevine. Also a video recording of the public meeting in Arlington was posted online for those unable to attend any of the public meetings in person.

These meetings were held to educate, inform, and seek comments from the public on transportation issues and the specific projects proposed for funding listed in the TIP. Comments were solicited from those present who wished to speak for the record and any other citizens who wished to submit comments in writing during the comment period ending April 13, 2016.

NCTCOG regularly supports and holds meetings for the NCTCOG Executive Board, the Regional Transportation Council (RTC), and the Surface Transportation Technical Committee (STTC). These committees review, endorse, or approve the development of the TIP and the supporting air quality conformity analysis. These meetings are open to the public, and meeting agendas are available to all interested parties.

Throughout the year, modifications to the programmed projects in the TIP are often necessary to either update project information or to facilitate changes to TxDOT’s project letting schedules. Based on the nature of the change, these modifications are either processed administratively or require STTC and RTC approval to proceed. Then, significant project modifications are transmitted to TxDOT for incorporation into the Statewide TIP (STIP) in accordance with the State’s rules for modification of the STIP. This process will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. These project modifications are communicated to the public through the public participation process as appropriate.

NCTCOG staff considers environmental justice issues in the transportation planning process when conducting public meetings.

Given the large Metropolitan Area, staff plan public meetings at diverse, accessible locations across the region at both day and evening times. Other efforts to involve minority communities include publication of newspaper display ads in local minority publications and press releases to reporters at minority news sources.

Invitations are mailed to more than 4,900 individuals and e-mailed to more than 8,600 individuals and organizations contained in NCTCOG’s public notification database. All public meeting notifications are posted on the Texas Secretary of State Texas Register web site as part of the Open Meetings requirement. Public meeting notices are also mailed to public libraries and city/county offices for posting in public access areas. More recently, public meetings have been posted on social media outlets such as NCTCOG’s Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram accounts. In addition to the three public meetings, video recordings are posted to the NCTCOG website for those unable to make it to the meetings in person.

For more information or public meetings minutes, please visit us at:
http://www.nctcog.org/trans/outreach/meetings