

# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES**

Prepared by the  
PINE BLUFF AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (PBATS)  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)  
Prepared in Cooperation with  
The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department  
Federal Transit Administration  
Cities of Pine Bluff and White Hall  
The County of Jefferson

**PBATS MPO does not currently have a web site. The new federal transportation act requires the PBATS MPO web site to be operational by July 1, 2007. Until then, documents for public review may be viewed at the PBATS MPO office or public library. Continue to check on line for the web site. We hope to have it available before July 1, 2007**

ADOPTED BY THE POLICY COMMITTEE ON MAY 15, 2007

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## **A. INTRODUCTION**

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA 21) requires an ongoing public involvement program in the development and maintenance of the Pine Bluff Area Transportation Study (PBATS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) and other transportation and implementation activities. The PBATS MPO Policy Committee and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) seek public input from local citizens, employers, and transportation providers, and other transportation users in the region, as programs are developed to make the most of transportation facilities in PBATS Study Area. These procedures are designed to give the public opportunities to make comments and suggestions during planning and implementation of transportation programs.

This document outlines procedures that are designed to promote and encourage public participation in the transportation planning process. It does not limit additional, ongoing, creative solutions to facilitate public involvement. Additional strategies to involve the public shall be encouraged such as contacting neighborhood groups within the study area, varying meeting times to better meet the public needs and any other techniques that will increase public participation. This program requires the MPOs to utilize public input in the development of projects so that they fit harmoniously within their communities without sacrificing safety and mobility.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act sets standards that authoritatively outlaw discrimination in the conduct of all Federal activities. PBATS MPO will encourage participation by members of traditionally underserved communities (e.g., elderly, minority, limited English proficiency (LEP), etc.) to exchange information regarding transportation planning by scheduling meetings at locations within the underserved area. Persons planning to attend who are in need of translation services may request services at least 48 hours in advance and an effort to arrange said services will be made. In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 guidelines, all meetings conducted by the PBATS MPO will take place at locations that meet ADA accessibility standards to accommodate persons with mobility limitations. Persons with disabilities who plan to attend the meetings and need auxiliary aids or services are requested to contact the PBATS MPO office (telephone: 870-534-4247) 48 hours in advance of the meeting so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

## **B. THE POLICY COMMITTEE AND THE TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

All meetings of the TAC and Policy Committee are open to the public and will follow these procedures to notify the public of upcoming meetings. Sub-committee meetings may be closed meetings and need not to be advertised.

1. A press release will be sent to Pine Bluff Commercial, radio and television stations at least one week prior to the meeting.
2. Information about the meeting will be posted in the municipal offices of the Cities of Pine Bluff and White Hall, the Jefferson County Courthouse, PBATS MPO office, and other local

venues as deemed appropriate to fulfill the intent of Environmental Justice at least one week prior to the meeting.

3. Information about the meeting will be posted on the PBATS MPO web site at least one week prior to the meeting.
4. If subsequent meetings are needed to finish business, the committee can recess the meeting, and meet again with no additional press release required. The web site will be updated to reflect the continued meeting, but the one week-public notice will not be required.

### **C. UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)**

In the spring of each year, PBATS MPO and AHTD staff will draft a proposed Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for the coming fiscal year. The UPWP must be adopted by the Policy Committee by June 30th of each year.

1. By the end of April, the proposed UPWP will be provided to the TAC. The TAC may meet to approve the UPWP or it may approve the UPWP by mailed/e-mailed ballot in lieu of a meeting. Once the TAC has reviewed and recommended the document for approval by the Policy Committee, there will be a two-week public comment period.
2. The public will be informed of the comment period in the following ways: a legal notice will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial and a press release will also be sent to the Pine Bluff Commercial repeating the information in the legal notice; notices of the availability of the document for public review will be posted in the municipal offices of the Cities of Pine Bluff and White Hall, the Jefferson County Courthouse, the PBATS MPO office, and other local venues as deemed appropriate to fulfill the intent of Environmental Justice.
3. During the public comment period, a copy of the draft UPWP may be obtained from the MPO office or viewed on the PBATS MPO web site.
4. After the two-week comment period, a Policy Committee meeting may be held to review and adopt the UPWP. The Policy Committee may also approve the UPWP by mailed/e-mailed ballot in lieu of a meeting if no public comments are received.

### **D. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

A Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be adopted by the Policy Committee every three years. The TIP covers a four-fiscal-year period and includes all surface transportation and transit projects and must be adopted by September 30th of update years.

1. In March of update years, the PBATS MPO will call for proposed projects from the jurisdictions within the PBATS boundary to be submitted to the MPO by March 31.
2. The MPO will review the proposed projects to ensure that they are in the LRP and on the Functionally Classified Streets Map.
3. By April 15, the MPO will compile a draft TIP including all street projects and public transit projects.
4. After the TAC review of the draft TIP, a legal notice stating that all surface transportation and transit projects are included will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial to allow a 30-day period to gather public comment. The public can obtain a copy from the MPO office or view the document on PBATS MPO web site.

5. Press releases will be sent to the Pine Bluff Commercial initiating the 30-day comment period and the TIP approval process.
6. After the conclusion of the one month public comments period, TAC will meet in May to review public comments on the projects and formulate the final draft TIP. When significant written and oral comments are received as a result of the public participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments will be made part of the final draft TIP. If needed, more meetings will be scheduled.
7. The Policy Committee will meet by the end of August to review and adopt the final TIP.

#### **E. AMENDMENTS TO THE UPWP AND THE TIP**

If significant amendments to the UPWP and the TIP are necessary, the procedures below will be used to notify the public and solicit comments. Significance will be determined through discussion between the MPO Study Director and the AHTD MPO Coordinator. Those items determined not to be significant may be adopted by ballot without a period of public comment.

##### **BY MEETING:**

1. A legal notice will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial setting forth the proposed amendment, a two-week comment period and the time and date of the TAC and Policy Committee meetings to approve the amendment.
2. A press release will be sent to the Pine Bluff Commercial containing the information in the legal notice and further necessary information.
3. The proposed amendment will be posted on the PBATS MPO web site.
4. After the two-week comment period, TAC and Policy Committee meetings will be held to consider and adopt the amendment.

##### **BY BALLOT:**

1. A legal notice will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial setting forth the proposed amendment, establishing a two week comment period, and identifying the dates of the balloting process (i.e. date ballots to be sent and date by which ballots must be returned).
2. A press release will be sent to the Pine Bluff Commercial containing the information in the legal notice.
3. The proposed amendment will be posted on the PBATS MPO web site.
4. After the two-week comment period, a ballot with the proposed amendment and a summary of the comments will be sent to all TAC and Policy members. Ballots may be sent by mail, fax, or e-mail according to the preference of the recipient.
5. The ballot will specify a time framework for returned votes to count. Votes will be received by mail, fax, and e-mail. The amendment will pass with an affirmative vote by a majority of the authorized voting membership.

## **F. THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

A Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) must be in place for the PBATS Study area in order to comply with federal guidelines, and in order to facilitate efficient utilization of transportation resources. The LRP must be updated every five years at a minimum.

1. The TAC will meet to develop a draft of the LRP elements.
2. At a minimum, five open houses will be conducted as part of the development of the LRP. The first four open houses will be held after the TAC has developed a draft of the LRP elements and the Policy Committee approves the draft of the LRP Elements. The fifth open house will be held after a Draft LRP document has been completed.
3. The first four open houses will be for the public to view the draft LRP Elements and to make comments and will be held within a two-week period. In an effort to facilitate maximum public involvement, the open houses will be at different locations and times of day. Two of the first four open houses will be held in predominately minority neighborhoods/areas.
4. Before the first of the four open houses to view the LRP Element list and before the fifth open house to review the Draft LRP document, three display advertisements stating that all surface transportation and transit projects are included will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial newspaper over a two-week period stating the time, place and purpose of each open house.
5. A press release for the first four open houses will be sent to the local newspapers and other outlets (radio stations, T.V. stations and local access cable stations) at least two weeks before the first open house takes place and again two weeks before the fifth open houses take place.
6. The meeting information described above will be placed on the PBATS MPO web site and made available for public viewing at the municipal offices of the Cities of Pine Bluff and White Hall, and the Jefferson County Courthouse.
7. After the fourth open house, the public will have thirty days to submit their written comments on the LRP Elements for consideration by the TAC and Policy Committee.
8. The TAC will review all comments received and, if needed, make revision to the LRP Elements based on those comments. If necessary, a TC meeting will be held to address public comments. All plan revisions and comments will be submitted to the Policy Committee for its consideration.
9. If necessary, a Policy Committee meeting will be held to address revisions and comments. After the Policy Committee reviews all comments and approves any changes, the PBATS MPO shall prepare a Draft LRP document and present it to the TAC members for review. Comments will be incorporated into the draft document for presentation to the public.
10. The fifth open house will be held to give the public an opportunity to review revisions to the LRP Elements and make comments on the Draft LRP document.
11. After the fifth open house, the public will have thirty days to submit their written comments on the Draft LRP document for consideration by the TAC and Policy Committee.
12. After reviewing and resolving comments received, the TAC will meet to recommend the LRP document to the Policy Committee for approval and the Policy Committee will meet to consider and adopt the LRP.
13. If significant written comments are received that require changes to the LRP document, another open house will be advertised as above and held to provide an opportunity for public review of the revisions.

14. When significant written comments are received as a result of the public involvement process that are not addressed in the transportation plan, a report will be prepared indicating the reason the comments were not addressed. Said report shall be submitted to the Policy Committee for informational purposes and filed in the MPO office. The Policy Committee will meet to consider and adopt the LRP.

## **G. AMENDMENTS TO THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

1. A TAC meeting will be held to discuss and formulate the amendment
2. A two-week comment period will be established for the public to comment on the proposed amendment. Information about the amendment and the comment period will be published as follows: a legal notice will be placed in the Pine Bluff Commercial, a press release will be sent to the Pine Bluff Commercial repeating the information in the legal notice; and the information will be posted on the PBATS MPO web site and other local venues as deemed appropriate to fulfill the intent of Environmental Justice
3. A Policy Committee meeting will be scheduled to consider adoption of the amendment.
4. All interested parties will be encouraged to attend this Policy Committee meeting. The Study Director will provide a summary of any public comments to the Policy Committee, and public comments will be encouraged at the meeting. The Policy Committee may adopt the amendment or send it back to the TAC for additional consideration.

## **H. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

At all public forums, TAC, and Policy Committee meetings, the public will be requested to sign an attendance roll. Members of the public will be provided an opportunity to address the Committees. Those desiring to make comment will be encouraged to also provide their comments in writing.

Public forums will allow for a fuller expression of all verbal comments as well as written comments. Written comments will be encouraged and requested to be submitted within two weeks after public forums and the specific TAC and Policy meetings that call for a comment period. The PBATS staff will maintain a file of written public comments for three years, and will provide a summary for the appropriate TAC and Policy meetings.

## **I. MODIFICATIONS TO THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCEDURES**

1. The PBATS MPO staff will periodically review the policy in terms of its effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all.
2. If necessary, a TAC sub-committee will be formed to develop modifications to the document. The TAC will meet to review the proposed modifications and approve the draft document for presentation to the public for review and comments. After TAC approval, legal notices and a press release, and a posting on the PBATS MPO web site will establish a 45-day public comment period.
3. The public will be able to pick up a copy, have one mailed or emailed to them, or view it on the City of Pine Bluff web site.
4. The Policy Committee may approve the new Procedures in two ways:

- a. At the end of the 45-day comment period they may meet and approve the document, or send it back to the TAC.
- b. They may meet in no less than three weeks after TAC approval of the document, and approve it pending no negative comment during the remainder of the 45-day comment period.

Approved this 15th day of May, 2007.

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Howard Parette,  
Chairperson, PBATS Policy Committee