

Wenatchee Valley

**WVTC**

Transportation Council

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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FINAL



**Adopted**

**6/12/2014**

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**Preface:**

Public participation is an essential element for effective decision making and planning for the regional transportation system. As such Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) must establish and periodically review and update the public participation process in a Public Participation Plan (PPP), as mandated through the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP 21). These processes should assure early and continued public awareness of, access to the transportation planning and decision process through providing citizens with a variety of opportunities to participate.



# Public Participation Plan

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## **Intro:**

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) addresses all planning activities undertaken by WVTC that will eventually result in decisions subject to state and federal review. This policy details procedures and standards for public involvement and the assessment of alternative transportation infrastructure projects at a conceptual, planning level.

The Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council maintains a consistent process for incorporating the public and all stakeholders in the development of all plans and programs. This plan complies with federal planning and civil rights statutes, ensuring opportunity for participation by all interested individuals, groups, organizations, businesses and institutions. In addition to providing opportunity for involvement, the WVTC will provide outreach to traditionally under-served and minority populations within the community.

## **Guiding Principles:**

The purpose of public involvement is two-fold. First, the public must be provided reasonable ability to be informed, involved and opportunity to affect the decisions made by public officials. At the same time, public officials must be aware of community and stakeholder priorities in order to make decisions that balance technical and policy recommendations from transportation professionals with the values of the community.

Second, it is the intent and commitment of WVTC to follow the spirit and letter of the Washington State Open Public Meetings Act (RCW 42.30), Title 23 Highways, Part 450 Planning Assistance and Standards and any other applicable federal and state laws, as required.

Finally, WVTC adheres to the belief that early and ongoing involvement of all interested and affected citizens and businesses improves the outcome of the transportation decision making process, and therefore will maintain a consistent process for involving the general public and all stakeholders in the development of transportation plans and programs.

## **MPO Structure & Operations:**

WVTC is responsible for transportation planning in the Wenatchee Valley urban area, and surrounding areas within Chelan and Douglas counties, to develop transportation plans and investment programs that meet the region's projected economic and population growth looking 20 years into the future. WVTC builds regional consensus about priorities to guide future transportation funding and land use planning decisions by WSDOT, Link Transit, our local cities and counties, and others.

WVTC is governed by a policy board of elected and appointed public officials that functions as the final decision making authority for the MPO. Each of the following entities are represented with one vote on the policy board:

- City of Wenatchee
- City of East Wenatchee
- Chelan County
- Douglas County
- LINK Transit
- Chelan County Small Cities
- Douglas County Small Cities
- Port of Chelan County
- Port of Douglas County
- Washington State Dept. of Transportation

In addition to the Policy Board the WVTC consists of WVTC staff, planning and engineering staff from member jurisdictions, community members who serve on various committees/boards and consultants. All work together to form plans and policy that affect transportation within the MPO boundary.

Specifics regarding each are as follows:

### **Staff**

WVTC is independently staffed with personnel responsible for administrative and technical services necessary to operate the MPO.

### **Advisory Committees**

The WVTC policy board is supported by a standing Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) of planning and engineering staff from each of the member jurisdictions. The TAC provides feedback and guidance to the policy board on planning, funding and policy initiatives.

The policy board periodically establishes temporary committees, work groups, task forces or advisory boards to assist in the development of transportation planning studies. These special committees may include any variety of community representatives, business leaders, elected officials and advocates.

### **Consultants**

WVTC periodically contracts with third party consultants to complete tasks or planning studies that require specialized expertise. Consultants work at the direction of the director or assigned staff, and are obligated to carry out the procedures of the Public Participation Plan when conducting business on behalf of WVTC.

### **Core Planning Activities:**

The WVTC solicits public comments on the documents governing its policies and operations when these documents undergo revision or major amendment. These documents include:

#### **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):**

Federal rules require that each MPO develop an annual Unified Planning Work Program (23 CFR 450.308). The intent is to coordinate all transportation and transportation-related planning activities that the MPO intends to accomplish during the program year utilizing federal, state and local resources. The UPWP delineates responsibilities and procedures for carrying out the cooperative transportation planning process. The UPWP serves as the budget narrative and a management tool for directing staff activities throughout the year.

#### **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**

Federal law requires that each MPO prepare and update a transportation plan for its metropolitan planning area in accordance with the requirements of the federal policy governing them. WVTC must prepare and update this plan every four years for the Wenatchee Valley urbanized area and surrounding areas within Chelan and Douglas counties. The RTP includes identification of regionally significant transportation facilities, transportation improvement strategies, transportation system operation and management strategies, a financial plan, and a capital improvements project list constrained to available revenues.

#### **Regional Transportation Improvement Program (Regional TIP):**

The Regional TIP is the prioritized expenditure program for federally funded transportation improvements within Chelan and Douglas counties over a four-year period. The Regional TIP must be updated at least every two years and must cover at least a four year period. The purpose of the Regional TIP is to provide WVTC member jurisdictions, transportation providers, the general public, and other affected individuals and groups with a description of planned, near-term capital transportation expenditures.

#### **Transportation Planning Studies:**

Periodically the WVTC will generate documents from staff or consultant-based transportation planning studies. When appropriate, a specific schedule and plan for public participation will be developed for these studies independently.

## **Title VI—Access for All:**

The Wenatchee Valley Transportation Council (WVTC) assures that no person shall on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or sex as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100.259) be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity. WVTC further assures every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not.

WVTC adopted a Title VI Plan in 2004 and submits an annual Title VI update and accomplishments report, to the state that documents all activities undertaken to carry out these assurances.

### **Planning Responsibilities**

- Ensure that all aspects of the planning process operation comply with Title VI.
- Ensure that participation of a cross section of various social, economic, and ethnic interest groups are represented in the planning process by disseminating information to minority media and ethnic/gender related organizations, when appropriate.
- Ensure equal participation on ad-hoc project advisory committees, when appropriate, through outreach to all social and economic sectors of the community.
- Collect and maintain data on gender, race, and national origin of public forum attendees and/or beneficiaries to help determine whether equal access was afforded to all people impacted by WVTC's federal-aid programs and activities.

### **Limited English Proficient (LEP) Guidelines**

Per Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, WVTC will ensure that project information and access to decision making processes will be provided in such a manner to allow those not proficient in the English language opportunity to provide feedback and participate in project or plan development.

In the event that a five percent or greater proportion of residents within a project impact area are not proficient in the English language, translation services for written project information will be made available, and if necessary and on a case by case basis, verbal translation services will be provided at public meetings.

### **Environmental Justice (EJ) Guidelines**

Per Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, WVTC will ensure that minority, disabled and low-income communities have equal representation when directly affected by plans or projects developed by the WVTC.

The US Department of Transportation defines three Environmental Justice principles:

1. To avoid, minimize or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
2. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision making process.
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

These assurances are carried out in the transportation planning process by a variety of procedures detailed in the Outreach Methods section of this plan.

### **Public Participation Procedures:**

Development of a Public Involvement Strategy is required at the outset of all studies, to be determined by the project steering committee. The Public Involvement Strategy is a three-step process that:

1. Identifies Stakeholders
2. Defines objectives of public involvement for the project; and
3. Selects appropriate public involvement activities.

### **Outreach Opportunities**

#### **Public Notice**

Public notification of all regular meetings of the Executive Council, which usually occur monthly, will be provided at least three (3) days prior to each meeting, and will be sent to news media in all member jurisdictions. Public notification of meetings will include the date, place and time of each meeting, and highlight of major agenda items. Public notification of special meetings of the Executive Council will be provided no less than 24 hours prior to the meeting. Announcements of special meetings may necessitate an alternative notification format, but will comply with local, state and federal requirements.

### New Projects/Plan Introduction

Projects and plans that are identified under the annual UPWP may contain elements that will benefit/require public input. Notification of these efforts and opportunities to provide input will follow the above public notice guidelines at a minimum.

Most studies will include major public involvement efforts at three common points in time, the first generally being during the project evaluation phase. The objective is to identify significant issues, concerns and potential courses of action, which might solve or alleviate short-term and long-term transportation problems.

### Draft review of Projects/Plan

The second major phase of public involvement generally occurs when an assessment of future conditions has been made and possible solutions developed. This provides the public input into the merits or ramifications of the alternatives being considered, and also provides an opportunity to suggest others.

### Final review Projects/Plan

The third typical phase of public involvement presents and seeks comments on study conclusions, recommendations and environmental documentation. This third phase of public involvement always includes a formal public comment period that is conducted prior to adoption of plans or studies by the Policy Board.

The start of the public comment period is announced formally through public advertisements and direct announcements to interested agencies and citizens. Draft documents will be made available no later than the start of the public comment period. Members of the public may also view plan information on the WVTC website or request a digital or printed copy.

### **Outreach Focus Areas**

In an effort to provide equal opportunity for involvement and to ensure that all affected stakeholders are made aware of plans and projects that may be of interest to them, WVTC will reach out to the following groups.

#### Interested Citizens

General and specific feedback from citizens within the community is a federal requirement and an important element of the decision process. It is the goal of each planning project to provide reasonable opportunity for the community to learn about, review, and provide feedback for each effort undertaken by the WVTC. Outreach to the general public will focus on distribution of information regarding the planning effort via all local print, radio, digital and social media available. When applicable posters, flyers, and other informational materials will be distributed in public locations throughout the planning area.

### Special Populations

In keeping with the Statutory responsibility of WVTC under Title VI public outreach will include special populations within the community such as: Minority and Low Income, Non-English Speaking, Disabled and Elderly populations.

When working on specific projects that may have potential adverse effects or disproportionate benefits, the WVTC will use the following techniques to reach out to these populations:

- Use the Census Tract level demographic information from the Census Bureau along with localized interviews and investigation to identify populations that may need special attention.
- Ensure that the minority, low-income and handicap populations are included in telephone surveys, stakeholder meetings, and public open houses; to include having a translator available for those not proficient in the English language.
- Post notices in the local print media and locations accessible to LEP populations, utilizing languages other than English.
- Seek out community based organizations that can function as a conduit to LEP populations; to include the Housing Authority, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, social service and church based organizations, etc.
- Print and disseminate materials for a specific project translated into alternate languages when 5 percent or more of the affected population speak that language at.
- Maintain statistical data on citizen participants in order to assist in measuring the accessibility of program information to LEP populations.
- Maintain records of attendance of minority and low-income populations at public involvement forums and records of direct comments and information requests.

### Study Stakeholders

WVTC Member agencies are directly represented on the WVTC TAC. Other government agencies, local advocacy groups and citizen/business focus groups are routinely invited to participate in the development and review of all plans. WVTC periodically reviews its list of interested public entities to better include all those with concern for transportation planning activities. The list below does not preclude involvement of others, but specific efforts and outreach will be made to the following groups when applicable to the planning process:

- Private Transportation Providers
- Public Transportation Users
- Local/Regional Freight and Business representatives
- Non-motorized Transportation Users

### **Outreach Methods**

#### *Email Distribution Lists and Databases*

A contact list and mailing database is maintained by WVTC staff to include all citizens, businesses and organizations with an interest in the activities of WVTC. The Community Forum receives notification of all regular and special Council meetings and meetings and events related to work program activities. The Community Forum exists in order to provide self-identified stakeholders with an opportunity to participate in and affect the outcome of the planning activities and decisions of the Council.

#### *Public Meetings, Workshops & Forums*

In order to ensure understanding of project goals, objectives, proposed actions and resulting projects are properly vetted through community feedback the WVTC staff will schedule public events. These events may come in the form of an open house, project or plan workshop, stakeholder meetings or just as a community education event designed to heighten the awareness of the efforts surrounding a project or plan. Any and all of these events will provide opportunity for the community and decision makers to share information and ideas that will assist in the development of WVTC projects or plans.

#### *Speakers Bureau:*

WVTC staff and Technical Advisory Committee will be available to organized community and business groups to present information workshops and forums about WVTC activities and general transportation topics. The website includes information about how to request and schedule a presentation.

#### *Open Public Meetings:*

A public comment period will be provided during each regular and special meeting of the Executive Council; however, the Chair may limit comment periods, or provide other options for public comment on specific issues as appropriate. Translation services or special accommodations will be provided upon request.

#### *Public Events:*

To further expand public knowledge of the WVTC and its programs and functions, staff may, when deemed appropriate, set up information booths at regional malls, annual fairs, or other functions of regional attraction.

### Direct Contact:

In circumstances where projects and plans are likely to have a direct effect on residents and/or businesses it may be necessary to send information to those who are closest in proximity to the project area. Mailings may also be used city wide to provide schedules of meetings, project or plan information, and as invitations to participate in committees or focus groups.

### Public Surveys

Public surveys may be used to ask specific questions about plans or projects or to elicit more direct responses to proposed actions within plans or projects, or to identify broad community opinion on policy questions.

Methods of developing and distributing surveys, as well as analyzing the answers to questions will vary depending on the sample size of response desired for the project. Surveys may be conducted in a variety of manners including but not limited to: online web based, by phone, or by handout.

### Website

A website is maintained with the primary purpose of making available general information about WVTC, posting meeting agendas and minutes, and providing detailed information about past and ongoing planning projects and studies. The website includes information about how to participate in WVTC activities and meetings, with a sign-up option to request being on the Community Forum mailing list. Additionally, certain information on the website is provided in Spanish.

### Social Media

At this time the WVTC does not maintain a social media presence. WVTC will monitor and evaluate social media opportunities and begin using outlets if beneficial to WVTC planning processes.

### Local/Regional Traditional Media Outlets

WVTC will send press releases in English and Spanish (when appropriate) to news media to highlight current activities and major upcoming actions requiring public input. Press releases will include when and where actions will be taken, and whom to contact for more information.

### **Outreach Materials**

Many planning efforts will include a significant visual component to help relay information, present visions of future projects, or to generate feedback. The following methods may be used:

#### **Maps**

GIS mapping will be used whenever appropriate to illustrate elements of the planning effort. Maps are very useful in clearly communicating the scope of the planning area, specific roadways, transportation corridors, and topography challenges or concerns. Maps may also be used to illustrate demographic characteristics, travel patterns and as a tool to generate feedback as to community areas of concern. Development of these maps can be completed by staff in most cases. Highly developed mapping with analysis may need to be contracted out to qualified consultants.

#### **Illustrations**

Using artistic “renderings” or “conceptual drawings” can facilitate planning in presenting a view of what the final project or proposed plan may result in. Illustrations or renderings are effective for multi-lingual communication of projects and potential effects of the projects. Development of illustrations may be prepared by staff or contracted out to qualified consultants depending on the project.

#### **Brochure/Pamphlet**

Combining the above Maps and Illustrations into an easily read and distributed brochure or project pamphlet can facilitate the feedback loop as well as provide an opportunity to ensure distribution of ideas and project information to specific populations. Brochures and pamphlets can also be used as educational tools in the case of new roadway configurations, safety programs or for specific mode use e.g. bicycle use on shared roadways.

#### **Video**

Using video in combination with the WVTC website allows information to be readily available, and accessible 24 hours a day. Video may be used to communicate many levels of project development, implementation as well as public process. Development of video communication for projects will depend on the goals and resources for each project. Video may also be used for safety education, to highlight transportation improvement projects or to identify and communicate transportation needs or challenges within this community. Development of video will require outside consultants.

## Public Comment Periods

Final Public Comment periods for the Planning Documents created by WVTC will require a 10 day, 20 day or 45 day duration. The shorter periods are designed to allow for ample comment, review of comments, and if necessary revision of documents prior to the scheduled monthly meeting of the WVTC board. The 45 day period is required only for revision and adoption of the Public Participation Plan. Adoption of a 10 and 20 day period ensures that issues raised will be addressed quickly and decisions made with information and ready familiarity with the project and processes associated with developing it.

### 10-Day Comment Period

The ten day period will in general begin the first Monday following the monthly TAC meeting, which allows for feedback to be received for two full work weeks with two days preparation before comment records and responses must be sent to the WVTC board for review.

The 10 day period will apply to the following plan documents:

- Unified Planning Work Program
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program

### 20-Day Comment Period

The 20 day period will follow the same pattern as previously described with an additional two business weeks available for public comment. This additional period of time is necessary with the more detailed planning involved with the documents that will require this. This additional time will also allow ample time to revise plan documents if need be prior to final approval by the WVTC Board.

The 20 day period will apply to the following plan documents:

- Regional Transportation Plan
- Transportation Planning Studies i.e. Bicycle Plan, Truck Route Plan

## Feedback Analysis:

### Comment Review/ Summary

WVTC staff will prepare a response to each comment received during the comment periods (written or delivered during a public hearing). Comments and responses will be compiled in a single document and will be available to members of the public upon request. The WVTC , Prior to adoption of the plan, Executive Council will review the comments and responses and consider any appropriate action which may include additional public comment if substantial changes are made to the document as a result of feedback received.

### Special considerations

All public meetings hosted by WVTC will be situated in facilities accessible to people with disabilities. Upon request, special accommodation will be made for individuals with disabilities. Consideration is also given to the needs of underserved populations (low-income, minorities, etc.) Interpreters will be provided upon request for a meeting or event, and will typically be provided as a matter of course for major events. WVTC maintains a policy of non-discrimination.

### Documentation

Outreach and analysis activities will be documented and available for public review at the WVTC offices.

### Periodic review

This policy is reviewed periodically to assess its effectiveness in assuring full and open public access to the WVTC planning, programming and decision-making process. Reviews will assess which techniques work, incorporate new and innovative methods, and eliminate those that are ineffective.

