

**STATELINE AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY (SLATS MPO)
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

INTRODUCTION:

The 1973 Federal Aid Highway Act required that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) be designated the responsibility to conduct a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C) intergovernmental transportation planning process for each urbanized area exceeding 50,000 in population. The Stateline area reached that threshold after the 1970 U.S Census, and in 1974, an agreement with the governors of Wisconsin and Illinois and the local units of government within the urbanized area established the Stateline Area Transportation Study (SLATS), the federally designated MPO for the Beloit Urbanized Area.

The 3-C planning process results in plans and programs that are consistent with the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRP) developed for the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and therefore, satisfies the conditions necessary to receive federal capital, operating, and planning funds. The MPO serves as a forum for cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing transportation decision making for all transportation modes and geographic areas within the SLATS MPA. It should also act as an information clearinghouse for regional issues affecting any interstate and inter-municipal planning efforts.

The SLATS MPO is responsible for preparing and maintaining three primary transportation documents including a multi-modal Long Range Transportation Plan as mentioned above, a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), in addition to other activities as required by federal and state regulations. According to federal guidelines, MPOs must update the LRP at least every 5 years.

In addition, the MPO is responsible for developing and maintaining a public involvement process, analysis and collection of traffic/transportation data, analysis of pertinent socioeconomic data, analysis to assure nondiscrimination in the delivery of transportation services and other research studies related to the health, safety, welfare, education, economic conditions and regional development in the SLATS MPA.

MPO staff and the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) shall review, evaluate, comment upon and make recommendations to the Policy Board for the required plans and programs. The MPO Policy Board shall also review evaluate, comment upon, make recommendations and ultimately endorse the required plans and programs such that federal and state funding eligibility is maintained.

The MPO, the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Illinois DOT have entered into intergovernmental agreements that outline the duties, responsibilities and authority of the MPO for programming federal, state, and local funds to be used for qualifying local transportation projects. The MPO assures that it will comply with all applicable federal statutes, regulations, executive orders, Federal Transit Administration (FTA) circulars, and other federal requirements in carrying out any project supported by federal funds. The MPO recognizes that federal laws, regulations, policies, and administrative practices may be modified from time to time and those modifications may affect project implementation, and agrees that the most recent federal requirements will apply as authorized by United States Code, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP21), the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), as amended

by the SAFETEA-LU Technical Corrections Act of 2008, or other Federal laws and subsequent transportation acts when using federal funds for any transportation projects or transportation planning within the SLATS MPA.

PURPOSE OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN:

Public involvement in transportation planning and programming gained new emphasis under the 1991 Inter-modal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), the 1998 Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), and was further expanded by the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and the 1994 Environmental Justice Executive Order No. 12898. Emphasis on public involvement continues with the current Federal Highway Act "Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century" (MAP-21) effective October 2012.

Public involvement in the development SLATS MPO plans and programs, specifically the LRP and the TIP, is not only federally required, but an important part of the transportation planning process. While the SLATS Policy Board makes final decisions, the MPO actively seeks and encourages public involvement early and throughout the transportation planning process to inform those decisions and reflect community values.

The purpose of this Public Involvement Plan is to provide a set of guidelines and standards that the MPO intends to follow when soliciting general public comments, particularly related to the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) itself, the multimodal LRP, the TIP, other plans and documents. Flexibility in the proposed procedures will be maintained throughout the public participation process in order to encourage maximum public involvement. This document serves as an update to the Public Involvement Plan adopted November 5, 2012. An evaluation of the 2012 Plan's effectiveness is included in **APPENDIX A** at the end of this update.

The public can view major work products including the PIP in the following ways:

- The SLATS MPO website www.beloitwi.gov (found under Engineering)
- The SLATS MPO Office located in City of Beloit Engineering Division at 2400 Springbrook Court, Beloit Wisconsin
- The City of Beloit, City of South Beloit and Village of Rockton public libraries

Paper copies or disc copies of documents are available upon request. The MPO reserves the right to request reimbursement for copy costs. Also upon request, the MPO can typically email documents in PDF format.

For additional information please contact the MPO Office at 608-364-6702 or email the MPO Coordinator at neet@beloitwi.gov

ORGANIZATION & MEMBERSHIP:

To ensure local agency participation, a 10-member Policy Board governs the SLATS MPO. The Policy Board is comprised of local elected officials and representatives from the Wisconsin and Illinois DOTs.

This group provides the principal contact between the MPO and the government entities that make up the MPO. The Policy Board has the responsibility to organize, guide, govern the study and establish transportation policy in the MPA. Five members are from Wisconsin and five members are from Illinois. Each member has one vote.

The SLATS Policy Board consists of the following agencies/ designated members (or duly appointed representative as described above):

1. City of Beloit Council President
2. City of South Beloit Mayor
3. Village of Rockton President
4. Town of Beloit Chair
5. Town of Turtle Chair
6. Rockton Township Chair
7. Rock County Board Chair
8. Winnebago County Board Chair
9. Southwest Region Planning Chief Wisconsin Dept. of Transportation (WisDOT)
10. Region 2 Engineer Illinois Dept. of Transportation (IDOT)

The SLATS Policy Board appoints and directs the TAC made up professional and technical staff from the local, state, and federal agencies represented by the Policy Board as well as public transit agencies within the MPO. TAC representation includes each participatory agency within the MPA. The TAC provides the Policy Board input and advice on transportation matters, planning issues and project level details.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES:

The MPO's planning process must consider the safe and efficient movement of people, services and freight by all modes of travel including streets and highways, public transportation, commuter railways, bicycle and pedestrian as well as intermodal connections for freight and passengers between ground transportation, airports, and railroads. An overarching goal of the transportation system is to encourage harmonious community interaction while protecting the aesthetic and ecological features of the physical environment. The MPO shall implement the 3-C_metropolitan planning process with a proactive public involvement process that provides:

- **Complete and timely dissemination of information** about transportation plans, programs and documents to the public
- **Timely public notice** of public involvement opportunities
- **Early and continuing opportunity for public review and comment** through public forums, open houses, public involvement sessions and at MPO meetings prior to Board action on all significant issues

- **Coordinated public involvement activities** with states, local agencies and neighboring MPOs as applicable regarding programs, plans, and activities
- **Documentation of public comments** in MPO plans and programs and timely responses to public questions, comments and suggestions
- **Identification and consideration of traditionally underserved populations** in the development of transportation plans, programs and projects including minorities, low-income persons, persons with limited English proficiency, the elderly and children. SLATS will update applicable demographic data regularly and periodically evaluate the effects of transportation plans, proposals, and projects on population groups using maps and analysis
- Periodic review and revision of the PIP and process to determine if it reasonably meets its stated goals of providing the public with:
 1. Complete and timely dissemination of information
 2. Timely public notice
 3. Early and continuing opportunity for public review and comment
 4. Coordinated public involvement activities
 5. Documentation of public comments
 6. Identification and consideration of traditionally underserved populations

PUBLIC MEETINGS IN GENERAL:

During all SLATS MPO TAC and Policy Board meetings, public information meetings, public open houses and other official meetings related to a specific project or plan (e.g. the LRP, TIP or a planning study), individuals will have the opportunity to participate in the planning process, provide input and ask questions. Comments will be documented for public record in meeting minutes or notes, and if applicable to a particular plan or document will be incorporated into that plan or document. Individuals may make oral comments, submit written comments in person, or send comments to MPO staff via mail or email.

The site for public meetings will be adequately sized for the audience, accessible to persons with disabilities, located on or convenient to public transportation routes and have adequate parking. While the goal is to choose meeting times the majority of the public will be able to attend, the MPO will make efforts to accommodate public transit schedules so that transit-dependent persons are able to not only attend the meeting but also make their return trip.

A sign language interpreter for hearing impaired persons will be made available if requested in advance. If requested, staff members will provide assistance in describing exhibits or provide information in alternative formats for visually impaired persons or those with other disabilities. The MPO will display a language identification chart at public meetings and at the MPO office to help limited English proficiency (LEP) individuals identify their language to staff. The MPO will work with existing resources to provide low-cost language assistance to the best extent possible to include LEP persons in the planning process. Upon request and if available, the MPO will coordinate translation or interpretive services as needed.

SPECIFIC PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND PROGRAMS:

The following pages describe specific major MPO planning documents and programs, and the related public involvement procedures. The MPO intends that the procedures described in this section provide meaningful opportunity for the public to participate in the planning process. The MPO may employ additional procedures as warranted on a case-by-case basis if it determines such procedures would be of an additional benefit.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN:

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) will be reviewed and evaluated at least every 5 years in advance of the LRP update, and amended as necessary to reflect changes in federal legislation or as deemed appropriate by the Policy Board. Prior to preparation and adoption of the PIP, a draft PIP will be prepared for public and SLATS TAC review. Review of the draft PIP will include a 45-day public comment period prior to adoption of the final PIP by the SLATS Policy Board. At the beginning of the 45-day public comment period, a notice will be printed in the Beloit Daily News and a notification letter will be mailed to the public participation contact list. The notification letter and public notice will include staff contact information and where the document is available for review, namely on the SLATS MPO website www.beloitwi.gov (found under Engineering) and at the SLATS MPO Office located in City of Beloit Engineering Division at 2400 Springbrook Court, Beloit Wisconsin, as well as the City of Beloit, City of South Beloit and Village of Rockton public libraries. The notice will also state when and where the Policy Board will meet to take action on the PIP, which will be a public meeting where interested parties will have the opportunity to provide input and ask questions prior to Board action.

The MPO will attach comments received prior to the meeting on the draft PIP, and the MPO's response to those comments to the draft document and make the information available to the TAC and Policy Board for review prior to PIP adoption. Following the 45-day public comment period, the TAC will then make a recommendation on the draft PIP to the Policy Board. The final PIP including any required revisions to the draft is subject to SLATS Policy Board approval.

Amendments to the PIP shall follow the same procedure as those followed in reviewing the full PIP as described above.

LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

As noted earlier, the planning process must consider the safe and efficient movement of people, services and freight by all modes of travel including streets and highways, public transportation, commuter railways, bicycle and pedestrian as well as intermodal connections for freight and passengers between ground transportation, airports, and railroads, . In this effort, the MPO updates a multi-modal Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRP) every five (5) years. It outlines all transportation projects planned in the MPA over the next 20-30 years that will use federal funds, and those that are regionally significant regardless of funding source.

All transportation projects proposed for construction in the TIP must also be in the LRP. Projects move from the relatively long 20-30 year list found in the LRP into the shorter and prioritized 4-6 year list found in the TIP, which state and local agencies plan to construct in the next few years.

As the LRP update gets underway, The MPO will review and summarize relevant transportation planning documents throughout the MPA such as transit plans, comprehensive plans, land use plans, park and open space plans and environmental plans, and prepare a general land use map for long-range transportation planning purposes. The map will identify planned land uses for all developed and undeveloped land within the MPA and will reflect a 20 to 30 year growth horizon. The MPO will review and update the goals, objectives and policies of the current LRP as needed. Review of the map, goals, objectives and priorities will include a 30-day public comment period prior to TAC recommendation to and adoption by the SLATS Policy Board. These goals, objectives and policies are the basis for setting project and funding priorities and policies over the next 20 to 30 year planning horizon, and so an early review and update is important in developing a plan that reflects the current shared vision that is unique to the Stateline. As the southern Wisconsin and northern Illinois region continues to grow and the separations between communities both within and around SLATS disappear, the unique identity and destiny of the Stateline area will remain. Ensuring autonomy and related control of federal transportation dollars locally will be increasingly important to realizing the long-term collective vision unique to the Stateline area.

Once the Policy board approves the goals, objectives and policies, a draft LRP (or sections thereof) will be prepared for public and SLATS TAC review. Review of the draft LRP section(s) will include a 30-day public comment period prior to TAC recommendation to and adoption of the final LRP (or sections thereof) by the SLATS Policy Board. At the beginning of the 30-day public comment period, a notice will be printed in the Beloit Daily News and a notification letter will be mailed to the public participation contact list. The notification letter and public notice will include staff contact information and where the document is available for review, namely on the SLATS MPO website www.beloitwi.gov (found under Engineering) and at the SLATS MPO Office located in City of Beloit Engineering Division at 2400 Springbrook Court, Beloit Wisconsin, as well as the City of Beloit, City of South Beloit and Village of Rockton public libraries. The notice will also state when and where the TAC and Policy Board will meet to take action on the LRP, which will be a public meeting where interested parties will have the opportunity to provide input and ask questions prior to Board action. The notice will also indicate the time and place for any additional opportunities for the public to provide input and ask questions such as an open house.

The MPO will attach comments received prior to the TAC and Policy Board meetings on the draft LRP, and the MPO's response to those comments, to the draft document for TAC and Policy Board review. Following the 30-day public comment period, the TAC will then make a recommendation on the draft LRP (or sections thereof) to the Policy Board. The final LRP (or sections thereof) including any required revisions to the draft is subject to SLATS Policy Board approval.

Note that public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review of the LRP will satisfy the Program-of-Projects (POP) requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula

Program. The public involvement procedures associated with LRP development are used to satisfy the Program-of-Projects requirements of Section 5307.

When significant amendments to the adopted LRP are proposed, The MPO will provide an additional 30-day public review period following the same noticing and procedural requirements for review of the draft and adoption of the final LRP by the Policy Board. Significant amendments may include: 1) additions of regionally significant projects, 2) major scope changes to regionally significant projects, 3) capacity-increasing projects, and 4) projects impacting air quality or environmental justice areas that significantly affect concentrated populations of low-income and/or minority populations. The amended LRP must remain fiscally constrained (within revenues reasonably expected to be available).

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) lists all federally funded programmed projects in the SLATS MPA under Title 23 U.S.C. and 49 U.S.C., and may include projects funded entirely with state or local funds. The MPO annually requests that each State DOT, community and transit provider within the MPA submit a list of proposed transportation projects to be included in the TIP.

All improvements in the TIP must be consistent with, flow from the LRP, and reflect investment priorities. There must also be a firm commitment to fund and implement all listed projects, especially those listed in the first year. However, because priorities and other factors can change, the TIP is a flexible and amendable document. However, the TIP must be fiscally/financially constrained. This means that projects cannot be included that do not have a reasonable chance of receiving funding unless specifically differentiated and noted as unfunded “illustrative” projects.

As a matter of practice, the SLATS MPO promotes and encourages citizen involvement and public participation early and throughout the planning process. The MPO will continue to seek ways to provide effective public and stakeholder involvement in the decision-making process. The public is encouraged to offer suggestions regarding the projects programmed in the TIP, and regarding the funding and timing priorities. The public can also offer suggestions regarding what illustrative projects should be included and which should move forward first as funds become available. The public can further provide input on funding system preservation projects and safety projects, as opposed to system expansion projects.

Transportation in the SLATS MPA is primarily automobile-oriented and most people travel via personal automobiles. However, various forms of public or private mass transportation including buses, paratransit vehicles or taxis are also available. The MPO regards both the users and operators of these mass transportation services as important transportation stakeholders, and maintains a list of area transit providers and makes special effort to notify these stakeholders of TIP development to provide them the opportunity to participate in the process of transit planning and delivery of services.

Once each State DOT, community and transit provider within the MPO submit a list of proposed transportation projects to be included in the TIP, the MPO prepares a draft TIP for public and

TAC review, and compiles projects into a draft table. The MPO clearly differentiates the funded projects from the unfunded (illustrative) projects.

Summary tables include information on:

- What projects are funded or programmed as opposed to unfunded or illustrative
- What agencies are sponsoring the projects and what agencies are participating
- What types of federal funding are being applied for or used to fund the projects
- What transportation modes are being programmed and at what levels
- What are the primary purposes of the projects, e.g. preserving, expanding, or improving the effectiveness of the transportation system
- What phases are the projects in and the relative costs of those phases
- What is the timing of the projects and the overall programmed expenditures
- What types of projects have been recently funded, at what levels, and by what agencies

Review of the draft TIP will include a 30-day public comment period prior to adoption of the final TIP by the SLATS Policy Board. At the beginning of the 30-day public comment period, a notice will be printed in the Beloit Daily News and a notification letter will be mailed to the public participation contact list. The notification letter and public notice will include staff contact information and where the document is available for review, namely on the SLATS MPO website www.beloitwi.gov (found under Engineering) and at the SLATS MPO Office located in City of Beloit Engineering Division at 2400 Springbrook Court, Beloit Wisconsin, as well as the City of Beloit, City of South Beloit and Village of Rockton public libraries. The notice will also state when and where the Policy Board will meet to take action on the TIP, which will be a public meeting where interested parties will have the opportunity to provide input and ask questions prior to Board action. If applicable, the public notice will also indicate the time and location of any public open house to review the draft TIP.

The MPO will attach comments received prior to the TAC and Policy Board meetings on the draft TIP, and the MPO's response to those comments, to the draft document for TAC and Policy Board review. The TAC will evaluate the projects for conformance with the LRTP and funding capabilities. The TAC will also recommend the ranking of projects for funding under the Surface Transportation Program (STP) in relation to each other. Following the 30-day public comment period, the TAC will then make a recommendation on the draft TIP to the Policy Board. The final TIP including any required revisions to the draft is subject to SLATS Policy Board approval. Once the MPO locally approves the TIP, it then forwards it to state and federal agencies. The Governors or their designees approve the TIP, which each State then makes part of their State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Only after the State DOTs approve and include the projects in their respective STIPs, can federally funded projects be commenced and implemented.

Note that public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review of the TIP will satisfy the Program-of-Projects (POP) requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula Program. The public involvement procedures associated with TIP development are used to satisfy the Program-of-Projects requirements of Section 5307.

TIP MODIFICATION AND AMENDMENT:

Although SLATS can amend the TIP at any time, and at a minimum must update the TIP every two (2) years, SLATS comprehensively updates the document every year. MPO staff can administratively modify the TIP for non-significant changes. Staff notifies the SLATS TAC and Policy Board at their next meeting of such administrative modifications. Changes that are more significant usually require full public notification in accordance with the PIP and formal amendment by the SLATS Policy Board. See below for clarification of when and how the TIP can be changed or amended.

NO AMENDMENT NEEDED FOR NON-SIGNIFICANT CHANGE

No formal amendment to the TIP is required for the following changes, provided the changes do not trigger the need to re-demonstrate fiscal constraint:

- Changing the implementation schedule for projects within the first four years of the TIP
- Changes to the project scope (i.e., the character of work or the project limits) where the project remains reasonably consistent with the approved project. Otherwise, this would be a minor amendment.
- Changing the funding source (federal, state, or local), funding category (the sub-type or source of Federal, State or local funding), or changing the amount of funding for a project without changing the scope of work or the schedule for the project

MINOR AMENDMENTS

The SLATS Policy Board must approve minor amendments before submitting them to the State DOTs for approval by the Governor(s) and to FHWA/FTA. Appropriate public involvement for minor amendments is required, usually within the context of a SLATS Policy Board meeting, provided SLATS gives advance notice in the formal public notice and agenda of the amendment action and public comment opportunity prior to the scheduled action on the amendment by the Policy Board. Examples of minor amendments include:

- Changing the schedule by adding a preservation project to the first four years of the TIP, including advancing a project for implementation from an illustrative list or from the out-years of the TIP.
- Changing the schedule by moving a preservation project out of the first four years of the TIP.

MAJOR AMENDMENTS

The SLATS Policy Board must approve major amendments before submitting them to the State DOTs for approval by the Governor(s) and to FHWA/FTA. Appropriate public involvement for major amendments is required including both formal public notice and 30-day public comment period. Examples of major amendments include:

- Changing the schedule by adding an expansion project to the first four years of the TIP, including advancing a project for implementation from and illustrative list or from the out-years of the TIP.
- Significantly changing the scope (i.e., the character of work or project limits) of an expansion project within the first four years of the TIP such that the current description is no longer reasonably accurate.
- Significantly changing the funding by changing, adding, or deleting any project to the extent that the change exceeds 50% of the annual program cost or \$1,000,000, whichever is less.

Foremost, the amended TIP must remain fiscally constrained (within revenues reasonably expected to be available).

ANNUAL LISTING OF FEDERALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

SLATS will provide the public a listing of projects for which federal funding was obligated in the previous year. The complete listing of projects will be posted on the MPO website and be available in the MPO office within the first **90** days of each calendar year.

PLANNING STUDIES:

The MPO seeks public involvement from time to time for special transportation studies. These include highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and other special studies that SLATS manages or funds. A few examples include corridor studies, parking studies and transit development plans.

Notice of special studies may be through a press release, direct mail/email to interested groups and individuals, particularly those within or adjacent to the planning area, and notice in the Beloit Daily News. The notice will inform the public of scheduled meetings, open houses or other means of obtaining information or providing input including MPO or lead agency contact information.

TITLE VI PROGRAMS:

SLATS will prepare a Title VI Program and any annual reporting for the MPO as required every three years. SLATS will assist public transit agencies within the MPO in preparing their Title VI Programs every three years in conjunction with the FTA triennial review process. SLATS will follow recommended procedures outlined in the FTA rules and regulations and State DOT includes solicitation of comments by representatives of public transportation or other parties.

PUBLIC OUTREACH EFFORTS:

The MPO will use appropriate outreach efforts and techniques during the public participation process to best achieve the goals of this PIP. Techniques may include using various media outlets, social media the local newspaper (Beloit Daily News), the SLATS website and direct mail/email. The goal is to not only inform interested persons of SLATS planning activities, but also provide meaningful opportunity for interested persons to participate in the transportation planning process. To do so may require more than one outreach technique as opposed to a one-size fits all approach. For example, an official notice in the Beloit Daily News may reach a large audience, but if the particular project affects a population of LEP persons, for example Spanish speaking LEP persons, perhaps a translated notice in a community newsletter or local Spanish language publication would also be beneficial. SLATS includes a statement in Spanish on all public notices and agendas that provides a name and phone number of a contact person with whom Spanish-speaking people can communicate to find out more information and become further involved. At this time, the estimated Spanish-speaking LEP population within the SLATS MPA is about 3,000, well above the Safe Harbor Threshold.

The MPO will maintain flexibility in developing and using creative public outreach techniques. Common methods to reach stakeholders may include:

- Publishing all SLATS MPO public notices in the Beloit Daily News.
- Publishing MPO public meetings and activities on the City of Beloit calendar on the City homepage, the weekly Beloit Report, an online publication of the City Manager's Office and through other participating agencies.
- Posting MPO contact information, meeting agendas, packets, documents and minutes on the MPO website, and making documents and work products such as the TIP and LRP (drafts and final versions) available for the public to view and comment on at the MPO Office and the Beloit, South Beloit and Rockton public libraries.
- Coordinating with transit to make MPO funded/prepared public transit related plans, programs and documents available at the transit office, website and transfer facility.
- Directly mailing or emailing the MPO mailing list notice of meetings and special planning projects. SLATS will maintain and update the list regularly as individuals wish to be added or removed.
- Attending meetings of interested stakeholders such as area bicycling groups, planning and economic development organizations, adjacent MPOs and local agencies.
- Using targeted methods of outreach (such as direct mailing, neighborhood notices or notices to specific neighborhood groups or leaders) when appropriate for areas directly affected by a

particular project or policy. This includes providing information in alternate languages as applicable.

The MPO does not intend for this to be an exhaustive list, and will use additional outreach efforts when appropriate. The MPO will undertake efforts to make sure plans and studies are presented to the public in ways that are reasonably appropriate for the nature and importance of the information presented. The MPO will take into account the technical capabilities and resources available in doing so. Visualization techniques may include maps, map overlays, computer simulation and other appropriate means.

TITLE VI AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

The SLATS MPO, as a sub-recipient of Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) grant dollars through the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT) and the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) will comply with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d) and the U.S. Department of Transportation implementing regulations. The MPO further recognizes the importance of outreach to low-income and minority groups early and throughout the transportation planning process. Title VI accompanied by Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice (EJ) inform these efforts and FHWA and FTA have specifically identified three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

SLATS will use the following strategies to comply with Title VI and Executive Order 12898:

- Identify minority and low-income groups in the SLATS MPA and include them in mailings announcing public meetings and planning activities
- Map low-income and minority populations using up to date demographic data in relation to planned transportation improvements
- Assess the short and long-term impacts of transportation programs and policies on EJ populations. As applicable, use these assessments to explore alternatives.
- Identify current transportation systems including highway, bicycle, pedestrian, and transit serving minority and low-income populations

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the PIP regularly

EVALUATION CRITERIA AND PROCESS:

The PIP will be reviewed and evaluated at least every five (5) years in advance of the LRP update, and amended as necessary to reflect changes in federal legislation appropriate by the Policy Board. Periodic review is to determine if the PIP reasonably meets its stated goals of providing the public:

- Complete and timely dissemination of information
- Timely public notice
- Early and continuing opportunity for public review and comment
- Coordinated public involvement activities
- Documentation of public comments
- Identification and consideration of traditionally underserved populations

The evaluation will consist of examining the following:

- Number of public notices in news media and on web page
- List of where public notices are posted
- Number of opportunities for public involvement
- Number of days from public notice to planning activity (meeting, open house, etc.)
- Number of days for public review and comment
- Number of local newspaper stories
- Number and quality of public comments, questions, suggestions
- Number of citizens at public meetings
- Number of citizens and organizations on mailing list
- Number of locations where documents and announcements are placed for public review and a list of when they are available

Based in part on this information, the MPO will evaluate whether the procedures for public involvement are adequate or if specific revisions are needed. Adequacy is in large part determined by how many citizens take the opportunity to make comments, ask questions or attend public meetings. The MPO may also send a survey to individuals/groups on mailing list to determine the adequacy of outreach techniques and any additional ways to expand participation including for those individuals or groups that may not currently participate.

MPO CONTACT INFORMATION:

Any questions, comments, concerns, or complaints about the Public Involvement Plan and process should be filed with the MPO Coordinator. The MPO Coordinator and the MPO Executive Director will review all communications. If the MPO Coordinator and Executive Director are unable to resolve a complaint or issue, it will be referred to the TAC and Policy Board for final resolution.

Please submit any comments, opinions, concerns, or complaints to:

SLATS MPO
City of Beloit Engineering Department
2400 Springbrook Court
City of Beloit, Wisconsin, 53511

Phone: 608-364-6702
Fax: 608-364-2879
E-mail neet@beloitwi.gov

APPENDIX A

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN EVALUATION

This evaluation examines the effectiveness of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP), adopted November 5, 2012, from that date through the drafting of this update (March 2015). It and based on the evaluation criteria included in this Plan.

NUMBER OF PUBLIC NOTICES IN NEWS MEDIA AND ON WEB PAGE

After SLATS adopted the PIP on November 5, 2012, and through March 2015, the MPO TAC met nine (9) times and the Policy Board met eight (8) times. Note that the TAC and Policy Board typically meet jointly. Public notices were published twice in the Beloit Daily News with the last notice being seven days or more prior to the meeting date. Public notices were published twice for each of the five (5) public open houses related to the TIP, Title VI Program, Unified Planning Work Program and Urbanized Area amendment during that time frame as well. A public notice was published in the Beloit Daily News and on the City of Beloit website, as well as posted at the Beloit Transit System transfer center, announcing two (2) public open houses for the ongoing Transit Development Plan update. Public informational meetings related to State projects such as the I-39/90 reconstruction project are also published on the City of Beloit website and included in City press releases, calendar and the weekly Beloit Report. While these meetings are not organized by SLATS, the MPO, Engineering and City Administration staff work with other agencies to involve the public in regionally significant projects.

LIST OF WHERE PUBLIC NOTICES/MEETING AGENDAS ARE POSTED

Beloit Daily News
SLATS page on the City of Beloit website

Beloit Transit Administration Building and Transfer Center as applicable to transit projects such as the TDP

NUMBER OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

There have been a number and variety of specific opportunities for public involvement during this time frame including during each meeting of the TAC and Policy Board as well as specific open houses (over sixteen (16) total meetings). The States (as opposed to the MPO directly) also provided opportunities for the area public to participate at various public information meetings related to ongoing projects such as the I-39/90 and Illinois 75 reconstruction projects. SLATS provides MPO contact information in all public notices, MPO Plans, the City of Beloit website and MPO webpage so that the public has additional opportunity to request additional information or provide additional input other than during a scheduled meeting or open house.

NUMBER OF DAYS FROM PUBLIC NOTICE TO PLANNING ACTIVITY (MEETING, OPEN HOUSE, ETC.)

There is a minimum of seven days between the last public notice and the public meeting where the Policy Board is scheduled to take action on a particular item. The MPO typically publishes public notices twice in the Beloit Daily News prior to every meeting and open house. Meeting information and packets are also posted on the SLATS website and emailed to the SLATS mailing list. For larger documents, links to the SLATS website are included in the email. The SLATS TAC and Policy Board had been receiving paper copies of all meeting information and packets, however as of late 2014, most members have indicated electronic versions are acceptable and so to save on printing costs, the MPO will only send hardcopies to those agencies or individuals requesting so. SLATS will continue to provide hard copies of all major final and approved documents such as the TIP, PIP and LRP to MPO members, the Beloit, South Beloit and Rockton public libraries and otherwise upon request. The MPO reserves the right to request reimbursement for copy costs. Also upon request, the MPO can typically email documents in PDF format.

NUMBER OF DAYS FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

A 30-day comment period was maintained for public review and comment of the TIP and major TIP amendments prior to recommendation by the TAC and action by the Policy Board. Public review and comment periods for the LRP update (last done in 2011) will follow this PIP (30 days). Likewise, the public review and comment period for this PIP will be 45 days.

NUMBER OF LOCAL NEWSPAPER STORIES

Since November 2012, the Beloit Daily News has published a number of local transportation-related stories including several stories about the I-39/90 reconstruction project. Additionally, articles about the Illinois 75 reconstruction through Rockton, the Rockton Road Bike path grant, the Highway 51 and Cranston Road intersection reconstruction, the TAP funded Powerhouse Riverwalk project, the Beloit Transit Development Plan, the South Beloit Bike Path and the Stateline Area Bike Plan and others have been written.

NUMBER AND QUALITY OF PUBLIC COMMENTS, QUESTIONS, SUGGESTIONS

Since November 2012, SLATS has received participation, comments, input and questions from public officials and staff (not including TAC or Policy Board members) at both regular SLATS meetings and open houses. We receive regular input from local bicycling advocates at MPO meetings, via email, in person and over the phone. We also receive input from neighborhood representative(s) including transportation-related input specific to traffic control and bicycling considerations. In addition, the MPO has discussed bicycle planning efforts in the Stateline area with Beloit 2020.

Specific comments and input otherwise received from the general public (not those mentioned above) have been few since November 2012. We received input on the 2015 TIP development from an interested citizen during an October 2014 open house. The input/question was in reference to the I-39/90 and I-43 interchange project in Beloit. MPO staff had maps on hand and described the proposed project to answer the question, but also later provided additional follow-up information via email.

Public input was gathered during the Stateline Area Bike System Implementation plan update. This plan was prepared in 2014 as a supplement to the 2010 SLATS Bike and Pedestrian Plan for most of the Illinois portion of the MPA. A number of community members attended meetings during the plan development process to provide input and inform the plan recommendations.

Additionally, several comments were received and numerous written and electronic surveys were collected as part of the Beloit Transit System Transit Development Plan development. That process is ongoing but the extent of participation in the process, including from stakeholders has been considerable. The TDP planning consultant will summarize and incorporate those comments and responses into the plan.

Lastly staff or local officials regularly represent member agencies regularly at MPO TAC and Policy Board meetings in addition to their TAC and Policy Board members. These individuals typically include planning representatives from Beloit and Rockton, a local official from the Town of Beloit, and non-voting members such as RMAP, the MPO for the Rockford area provide regular input and updates to SLATS staff, TAC and Policy Board.

NUMBER OF CITIZENS AT PUBLIC MEETINGS

Other than MPO and local agency staff, local officials, TAC and Policy Board members, there have been only a few attendees at meetings since November 2012. During the 2015 TIP development process, transit representatives from a private coach bus company and school bus company attended the TAC and Policy Board meeting, as well as a citizen (previously mentioned) that attended the open house. Additionally, a local bicycling advocate has attended SLATS meetings. Several members of the public have attended State DOT Public Informational Meetings (PIMS) and open houses, particularly related to the I-39/90 reconstruction on the Wisconsin side and the Illinois 75 reconstruction on the Illinois side. That is expected, as these are major projects that affect the entire Stateline community. Likewise, as mentioned, many citizens have attended open houses and been involved in public input gathering efforts of the ongoing Beloit Transit System Transit Development Plan development.

NUMBER OF CITIZENS AND ORGANIZATIONS ON MAILING LIST

The SLATS mailing list is updated regularly and includes roughly sixty (60) addressees including the TAC and Policy Board members, the local government agencies/clerks, non-voting members such as FTA and adjacent MPOs and other interested parties. The TIP mailing list includes an additional dozen or so area public and private transportation providers.

NUMBER OF LOCATIONS WHERE DOCUMENTS ARE PLACED FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND WHEN THEY ARE AVAILABLE

Hard copies of all draft and final MPO plans are distributed to the Beloit, South Beloit and Rockton public libraries and are available for review during normal business hours. MPO plans are also available at the MPO Office, 2400 Springbrook Court, Beloit, WI 53511 generally between the hours of 7 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday. It is advised to call ahead to make sure someone will be available to assist. Draft copies will be available during public review and comment periods as noticed in the Beloit Daily News, but removed once SLATS has approved the final document. Plans are also available on the MPO website.

CONCLUSION

The SLATS MPO has followed public participation procedures and met the goals as outlined in the Public Involvement Plan in the period following the previous update in 2012. Although public attendance at regular MPO meetings has been minimal, this is typical of public meetings with no highly contested issue on the agenda, particularly since many if not most people have many demands on their schedules and limited time to attend extra meetings or functions beyond what they already do. Nevertheless, the MPO will continually explore effective and creative ways of engaging the public in the transportation planning process with the goals of refining public participation outreach methods and garnering meaningful results. To this end, the MPO will explore the following strategies:

- Continue updates to the MPO website to provide both current information, and opportunities for public input such as a feedback form. Work with the City of Beloit to make the MPO page more accessible on the City's website. Currently, users must access it from a link found at the bottom of the City Engineering page, which can be difficult to find.
- Connect with community organizations, appropriate staff and others to ensure adequate means of translating important documents into Spanish and providing as-needed translation services to those with language barriers that are interested in participating in the transportation planning process. Up until a recent retirement, the MPO handled Spanish translation internally through the Engineering Division of the City of Beloit.
- Using surveys (paper-based or electronic) in the planning process can be an effective means of gathering public input, particularly for those unable to attend meetings or open houses. The quantity of responses is less important than the quality, particularly since the MPO receives so little input currently.

- As noteworthy projects or events related to the transportation planning process occur, the MPO could prepare a press release for local media, and maintain a “current news” or similar section on the MPO page. The MPO should provide the press releases to the City of Beloit for potential inclusion on the City’s homepage and Beloit Report, as well as the other local agencies within the MPO.
- While electronic communication and dissemination of information is an effective means of efficiently reaching a broad audience, a paper flier or meeting notice posted in strategic locations such as senior centers, neighborhood community centers, community service organizations or other venues with high foot-traffic (particularly from those with limited or no access to a personal automobile) may be effective. The MPO should compile and maintain a list of such locations, and work with appropriate staff to post such fliers as provided by the MPO from time to time.
- Continue regular updates to the mailing and distribution list and include identified minority and low-income groups in the SLATS MPA in mailings announcing public meetings and planning activities.