

Chapter 3 – Public Involvement

Effective public involvement is one of the most critical elements in transportation planning. It is also one of the most difficult to get right. On the one hand, failure to involve the public early in the process assures public opposition when the plan is proposed for adoption. On the other hand, involving citizens and stakeholders too often or asking them to provide input without an adequate base of information can produce frustration and poor feedback. If the transportation plans are to reflect the needs and desires of the community, then proactive citizen participation is crucial to gain input, overcome apathy and governmental distrust, and build the citizen commitment necessary for implementation of projects. The intent of PPACG's public involvement effort is to:

1. Gain early and continuing public involvement opportunities through the transportation planning and programming process;
2. Achieve a credible regional transportation planning process by applying professional standards in the collection and analysis of data and in timely dissemination of information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, impacted public agencies, transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties;
3. Seek out and include the needs of people traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households who may face challenges accessing employment and other regional amenities;
4. Achieve effective intergovernmental consultation, cooperation, and coordination of transportation related activities and decisions.

The *Public Involvement Plan for the Development of the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan and 2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program, (Public Involvement Plan)* was approved by the PPACG Board of Directors on September 10, 2003. 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. The *Public Involvement Plan* is provided in Appendix B.

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 the development of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*. 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 2030 *Regional Transportation 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, draft document availability, and public comment opportunities.

Special Briefings

Throughout the 2030 *Regional Transportation Plan* development process, PPACG staff members provided special briefings to a number of groups including civic organizations, 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 feasibility and/or environmental studies in the region. Subjects of the briefings varied according to the stage of the plan development process and group addressed.

A list of key decision points was prepared and updated as necessary to keep participants informed of the plan development process. Table 3.1 describes these key decision points and identifies the date they occurred.

TABLE 3.1
Key Decision Points for PPACG Board of Directors

Date	Action Taken
September 10, 2003	Public Involvement Plan Approved
December 10, 2003	Socioeconomic Forecasts Approved 2030 Regional Transportation Vision, Goals and Objectives Approved
February 11, 2004	Evaluation Criteria Approved
April 14, 2004	Weights by Goal for Evaluation Criteria Approved Socioeconomic Forecasts Adjusted to Address Citizen Concerns
July 14, 2004	Priority List of Projects Presented
August 11, 2004	Release of Draft Plan for 30-day Public Review Approved
October 13, 2004	<i>2030 Regional Transportation Plan</i> Approved

3.2 PPACG Community Advisory Committee

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is made up of 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 Neighbors and Organizations (CONO) and the League of Women Voters. The CAC was very active in development and implementation of the Public Involvement Plan for the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and participated in preparing recommendations at every step in the plan development process.

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 publicize the public meetings on the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan:

- PPACG website, www.ppacg.org;
- Media releases;
- Paid advertisements in regional newspapers;
- Flyers mailed to over 700 neighborhood organizations and associations and mailing-list participants (4 mailings);
- Electronic mailing list; and
- Announcements at committee and various community meetings.

A newsletter, published four times and mailed to over 800 addresses including those of the target audiences listed in Section 3.1, was used to communicate details of plan-related topics. All public meetings were held in locations accessible to the disabled and near public transportation. Most were held in PPACG's conference room in Colorado Springs. Published materials included contact information for persons needing special accommodations and conveyed information regarding Federal Transit Administration funded projects.

Summaries of each meeting are presented in the following text. Public comments made at these meetings are included in Appendix C.

Public Process Initiation Meeting

PPACG's Transportation Planning Program initiated preparation of the 2030 *Regional Transportation Plan* in the fall of 2003. Two 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. The proposed vision, goals, and objectives and the draft 2030 Small Area Forecasts were also presented for public review and comment.

The public meetings were held November 18, 2003, at PPACG's Conference Room at 15 South 7th Street in Colorado Springs. Two meeting sessions were held: the first, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m., and the second, from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m., featured identical agendas. The format of each meeting was divided between open house and informal discussion groups. Displays, including the plan development process and schedule and the proposed vision, goals and objectives, and maps showing regional transportation facilities and the results of the 2030 *Small Area Forecast* were posted for participants to reference and to serve as a mechanism to collect comments. Citizens were asked to post specific comments on the displays to reference a location or to apply to a specific item on the displays. A number of comments were made covering a

wide range of locations and issues. These concerns, among others, were considered and addressed by PPACG planners and advisory committees when refining the vision, goals and objectives. Comments regarding specific locations were recorded for consideration, as appropriate at future points in the plan development process. This information was also conveyed to the respective jurisdiction referenced by a specific project or planning suggestion.

Public Meeting on Evaluation Criteria

A public meeting was held on January 13, 2004, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., to obtain public input on the draft evaluation criteria. The format of this meeting was an open house. Displays and maps were provided as at the November 18, 2003, meeting, with the addition of the proposed evaluation criteria. A secondary purpose of the meeting was to continue soliciting input on the transportation system problems and potential solutions.

A number of suggestions were made regarding the proposed evaluation criteria. One suggestion was to evaluate the change or increase in vehicle miles traveled compared to population growth. Another suggestion was that the flow of traffic through intersections should be used as a measurement of efficiency. One commenter felt that within the proposed criterion regarding neighborhood impacts, the safety of pedestrians should be considered. A number of roadways were listed as those needing improvements such as widening, new interchanges, and new construction.

Public Meeting on Proposed Evaluation Criteria Weighting

A public meeting was held on March 4, 2004, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., to obtain public input on weighting the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* goals. The format of this meeting was an open house. Displays and maps were provided similar to those in previous public meetings. Featured at this public meeting was a short survey designed to provoke discussion and gather meaningful input. The survey asked the participants to indicate: "For each \$100 of taxpayer dollars spent on transportation system improvements, tell us to which goal you think the money should be allocated." The survey was also provided in an interactive format on the PPACG's *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* website and in the newsletter to broaden its reach.

Public comments were also collected via the newsletter, through the PPACG *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* website, from the survey form, and from the public meetings. Sixty completed opinion surveys were returned to PPACG. Additional information on weighting the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* goals can be found in Chapter 4.

Preliminary Prioritized List of Projects

A public meeting was held on June 22, 2004, from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m., to obtain public input on the first draft list of prioritized projects, both for the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and for the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program*. The format of this meeting was an open house. Displays were provided similar to those in previous public meetings. Maps showing proposed system projects were displayed. Lists of projects, both for the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program*, were provided.

Public Meetings for Final Plan Review

Public meetings were held to facilitate public review of the draft recommended *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program*. The PPACG's Board of Directors approved release of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program* documents to the public on August 11. Meetings were held August 31, in PPACG's Conference Room, and September 1, at the East Library and Information Center at 5550 North Union in Colorado Springs. Public comment opportunities were included on the agendas of three advisory committee meetings in August 2004: the Community Advisory Committee meeting on August 18, the Air Quality Technical Committee meeting on August 25, and the Transportation Advisory Committee meeting on August 26. The PPACG Board of Directors meeting on September 8 also had an agenda item specifically for public comment.

Document copies were distributed to area libraries and to the administrative offices of PPACG member entities. The draft *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program* documents were also available on PPACG's website, www.ppacg.org. The public review period ended September 15, 2004.

Representatives of the Colorado Department of Transportation participated in the August 31 and September 1 public meetings to facilitate public review of the draft Colorado Statewide Plan. Federal planning regulations require metropolitan and statewide public involvement processes to be coordinated wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs, and to reduce redundancies and costs (23 CFR 450.316(b)).

A number of comments were submitted on the draft *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program* documents during the final public review period. Those comments were summarized and responses were prepared and reviewed by PPACG Staff and

advisory committees. The summary of comments submitted during the final public review period and responses to them is included in Appendix C.

Final Public Hearing

The final public hearing for the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* and the *2005-2010 Transportation Improvement Program* was held October 13, 2004, during the PPACG Board of Directors meeting. A list of public comments from that meeting is included in Appendix C.

3.4 Website

PPACG's website was used as a focal point for dissemination of *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* information. Continuously updated, the *2030 Regional Transportation 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 *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* information and announcements. Comments on the plan could be submitted via the web page and viewers could also link to other transportation planning related sites.

3.5 Coordination with Other Transportation Planning Processes Public Involvement Efforts

City of Colorado Springs Public Transportation Plan

The Transit Services Division of the City of Colorado Springs prepared an update to the *Destination 2025 Long-Range Public Transportation Plan*. The City of Colorado Springs Transit Services Division is responsible for the planning, development, management, and operations of the public transportation system that serves the Colorado Springs Urbanized Area.

Transit Services Division staff participated in the public process for development of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*. Public transportation system

informational displays and materials were available at *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* public meetings. Transit Services Division staff was in attendance to answer questions and record comments relative to public transportation system needs and recommendations. PPACG paid advertising for publicizing public meetings included the following statement: “This public notice also serves as public notice of the Federal Transit Administration, Sections 5307 and 5310 grant(s) Program of Projects.”

During the development of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, the City of Colorado Springs began the process to develop a long-range Rapid Transit Study and Master Plan. This master plan process examined potential rapid transit corridors in the City of Colorado Springs and the region. The purpose of this study was to identify feasible corridors in the region for implementing rapid transit. As part of this effort, an extensive public involvement process included input from the public, neighborhood organizations and homeowner’s associations, the business community, PACG advisory committees, and the PPACG Board of Directors. Information gained from the Rapid Transit Study and Master Plan process was incorporated into the Public Transportation Plan developed by the City of Colorado Springs as part of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* referenced in Chapter 5 and included in Appendix D, the *2030 Public Transportation Plan*.

Specialized Transportation Plan for Persons with Disabilities and Elderly Persons

In 2004, PPACG updated 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 primary input group. STAS members represent 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.

For the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan*, the Specialized Transportation Plan was updated to reflect additional 2000 Census data. Updated sections include the existing transportation services and revised short-range and long-range projected needs and fiscally constrained systems. Service demand and unmet needs were documented and evaluated and service coordination issues were addressed. The recommendations of the Specialized Transportation Plan are summarized in Chapter 7. The entire document is included in Appendix E.

Colorado Department of Transportation Statewide Planning Effort

In the spring of 2003, the Colorado Department of Transportation launched an update to the statewide long-range transportation plan. On March 4, 2003, PPACG hosted a meeting for CDOT concerning the 2030 statewide long range plan development. Public input followed the following topics:

- 2030 revenue projections;
- Performance objectives;
- Resource allocation;
- Strategic system vision;
- Corridor vision for state highway facilities; and
- Statewide planning policies.

Coordination with CDOT's statewide planning effort continued throughout the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* development process through CDOT's participation on the Transportation Advisory Committee and through PPACG's public involvement effort.

3.6 Media Outreach

Media outreach took place during each key decision Point of the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* development process. Media outreach served as a mechanism 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.
- Media Releases - Media releases informed local newspapers, radio and television stations, and other media outlets about upcoming transportation planning activities or events. 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.

3.7 Outreach to Under-Served Populations

The *2030 Regional Transportation 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:

- 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 primarily held at PPACG offices, which are accessible and have nearby access to public transportation services, 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*.

3.8 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 *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* development. Citizens provided perspective on the vision, goals, and objectives for the regional community through 2030 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 C lists the public comments received and provides a summary, analysis, and report of comments received during the final public review period.

3.9 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 *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* development process had accomplished the established public involvement goals and objectives, the public involvement program was evaluated throughout the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* development process. 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 mark on a map to indicate their residence and place of employment 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 determine if any comments specifically related to meeting presentation, format, location, or other concerns.

Information and input gathered during the *2030 Regional Transportation Plan* public involvement process will be analyzed in early 2005 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.