

SHENANGO VALLEY AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY MPO

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Representing Mercer County
Approved by the Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study MPO Coordinating
Committee
_____, 2008
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Table of Contents

PURPOSE 2
PUBLIC MEETINGS 3
ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT 4
DEFINITION OF PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDERS 4
ADEQUATE TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT 5
METHODS OF NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC 5
DOCUMENTATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT & RESPONSE 6
FOR SECTION 5307 GRANTS 7
ACCESS TO TECHNICAL INFORMATION 7
REASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 7
APPENDIX A 8
APPENDIX B 10
APPENDIX C 11

Public Participation Plan

SVATS MPO

Purpose

It is the policy of the Shenango Valley Area Transportation Study - SVATS MPO to have a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to SVATS MPO activities at all key stages in the decision making process. It is also SVATS MPO policy to involve the public early in the planning process, and to actively seek out the involvement of communities most affected by particular plans or projects. Furthermore, it is a goal of the community involvement policy that the Region's transportation plans and programs are developed in a manner that assures that the public, and affected communities in particular, are afforded ample opportunity to participate in the development of such plans.

The SVATS MPO's Public Participation Plan also provides a framework for focused efforts to identify, seek out and engage populations that have traditionally been underserved by existing transportation systems, including: minority populations, low-income populations, non-English speakers and those with limited English proficiency, older persons and persons with disabilities.

The foundation for these efforts is stated in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

"...No person in the United States shall, on the basis of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal financial assistance..."

--Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000)

Further reinforcement was established by the President's 1994 Executive Order on Environmental Justice, which states:

"...Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations..."

--Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994

These efforts also stem from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 as well as Executive Order 13166 (2000). The former document gives civil rights protections to

individuals with disabilities and guaranteeing equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, State and local government services, and telecommunications. Executive Order 13166, an order "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency," requires Federal agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them. The Executive Order also requires that the Federal agencies work to ensure that recipients of Federal financial assistance provide meaningful access to their LEP applicants and beneficiaries.

The SVATS MPO will coordinate its public involvement processes with those of the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service, the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission and the municipalities of Mercer County to improve public involvement and reduce costs where agencies are reviewing similar issues. In addition, the SVATS MPO will coordinate activities with the Eastgate Ohio, MPO. As a result of the 2000 census the two MPOs by agreement will share information and coordinated planning activities within each of their regions.

1. PUBLIC MEETINGS

A. Meeting Accessibility

- i. With the exception of those meetings that are appropriate executive sessions, all meetings of the SVATS MPO and the meetings of MPO committees shall be open to the public.
- ii. Assistance for the sight and/or hearing-impaired, those with limited English proficiency or non-English speakers shall be provided with advanced notice. When possible, written materials will be made available in languages other than English that are relevant to local populations.
- iii. The MPO Staff will provide contact information for assistance to individuals in need of auxiliary aids and services in the below mentioned meeting notice. In addition, the MPO Staff will provide information in regards to the status of the building's accessibility.
- iv. With consideration to the geographical area and diverse topics of concern to the public, the Commission shall schedule meetings at convenient and accessible facilities, locations, and times which will encourage attendance by the general public, and that are accessible and accommodating to persons with disabilities, older persons and the sight and/or hearing-impaired. Where possible, meeting places will be accessible by public transportation. Meeting locations

shall be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

B. Meeting Notice

- i. All Coordinating and Technical Committee meetings of the MPO shall be legally advertised as required.
- ii. Meeting announcements shall be provided on MPO's web site www.mcrpc.com.

2. ACTIVITIES SUBJECT TO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The SVATS MPO shall provide early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process.

A. Planning Activities

Special emphasis shall be given to engaging the public in planning studies that form the basis for later programming decisions. Planning activities include corridor studies and special regional studies, environmental assessment studies, and development of the Long Range Transportation Plan. These activities offer the public the earliest opportunity to participate in the development of project proposals that might eventually be programmed for funding. Thus, the SVATS MPO shall make an extra effort to involve the affected community through methods such as local advisory committees, public information meetings, and newsletters.

B. Programming Activities

Opportunities for the public to participate shall also be provided through the project selection, programming, and project development phases. These activities include the selection of Surface Transportation Program -Urban projects, and the adoption or amendment of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

3. DEFINITION OF PUBLIC & STAKEHOLDERS

The SVATS MPO shall make an effort to inform and engage both the general public and stakeholders as appropriate.

A. General Program

As part of its general planning and programming process, the SVATS MPO will try to involve the member municipalities, and other parties who have expressed an interest in the process.

B. Special Studies

For special studies that the SVATS MPO conducts, it shall make an effort to identify and involve persons and groups that might be affected by potential changes to the particular transportation service or facility under review. Examples include abutting

property owners, neighborhoods associations, representatives from disability groups, and businesses within the study area.

C. Outreach to Special Groups – Environmental Justice (EJ)

The SVATS MPO shall also make a special effort to consider the needs of groups or communities traditionally not well served by existing transportation systems. These include, but are not limited to low-income households and minority households.

It is sometimes necessary to conduct an outreach effort to EJ communities, beyond that which is normally expended. At a minimum, the SVATS MPO shall identify groups that it needs to involve, add them to the appropriate mailing lists, and define methods for engaging them in relevant programs or projects.

SVATS MPO efforts in this regard shall be consistent with the Environmental Justice Executive Order (EO 12898) dated February 11, 1994, and other related guidance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

4. ADEQUATE TIME FOR PUBLIC COMMENT

The SVATS MPO shall allow reasonable time for public review and comment at key decision points. These include, but are not limited to, action on the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Minimum notification periods shall be as follows:

Amendments to the SVATS MPO’s Public Participation Policy – 45 days

Adoption of the TIP, Long Range Transportation Plan and air quality documentation – 30 days

Coordinating and Technical Committee meetings – 7 days

5. METHODS OF NOTIFYING THE PUBLIC

The SVATS MPO shall use appropriate methods to notify the public of its activities and of opportunities for public involvement. Determination of which methods to use must be done for each individual planning project or study. However, the minimum requirements are listed below.

A. Schedule of Meetings

For committees with regularly scheduled meetings (Coordinating and Technical Committees), the annual schedule of meetings shall be published in the Sharon Herald and sent to each municipality at the beginning of each calendar year.

B. Meeting Notices

A notice of each committee or subcommittee meeting shall be filed with every municipality office. In an effort to actively engage minority and low-income populations, non-English speakers and those with limited English proficiency, older persons and persons with disabilities, and other

populations traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system, announcements of regularly scheduled meetings will be distributed to newspapers or other media that specifically target these groups as appropriate. For studies or committees that involve only a few municipalities, the notice shall be filed only in with the municipalities of the affected communities.

C. Public Comment

Every meeting conducted by the Coordinating or Technical Committee of the SVATS MPO will include on the agenda an opportunity for public comment.

D. Mailing Lists

The SVATS MPO shall maintain mailing lists for each committee or study. Notices of meetings shall be sent to all persons on the mailing list. Anyone may request that his or her name be added to a particular mailing list, by indicating the appropriate list and providing either an email address or a regular mail address.

E. SVATS/MCRPC MPO Website

The SVATS MPO through www.mcrpc.com shall maintain a calendar of meetings and activities on its website. All SVATS MPO meeting agendas will be posted approximately one week prior to the meeting date. Minutes from the MPO meetings will be posted within two weeks of their approval by the MPO members. The website shall also include copies of appropriate reports and plans that individuals can read online or download to their own computer.

F. Legal Notices in Newspapers

Anytime the SVATS MPO initiates a formal 30-day or 45-day public comment period, notice of the opportunity to comment shall be posted in a legal ad in the area's major daily newspaper.

G. Additional Methods

The SVATS MPO shall give consideration to alternative methods of involving the public appropriate to the project. Such methods may include, but are not limited to newsletters, distributing information through public libraries and community groups (especially those serving EJ and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) communities, the elderly and persons with disabilities), using open house format meetings, conducting surveys, involving focus groups for specially selected topics, preparing press releases, and holding events at special locations like shopping malls.

6. DOCUMENTATION OF PUBLIC COMMENT & RESPONSE

The SVATS MPO shall document public comments received during the course of a study or an amendment of the Public Participation Plan (PPP),

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), or Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The SVATS MPO shall also document how it responded to public comments.

A. Comments Received

Documentation of comments may be accomplished in a manner appropriate to the project and the nature of the comments. Documentation may consist of meeting minutes, a file of letters, or a special memo that summarizes the comments. A written summary is preferred at key points in the decision-making process when members of the relevant study committee must decide to narrow the range of alternatives, select a preferred alternative, or make a decision of similar nature. The written summary of comments made at public information meetings shall be given to the committee members prior to any committee action.

B. Response to Comments

The SVATS MPO shall provide a descriptive summary of how it responded to public comments during the development of a plan or document such as the TIP. The summary may be produced as a separate report or included as a short section in the final plan or document.

7. PUBLIC INFORMATION REQUIREMENTS FOR SECTION 5307 GRANTS

The public involvement process adopted by the SVATS MPO for its TIP shall also serve to satisfy the public involvement requirements of the Shenango Valley Shuttle Service (SVSS) as applicant for regular Section 5307 (FTA Transit Capital) funds. This applies to the Authority's annual purchase of replacement vehicles for programs such as, the regional ADA service, or the commuter bus services. This does not apply to non-routine capital projects that require an environmental assessment or environmental impact statement. For major projects the SVSS shall conduct its own separate public involvement process.

8. ACCESS TO TECHNICAL INFORMATION

The SVATS MPO shall provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the SVATS LRTP, the TIP and related studies, the PPP, special studies, plans, programs, and visualization tools. All documents will be available by request and digitally, when possible, through the MCRPC website (www.mcrpc.com).

9. REASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The SVATS MPO shall conduct a biennial review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all. Amendments shall be initiated when public comment deems reassessment necessary, or the MPO Staff or committee members recommend changes. Amendments shall occur whenever Federal law dictates change in public involvement to correspond with the current transportation planning legislation.

Appendix A Definitions

Air quality conformity determination

A process in which transportation plans and programs are reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with federal clean air requirements. Changes to the transportation system collectively must not worsen air quality; in areas where air quality does not meet federal standards, transportation plans and programs are expected to improve the air quality.

Long-Range Transportation Plan

A transportation plan addressing at least a twenty-year planning horizon, including both long-range and short-range strategies/actions of an integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods and meets Federal requirements (23CFR Part 450.322).

Major amendment

Any amendment to a long-range transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that does not qualify as a minor amendment, or an amendment that meets the criteria for a minor amendment but is treated as a major amendment because of controversy or high visibility. Procedures for TIP modifications and amendments are provided in the TIP document.

Major decision

The adoption or major amendment of the long-range transportation plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), air quality conformity determination, or other significant transportation plan or program.

Minor TIP or long-range transportation plan amendment

Correction of clerical errors; changes that are air quality neutral (projects and project types which are not required to be included in regional air quality conformity assessments for transportation plans and programs as listed in Sections 126 and 127 of Environmental Protection Agency's Transportation Conformity Rule, 40CFR Part 93). Procedures for TIP modifications and amendments are provided in the TIP document.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Regional planning entity responsible for transportation planning and approval of federal transportation funding for the region.

MPO Staff

The staff of the Mercer County Regional Planning Commission.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

A staged, multiyear, fiscally constrained, intermodal program of transportation projects which is consistent with the long-range transportation plan. The TIP

develops a prioritized program of projects and its financing plan based on estimate funding available. The TIP covers a four-year period and is updated every other year.

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Appendix B

Minority Population in Mercer County Municipalities (2000)

Municipality	% Minority 2000
Coolspring Township	1.7%
Deer Creek Township	1.1%
Delaware Township	1.3%
East Lackawannock Township	3.5%
Fairview Township	1.0%
Findley Township	19.3%
French Creek Township	0.9%
Greene Township	1.2%
Hempfield Township	1.6%
Jackson Township	1.3%
Jefferson Township	1.7%
Lackawannock Township	2.5%
Lake Township	1.3%
Liberty Township	1.4%
Mill Creek Township	1.3%
New Vernon Township	0.2%
Otter Creek Township	2.3%
Perry Township	0.8%
Pine Township	7.7%
Pymatuning Township	2.2%
Salem Township	1.3%
Sandy Creek Township	0.8%
Sandy Lake Township	1.1%
Shenango Township	2.8%
South Pymatuning Township	1.4%
Springfield Township	1.5%
Sugar Grove Township	2.6%
West Salem Township	1.5%
Wilmington Township	2.2%
Wolf Creek Township	3.2%
Worth Township	1.0%
Townships	3.0%

Municipality	% Minority 2000
City of Farrell	50.0%
City of Hermitage	5.4%
City of Sharon	14.1%
Clark Borough	0.9%
Fredonia Borough	0.6%
Greenville Borough	3.9%
Grove City Borough	3.0%
Jackson Center Borough	0.5%
Jamestown Borough	0.5%
Mercer Borough	4.0%
New Lebanon Borough	0.5%
Sandy Lake Borough	0.8%
Sharpsville Borough	4.4%
Sheakleyville Borough	1.8%
Stoneboro Borough	1.7%
West Middlesex Borough	2.2%
Wheatland Borough	15.0%
Cities and Boroughs	10.9%

Mercer County	7.3%
Pennsylvania	15.9%

Appendix C

Income in Mercer County Municipalities (2000)

Municipality	% Less Than \$10,000	% \$10,000-\$14,999	% \$15,000-\$24,999	% \$25,000-\$34,999	% \$35,000-\$49,999	% \$50,000-\$74,999	% \$75,000-\$99,999	% \$100,000-\$149,999	% \$150,000-\$199,999	% \$200,000+	Median Income
City of Farrell	21.0%	13.7%	19.4%	14.2%	14.4%	12.2%	3.4%	0.6%	0.2%	0.8%	\$22,659
City of Hermitage	6.1%	5.6%	17.1%	15.3%	19.3%	18.9%	8.9%	4.8%	2.1%	1.9%	\$39,454
City of Sharon	15.7%	10.5%	19.6%	16.3%	15.9%	12.8%	4.9%	2.5%	0.6%	1.0%	\$26,945
Clark Borough	4.2%	1.7%	9.3%	10.2%	16.9%	29.2%	15.7%	7.2%	1.3%	4.2%	\$53,438
Fredonia Borough	13.4%	12.2%	12.2%	8.4%	20.6%	25.2%	5.0%	2.9%	0.0%	0.0%	\$37,917
Greenville Borough	13.0%	10.3%	17.7%	16.0%	16.9%	18.4%	3.6%	3.0%	0.7%	0.5%	\$31,250
Grove City Borough	10.5%	8.6%	17.9%	13.8%	16.3%	19.2%	7.5%	4.0%	0.4%	1.9%	\$34,598
Jackson Center Borough	12.0%	6.0%	4.8%	26.5%	12.0%	26.5%	9.6%	2.4%	0.0%	0.0%	\$35,625
Jamestown Borough	10.5%	10.5%	21.8%	22.6%	7.5%	19.2%	3.4%	4.5%	0.0%	0.0%	\$26,979
Mercer Borough	11.4%	9.4%	17.6%	18.5%	9.2%	20.4%	7.9%	3.9%	0.0%	1.7%	\$29,795
New Lebanon Borough	14.3%	1.3%	9.1%	20.8%	26.0%	15.6%	13.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	\$38,472
Sandy Lake Borough	6.8%	9.8%	21.6%	13.2%	23.3%	14.2%	7.1%	3.4%	0.7%	0.0%	\$34,231
Sharpsville Borough	9.6%	7.2%	20.1%	16.9%	19.4%	18.6%	3.1%	2.7%	1.0%	1.4%	\$32,580
Sheakleyville Borough	9.1%	12.1%	24.2%	10.6%	18.2%	19.7%	3.0%	1.5%	1.5%	0.0%	\$28,750
Stoneboro Borough	11.0%	11.8%	17.5%	16.1%	22.8%	15.6%	3.6%	0.2%	0.8%	0.4%	\$30,592
West Middlesex Borough	6.6%	7.4%	21.6%	14.5%	20.3%	20.0%	4.4%	4.7%	0.0%	0.5%	\$34,937
Wheatland Borough	15.0%	10.1%	19.0%	18.7%	13.5%	17.1%	5.2%	0.9%	0.0%	0.6%	\$27,596
Cities and Boroughs	11.9%	9.0%	18.4%	15.7%	17.0%	16.8%	6.0%	3.2%	0.9%	1.3%	
Coolspring Township	4.4%	5.8%	16.1%	18.2%	21.0%	15.5%	8.1%	8.6%	1.3%	1.0%	\$37,106
Deer Creek Township	3.8%	11.5%	17.8%	19.1%	14.0%	15.9%	10.8%	2.5%	3.2%	1.3%	\$33,542
Delaware Township	7.6%	6.0%	12.5%	13.6%	18.8%	29.1%	6.7%	4.3%	1.6%	0.0%	\$42,240
East Lackawannock Township	6.3%	5.3%	17.3%	14.5%	16.0%	25.3%	9.5%	4.1%	1.7%	0.0%	\$41,250
Fairview Township	7.1%	6.3%	13.4%	14.3%	24.1%	20.5%	7.1%	5.7%	0.9%	0.6%	\$40,395
Findley Township	3.7%	8.2%	12.8%	17.1%	22.3%	26.3%	8.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.0%	\$42,153
French Creek Township	10.0%	9.7%	12.2%	17.2%	18.6%	19.0%	8.6%	2.9%	1.8%	0.0%	\$35,568
Greene Township	6.5%	6.2%	16.9%	13.4%	21.8%	24.1%	7.6%	2.2%	0.0%	1.3%	\$39,625
Hempfield Township	6.6%	6.2%	15.5%	17.5%	18.9%	21.2%	6.9%	5.6%	0.8%	0.8%	\$38,396
Jackson Township	5.1%	5.8%	11.3%	15.2%	24.2%	20.6%	13.4%	1.8%	1.6%	0.9%	\$42,574
Jefferson Township	3.3%	5.9%	19.8%	21.2%	20.2%	18.5%	8.6%	1.7%	0.0%	0.8%	\$34,872
Lackawannock Township	8.2%	6.7%	19.0%	15.4%	19.0%	17.8%	7.2%	5.3%	0.4%	1.0%	\$35,428
Lake Township	6.4%	4.3%	20.9%	15.4%	22.2%	15.0%	12.0%	3.0%	0.9%	0.0%	\$36,591
Liberty Township	4.5%	6.7%	11.8%	12.6%	24.0%	25.3%	6.5%	5.1%	1.4%	2.0%	\$43,355
Mill Creek Township	4.9%	4.5%	10.7%	23.9%	21.0%	23.5%	7.8%	3.7%	0.0%	0.0%	\$39,219
New Vernon Township	8.7%	6.1%	14.3%	28.6%	23.5%	14.3%	3.6%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	\$32,031
Otter Creek Township	2.1%	10.3%	15.9%	14.6%	24.0%	19.7%	9.9%	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	\$37,656
Perry Township	9.3%	4.7%	15.4%	20.4%	22.5%	15.9%	8.8%	1.4%	1.2%	0.5%	\$35,221
Pine Township	6.0%	5.1%	11.7%	18.7%	21.3%	18.9%	8.5%	6.5%	1.3%	2.0%	\$41,423
Pymatuning Township	12.8%	6.2%	18.0%	16.0%	21.8%	15.4%	7.2%	2.2%	0.0%	0.4%	\$33,048
Salem Township	5.6%	6.6%	19.1%	18.8%	21.2%	16.0%	8.0%	2.8%	0.7%	1.4%	\$35,000
Sandy Creek Township	7.1%	6.8%	15.7%	18.5%	20.3%	24.0%	4.6%	1.8%	0.6%	0.6%	\$36,250
Sandy Lake Township	7.7%	5.3%	17.0%	16.4%	19.0%	17.8%	9.5%	3.4%	2.8%	1.2%	\$39,896
Shenango Township	7.3%	6.5%	10.9%	18.1%	26.1%	16.9%	11.1%	2.3%	0.4%	0.4%	\$38,162
South Pymatuning Township	5.8%	6.0%	13.5%	12.5%	20.3%	22.0%	12.0%	5.6%	1.2%	1.1%	\$44,102
Springfield Township	5.7%	6.1%	14.9%	14.6%	20.2%	25.1%	7.2%	4.0%	0.8%	1.3%	\$40,341
Sugar Grove Township	7.3%	3.4%	16.3%	20.0%	23.1%	18.3%	9.3%	1.7%	0.6%	0.0%	\$36,010
West Salem Township	3.3%	6.8%	18.6%	16.4%	19.3%	29.4%	2.2%	2.0%	1.2%	0.8%	\$38,480
Wilmington Township	7.8%	5.0%	21.7%	11.2%	14.9%	21.7%	10.4%	4.4%	1.0%	1.8%	\$38,068
Wolf Creek Township	8.0%	4.0%	19.2%	16.7%	20.3%	18.8%	5.4%	6.2%	1.4%	0.0%	\$37,500
Worth Township	6.7%	7.0%	12.2%	15.8%	19.8%	24.6%	10.9%	1.2%	0.0%	1.8%	\$41,328
Townships	6.6%	6.1%	15.3%	16.7%	20.9%	20.7%	8.2%	3.8%	0.9%	0.8%	
Mercer County	9.6%	7.7%	17.1%	16.1%	18.7%	18.5%	6.9%	3.5%	0.9%	1.1%	\$34,666
Pennsylvania	9.7%	7.0%	13.8%	13.3%	16.9%	19.5%	9.6%	6.6%	1.8%	1.9%	\$40,106

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