



Metropolitan Planning Organization

## Public Participation Plan

**Public Meeting Date:** Aug. 21, 2012

**Technical Committee Review:** Aug. 23, 2012

**Policy Board Review and Adoption:** Sept. 17, 2012

**Amended:**

### **Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization**

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**FRONTIER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

**Resolution Adopting the Public Participation Plan**

**WHEREAS**, The Frontier MPO is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Fort Smith Urbanized Area, having been so designated by the Governors of Arkansas and Oklahoma for the expressed purposes of carrying out the transportation planning requirements of U.S.C. Title 23, Chapter 134 and U.S.C. 49, Subtitle III, Section 5303; and

**WHEREAS**, the Frontier Public Participation Plan has been prepared by the MPO in consultation with all member local and state governments and local, state and federal transportation agencies in a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process; and

**WHEREAS**, the Public Participation Plan is consistent with local, regional, and state transportation and other planning goals and objectives and has been prepared in accordance with all relative state and federal rules and regulations; and

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that the Frontier MPO Policy Board hereby approves and adopts the Frontier MPO Public Participation Plan for the Fort Smith Metropolitan Planning Area. Further be it resolved that the Frontier MPO Policy Board recommends that the Public Participation Plan be accepted by the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, Oklahoma Department of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration as the official Public Participation Plan for the above cited area.

Approved and adopted by the Frontier MPO Policy Board and signed this 17<sup>th</sup> day of September 2012.



Mayor Bob Freeman, City of Van Buren  
Frontier MPO Policy Board

ATTEST:



Mr. Tim Conklin  
Frontier MPO Director

*Prepared By:*

**FRONTIER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

*In Cooperation with:*

The Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department  
Oklahoma Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
Federal Transit Administration

And

The Arkansas Cities of;

Alma, Barling, Bonanza, Central City, Fort Smith, Greenwood, Kibler, Lavaca, and Van Buren

And

The Oklahoma Towns of;

Arkoma and Pocola

And

Crawford and Sebastian Counties in Arkansas  
Le Flore and Sequoyah Counties in Oklahoma

And

Western Arkansas Planning and Development District, Inc.  
Fort Smith Transit Department  
Fort Smith Regional Airport  
Western Arkansas Intermodal Transportation Authority

**September 2012**

The preparation and publication of this document was financed in part by funds provided by the United States Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration. The provision of Federal financial assistance should not be construed as denoting U.S. Government approval of plans, policies, programs or projects contained herein.

**Notice of Nondiscrimination**

The Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, the Frontier MPO does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, or national origin, religion or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in Frontier programs and activities, as well as the Frontier hiring or employment practices. Complaints of alleged discrimination and inquiries regarding the Frontier MPO's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to Cody Schindler, Title VI/Title II (ADA/504/508) Coordinator, 1109 S. 16th Street, AR 72901, (479) 785-2651 (Voice/TTY 711) or email [cschindler@wapdd.org](mailto:cschindler@wapdd.org). Additional information can be found on our website, [www.frontiermpo.org](http://www.frontiermpo.org).

This notice is available in large print, on audiotape and in Braille upon request.

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## FRONTIER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

# Public Participation Plan

### **Introduction**

The Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Participation Plan (PPP) has been developed to assure that the transportation planning process conducted by the Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) complies with Federal requirements for public involvement and participation. This document presents the goals of the Frontier MPO for public participation and involvement, as well as the public involvement procedures designed for various MPO activities. These procedures will provide opportunities for citizens to contribute ideas and opinions early and at every stage of the planning process. Efforts will be made to assure participation in the transportation planning and programming process by traditionally underserved individuals, including elderly, low income and minority individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons with Limited English proficiency (LEP).

The Frontier MPO will, to the extent reasonable and practical, ensure that the PPP will address the requirements for MPO public involvement as identified in 23 CFR 450.316 Metropolitan Planning Process: Elements. Copies of these requirements are found in **Appendix A** of this document.

### **Federal Planning Requirements for an MPO**

Federal law and regulations require each MPO to conduct a planning process that must consider projects, planning strategies, and implementation methods that will:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety and security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

### **Freedom of Information Act**

In order to ensure adequate public notice and provision of timely information, all meetings of the Frontier Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board and all subcommittee and focus groups are subject to the provisions of the Arkansas Code Annotated, 25-19-101 and the Oklahoma Annotated Statutes, 25-301-314.

## **Public Notification and Participation**

The Frontier MPO Policy Board and Technical Committee meeting notices will be provided to local newspapers of general circulation sufficiently in advance of a meeting to meet newspaper guidelines for publication during the week of and prior to the meeting. When, and if, non-English newspapers of general circulation are initiated in the Frontier region, the Frontier MPO Staff will work with these newspapers to have the above meeting notices printed in the appropriate language in their publications. These notices do not need to be paid notices. The notice of public meetings and hearings will be published at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the meeting date. A copy of paid newspaper publications shall be retained in the Frontier MPO files for a period of three (3) years after the end of the Fiscal Year.

Official notification of Public Meetings, Public Hearings, and Public Review and Comment periods will also be posted on the Frontier MPO website and will be provided for posting at the following locations and other locations identified by Frontier MPO staff in order to encourage minority and other underserved populations to participate in the process:

- The Administrative Offices of each local member jurisdiction,
- Departments of Human Services,
- Regional Library,
- Frontier MPO / WAPDD office, and
- Frontier MPO website.

All Frontier MPO Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings are open to the public and will be conducted in a location that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A reasonable period of time (15 – 20 minutes) for comments from members of the public will be provided prior to the adjournment of said meetings. If a natural disaster or pandemic occurs, then virtual meetings will be scheduled to adopt, approve, or amend studies and documents.

## **Reasonable Public Access to Technical and Policy Information**

The Frontier MPO staff is available during normal business hours to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties. The Frontier MPO offices are located at 1109 South 16th Street in Fort Smith, Arkansas. Frontier MPO staff is also available to meet with outside groups after normal business hours. Arrangements for staff to attend meetings after normal business hours must be made at least one (1) week in advance of the meeting. Copies of all available documents and other materials are available for the cost of postage.

## **Environmental Justice**

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, dated February 11, 1994, and the subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5680.3, issued April 15, 1997, the Frontier MPO promotes Environmental Justice in all aspects of the Frontier transportation planning process. These procedures augment and reaffirm the Frontier MPO policy to adhere to and advance the principles of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA) as amended, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) as amended, the

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), and other statutes, regulations and guidance that address or affect infrastructure planning and decision making; social, economic, or environmental matters; public health; and public involvement. To these ends, notices of meetings and public hearings will be specifically provided in minority and ethnic gathering places to promote participation in the transportation planning process. Minority and ethnic communities will be monitored through census data to guarantee their inclusion in the process as populations fluctuate over time. Special accommodations (e.g. interpreter, sign language interpreter, large print copy, etc.) may be requested of the Frontier MPO staff during normal business hours at least five (5) business days prior to the meeting. Frontier MPO staff will attempt to accommodate all such requests.

**Transit Projects**

The public involvement procedures outlined in these Procedures serve as the public participation process required for the development of transit projects as per FTA Circular 9030 and 9040. The Frontier MPO will assist any and all public transit providers in their respective outreach programs that have developed to advance participation by transit users. The Frontier MPO and any and all public transit operators will address the Program of Projects requirements as per Federal Transit Administration Circulars. Additionally, any and all public transit operator’s capital projects and operational costs are included in the Frontier MPO Transportation Improvement Program which is developed through a cooperative and collaborative process with interested parties and other private and public transportation providers.

**MPO WORK PRODUCTS**

**Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)**

<b>Public Comment Period</b>	<b>Number of Calendar Days</b>
Public Comment Period for Draft MTP Document	30
Public Comment Period of Final MTP Document	15

Major updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan will be conducted every five (5) years. The Frontier MPO will host three (3) public meetings and/or provide notice of availability for public outreach to involve interested parties in the early stages of the plan development. Notices of public hearings and/or notice of availability for public outreach for the MTP will be published and posted as stated in the Public Notification and Participation section above. If customary public meetings cannot be held due to pandemics, natural distasters, etc. then virtual meetings and open houses can occur. After the draft MTP is developed, the Frontier MPO will host three (3) additional public meetings and/or notice of availability for public outreach to solicit comments on the draft plan. A final draft MTP will be presented to the Technical Committee and any appropriate focus group for review and comment prior to recommendation to the Frontier MPO Policy Board for adoption. All public comments received will be made a part of the final adopted document.

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

<b>Public Comment Period</b>	<b>Number of Calendar Days</b>
Public Comment Period for Draft TIP Document	10
Public Comment Period for TIP Amendments	10

The Transportation Improvement Program is updated every four (4) years and maintained annually. Frontier MPO staff works directly with the MPO member local governments and with the Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department and the Oklahoma Department of Transportation and Fort Smith Transit to identify proposed projects for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program. After all proposed project requests are identified, Frontier MPO staff, in conjunction with the Technical Committee, will prepare a draft Transportation Improvement Program for public review. Notices of public review and comment period for the TIP will be published and posted as stated in the Public Notification and Participation section above. Upon resolution of public comments, the Technical Committee will review the TIP and a recommendation to adopt the TIP will be made to the Frontier MPO Board. If no adverse public comments are received, a recommendation to approve the TIP may be made by mail-out, fax or e-mail ballot. Final TIP will be published and made available to the public.

**Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

<b>Public Comment Period</b>	<b>Number of Calendar Days</b>
Public Comment Period for Draft Public Participation Plan Document	45

Review of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) will be conducted annually and updates will be adopted as necessary. The public comment period will be 45 calendar days. The PPP will be presented to the Technical Committee for review and for a recommendation to the Frontier MPO Board for adoption.

**Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

<b>Public Comment Period Unified Planning Work Program</b>	<b>Number of Calendar Days</b>
Public Comment Period for	10

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is a description of the proposed transportation planning activities of the Frontier Metropolitan Transportation Program during the coming fiscal year (July 1 through June 30). The program is prepared annually and serves as a basis for requesting Federal planning funds. It also serves as a management tool for scheduling, budgeting, and monitoring the planning activities of the participating agencies.

**Regional Transportation Improvement and Mobility Studies and Corridor Plans**

<b>Public Comment Period</b>	<b>Number of Calendar Days</b>
Public Comment Period for Studies and Corridor Plans	15

Notices will be distributed to the citizens who live in the specific study areas in order to obtain the input of persons of interest who would most likely be affected by any proposed improvements. After consideration by the Technical Committee and at least one public meeting at a location convenient to the affected citizens, regional studies and corridor plans will be presented to the Frontier MPO Board for adoption.

### **Public Transit Studies and Plans**

#### **Public Comment Period**

#### **Number of Calendar Days**

Public Comment Period for Studies and Corridor Plans

15

Notices will be distributed to the citizens who live in the specific study areas in order to obtain the input of persons of interest who would most likely be affected by any proposed improvements. After consideration by the Technical Committee and at least one public meeting at a location convenient to the affected citizens, regional studies and corridor plans will be presented to the Frontier MPO Board for adoption.

### **Amendments to Adopted Documents**

#### **Public Comment Period**

#### **Number of Calendar Days**

Public Comment Period for Studies and Corridor Plans

10

Whenever proposed amendments to adopted non-administrative documents such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) are necessary, the Frontier MPO will notify members of the Technical Committee by mail, facsimile or by e-mail to initiate the amendment process, and post notification that the amendment is available for public review. This notification will serve as the ten (10) calendar day public notice of the upcoming meeting. Notices of public review and comment period for proposed amendments will be published and posted as stated in the Public Notification and Participation section above. The proposed amendment will be stated on the posted notice. Mail-out, e-mail, or faxed ballots may be used for amending the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other time sensitive Frontier MPO business matters on a case-by-case basis. Copies of the ballots will become a part of the record of Frontier MPO activities and a summary of the vote will be included as an addendum to minutes of the previous meeting. In the case that a natural disaster or pandemic strikes, virtual meetings may occur for the adoption or amendment of the various studies and documents referenced.

The public comment period for document amendments will be ten (10) calendar days. Proposed documents, amendments, and public comments will be referred to the Technical Committee for review and recommendation and to the Frontier MPO Policy Board for adoption. The following amendments to adopted documents are entirely exempt from the public involvement process:

- (A) Emergency transportation improvement projects that are identified as necessary for the public safety and welfare of the citizens of any Frontier MPO member government or jurisdiction.
- (B) Minor technical, editorial, or otherwise non-substantive revisions including the following:



- Minor cost changes
- Changes in cost shares
- Splitting or phasing of projects
- Other administrative changes such as in the lead agency or funding source

### **Activities to Enhance Public Participation and Involvement**

The following activities and initiatives will be incorporated into the Frontier MPO public involvement and outreach programs as well as into the overall planning process and MTP development.

#### **1. On-line Surveys**

The Frontier MPO will have an annual work element in its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) that will enable the Frontier MPO to offer on-line survey capabilities for MPO planning activities as well as for planning activities of Frontier MPO member jurisdictions. A reputable web-based survey vendor will host this service. “Hard Copy” survey forms of the on-line surveys will be distributed to the appropriate affected populations within the Frontier MPO area.

#### **2. Interactive Frontier MPO GIS Mapping**

The Frontier MPO will offer an on-line GIS interactive map of the Frontier MPO Area that will have the capabilities of presenting all appropriate information pertaining to MTP elements and proposed amendments, TIP projects and proposed amendments, traffic related data elements that are considerations for individual project selection. The interactive mapping function will provide the Frontier MPO with numerous opportunities to present information on a wide range of planning activities and specific projects to the general public as well as to targeted underserved groups.

#### **3. Visualization Techniques**

In addition to the on-line surveys and the web-based GIS program, the Frontier MPO will incorporate visualization techniques into the planning process and public involvement activities which may include:

- Utilization of the City of Fort Smith’s dedicated television channel for public notices and MTP/TIP proposed amendments and revisions.
- A coordinated and comprehensive campaign to elevate the regional awareness of the Frontier MPO planning activities and functions of the Frontier MPO through the development of a Frontier MPO banner, Project fact sheets, speaker bureaus, transportation fairs, Frontier MPO logo utilization in Frontier MPO sponsored events, and articles of interest prepared by the Frontier MPO staff for local newspapers and regional magazines.
- Increased circulation of Frontier MPO products and proposed documents through the use of the Fort Smith Multi-Cultural Center, the Fort Smith Ministerial Alliance, and the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC).

- Annual production of maps presenting the Annual Listing of Projects.
- The expanded use of digital photography and photographs in Frontier MPO public meetings, advertisements, and publications.
- An upgrade of the Frontier MPO website to create a more user friendly and interactive experience for the visitor as well as to provide the Frontier MPO an improved platform for animations, digital presentations, and timely information regarding the performance of the region's transportation network and proposed improvements to the region's transportation network.

## APPENDIX A

### PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Excerpted from 23 CFR 450.316

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

## APPENDIX B

FRONTIER MPO PLANNING ACTIVITY	PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES
Policy Board Meetings Technical Committee Meetings	<b>Ten (10) Day Notice</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> <li>• Email Press Release</li> <li>• Agendas include a public comment period for action items</li> </ul>
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	<b>Thirty (30) Day Public Comment Period for Draft MTP</b> <b>Fifteen (15) Day Public Comment Period of Final MTP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO online surveys</li> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Multicultural Center, LULAC, Focus Groups</li> <li>• Articles in local magazines</li> <li>• City Cable Channel</li> <li>• Brochures/Flyers</li> </ul>
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	<b>Ten (10) Day Public Comment Period for the Draft TIP</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> <li>• Email Press Release</li> <li>• Multicultural Center, LULAC, Focus Groups</li> </ul>
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	<b>Forty-five (45) Day Public Comment Period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> </ul>
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	<b>Ten (10) Day Public Comment Period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> <li>• Email Press Release</li> </ul>
Regional Transportation Improvement and Mobility Studies and Corridor Plans	<b>Fifteen (15) Day Public Comment Period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> </ul>
Public Transit Studies and Plans	<b>Fifteen (15) Day Public Comment Period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website</li> <li>• Frontier MPO online surveys</li> </ul>
Amendments to Adopted MPO Documents	<b>Ten (10) Day Public Comment Period</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Frontier MPO website (<a href="http://www.frontiermpo.org">www.frontiermpo.org</a>)</li> <li>• Post at the Frontier MPO / WAPDD office</li> <li>• Email Press Release</li> </ul>