

# **CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (CMMPO)**

## **MPO Endorsed 2009 Program Year Public Outreach Program (POP)**



**Central Massachusetts Metropolitan  
Planning Organization**  
2 Washington Square - Union Station  
Worcester, MA 01604-4016

*Prepared by the transportation staff of the*



**September 2009**

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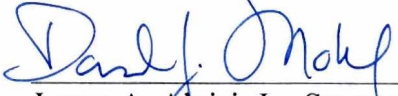
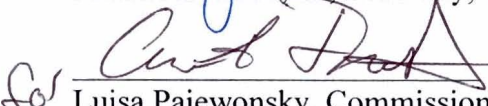
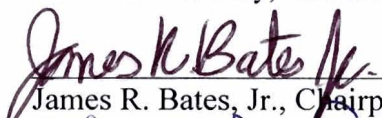


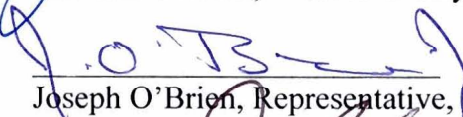
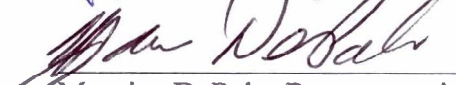
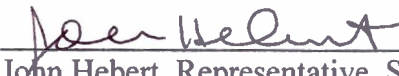
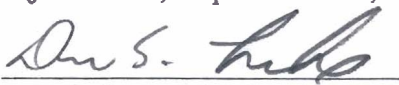
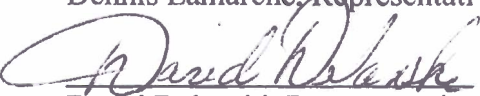
***Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Endorsement Sheet***

***2009 Program Year  
Public Outreach Program (POP)***

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) hereby endorses the 2009 Program Year Public Outreach Program (POP) document. The POP ensures early and continuing opportunities for the public to express their views on transportation issues and to become active participants in the transportation decision-making process of the CMMPO. The 2009 Program Year POP document was endorsed at a meeting of the CMMPO on September 29, 2009.

**2009 Program Year  
Public Outreach Program (POP)**

**Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>09/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	James A. Aloisi, Jr., Secretary, EOT	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur	 for	Date <u>9/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Luisa Paiewonsky, Commissioner, MassHighway	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9/29/2009</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	James R. Bates, Jr., Chairperson, CMRPC	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur	 for SFO	Date <u>9/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Stephen O'Neil, Chairperson, WRTA	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur	 for MBU	Date <u>9-29-09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Michael O'Brien, Worcester City Manager	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Joseph O'Brien, Representative, North Subregion	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Maurice DePalo, Representative, Northeast Subregion	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9-29-09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	John Hebert, Representative, Southeast Subregion	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9-29-09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	Dennis Lamarche, Representative, Southwest Subregion	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	I concur		Date <u>9/29/09</u>
<input type="checkbox"/>	I do not concur	David Delanski, Representative, West Subregion	

# ***2009 Public Outreach Program For Ongoing Transportation Planning Activities Including Specific Requirements for Major Planning Documents***

## **PURPOSE**

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) is responsible for carrying out the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the Central Massachusetts Region that results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development and social goals. The purpose of this Public Outreach Program (POP) is to ensure early and continuing opportunities for the public to express their views on transportation issues and to become active participants in the transportation decision-making process.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005, the current transportation enabling regulation, continues to emphasize the importance of public involvement in the transportation planning process that was included in both the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) of 1998. In addition, SAFETEA-LU highlights the need to develop MPO public participation plans “in consultation with all interested parties.” (See Appendix A for more information on the CMMPO and the key federal regulations affecting the POP.)

As a result, this POP has been developed with input from a wide variety of transportation stakeholders, including those interested in environmental, freight, transit, roadway, pedestrian, and bike concerns. Input was also sought from representatives of low-income, disabled, and elder populations. Input on ways to improve outreach, communication, and feedback on transportation planning issues has been, and will continue to be, an on-going process. Valuable input that has been incorporated into this plan includes:

- Maintaining on-going dialogue with stakeholders so that information about projects is provided early in the planning process when potential mitigation can be addressed most efficiently.
- Incorporating stakeholder data into the planning process at the early stages of project development.
- Communicating in a manner that meets the requirements of stakeholders, such as using visualization to translate technical issues to be easily understood by lay individuals or providing more technical information to those who require it.
- Providing information in a format that allows the stakeholders to compare projects geographically and to understand the impacts of historical projects within an area.

As noted in the Appendix B, various ways of addressing stakeholder needs has been undertaken in the past. In addition, the development of the 2007 Central Massachusetts Regional Transportation Plan and the 2007 Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Coordination Plan have provided opportunities to attempt new outreach and visualization methods. The CMMPO will continue to monitor the effectiveness of outreach efforts and continue to employ new methods, as appropriate. Methods will include:

- Meetings with MPO Advisory Groups
- Meetings with key stakeholder groups, including environmental groups and groups representing elderly, disabled, and low-income populations
- MPO web site
- Direct mailings to MPO database of interested parties
- Legal advertisements
- Quarterly newsletter
- Customized visualization techniques
- Geographic & historic presentation of data
- Public meetings and hearings
- Electronic correspondence
- Project Guidance Committee meetings
- Press releases
- Internet and paper surveys
- Flyers

### **SUMMARY OF THE PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM**

The CMMPO Public Outreach Program (POP) is summarized below. The listed elements address the fundamentals for public participation contained in the *Final Rules for Statewide and Metropolitan Planning*, the regulatory guidelines for implementation of SAFETEA-LU. A full description of how the POP meets compliance with each specific requirement of SAFETEA-LU is contained in Appendix C.

**(i) *Provide adequate public notice for public review and comment at key decision points.***

Public notices are published in the regional newspaper, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, posted on the CMRPC website, and sent via email as to when meetings will occur and when draft documents are available for circulation. Notices will be sent at least two weeks prior to selected meeting dates and to a wide variety of stakeholders including the following:

- CMRPC Commission Members
- Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee
- WRTA Advisory Board
- Regional Board of Selectmen Chairs
- Regional City/Town Managers
- Regional State Legislators

- State Agencies (including EOT, MassHighway and DEP)
- Interested individuals and Private Transportation Providers (who ask to be placed on the mailing list)
- Environmental Justice and environmental stakeholders

**(ii) Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.**

Early in the process of developing the RTP, UPWP and TIP, a schedule of public activities is posted in the regional newspaper, sent to key stakeholders, and is posted on the website. Prior to scheduled public meetings, press releases are sent to all local newspapers for publication at least two weeks prior to the established meeting date.

A minimum public comment period of 30 days has been established for the RTP, TIP, UPWP and major amendments, however the MPO, at their discretion, may vote to abbreviate the public comment period under what they consider to be extraordinary circumstances. All comments received during that time are considered before making a recommendation for MPO endorsement.

Copies of major documents are readily available for viewing on the website and are available at the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission's office during normal business hours.

In a further effort to broaden the public's knowledge of the transportation planning process, CMMPO staff will develop a "user-friendly" guide that outlines the steps in the life of a transportation-related project, from inception through construction. The guide will be tailored to the needs of stakeholders in the spirit of Limited English Proficiency guidelines.

**(iii) Employ visualization techniques to describe major planning documents.**

Visualization techniques will be tailored to the expected audience and related to the document that is being prepared and/or discussed. Examples of visualization techniques include, but are not limited to, maps, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive GIS systems, and drawings.

**(iv) Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats.**

CMRPC is updating its website to make it more "user-friendly" and to be able to display more information than it can now. The new website will include all current MPO documents for download, meeting notices, agendas and a specific CMMPO subpage to describe the roles and duties of the MPO.

CMRPC will be preparing a quarterly e-newsletter which will include coverage of MPO transportation issues and will be widely distributed to local/state officials, agencies and individuals, as well as be available for view on the website.

**(v) Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times.**

Open public meetings are held throughout the CMMPO's district (see Figure 1), tailored to times and locations that maximize the potential for public input and participation. All meetings are held in locations that are accessible to all persons.

**Figure #1**



**Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
Six Transportation Planning Sub-regions**

**(vi) Demonstrate consideration and response to public input received.**

All written public correspondence submitted to the CMMPO throughout the development of major documents are considered and responded to. All written public correspondence submitted to the CMMPO will be included in the commented planning document's Technical Appendix. CMRPC staff's response to those comments will also be included within these Technical Appendices and will also be sent directly to the commenter.

***(vii) Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.***

The CMMPO has historically made a concerted effort to involve the region's disabled, elderly, low-income and minority populations and will continue to do so. A number of advocacy groups serving these populations are included on the TPAG Elderly and Disabled Technical Task Force. These advocacy groups distribute transportation planning materials to their associates, including local community organizations. Participants include the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Worcester Office of Elder Affairs, the (Worcester) City Manager's Executive Office of Human Resources, the Age Center of the Worcester Area, Worcester Elder Home Care, the Seven Hills Foundation, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. Relationships with additional advocacy groups representing low income and minority populations are currently being broadened to other groups such as Common Pathways, a grassroots advocacy organization, to build on efforts conducted in the past.

Throughout the planning process, outreach to potentially affected populations, including those traditionally underserved, will be conducted. An example of this is when projects listed on the TIP are identified by staff as having the potential to impact communities of environmental justice concern, staff will encourage project proponents to use additional effective and efficient outreach, which may include (but not be limited to) such measures as: the use of multi-lingual radio announcements on radio stations targeting the impacted communities, multi-lingual notices in newspapers circulated widely within the impacted communities, announcements in newsletters of community-based organizations serving the impacted communities, and notices to neighborhood organizations serving the impacted communities.

In an effort to facilitate this additional notice, the CMMPO will make every effort to maintain a comprehensive contact list of social service agencies, media outlets, community-based organizations, and neighborhood organizations serving environmental justice communities throughout the region and make it readily available to transportation project proponents.

***(viii) Provide an additional opportunity for public comment, if final major documents differ significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO***

The CMMPO is committed to re-advertising a notice of proposed amendments and scheduling an additional public meeting followed by an abbreviated comment period if the need arises to substantially revise or amend the content of a major document following the initial 30-day public comment period. Adjustments, defined as relatively minor alterations to major documents, are not considered amendments and will not be re-advertised.

- (ix) *Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes, as well as with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPO***

The public involvement process, as defined in this document, shall be closely coordinated with the public involvement processes developed by state and local agencies in regards to transportation operations, economic development, environmental protection, and community development. The CMMPO will make available to these agencies all pertinent materials and will consult with them, to the maximum extent practicable, on such planning activities. In addition, the CMMPO will assist these agencies in scheduling and conducting joint MPO/state agency outreach meetings which may be held within the region.

- (x) *Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the outreach program to ensure a full and open participation process***

Through its Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee, the CMMPO is committed to reviewing its Public Outreach Program on an annual basis in order to implement any necessary refinements that may be needed.

**APPENDIX A**  
**BACKGROUND INFORMATION**  
**on the**  
**CMMPO and KEY FEDERAL REGULATIONS**

**1. CMMPO**

The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) is a cooperative body of ten signatories designated by the Governor to act as a forum for ensuring a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (often referred to as the “3C”) transportation planning process that involves state and local government. The CMMPO region is comprised of the City of Worcester and 39 towns in central and southern Worcester County. The MPO is responsible for endorsing official transportation policy and the development of regional planning documents, including a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (often referred to as an RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Congestion Management Program (CMP), and developing a broad Public Outreach Program.

The ten signatories that make up the CMMPO include the Executive Office of Transportation (EOT), the Massachusetts Highway Department (EOT/MassHighway), the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA), the City of Worcester, five subregional representatives that rotate terms every two years, and the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC). It is important to note that the CMMPO is not established as a legal entity and is separate from its member governmental agencies and locally elected officials.

**2. CMRPC**

The Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC) is one of ten signatories of the CMMPO. The Commission’s Chairman serves as the MPO member and the Commission’s staff provides technical support to the MPO. As a Regional Planning Agency, CMRPC provides planning assistance to communities within the same 40 city and town region as the MPO that includes land use planning, transportation data gathering, economic development planning and GIS services.

**3. SAFETEA-LU Requirements**

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) of 2005 continues to emphasize the importance of public involvement in the transportation planning process that was included in both the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 and the Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty-first Century (TEA-21) of 1998, however it now requires that an MPO’s Public Participation Plan be developed “in consultation with all interested parties.”

As specifically outlined in the February 14, 2007 *Rules for Statewide and Metropolitan Planning*, Section 450.316 (a), states “The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than title 49, U.S.C., Chapter 53, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.” MPOs are expected to develop a public participation program specific to their region. Based on the requirements and criteria specified in the federal planning regulations, the CMMPO has developed its own Public Outreach Program which outlines the public participation process used for ongoing transportation planning activities including the specifics associated with MPO endorsement of the RTP, UPWP, and TIP.

#### **4. TITLE VI Requirements**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 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 subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.” All federal agencies which provide financial assistance for any program are authorized and directed by the United States Department of Justice to apply provisions of Title VI to each program by issuing applicable rules, regulations, or requirements.

#### **5. Environmental Justice Requirements**

Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, expanded the impact of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and responded to the concern that everyone within the United States deserves equal protection under the country’s laws; thus the concept known as “environmental justice” was developed. The Executive Order organized and explained in detail the Federal government’s commitment to promote environmental justice. Each Federal agency was directed to review its procedures and to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

The U.S. Department of Transportation issued its DOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations in 1997. As partners of DOT, MPOs are expected to embrace the principles of environmental justice as well. The USDOT Order states, in part, that “*In undertaking the integration with existing operations ... DOT (and by extension MPOs) shall observe the following principles:*

- (1) *Planning and programming activities that have the potential to have a disproportionately high and adverse effect on human health or the environment shall include explicit consideration of the effects on minority populations and low-income populations. Procedures shall be established or expanded, as necessary, to provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement by members of minority populations and low-income populations during the planning and development of programs,*

*policies, and activities (including the identification of potential effects, alternatives, and mitigation measures).*

- (2) *Steps shall be taken to provide the public, including members of minority populations and low-income populations, access to public information concerning the human health or environmental impacts of programs, policies, and activities, including information that will address the concerns of minority and low-income populations regarding the health and environmental impacts of the proposed action.*

Following both the Executive Order 12898 and the USDOT Order as a guide, the CMMPO created its own Environmental Justice Task Force to assist the MPO in identifying low income and minority communities or neighborhoods throughout the region and create a Statement of Environmental Justice Principles. In that Statement, it was defined that the MPO should create “plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development and social goals.” In addition, transportation planning should assure that:

- The transportation system be socially equitable; enabling all people to gain access to good jobs, education and training, and needed services.
- No group be disproportionately adversely impacted by planning decisions that affect human health or the environment.
- There is full and fair participation in the planning process by all affected communities, with particular efforts made to extend outreach to those minority and low-income residents not traditionally engaged in the planning process.
- The quality, livability and character of communities be enhanced, revitalization without excessive displacement be supported, and it be integrated with land use planning.

Further, the transportation system should include the use of effective and efficient outreach to insure the opportunity for all Central Massachusetts residents to participate fully in society regardless of age, ability, ethnicity, or income. The Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization transportation planning process seeks to provide for:

- *Procedural equity.* The process by which transportation decisions are carried out should be in a uniform, educational, fair, and consistent manner with involvement of diverse public stakeholders.
- *Geographic equity.* The effect of these decisions should not result in disproportionate negative impact upon one geographic area over another. Transportation decisions have distributive impacts (positive and negative) that are geographic, such as rural vs. suburban vs. central city. Environmental justice concerns revolve around the extent that transportation systems address outcomes (diversity and quality of services, resources and investments, facilities and infrastructure, access to primary employment centers, etc.).
- *Social equity.* The effect of these decisions should not result in disproportionate negative impact upon one population group over another. Transportation decisions have distributive impacts (positive and negative) that are social, economic and intergenerational in nature that can produce life-altering events.

## **6. Limited English Proficiency Requirements**

Executive Order 13166, issued in 2000, also expanded the impact of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and responded to the concern that persons with limited English proficiency deserve equal participation in the transportation planning process. In accordance with the Executive Order, the U.S. DOT issued *Policy Guidance Concerning Recipient's Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons*, which is modeled after the U.S. Department of Justice's general LEP policy guidance document. As described in the guidance, DOT recipients are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. The guidance applies to all DOT funding recipients, which include MPOs.

The US DOT guidance outlines four factors recipients should apply to the various kinds of contacts they have with the public to assess language needs and decide what reasonable steps they should take to ensure meaningful access for LEP persons:

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by a program, activity, or service of the recipient or grantee.
2. The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program.
3. The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the recipient to people's lives.
4. The resources available to the recipient and costs.

## APPENDIX B

### PAST PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES

#### **1. *Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization-Supported Citizen Involvement Process***

The principal past mechanisms for public participation in Central Massachusetts were open public meetings, letters, emails and phone calls. For specific MPO documents, such as the RTP, the MPO has tailored its outreach to effect the maximum participation. Such outreach has included subregional meetings, internet surveys and stakeholder consultations. In addition, the following standing and ad-hoc technical task forces also provide participation support to the CMMPO.

- The Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee (and its predecessor, the Central Massachusetts Transportation Committee) performs in an advisory capacity and provides recommendation and comments on documents requiring MPO endorsement. Recommendations made by the Committee are presented by CMRPC staff to the 10 member MPO.
- The Elderly and Disabled Technical Task Force acts primarily in an advisory capacity to the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). The Task Force provides a forum for addressing service related issues that impact the WRTA's elderly and disabled transit users. Representation on the Task Force is broadly based, including elderly and disabled service users, human service agencies, the WRTA's service providers, the WRTA Administrator and representatives from the CMRPC who are staff to the Task Force. Its regular monthly meetings are held the third Wednesday at the WRTA. The meetings are advertised and open to all who wish to attend.
- The Environmental Justice Strategic Planning Task Force, assembled in 2002, serves in an advisory capacity to the MPO to provide overall guidance to the MPO and staff as they incorporate the principles of environmental justice into the transportation planning process and establish various measures and standards by which to review transportation decisions. Representation on the Task Force includes staff from various social service agencies serving minority and low-income populations within Worcester County.
- Corridor Planning Study Technical Task Forces are ad-hoc in nature and are established for each corridor planning study (CPS) performed by CMRPC staff for the MPO. The purpose of these task forces is to provide early input on transportation issues affecting the particular corridor, to review work performed by staff and to provide recommendations as to which alternatives, if any, should proceed toward project development. The membership of these task forces varies but generally includes 3 to 4 members from each of the affected communities as well as technical, legislative and Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD) representatives. CPS Task Force meetings are generally held monthly with CMRPC providing total staff support. The meetings are advertised and open to all who wish to attend.

- Other MPO related Technical Task Forces are formed on an as-needed basis. The purpose of these task forces is to provide early input on issues related to the particular subject, to review work performed by staff or study consultants, and to provide advisory recommendations on courses of action. Membership on these task forces varies but is generally made up of those with technical expertise on the subject.

## ***2. MPO Role in Citizen Involvement Process for Other Studies Including Major Investment Studies***

There are, in fact, occasions when the lead agency responsible for conducting technical studies may be an agency other than the members of the MPO itself. Examples may include corridor planning studies and major transportation investment studies (MIS) where, given the timing needs, the magnitude of the study and/or the needed expertise, a decision is made by the MPO (through a cooperative and collaborative process) to have another agency take the lead and therefore be responsible for the associated citizen involvement process. The MPO will ensure that an open and participatory process is followed for identifying the alternatives to be studied, for determining evaluation criteria to be addressed and in selecting a preferred strategy. The associated public involvement strategies are expected to be custom tailored for each individual MIS and coordinated with each participating agency's policies and procedures for public outreach.

## APPENDIX C

### DOCUMENTATION of a SAFETEA-LU COMPLIANT PUBLIC OUTREACH PROGRAM

Based on the text of section 450.316 (a) and (b) of the *Final Rules for Statewide and Metropolitan Planning*, the following will address each listed point, while outlining the specifics associated with MPO's public participation process, as well as the specifics associated with MPO endorsement of both the RTP, UPWP and TIP.

**(i) *Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP***

Public notices will be published in the regional newspaper, the *Worcester Telegram & Gazette*, posted on the CMRPC website, and notices sent via email as to when meetings will occur and when draft documents, particularly the RTP, UPWP and TIP, are available for circulation. Direct mailings of notices will be sent to the following:

- CMRPC Commission Members
- Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee
- WRTA Advisory Board
- Regional Board of Selectmen Chairs
- Regional City/Town Managers
- Regional State Legislators
- State Agencies (including EOT, MassHighway, and DEP)
- Interested Individuals and Private Transportation Providers (who ask to be placed on mailing list)
- Environmental Justice and environmental stakeholders

**(ii) *Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes***

Early in the process of developing the RTP, UPWP and TIP, CMRPC staff defines an all-encompassing schedule of public activities. The schedule is published in the legal advertisement section of the regional newspaper, as well as being sent to those included on the MPO's regional mailing lists, email lists, and is posted on the website. Prior to scheduled public meetings, press releases are sent to all local newspapers for publication at least two weeks prior to the established meeting date.

The CMMPO has endorsed a minimum public comment period of 30 days for the RTP, TIP, UPWP and major amendments, however the MPO, at their discretion, may vote to abbreviate the public comment period under what they consider to be extraordinary circumstances. The Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee will consider all comments received at the time of their regular monthly meeting, recognizing there may be some circumstances when the full comment period is not complete before making a

recommendation for MPO endorsement. The MPO, to the extent possible, will condition their endorsement of the RTP, UPWP and TIP on any additional public input received if the official review and comment period has not been completed.

Copies of the RTP, UPWP and TIP are readily available for viewing on the website or they can be obtained at CMRPC's office during normal business hours. Similarly, all information used in the development of such documents is open to public inspection during normal business hours and, upon request, copies of such information will be provided at no cost. Notification of draft amendments thereto, which are subject to the public participation process, will, at a minimum, be published in the regional newspaper.

The WRTA, the FTA Section 5307(c) grant applicant and a member of the CMMPO, states that the public involvement process adopted by the MPO for the development of the TIP satisfies the public hearing requirements that pertain to the development of the Program of Projects for regular Section 5307, Urbanized Area Formula Program, grant applications including the provision for public notice and the time established for public review and comment. For FTA projects that are not routine, i.e. Section 5307 applications that require an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement, the public involvement provided herein for TIP review is not sufficient. Additional public involvement, as presented in the joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, 23 CFR part 771, will be required by FTA for grant approval.

In a further effort to broaden the public's knowledge of the transportation planning process, CMRPC staff will develop a "user-friendly" guide that outlines the steps in the life of a transportation-related project, from inception through construction. This guide will be distributed annually, well ahead of the RTP and TIP official timetables, to various community-based organizations and interested members of the general public. Those individuals and organizations with an interest in proposing or commenting on projects will be directed to their respective municipal officials for further input. The guide will be tailored to the needs of stakeholders in the spirit of Limited English Proficiency guidelines.

***(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs***

Visualization techniques will be tailored to the expected audience and related to the document that is being prepared and/or discussed. Examples of visualization techniques include, but are not limited to, maps, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive GIS systems, and drawings.

***(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web***

CMRPC is updating its website to make it more "user-friendly" and to be able to display more information than it can now. The new website will include all current MPO documents for download, meeting notices, agendas and a specific CMMPO subpage to describe the roles and duties of the MPO.

In addition to the public notices provided as part of the RTP, UPWP and TIP development process, it should be noted that CMRPC will be preparing a quarterly e-newsletter which will include coverage of MPO transportation issues and will be widely distributed to local/state officials, agencies and individuals, as well as be available for view on the website.

**(v) Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times**

Open public meetings will be held in the CMMPO's district (see Figure 1) at times when public input and participation would likely be greatest. In addition, at least one formal public meeting will be held each year to review the RTP, UPWP and TIP development process. All meetings will be held in locations that are accessible to all persons.

**Figure #1**



**Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission  
Six Transportation Planning Sub-regions**

**(vi) *Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plans and TIP***

All written public correspondence submitted to the CMMPO throughout the development of the RTP, UPWP and TIP processes, either directly or through the mail, will be considered, reflected upon and included in the planning document's Technical Appendix. CMRPC staff's response to comments will also be included within these Technical Appendices and will also be sent directly to the commenter.

**(vii) *Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services***

The CMMPO has historically made a concerted effort to involve the region's disabled, elderly, low-income and minority populations. A number of advocacy groups serving these populations are included on the Elderly and Disabled Technical Task Force. These advocacy groups distribute transportation planning materials to their associates, including local community organizations. Participants include the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, the Worcester Office of Elder Affairs, the (Worcester) City Manager's Executive Office of Human Resources, the Age Center of the Worcester Area, Worcester Elder Home Care, the Seven Hills Foundation, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. Relationships with additional advocacy groups representing low income and minority populations are currently being broadened to build on efforts conducted in the past.

When projects listed in years 2 and beyond of the TIP are identified by staff as having the potential to impact communities of environmental justice concern, staff will encourage project proponents to use additional effective and efficient outreach, which may include (but not be limited to) such measures as: the use of multi-lingual radio announcements on radio stations targeting the impacted communities, multi-lingual notices in newspapers circulated widely within the impacted communities, announcements in newsletters of community-based organizations serving the impacted communities, and notices to neighborhood organizations serving the impacted communities.

In an effort to facilitate this additional notice, the CMMPO will make every effort to maintain a comprehensive contact list of social service agencies, media outlets, community-based organizations, and neighborhood organizations serving environmental justice communities throughout the region and make it readily available to transportation project proponents.

**(viii) *Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plans or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO***

Should the need arise to substantially revise or amend the content of the RTP, UPWP or TIP following the close of the initial 30-day public comment period following MPO endorsement, the CMMPO is committed to advertising a notice of the proposed amendments in the legal section of the regional newspaper and scheduling an additional public meeting followed by an abbreviated comment period. Copies of the amendment text will be readily available for public viewing and acquisition at CMRPC's office. Similar to the process previously described, all public comments submitted to CMRPC during the 30-day

comment period will be considered. Adjustments, defined as relatively minor alterations, such as a change in a project's schedule or funding source within the TIP's 3year listing, shall not be considered as amendments.

**(ix) *Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes, as well as with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPO***

The public involvement process, as defined in this document, shall be closely coordinated with the public involvement processes developed by state and local agencies in regards to transportation operations, economic development, environmental protection, and community development. The CMMPO will make available to these agencies all pertinent materials and will consult with them, to the maximum extent practicable, on such planning activities. In addition, the CMMPO will assist these agencies in scheduling and conducting joint MPO/state agency outreach meetings which may be held within the region.

**(x) *Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process***

Through its Central Massachusetts Advisory Committee, the CMMPO is committed to reviewing its Public Outreach Program on an annual basis in order to implement any necessary refinements that may be needed.