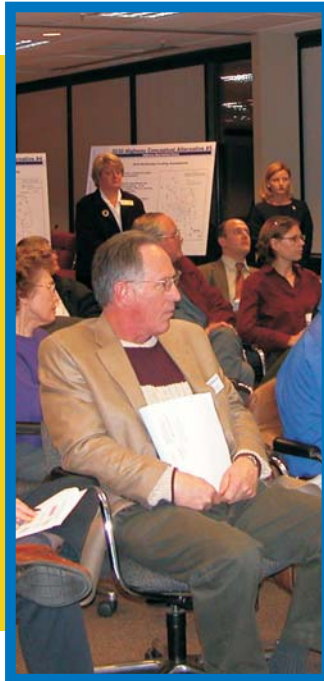


PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING



October 2005



THE DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning



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Adopted October 19, 2005

Denver Regional Council of Governments
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Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning

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1. Introduction

This report documents the actions to be carried out by the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) to ensure that opportunities exist for the public to be involved in transportation planning activities, pursuant to Title 23 CFR 450.316 of Statewide Planning; Metropolitan Planning and 40 CFR 51.402(e) Criteria and Procedures for Determining Conformity to State or Federal Implementation Plans of Transportation Plans, Programs, and Projects.... and section VI-A 2CCR604-2 Statewide Transportation Planning rules.

The report also serves as the statement of transportation public involvement policies adopted by the DRCOG Board of Directors. Participation of the public in transportation planning activities is vitally important to the DRCOG Board. The emphasis of the adopted policies in this report is on regional system planning products regularly produced in the transportation planning process. Specific project-level public involvement procedures and practices are defined by implementing agencies. Only the relationship of regional involvement processes to project planning is included here.

2. Public Involvement Policy and Goals

Federal and State Mandates

Federal regulations exist that require a public participation component to the metropolitan transportation planning process. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into law in 2005. DRCOG is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Denver region. DRCOG implements SAFETEA-LU through plans and programs that consider all modes of transportation, and which are "*continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate*" [SEC. 1203(a)(4)]. In addition to the "3C" process listed above, SAFETEA-LU emphasizes the broadening of public participation to include stakeholders who have not traditionally been involved. Transportation planning under SAFETEA-LU must be performed in conjunction with state and local officials, transit operators and the public.

Further, Metropolitan Planning Organizations are responsible for conducting the locally-developed public participation process as required by the Joint Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)/ Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450, 49 CFR part 613). The legislation requires that the metropolitan planning process must "include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans" and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) [23 CFR part 450.316(b)(1)]. Additional MPO public involvement requirements and criteria are specified in Appendix A.

There are also public involvement requirements at the state level. The public records law of Colorado states that all public records shall be open for inspection by any person at reasonable times (Colorado Revised Statutes 24-72-201). Public records include all writings made,

Who are DRCOG's "Publics"?

- *Local elected officials*
- *People who use, pay for, or are impacted by transportation investments*
- *Residents and property owners*
- *Users of public transit*
- *Business community*
- *Private transit providers*
- *Transportation facility users from outside the region, such as tourists, visitors, students, workers, shoppers, and health facility patients*
- *Interest groups*
- *Freight shippers and carriers*
- *State and Federal elected and appointed officials*
- *News and other media*

maintained or kept by the state or any agency, institution or political subdivision for use in the exercise of functions required or authorized by law or administrative rule or involving the receipt or expenditure of public funds. DRCOG's procedures for distributing information in accordance with the public records law of Colorado are discussed in Chapter 4: Documentation, Distribution and Notification.

Though the meaningful engagement of diverse interests may be challenging at times, transportation decisions are ultimately more responsive to local needs as a result of the public participation process.

Low-Income Communities and Minority Communities

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations, was signed by President Clinton on Feb. 11, 1994 and published in the Feb. 16, 1994 Federal Register, Vol. 59, No. 32. The Executive Order (EO) and accompanying memorandum reinforced the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that focus federal attention on the environmental and human health condition in minority and low-income communities. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act states that "no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance" [42 USC 2000d]. Together these two laws promote non-discrimination in federal programs affecting human health and the environment, and provide minority and low-income communities access to public information and an opportunity to participate in matters relating to transportation and the environment.

The EO is oriented not only toward project level decision-making in the engineering and design phases for projects, but also toward long-range and project programming activities. MPO self-certification reviews conducted by the FHWA and FTA in metropolitan areas stress the public participation efforts with potential environmental justice communities.

Through the regional planning process, DRCOG and partner agencies will thoroughly analyze the three fundamental environmental justice principles. The principles are:

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

DRCOG's public involvement methods to address the full and fair participation of all populations are described in Chapter 3: Opportunities for Public Involvement. These methods and tasks can also be viewed as opportunities for public involvement in the transportation planning process.

Disabled Populations

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) requires involving disabled communities in the development and improvement of transportation services. Planners, engineers, and builders must provide access for the disabled at sidewalks and ramps, street crossings, and in parking or transit access facilities. Persons with disabilities must also be able to access the sites where public involvement activities occur as well as the information presented. DRCOG's public involvement methods to address the Americans with Disabilities Act are described in Chapter 3: Opportunities for Public Involvement.

DRCOG Public Involvement Policy

Public involvement is vital to the Denver Regional Council of Governments. It helps provide the DRCOG Board of Directors the broadest spectrum of relevant information available prior to its decision-making and offers the public an opportunity to raise concerns that can be considered along with discussion of technical, political and economic merit.

The Board of Directors welcomes the early and continued involvement of the public in developing the agency's regional policies and plans. DRCOG seeks to establish an attitude and an atmosphere which encourages public reflection, reaction and discussion of the wide-ranging issues with which it is involved.

Of particular importance in the pursuit of public involvement is the identification of audiences which would be affected by or have a business or other affinity with the issues under consideration. All views should be heard and their participation likewise encouraged. In this context, minority views include not only ethnic groups but also others whose perspectives may not be fully reflected by larger segments of the public.

It is the intent of the DRCOG Board to actively solicit the comments and engage the interests of the public through the participation process. It then is the responsibility of this body to balance the public's needs and desires with the Board's responsibilities and visions for the future of the region.

In adopting this policy, the Board also directs the DRCOG staff to incorporate appropriate activities to make public communications and outreach a part of the agency's overall planning activities. In addition to required public hearings, such activities might include: representative task forces or advisory committees; public meetings and workshops, presentations and discussions with special interest organizations, forums or conferences that provide information about issues and processes and the opportunity for input from the public; opinion polls, surveys, focus groups and interviews to acquire information; and use of the media and reports to disseminate information.

Public Involvement Goals

The fundamental goal of public involvement is to assure that the decisions regarding a proposed plan or project are made only after the public is aware of and has the opportunity to comment on the proposal. Transportation planning decision-makers must consider concerns of all the publics who may be affected by a proposed project.

Specific goals of the public involvement process are:

Goal 1: Educate and Present Information

DRCOG is responsible for providing information to the public. DRCOG staff shall educate and present information about the regional planning process, including the sources of funding and impacts of regional planning decisions. DRCOG staff shall inform the public about the role of the Metropolitan Planning Organization and the committee structure of DRCOG. Staff shall explain the specific tasks and goals of the DRCOG, as well as related tasks that are not in the MPO's authority to perform. This information shall be presented in non-technical terms so the public can understand and process this information.

Goal 2: Solicit Public Input

DRCOG shall gather representative input from the public to identify mobility needs, desires, issues and concerns. DRCOG shall continuously seek public involvement throughout transportation planning processes, though specifically targeted at the beginning of transportation planning processes, at key decision points and when final product drafts are issued. The elected Board members also have direct contact with the public (as they were selected by the public to represent them) and should reflect their concerns to DRCOG staff. Staff will also closely monitor public input received through major project development and corridor studies.

Goal 3: Facilitate Information Flow between the Public and Decision-Makers

DRCOG staff is responsible for compiling public issues, comments and concerns into complete and concise documents for presentation to the decision-makers. The DRCOG staff shall also schedule and organize meetings where the public can present concerns to the staff or Board.

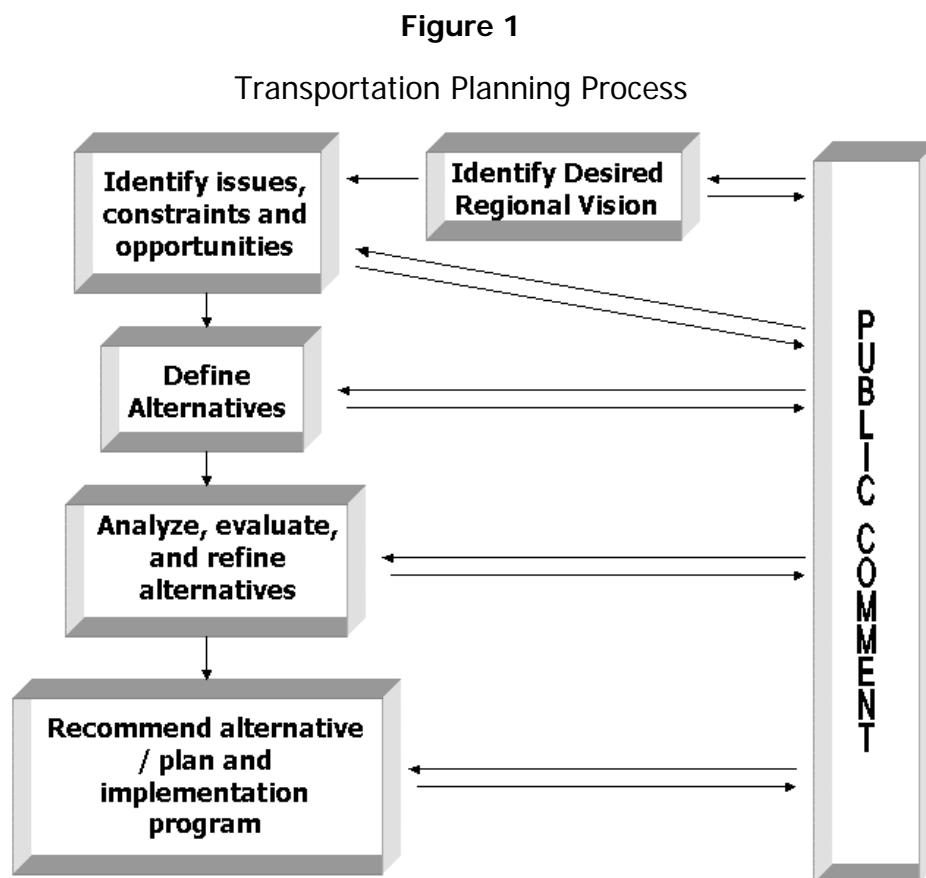
Goal 4: Consider Public Concerns in Decision-Making

The Board shall consider the public concerns that are presented to them by the staff as well as those presented to them by individual persons at public meetings. DRCOG staff shall consider public concerns as it prepares draft planning documents.

3. Opportunities for Public Involvement

Planning Process

The regional transportation planning process involves a number of varied activities including the preparation of regional plans, transportation improvement programs, corridor studies, environmental studies and administrative documents. Public interest will vary considerably by geography and intensity of the issues. This diversity of public interest suggests that the regional public involvement process should not be rigid. The process should instead recognize the differences in public interests and provide opportunities for involvement to meet the needs of the varying interests. DRCOG typically follows the transportation planning process displayed in Figure 1. The process is applied to long-range regional plans, corridor and project studies and short-range transportation improvement programs.

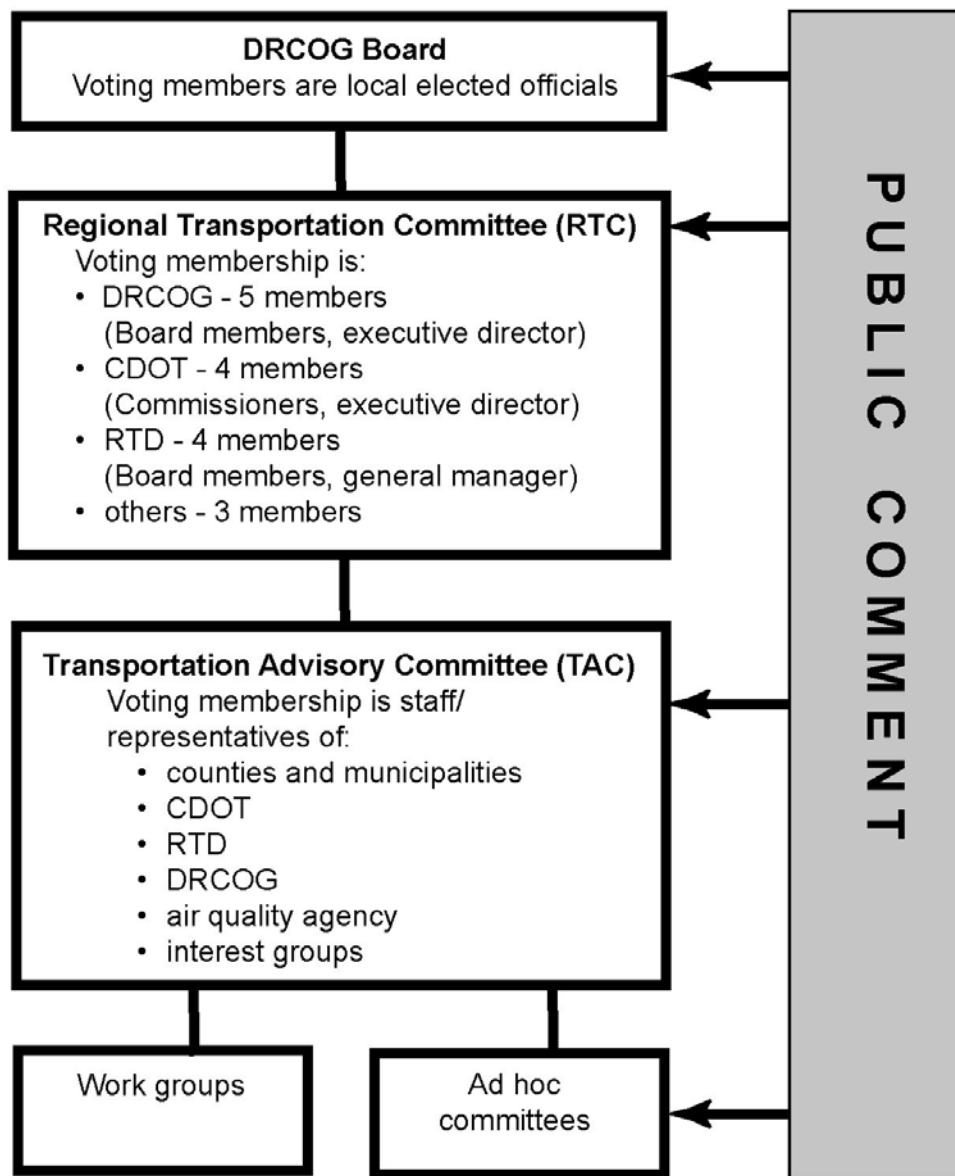


DRCOG Committee Structure

The Metropolitan Planning Organization process in the Denver region has been established in the Memorandum of Agreement between DRCOG, the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) and the Regional Transportation District (RTD). The DRCOG committee structure, including opportunities for public comment to the committees, is displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

DRCOG MPO Committee Structure



The DRCOG Board of Directors is comprised of local elected officials who each hold one vote on the Board on behalf of their local governments. There are two permanent committees that assist the DRCOG Board of Directors with transportation policy decision-making. The Regional Transportation Committee (RTC) prepares and forwards policy recommendations to the DRCOG Board of Directors. The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) reviews work of the transportation process and advises the Board and the RTC on planning and implementation procedures. Ad Hoc Committees and work groups are also established for short durations to assist on specific planning tasks and functions. Examples of ad hoc committees and work groups include the Metro Vision Update Ad Hoc Committee and the 2030 Freight Work Group. The membership of these short-term committees includes experts on the relevant committee topic and/or representatives of affected groups.

The RTC is composed of:

- five members of DRCOG, including the chairman of the Board of Directors, the vice chairman of the Board of Directors, two other members of the Board of Directors, and the executive director;
- four members of CDOT, including three Denver metropolitan area transportation commissioners as well as the executive director;
- four members of RTD, including three members of the RTD Board of Directors as well as the general manager; and
- three other members, appointed by the RTC chairman annually, upon unanimous recommendation of the executive directors of DRCOG and CDOT, and the general manager of RTD.

There are 25 members of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). TAC membership includes representatives from:

- local counties and municipalities;
- DRCOG;
- CDOT;
- RTD;
- Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC);
- environmental interests;
- freight interests;
- Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and non-motorized transportation interests;
- aviation interests;
- business/economic development interests; and
- FHWA / FTA.

The public is encouraged to attend committee meetings and/or contact their representatives with their comments and concerns. A public comment period is included in all meetings of the Board, RTC, TAC and ad hoc committees. The DRCOG web site contains a calendar of meeting dates and associated agendas.

DRCOG transportation planning process meetings – standing meeting times and dates

Transportation Advisory Committee	1:30 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.	3rd Monday
Regional Transportation Committee	8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	2nd Tuesday
Board of Directors	7 p.m.	3rd Wednesday

Policy Action Process and Agency Integration

Major Policy Action Process

The DRCOG policy action process has been designed to ensure the Board of Directors has ample opportunity to carefully consider the issue or action in question and that the views of the public are considered before taking a major policy action. Such major actions are associated with a:

- New or amended Regional Transportation Plan (RTP);

- New Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or amendment affecting air quality conformity; and
- Air quality conformity finding/document.

Major policy actions include the following steps:

- 1) The DRCOG Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of both private-sector individuals and public officials, reviews work of the transportation process and advises the RTC on planning and implementation procedures.
- 2) After assuring that the actionable document has been subject to DRCOG committee review and appropriate public comment, the Regional Transportation Committee (RTC) considers the action and makes a recommendation to the DRCOG Board to hold a public hearing.
- 3) The chair of the DRCOG Board sets a public hearing date that allows at least a 30-day period for the public to review documents before the public hearing.
- 4) After setting the public hearing date, a notice of the public hearing is published in both major newspapers in the region at least 30 days in advance of the public hearing. Notices may also be published in other newspapers. The notice includes the time, date and location of the public hearing as well as how the subject document can be reviewed. The subject document is also made available on the DRCOG web site (www.drcog.org).
- 5) A formal public hearing is conducted. The views of the public as well as the recommendations of the DRCOG ad hoc committees are heard at the hearing. Action on the policy is then typically scheduled for the next regular meeting of the Board.
- 6) DRCOG staff prepares a written response to the comments presented at the hearing and also those received via email, letter or phone during the 30-day comment period. The

responses are provided to the Regional Transportation Committee, the Transportation Advisory Committee and the Board prior to their next regular meetings.

- 7) After considering public comments and DRCOG committee comments, the Regional Transportation Committee recommends an action to the Board.
- 8) After considering all comments and recommendations, the DRCOG Board takes action.
- 9) A summary of significant public comments and responses is included in the final published policy document or made available as a separate document.

Agency Integration

The Denver regional transportation planning process, and its corresponding public participation process, is a coordinated approach among DRCOG, RTD and CDOT. The three agencies prepared a Memorandum of Agreement outlining their plans for communication, collaboration and coordination in transportation processes in 2001. In December of 2004, the DRCOG Board authorized the DRCOG members of the RTC to approve an updated *Transportation Planning in the Denver Region*, which outlines coordination efforts of the three agencies.

There is additional integration among DRCOG and RTD on fixed-guideway transit improvements planned for the region. State legislation or law provides that the MPO shall approve each fixed-guideway component part or corridor separately, including the method of financing and the technology selected, before federal funding can be distributed. DRCOG also hosts a public hearing to solicit public issues and concerns about any fixed-guideway transit proposals.

Additionally, staff from CDOT, DRCOG, RTD, RAQC and the Air Pollution Control Division (APCD) meet informally to provide integration among the agencies. This "agency coordination team" reviews the transportation planning activities of each agency and coordinates the Unified Planning Work Program planning activities and timing with the individual agency planning activities. Consultation will also be conducted as appropriate with federal, state and local resource agencies responsible for land management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation.

Key Planning Activities

The framework described in Table 1 identifies types of planning products, the most appropriate agency responsible for the public involvement activity and the usual methods for obtaining public involvement. Additional methods to obtain public input may also be used if needed. It should be noted that all DRCOG committee meetings have their agendas posted on the DRCOG web site, and offer a period to receive public comments.

**Table 1
Key Planning Activities and Public Involvement Methods**

Activity	Responsibility	Methods
Metro Vision Plan and Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan	DRCOG	Public interest forums at key points throughout the development process; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing before adoption. Staff outreach to communities and organizations using workshops, poster sessions, questionnaires, web site announcements, etc.
Specialized Plan Elements	DRCOG	Ad hoc committees or work groups; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; solicitation of comments and input announced via web site and email notification.
Transportation Improvement Program	DRCOG, Local Governments, CDOT, RTD	Project sponsor conducts public outreach in communities regarding specific projects; DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing before adoption of new TIP or a TIP amendment requiring conformity finding.
Corridor/ Sub-area Studies	CDOT, RTD, DRCOG	Task forces/committees and/or public meetings in the corridor or sub-area at key decision points. Public advisory committee surveys and questionnaires. Meetings conducted in affected neighborhoods, community study office and community outreach efforts (e.g. newsletter, web site, comment forms).
Project Development	Implementing Jurisdiction	Task forces/committees and/or public meetings in the project locale at key decision points; public hearing. Public advisory committee surveys and questionnaires.
Conformity of the RTP and the TIP	DRCOG	DRCOG committee review and recommendation; public hearing on draft conformity finding.
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	DRCOG, CDOT, RTD	Transportation Forum to identify key planning tasks, Review work plans with partner agencies, DRCOG committee review and recommendation, final review by FHWA/FTA.

Metro Vision 2030 Plan

Metro Vision 2030 is a long-range plan to manage growth within the Denver area. It addresses development, transportation needs and ways to preserve environmental quality. Metro Vision 2030 encourages communities to work together for regional cooperation by providing a framework for addressing common issues while respecting the visions of individual communities. It was adopted by the DRCOG Board in January 2005.

Opportunities for public involvement were offered throughout the process of preparing the Metro Vision 2030 Plan. They will also be conducted as part of the future plan assessments and updates. Such opportunities will include hearings, workshops, speakers bureau, questionnaires, a video overview, speaking engagements, comment periods at meetings and web site interaction. Public involvement plans outlining specific activities and dates are prepared in association with major updates to the Metro Vision Plan.

Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (MVRTP)

The Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan is a long-range, transportation plan for the Denver region. It represents the vision for a multimodal transportation system that will serve the region through 2030. It also includes a Fiscally Constrained Plan that identifies transportation improvement projects of various travel modes that are financially feasible for at least the next 20 years. The MVRTP reflects proposals throughout the entire region. The current 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan (2030 MVRTP) was adopted in January 2005. Opportunities for public and resource agency involvement are provided around key decision points in the planning process. The document "Summary of Public Involvement Activities Associated with the Regional Planning Process and the 2030 Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan" describes in detail activities conducted and responses received from the public. Public involvement plans outlining specific activities and dates are prepared in association with major updates to the MVRTP. As with the Metro Vision 2030 Plan, opportunities for public involvement will also be conducted as part of future annual plan assessments, amendments and updates.

Specialized Plan Elements

Occasionally, specialized plan elements are prepared to further define the Regional Transportation Plan. Such examples include the *Pedestrian and Bicycle Element of the RTP* (1994), the *Transit Element of the 2030 MVRTP* (2005) and the *Regional ITS Strategic Plan* (2002). Upon adoption, specialized plan elements become part of the overall Regional Transportation Plan. Opportunities for public involvement are provided through ad hoc committees or work groups, and comment periods during TAC, RTC, and DRCOG Board meetings. Additional public meetings may be held if further public input is desired prior to DRCOG Board action.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a document that programs transportation improvements to be funded in the region over a six-year period. Local governments, CDOT, RAQC and RTD recommend projects to be included in the TIP. Project priorities considered for the TIP must be identified in or be consistent with the MVRTP. Early public input should be obtained by sponsor agencies before submitting projects to be included in the TIP. The draft TIP document is the subject of a public hearing. The hearing also serves as part of the public comment process for the elements of the RTD Transit Development Program that are included in the TIP. All policy amendments to the TIP will be announced via web site and email notification with solicitation for comments at DRCOG committee and Board meetings. A public hearing will be held for those amendments requiring a new air quality conformity finding. The project sponsor is responsible for providing appropriate public involvement opportunities during the project development and design stages.

Corridor / Sub-area Studies

Corridor and sub-area studies are local in concern yet often have impacts on larger areas. Many corridor studies serve as Environmental Assessments (EA) or Environmental Impact Statements (EIS) to lead toward environmental clearance actions. Such studies normally have very extensive public outreach and input efforts that attract a significant number of participants. The

agency charged with conducting the specific study is responsible for conducting public involvement activities. DRCOG staff is actively involved and monitors the public involvement activities in these studies to help identify broad issues, concerns, desires, etc. that might be relevant to regional planning activities. Opportunities to integrate DRCOG public outreach efforts via corridor study venues are also pursued.

Projects

The project sponsor is responsible for involving the public in efforts during environmental planning and design phases for specific local transportation projects. DRCOG staff monitors studies for major projects.

Conformity

DRCOG must find conformity with the State Air Quality Implementation Plan before it can adopt or amend the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan or the Transportation Improvement Program. Public involvement is crucial to the conformity process, since this determination affects what types of projects can be included in the MVRTP and TIP.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes all metropolitan transportation planning and transportation-related land use and air quality planning activities regardless of funding source for the coming year, addressing the planning priorities facing the DRCOG region. The UPWP identifies tasks that will be accomplished using federal transportation planning funds. DRCOG, CDOT and RTD participate in the activities of the annual UPWP, which includes descriptions of planning tasks to be performed, identification of funding sources and descriptions of other major transportation planning activities by partner agencies and local governments.

Public Involvement Methods

Various techniques will selectively be used to provide information and solicit public comment. Some examples of public involvement activities are briefly described below.

Community and Public Places Outreach

Informational tables or displays may be set up at the following sites:

- shopping malls;
- outside of large retail establishments; and/or
- at community festivals or events.

Staff will be available to provide information to the public and to solicit input.

Informational Brochures or Newsletters

Informational brochures and newsletters are often provided by the programs at DRCOG to encourage communication between the regional community and the program staff. This helps to ensure that information regarding current activities and news about the region is shared throughout the region. Brochures and newsletters are prepared for major plan updates and provide an overview and basic information to the public pointing them toward additional resources, including the DRCOG web site (www.drcog.org).

Mailing Lists

Mailing list databases help an agency organize and update its public communications. Lists may include telephone numbers, fax numbers and/or email addresses to help contact the public. Using mailing lists, DRCOG reaches an audience with announcements of upcoming events, meeting invitations, newsletters, summary reports and other information about its activities.

DRCOG updates its mailing list at the start of a major planning process. DRCOG may also create a targeted mailing list for a survey. The DRCOG master mailing list includes nearly 6,000

members of the public and organizations, all of whom receive the official newsletter. About 2,000 people and organizations receive specific transportation notifications.

Media Strategies

Media strategies inform the public about projects and programs through newspapers, radio, television and videos, billboards, posters and variable message signs, mass mailings of brochures or newsletters, and distribution of fliers. Promotional brochures or fliers can be used in direct mail campaigns or through a full-size newspaper supplement explaining the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan. Briefing reporters and editorial boards of both newspaper and broadcast media with background on a project or program prepares them to cover the topic in an objective and fair manner.

DRCOG may prepare press releases and media packets at the 'kick off' of the planning process of such major endeavors as the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan.

Minority and Low-Income Community Strategies

DRCOG staff is proactive regarding public outreach to potential low-income communities and minority communities. Frequently used methods to obtain input are:

- targeted mailings and questionnaire distribution;
- speaking requests to organizations and interest groups;
- participation on corridor studies and compilation of local comments;
- Spanish language questionnaires; and
- frequent contact with local government planners, staff and elected officials.

Piggybacking on Other Efforts

DRCOG staff often sets up public outreach displays and materials at public meetings or corridor study offices administered by CDOT, RTD or local governments. Staff will also take advantage of opportunities to interact with the public through the activities of the DRCOG Commuter

Services program. A wider audience is directly reached through these efforts, especially those in low-income communities and minority communities.

Public Guide to Planning and Public Participation

Preparation of a popular style document (title unknown) that will help to explain many aspects of the planning process, such as transportation, land-use, open space and parks, water treatment, etc. The issues and planning processes will be explained, with information provided about how the public can participate at the regional, local and study or corridor area planning level.

Public Hearing

Public hearings are more formal events than a public meeting and are based on legal requirements. Held prior to a decision point, a public hearing gathers community comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input into decisions. Public hearings are required by the federal government for many transportation documents and projects. Additional hearings may be held during the transportation planning process at the discretion of the sponsoring organization. Public notices in a general circulation newspaper cite the time, date and place of a hearing. A minimum period of 30 days between notice and hearing dates provides time for the public to prepare comments for submission to an agency. During this period, the agency accepts questions and provides clarification. Subject documents must be available to the public when notice of a hearing is given.

DRCOG hosts public hearings before the adoption of the Metro Vision Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program and their corresponding conformity statements, and other key planning documents. DRCOG staff prepares summaries of all comments received during the 30-day review period and presents them to the DRCOG committees and Board. All DRCOG-hosted public hearings are wheelchair accessible. Also, DRCOG will accommodate and provide services for persons with other disabilities when provided notice before the hearing.

Public Interest Forums / Meetings / Workshops

Public forums and meetings disseminate information, provide a setting for public discussion, and get feedback from the community. They are often hosted at more than one key point in the process to develop specific planning documents. They are often tailored to specific issues or community groups and are either informal or formal. Such forums or meetings may include the following:

- poster sessions;
- open houses / interactions periods;
- activities to engage public input;
- formal presentations;
- question and answer periods;
- brainstorming sessions; and
- small break-out groups
- charettes

DRCOG addresses the Americans with Disabilities Act by ensuring that all DRCOG-hosted public forums and meetings are wheelchair accessible. Also, DRCOG will accommodate and provide services for persons with other disabilities when provided notice before the forum or meeting.

Speakers Bureau

DRCOG staff routinely contact local and regional interest groups, requesting to speak to and listen to their members at the meetings. The DRCOG web site also advertises this offer.

Surveys and Questionnaires

Surveys are useful for gathering public feedback on general or specific topics. A series of questions relating to a particular topic may be administered to a wide array of people in both English and Spanish. Surveys can be administered in person at public meetings and gatherings, through the mail, over the telephone, and/or on the web.

Web Site

Improvements are continually made to the DRCOG web site (www.drcog.org) to keep the public informed about planning activities and to offer another way to provide comments. Currently the web site contains a calendar of meetings, agendas and meeting summaries within the agendas.

Additional efforts to improve the web site may include:

- clear announcements of public meetings;
- easy to navigate access to documents;
- interactive maps and displays for providing information to the public;
- interactive questionnaires or surveys;
- links for providing comments or identifying needs or concerns; and
- official publication of legal notices.

Work Groups

These groups are assigned a specific task, with a time limit for reaching a conclusion or producing a draft document, subject to ratification by official decision-makers. The membership of these groups often includes local people or representatives from interest groups, appointed by elected officials or agency executives. Agency staff people are frequently assigned to provide technical support.

4. Documentation, Distribution and Notification

All documentation pertaining to transportation plans and programs is available for public review and comment. This chapter describes the type of documents available and how they are distributed. It also identifies procedures DRCOG follows to notify the public of the documents, meetings and other information.

Documentation

DRCOG produces policy documents via adopting resolutions, technical reports, white papers, consultant reports and popular reports. These provide written documentation of the policies, plans, programs and planning activities of the transportation planning process.

DRCOG plans, reports, meetings, agendas and meeting summaries are available on the DRCOG web site at www.drcog.org

Policy documents are prepared first in draft form and then published in final form after adoption by the Board of Directors. DRCOG will make drafts of policy documents available for public comment at least 30 days prior to any public hearing on the subject. Drafts of the Public Involvement Plan will be available at least 45 days prior to a public hearing. Public comments received on the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program will be summarized and included with the policy document along with responses and the disposition of the comments.

DRCOG may publish technical and other reports after acceptance by the Transportation Advisory Committee or other committees, as appropriate. These reports will be available upon their completion. In addition to published reports, DRCOG maintains unpublished technical information in support of its planning efforts.

Summaries are prepared of all meetings of DRCOG committees and the Board. These are available upon request from DRCOG or on the DRCOG web site. DRCOG prepares written responses to comments made at public hearings one week before Board action. DRCOG will also provide documentation of key decision points in a planning process through the public outreach of that process.

For major updates to the Metro Vision Regional Transportation Plan, a separate summary document of public involvement activities and input received is produced. It is available to decision-makers and the general public on the DRCOG web site. The most recent summary document is the *Summary of Public Involvement Activities*.

Distribution and Notification

The public may request to own or view all reports developed and compiled by DRCOG. DRCOG publications may be free of charge or cost a nominal fee. Most publications can also be downloaded and printed from the DRCOG web site. The public may also view unpublished technical information at the DRCOG offices.

Draft policy documents are available at DRCOG's office and on the DRCOG web site. Libraries in the region have access to the DRCOG web site for viewing or downloading documents.

DRCOG informs the public about the agency's actions or activities through its monthly newsletter, *Regional Report*. This newsletter is mailed to nearly 6,000 individuals and organizations. In addition to the newsletter, DRCOG distributes advance notices regarding pending policy actions and decisions to regional, community and minority media. Public hearings are advertised in at least both major Denver daily newspapers.

DRCOG will maintain a comprehensive mailing list of elected officials, public officials, special interest groups and others to ensure the widest possible distribution of documents. This list is used for its monthly newsletter and to selectively inform the public of upcoming meetings and other events pertaining to the transportation planning process and products. Various DRCOG email lists will be consolidated and expanded. This provides an additional mechanism to notify the public of timely events and activities.

DRCOG will prepare a weekly listing of public meetings scheduled under its auspices. This listing is posted at the DRCOG offices and on the DRCOG web site. These meetings are all open to the public. Public comment periods are provided for during meetings of DRCOG committees.

5. Review of Public Participation Process

Every **four** years DRCOG is reviewed and certified by FHWA/ FTA to ensure DRCOG is meeting Federal requirements as an MPO. In the annual interim years, a self-certification review is conducted. The public participation processes of DRCOG are an important part of this review. As part of the self-certification, DRCOG will annually review the public participation process, considering the following items:

- What was the success of specific strategies in attracting the public and associated comments?
- What level of public input was received for various planning products?
- Was public input considered by decision-makers?
- Should any new strategies or adjustments be considered in the following year?
- Are any changes or amendments necessary to the Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning document?

The DRCOG public participation process has improved as a result of such past reviews. For instance, greater efforts are now made to monitor corridor studies that solicit valuable input from low-income and minority communities. This has resulted in more information being provided to DRCOG decision-makers. Improvements to the DRCOG web site provide more information to the public and more opportunities for the public to provide input on specific transportation topics.

Appendix A
Federal Regulation on MPO Public Involvement Process

Appendix A - Federal Regulation on MPO Public Involvement Process

23 CFR 450.316: Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process: Elements.

(b) In addition, the metropolitan transportation planning process shall:

- (1) Include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs and meets the requirements and criteria specified as follows:
 - (i) Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
 - (ii) Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to central city and other local jurisdiction concerns);
 - (iii) Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
 - (iv) Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs (in nonattainment areas, classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan, TIP and major amendment(s));
 - (v) Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
 - (vi) Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households;
 - (vii) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;
 - (viii) If the final transportation plan or TIP 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 plan or TIP shall be made available;
 - (ix) Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;
 - (x) These procedures will be reviewed by the FHWA and the FTA during certification reviews for TMAs, and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to assure that full and open access is provided to MPO decisionmaking processes;
 - (xi) Metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs;

Appendix B
Adopting Resolution

DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

STATE OF COLORADO

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION NO. 24, 2005

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE DOCUMENT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

WHEREAS, the Denver Regional Council of Governments, as the Metropolitan Planning Organization, is responsible for carrying out and maintaining the continuing comprehensive transportation planning process designed to prepare and adopt regional transportation plans and programs; and

WHEREAS, the urban transportation planning process in the Denver region is carried out through cooperative agreement between the Denver Regional Council of Governments, the Regional Transportation District, and the Colorado Department of Transportation; and

WHEREAS, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires that each Metropolitan Planning Organization prepare a document that outlines public involvement policies and efforts; and

WHEREAS, the document *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* was prepared, which incorporates Board policy, describes methods and procedures, and responds to state and federal regulations pertaining to public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, the draft *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document was the subject of an advertised 45-day public comment period and a public hearing on September 21, 2005; and

WHEREAS, the Regional Transportation Committee has recommended adoption of the document.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Denver Regional Council of Governments hereby approves the *Public Involvement in Regional Transportation Planning* document dated October 19, 2005 as the policy plan for the conduct of public involvement activities associated with the regional transportation planning process.

A RESOLUTION TO ADOPT THE DOCUMENT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN
REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING.

Resolution No. 24, 2005


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RESOLVED, PASSED AND ADOPTED this 19th day of ~~October~~, 2005 at
Denver, Colorado.



Will Toor, Chair
Board of Directors
Denver Regional Council of Governments

ATTEST:



Jennifer Schaufele, Executive Director



DRCOG

DENVER REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

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