

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

LAKE NORMAN RURAL PLANNING ORGANIZATION (LNRPO)



**Amended – November 24, 2009
(Originally Approved August 24, 2004)**

I. Purpose

The purpose of the Lake Norman Area Rural Transportation Planning Organization (LNRPO) Public Involvement Plan (Plan) is to provide guidance and policy in engaging the public in the transportation planning process. The Plan has the following objectives:

1. Create a well-informed public that contributes to transportation decision-making in a meaningful way
2. Engage the public early and continuously in the transportation planning process
3. Develop a public education program on LNRPO activities
4. Assist the LNRPO in developing specific transportation projects that reflect the interest and needs of the region
5. Gain the support and trust of the public
6. Satisfy the requirements of N.C.G.S. § 136-212 regarding duties of an RPO

The Plan is not intended to preempt any public involvement activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) or any local governments within the LNRPO region.

II. Forms of Public Involvement

A. Public Outreach

Public outreach is the process of informing the public about the transportation planning process, specific transportation projects, and activities of the LNRPO. Typical public outreach strategies include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Identification of Stakeholders

A stakeholder is any person or group who is affected by a transportation plan, program, or project. Stakeholders may include:

- The general public
- Business/industry organizations, such as the Chambers of Commerce
- Environmental organizations
- Neighborhood/community organizations
- Public agencies
- Civic organizations
- Transit providers
- Motor freight carriers
- Taxicab companies

Stakeholder groups will be identified and will be included on a mailing list for notices of public hearings, workshops, etc.

The Chambers of Commerce for the LNRPO region are invited to send a representative to each Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting to update and confer with the TAC on transportation issues.

2. Media Advisories

LNRPO will periodically issue media advisories detailing significant actions of the RPO. These actions may include:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Adoption of Long-Range Transportation Plan and air quality conformity analysis
- Selection of officers
- Adoption of Project Priority List

A list of media contacts is kept on file at the Centralina Council of Governments with the Public Information Officer and is updated on a regular basis. This distribution list also includes other interested parties who wish to receive information on the activities of the LNRPO.

3. Website

The LNRPO will have a separate domain name hosted by the Lead Planning Agency (LPA), Centralina Council of Governments. The website will contain information about the LNRPO, current projects and programs, and a “comments” section to invite public comments.

4. Open Houses

Open houses may be held to provide information on transportation projects and LNRPO activities to the public in an informal setting. Open houses will have no fixed agendas or formal presentations. Planning documents, project maps, and other transportation-related information will be displayed. RPO staff and committee members will be available to provide details and answer questions.

5. Posting of Draft and Final Planning Documents

Copies of draft and final versions of certain planning documents will be made available at the following libraries and other locations in the LNRPO region:

- Iredell County Public Library (all branches)
- Lincoln County Public Library (all branches)
- Gaston County Public Library (branches serving the LNRPO area)
- Cleveland County Public Library (all branches)
- County and municipal offices in all LNRPO jurisdictions
- The LNRPO website

6. Notification of Meetings

Notification of LNRPO meetings is sent to news media in the region. A media advisory list is maintained at the COG office.

7. Presentation to Civic Organizations

Presentations will be made to interested civic organization on LNRPO activities, the transportation planning process in general, or specific transportation projects as requested. LNRPO staff and/or NCDOT staff will make presentations.

8. Public Information Brochure

A public information brochure tailored to each county in the LNRPO area is available to inform the public about the LNRPO, to update them on local transportation projects and priorities, and to inform them as to how they can become involved in providing input into the process. The brochure also contains general information about the LNRPO. The brochure is also available on the website.

B. Public Input

Public input is the process of gathering the views, opinions, and ideas of interested individuals and groups in the transportation planning process. Opportunities for public input provided by the LNRPO include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Public Comment at RPO Meetings

LNRPO meetings are opens to the public and provide opportunity for public comment. As noted above, Chamber representatives are invited to each TAC meeting to provide input.

2. Public Hearings and Public Comments Period

Public hearings will be held by the LNRPO TAC prior to taking formal action on specific planning documents. The public comment period will be 30-days prior to the TAC meeting in which action is scheduled to be taken. These actions may include:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Adoption of Long-Range Transportation Plan and air quality conformity analysis
- Amendment to Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Adoption of Highway Project Priority List

3. LNRPO Website

The LNRPO website includes a section for public comments, calendar of meetings, regional projects listings, contact information for members of the TAC and TCC as well as other information of interest to the general public. The website address is www.lakenormanrpo.org.

4. Surveys

Surveys may be developed to gauge citizen opinion on specific transportation planning issues and/or projects. Survey content, method of distribution, and geographic target area will be dependent on the specific transportation planning issue or project.

5. Workshops

Workshops will be in the form of small group discussions used to gather views and opinions on a single transportation topic or project as those topics emerge. The workshops will provide detailed information on the specific issue, and will allow for in-depth discussion by invited stakeholders, local government officials, and citizens.

III. Schedule of Public Involvement

A. Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

1. Notification of Meetings:

News media will be notified of LNRPO TAC and TCC meetings one week prior to each TAC/TCC meeting. All TAC/TCC meetings are open to the public.

2. Planning Documents:

These documents are maintained at the LPA, Centralina Council of Governments, 1300 Baxter Street, Suite 450, Charlotte, NC 28204. These documents are available for public review upon request. They are also posted on the LNRPO website.

3. Public Hearings, Workshops, and Meetings:

News media will be notified of any public hearings, workshops or meetings one week prior to the date set for the event. As noted above, stakeholder groups will be notified by mail (regular or electronic) one week prior to the event.

4. Media Advisories:

As warranted by the event, press releases will be issued by the LNRPO and sent to news media in the region.

B. Public Involvement for Specific Activities

Public involvement strategies will vary depending on the particular issue or project for which public comment is desired. Typical activities of the LNRPO which are expected to warranted more targeted public involvement activities include, but are not limited to:

1. Long-Range Transportation Plan development

2. Actions related to improvement of air quality from mobile sources
3. Specific projects or topics such as bicycle/pedestrian plans, access management plans, special small-area reports, etc.
4. Prioritization of projects for recommendation to State's TIP

IV. Response to Public Input

Public involvement may be documented in a variety of ways. Any public comments received during a meeting of the LNRPO's TCC or TAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Any comments received during a public hearing held by the TAC will be included in the meeting minutes.

Comments received during workshops, open houses, or presentations to civic organizations will be summarized, presented to the TAC and TCC, and kept on file. Results of surveys will be compiled, summarized, presented to the TAC and TCC, and kept on file. Public comments may be included as appendices in formal documents or plans for which they were made. The TAC or TCC may direct RPO staff to respond directly to public comments via letter/email.

V. Access by Person with Disabilities

All LNRPO meetings will be held in facilities that are accessible to people with disabilities. Where permitted, clear directional signs will be posted at outdoor entrances to buildings.