

## **Chapter 3 – Public Involvement**

Proactive citizen participation in the transportation planning process is crucial if plans are to reflect the needs and desires of the community for its transportation system. In addition, the federal government requires that citizens be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in each step of the long-range transportation plan for the region. The *Public Involvement Plan for the Development of the 2025 Regional Transportation Plan and 2002-2007 Transportation Improvement Program*, approved by the Urban Area Policy Committee and PPACG Board of Directors on November 8, 2000, was implemented to encourage and facilitate region-wide public involvement in the development of these two inter-related documents. The *Public Involvement Plan* is in Appendix B and was followed during the development of the *Destination 2025 Plan*. The public involvement and consultation process involved many components to ensure a meaningful process and a rich opportunity for citizens of the region to participate.

### **3.1 Target Audiences**

Transportation issues and decisions affect many different audiences in different ways. A variety of public involvement techniques were used to ensure that the broadest possible input was received to aid in plan preparation. Elected officials, local government staff, federal and state regulatory agency personnel, transit and specialized transportation providers, human service agencies, citizens representing all geographic areas of the region and community-based organizations are ongoing participants on PPACG's advisory and policy committees. For the development of the *Destination 2025 Plan*, the input from a broad range of perspectives was sought and facilitated. The following audiences were specified for outreach:

- Businesses
- Faith-based organizations
- Citizen groups
- Civic organizations
- Disabled populations
- Emergency response organizations
- High school and college students
- Homeowners associations
- Human service agencies
- Low-income populations
- Media
- Military installations
- Minority populations
- Native Americans
- Neighborhood associations
- Parent teacher associations
- Private transportation providers
- Regulatory agencies
- School districts
- Senior populations and organizations
- Tourist organizations
- Users of all modes of transportation
- Youth service organizations

A mailing list was assembled to ensure that these audiences were notified of the plan development schedule, public participation opportunities and document availability.

## Special Briefings

Throughout the *Destination 2025 Plan* development process, PPACG staff members provided special briefings to a number of groups including civic organizations, school districts, chambers of commerce, and local governmental bodies. Briefings were also given to groups addressing specialized transit needs and to participants in many of the ongoing environmental studies in the region. Subjects of the briefings varied according to the stage of the plan development process and group addressed. It is estimated that over 25 such briefings were made.

A list of key decision points was prepared and updated as necessary to keep participants informed of the plan development process. Figure 3-1 describes these key decision points and lists the date they occurred.

**Figure 3-1**  
**Key Decision Points for Urban Area Policy Committee and PPACG Board**

DATE	ACTION TAKEN
May 10, 2000	Approved the Public Involvement Plan
October 11, 2000	Approved the Small Area Forecast
June 13, 2001	Approve Criteria and Weights for Project Selection
August 8, 2001	Present Priority List of Projects
September 12, 2001	Present the Fiscally Constrained List of Projects
September 19, 2001	Authorize Release of Draft Plan for 45 -day Public Review
November 14, 2001	Approve Destination 2025

### **3.2 PPACG Community Advisory Committee (CAC)**

The CAC is made up of ordinary citizens who are appointed by member governments to represent the citizens of their local governments, as well as citizens who represent organizations in our community that have a regional transportation perspective such as the Council of Neighborhood Organizations (CONO) and the League of Women Voters. The CAC was very active in development and implementation of the Public Involvement Plan for the *Destination 2025 Plan*.

### **3.3 Public Meetings**

Public meetings are an integral part of communicating with the public on regional transportation planning matters. Public workshops, meetings, and special briefings provide a forum through which partnerships can be forged between stakeholders of the transportation system. Further, they provide the interested public with the opportunity to interact one-on-one with PPACG Planning staff and to actively contribute to the policy and decision-making process on transportation planning. These meetings provide the opportunity for early and continuous input into the process and provide outreach to various professional, civic, cultural, and community groups.

The following means were used to announce the public meetings: media releases, published advertisements in regional newspapers, over 1,800 flyers mailed to neighborhood associations and mailing-list participants, electronic mailing list, direct contact and other appropriate notification means. All public meetings were held in locations accessible to the disabled and near alternative modes of transportation. Advertising included contact information for persons needing special accommodations.

### Public Process Initiation Meeting Series

The Pikes Peak Area Council of Governments' Transportation Planning Program kicked off preparation of *Destination 2025: A Mobility Plan for the Pikes Peak Region (Destination 2025 Plan)* in the fall of 2000. As part of the first phase of the process, public meetings were held to obtain input from the public on problems, issues, constraints and opportunities related to the region's transportation system. Citizens were asked to help identify transportation system problems areas and issues related to planning and implementing transportation improvements. Six public meetings were held in the fall of 2000 around the region as shown in Figure 3-2:

**Figure 3-2**  
**Public Process Initiation Meeting Series – Fall 2000**

<b><u>Evening Meetings:</u></b>	<b><u>Open House 6 to 7 p.m. -- Public Forum 7 to 8:30 p.m.</u></b>
Tuesday, October 24	Timberview Middle School 8680 Scarborough Drive, Colorado Springs
Thursday, October 26	Green Mountain Falls Town Hall 7035 Oak, Green Mountain Falls
Thursday, November 2	City of Colorado Springs Council Chambers 30 South Nevada, Colorado Springs
Wednesday, November 8	City of Fountain Council Chambers 212 North Santa Fe, Fountain
Thursday, November 16	Lewis–Palmer High School 1300 East Higby Road, Monument
<b><u>Daytime Meeting:</u></b>	<b><u>Open House 2 to 3 p.m. -- Public Forum 3 to 4:30 p.m.</u></b>
Thursday, November 2	City of Colorado Springs Council Chambers 30 South Nevada, Colorado Springs

### Public Meeting on Project Prioritization Process

PPACG sponsored a public meeting on May 23, 2001, 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., as part of the public participation process to develop the *Destination 2025 Plan*. The format for the meeting featured

an Open House, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m., where citizens could view displays and discuss regional transportation-related issues that concerned them, and a public forum, from 6 p.m. to 7 p.m., where they could discuss the issues in a group setting. The purpose of the public meeting was to obtain public input into the development of the project prioritization process and on the list of projects proposed for inclusion in the *Destination 2025 Plan*. The proposed Project Prioritization Process featured the *Destination 2025 Plan* adopted goals and objectives grouped by the seven planning factors of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21). One of the meeting activities focused on obtaining public input into the relative importance of each of the seven planning factors.

#### Project Evaluation Public Meeting

A public meeting held July 17, 2001, provided citizens the opportunity to examine the preliminary prioritized project list. Fifty-eight citizens attended this well-publicized meeting and provided written and verbal comments on the relative ranking of over 350 road, bicycle, pedestrian, public transportation and congestion management projects. These projects, which PPACG staff ranked according to the adopted Project Prioritized Process, were presented in priority order in a multi-modal list.

The tenor of the comments reflected support for the shift in emphasis placed on alternative modes of transportation and the environment; however, it was also recognized that there were many unmet roadway needs that should be addressed. Many individuals at the public meeting took the opportunity to compliment PPACG for the open manner in which the plan development process had been conducted.

#### Public Meetings for Final Plan Review

Four public meetings were scheduled around the region for the public to review the draft *Destination 2025 Plan*. The meetings were held in Colorado Springs, Fountain, Woodland Park, and the Black Forest/Falcon Area. On September 12, the Urban Area Policy Committee and PPACG Board of Directors voted to release the draft document for its 45-day review period. The document was provided to libraries and the administrative offices of member governments for citizens to review. The document was available on PPACG's website. Comments on the plan were addressed and responses prepared for inclusion in the final plan documentation.

#### Final Public Hearing

A final public hearing was held on the *Destination 2025 Plan* prior to its adoption at the Urban Area Policy Committee/PPACG Board of Directors meeting November 14, 2001.

### **3.4 Focus Groups**

PPACG conducted four focus group meetings May 1 and May 2, 2001, also to obtain input on prioritizing the seven TEA-21 planning factors. Previously, traditional methods such as open houses and public presentations have been employed to gather public commentary. However, several factors led PPACG to believe the general public was not well represented in past public

involvement efforts. The factors that have contributed to PPACG's decision to incorporate alternative methods of gathering community input include:

- Poor attendance at public meetings;
- Over-represented sectors of the public;
- Under-represented sectors of the public;
- Lack of meaningful and relevant feedback necessary to enrich the recommendations set forth by the PPACG.

In order to meet these challenges and gather a true representation of the community opinion as it relates to transportation issues and planning, a process by which a thorough sampling of opinion of as many of the community segments as possible was recommended. To assist PPACG in completing this task effectively, PRACO, Ltd., was hired to design and implement the focus group meetings.

Several focus groups of the community at large were recommended to complement PPACG's overall public information process that included community and media relations programs. Focus groups are informal discussions in which eight to twelve participants discuss the research topic in their own terms, guided by a professional moderator. As part of the public process, focus groups allow for probing of perceptions of current societal or public affairs issues, in this case, long-range transportation planning.

Focus groups, by the nature of their design, typically yield qualitative data. However, depending on the methodology employed, quantitative data also can be extracted. Qualitative research utilizes open-ended interviewing to explore and understand the attitudes, opinions, feelings, and behaviors of individuals or a group of individuals. Qualitative methods provide the unique ability to gather insight into the underlying issues most pertinent to the population under study and are best used to gather in-depth information. Quantitative research is specifically designed to produce accurate and reliable measurements that permit statistical analysis. In PPACG's focus groups, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used.

A demographic analysis of the Pikes Peak Region was conducted by PPACG to establish focus group selection criteria to accurately represent the demographic characteristics of the region in accordance with the 1990 United States Census, the most current and complete set of data. Criteria were selected to alleviate over and under representation that is common in the public meeting forum. These parameters included: home zip code, gender, age, annual household income, ethnicity, and employment status.

PRACO established the focus group recruiting methodology and conducted the groups' meetings. Based on the criteria established by PPACG, the overall participant mix of the four focus groups was representative of all residents in the Colorado Springs Urbanizing Area. PRACO incorporated stringent criteria for each group including a finite number of males and females, specific zip codes, specific age ranges, income ranges, and mix of ethnicity. In order to try to closely match specified criteria, a 250-person database was used. Other targeted calls were

made using the US West DEX directory for phone numbers in specific zip codes (i.e., Palmer Lake, Peyton, Black Forest), and an email database of 500 addresses was used.

Additionally, geographic specifications were used to establish the recruiting protocol for the focus groups. In order to ensure meaningful dialogue, participants were placed in groups where geographic location was a common factor. The recommended geographic zones characterized in Figure 3-3 below were devised to provide region-wide coverage.

**Figure 3-3  
Recommended Geographic Characteristics**

<b>Zone</b>	<b>Location Description</b>	<b>Included Zip Codes</b>
North Zone	Old Ranch Rd by Marksheffel Rd by Austin Bluffs/Garden of the Gods by mountains	80917, 80918, 80919, 80920, 80922
Central Zone	Garden of the Gods/Austin Bluffs by Marksheffel Rd by Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by mountains	80903, 80904, 80907, 80909, 80915
Outlying Zone	Monument, Gleneagle, Palmer Lake, Falcon, Black Forest, Fountain/Security, Woodland Park	80132, 80921, 80133, 80831, 80908, 80817, 80911, 80863
South Zone	Hwy 24/Platte/Airport by Marksheffel Rd by Drennan Rd/Hwy 83 by Norad Rd by mountains	80829, 80905, 80906, 80910, 80916

The result of the stringent recruiting protocol guaranteed a mix of participants comparable to the population at large in the Pikes Peak Region.

In order to ensure an unbiased and true representation of the focus group participant's opinions as they relate to the seven planning factors, it was necessary to fully and completely explain the role of the factors, the factors themselves, and how the factors fit into the transportation planning process in terms that the participants could clearly understand. To accomplish this, the following steps were taken:

- In-depth explanation and discussion of each of the seven planning factors using federal and lay terminology;
- Open floor for questions regarding the factors throughout the focus groups;
- Allowing a group of observers to view and validate the process and highlight any area for further explanation and discussion.

The methodology employed throughout the focus group process was consistent with industry standards for gathering information in this forum. The resulting priorities placed on the seven planning factors are a fair and well thought-out representation of the community’s overall opinion toward the planning factors.

### 3.5 Website

PPACG’s website was used as a focal point for dissemination of *Destination 2025 Plan* information. Continuously updated, the *Destination 2025 Plan* web page contained information on the following plan topics:

- Schedule and Process
- Projects
- Plan Documents
- Mailing List Sign-up
- Public Meetings
- Prioritizing Projects
- Transportation Related Links
- Multi-modal Transportation

A “Hot Topics” button provided web page viewers with instant access to the most recent plan information. Comments on the plan could be submitted via the web page and viewers could also link to other transportation planning related sites.

### 3.6 Coordination with Other Transportation Planning Processes Public Involvement Efforts

#### City of Colorado Springs Public Transportation Plan

The Transit Services Unit, a division of the Public Works Department of the City of Colorado Springs, prepared the Long-Range Public Transportation Plan. The Long-Range Public Transportation Plan is included as an integral part of the *Destination 2025 Plan* and functions as the City of Colorado Springs Transit Development Plan 2025. The City of Colorado Springs Transit Services Unit is responsible for the planning, development, and management of the public transportation system that serves the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area.

Transit Services Unit staff participated extensively in the public process for development of the *Destination 2025 Plan*. Long-Range Public Transportation Plan displays and informational materials were presented at *Destination 2025 Plan* public meetings. Transit Services Unit staff were on hand to answer questions and take comments relative to public transportation system needs and recommendations.

The Transit Services Unit staff also held public meetings as specific components of the Public Transportation Plan were developed. These meetings were held at different locations throughout the public transportation service area. Goals, objectives and strategies for public transportation were developed. Recommendations include detail on system operation for both the fixed-route service and the Americans with Disabilities Act paratransit service. Detail on the Public Transportation Plan development and its public process are included in Appendix D.

## Specialized Transportation Plan for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons

PPACG prepared the Specialized Transportation Plan to address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities and elderly persons in the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area. Springs Mobility and several non-profit human service transportation providers operating in the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area provide for these transportation needs. The Specialized Transportation Plan development process utilized the PPACG's Specialized Transportation Advisory Subcommittee (STAS) as the input group. STAS includes representatives of the non-profit human service transportation providers, Springs Mobility, Springs Transit, organizations providing representing the needs of disabled and elderly clients, and community-based organizations. STAS also has representation from users of public transportation and specialized transportation services.

The consultant for the Specialized Transportation Plan, LSC Transportation Consultants, conducted direct interviews of clients and human service providers and others to gather input and data for plan development. Input for the Specialized Transportation Plan was also gathered during PPACG's *Destination 2025 Plan* public process. LSC maintained a web page throughout the Specialized Transportation Plan development process to facilitate easy access by the public to plan development information. Those activities are detailed in the Specialized Transportation Plan document included in Appendix E.

### **3.7 Media Outreach**

Media outreach took place during each key decision Point of the *Destination 2025 Plan* development process. PRACO, Ltd., PPACG's consultant for the public process, provided ongoing support to inform the public of the key study events, to encourage the media to highlight transportation issues, and to increase awareness of the transportation planning process. Outreach techniques included:

- Briefings - Media briefings were conducted to provide the media with information regarding the transportation planning process and to answer any questions in regard to transportation issues.
- Media Interviews/Talk Shows - Local media interviews, including print, television and radio talk shows were used to convey information about transportation planning objectives and progress. These interviews provided the opportunity to discuss planning elements in further detail and to address questions from the media and the public.
- Press Releases - Press releases informed the media about upcoming transportation planning activities or events. Draft press releases were submitted to PPACG for review prior to release. Non-English speaking outlets were asked to translate the information for their audiences.
- Calendar of Events/Advertisements - The PPACG website, the local media event calendars, and paid advertisements were used to notify the public about public meetings and public hearings, the website and other participation opportunities.

### 3.8 Outreach to Under-served Populations

The *Destination 2025 Plan* development process was structured to ensure that all individuals had access to public participation opportunities and all comments and input were given fair consideration. The Public Involvement Plan contains measures intended to reach a broad section of the community.

These specific efforts were made to encourage participation by ethnic, minority, and low-income groups and disabled and elderly citizens in the transportation planning and decision-making process:

- Four focus groups were held with participants representing a demographic cross-section of the region to get input on the transportation priorities of the community. A full report on the focus groups is provided in Appendix F.
- Flyers publicizing the plan development process were mailed to minority organizations and to community-based organizations serving the needs of low-income and homeless persons, persons with disabilities and elderly persons.
- Public meetings were held throughout the community and locations and times were chosen to ensure that transit-dependent individuals could attend. All meeting locations were compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act for accessibility.
- An extensive media program was initiated to ensure public meetings and input opportunities were well publicized. Advertising and media releases contained contact information for persons needing special accommodations to attend the meetings, and alternative formats for receiving information were offered. Media releases were provided to media organizations targeting minority and ethnic populations.
- Draft plan availability and plan comment opportunities were advertised in Spanish in *Hispania News*.

### 3.9 Response to Public Comments and Concerns

Comments given by members of the public were integrated into the decision-making process at each point in the *Destination 2025 Plan* development. Citizens provided perspective on the vision and goals for the regional community through 2025 and provided many suggestions on how to achieve those goals. The citizens also provided a very valuable resource for information on transportation system function and needs. Literally hundreds of comments, project ideas, and concerns were expressed during the public process, and many echoed the same or similar concerns. Public input topics ranged from overall ideas on improving the planning process to specific recommendations for project specific locations.

Appendix F lists the public comments received and provides a summary, analysis, and report on how comments were responded to throughout the plan development process.

### 3.10 Public Process Evaluation

Federal regulations require that the public involvement procedures of a Metropolitan Planning Organization be reviewed periodically for effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all. To determine whether the *Destination 2025 Plan* development process had accomplished the established public involvement goals and objectives, the public involvement program was evaluated throughout. Demographic information on public meeting attendees was collected via a short survey form. Comment forms asked meeting attendees how they heard about the meeting. Meeting attendees were asked to place a dot on a map to indicate their residence so that it could be determined whether broad coverage of the region had been achieved.

The information obtained from these sources was reviewed to determine program progress and recommend possible adjustments to better facilitate public involvement in the transportation planning process. Meeting comments were also reviewed to see if any specifically related to meeting presentation, format, location, or other concerns.

This review resulted in a mid-course adjustment to the public involvement process. The first series of six meetings were poorly attended, and attendees, based on the information from the demographics forms filled out at the meetings, did not demographically represent the region's population make-up. It was determined that different techniques needed to be employed to ensure that PPACG's public involvement goal and objectives were met. Therefore, professional consultation and facilitation services were sought. A Request for Proposals was prepared and published and PRACO, Ltd., was chosen as the firm to assist PPACG in broadly implementing the Public Involvement Plan recommendations. PRACO staff was charged with implementing the media program, planning and holding four focus groups and facilitating public meetings and Community Advisory Committee meetings.

Information and input gathered during the *Destination 2025 Plan* public involvement process will be analyzed in early 2002 to determine what, if any, adjustments should be made to PPACG's public involvement procedures for future planning efforts. The PPACG's Community Advisory Committee serves as the input group on recommendations concerning public involvement procedures. The focus of this effort will be to identify and eliminate participation barriers and foster an inclusive environment that engages minority, low-income, disabled and elderly persons in the transportation decision making process.