

**WINCHESTER – FREDERICK COUNTY (WIN-FRED)
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)**

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)

Adopted July 18, 2007
Amended August 15, 2012

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This Plan is prepared on behalf of the Winchester-Frederick Metropolitan Planning Organization (WinFred MPO) through a cooperative process involving the City of Winchester, County of Frederick, Town of Stephens City, Virginia Department of Transportation, Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is the second amendment to the original Public Involvement Plan (PIP) adopted by WinFred MPO on 16 June 2004. The first amendments to the PIP occurred on 28 June 2005. This second amendment has been driven by the need to become compliant with federal SAFETEA-LU regulations issued in February, 2007.

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Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The purpose of the Win-Fred MPO Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to provide a documented plan and meaningful process that ensures opportunities for the public to be involved in all phases of the MPO area urban transportation planning process.

This is accomplished through the following means:

- Provide complete information about MPO plans, programs and activities, using technology and visualization techniques to make this information understandable and readily accessible, and
- Provide adequate public notice for public review, input, participation and comment on key decisions regarding the Constrained Long Range Transportation Plan (CLRP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), amendments to the Public Participation Plan (PPP), and other major plans, programs and transportation planning initiatives of significance, utilizing multiple means of public notice to ensure that transportation planning information reaches the broadest possible audience; and
- Conduct meetings at convenient times and accessible locations to provide full access to key decisions, and
- Early and continuing public participation, demonstrating explicit consideration and thoughtful response to public input received during the development of the CLRP, TIP and other planning initiatives; and
- Outreach plans and programs to all stakeholders and interested parties, including efforts to seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low income and minority households who may face challenges accessing employment and other services; and
- Periodically review the effectiveness of this plan and its procedures and strategies to continually improve our full and open participation process; and
- Coordination with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation process, and
- Addressing Title VI and Environmental Justice provisions

Aspects of Public Participation

Public participation means participation in planning by people (public) outside the Win-Fred MPO staff, committees, and board members; by citizens of the MPO area including low income and minority populations. It is a process of taking part in the transportation planning and decision-making that affects the community.

The Win-Fred MPO efforts to secure participation will be targeted to citizens, stakeholders, and other interested parties that could be significantly affected by the transportation planning recommendations or could significantly influence implementation. Stakeholders and interested parties include, but are not limited to: citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of

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users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives for people with disabilities, low and moderate income persons, and minority groups.

Why does the Win-Fred MPO need to involve the public in the Transportation Planning process?

- The public has the right to have a strong voice in all matters of public policy, including planning.
- Planning staff, consultants and local officials need comments from those who know the community best: the people who live and work there.
- Involvement informs and educates the public about transportation planning and creates an informed community, which in turn leads to better planning.
- Participation gives the public a sense of ownership of the MPO transportation plan. It fosters cooperation and partnership among the public and between them and the Win-Fred MPO.

The Win-Fred MPO Public Participation Plan contains the following elements:

- Involvement Opportunities. Provide the opportunity for the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process. See Sections III, VI and VII for details.
- Communication. Establish mechanisms for maintaining communications between the public and local officials such as processes like mailings, legal ads, displays and newsletters. See Section IV for details.
- Information. Ensure that technical information is available and in simplified, understandable form. See Section V for details.
- Response to Public Input. A description of the methods used to respond to comments from the public. See Section VIII for details.
- Advisory Committees. The use of the committees and the means of providing a cross-section of representation on the advisory committees.

The following sections outline the elements of the Win-Fred MPO Public Participation Plan in greater detail.

Section I: Public Participation Process

To have a proactive public participation process, the Win-Fred MPO will provide the following public notification and comment periods. At least seven (7) days public notice will be given prior to all regular public meetings. All major plans and programs will require Policy Board approval at a public meeting, and most will also include review and recommendation at Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) public meetings. Longer formal public comment periods will be required prior to final approval at the MPO Policy Board public meeting for any changes to this PPP, and major updates or amendments to the Constrained Long Range Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. Other major plans and programs may include additional public review and comment when requested by the MPO Policy Board. Procedures will inform the public about how, when, and where they may participate. Public notification is described in greater detail in Section II.

Section II: Public Notification and Consultation

The Win-Fred MPO has the added responsibility of educating the public on the existence of the MPO and what it means for them. Without this education, other activities mentioned within the context of this Public Participation Plan (PPP) will be less effective. The following are ongoing activities used by the MPO staff to educate the citizens of the MPO area:

- Compile an educational packet\brochure for distribution at public offices, agencies, libraries, and to post on the Win-Fred MPO website.
- Be available to make presentations as requested by citizen groups, public agencies, or local governmental bodies.
- Attend public meetings sponsored by MPO member jurisdictions as deemed necessary and appropriate by those jurisdictions and their staff.

Consultation, official public notification, and other participation efforts related to approval of major plans and programs, public comment periods, public meetings, or other significant events will be provided in the following manner:

- Revisions to this Public Participation Plan (PPP) - WinFred MPO will develop the PPP in consultation with all interested parties. MPO website posting and newspaper publication notifying the public, as well as email or other notification to interested parties, shall give the public and interested parties the opportunity to review documents and provide input for at least forty-five (45) days prior to Policy Board final approval at a public meeting. Public Notice and notification will explain where the public and interested parties can view information and provide input on the current plan and proposed revisions, and will provide an invitation to the Policy Board public meeting at which revisions will be considered for approval. TAC and CAC will also review and recommend approval at public meetings.
- Constrained Long Range Plan (CLRP) – The MPO shall consult, as appropriate, with State and local agencies concerning the development of the CLRP, including comparison of the

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CLRP with plans, maps and inventories provided by these agencies. TAC and CAC will review and recommend approval at a public meeting. WinFred MPO website posting and newspaper publication notifying the public of the opportunity to review documents and provide input will be at least twenty (20) days prior to the Policy Board final approval at a public meeting. Public Notices will explain where the public can view information and provide input on the proposed CLRP, and will provide an invitation to the Policy Board public meeting at which the CLRP will be considered for final approval. Visualization techniques will be utilized to help illustrate the CLRP to the public. The above requirements apply to approval of the major review and update of the CLRP, or amendments to the current CLRP. During the major review and update to the CLRP that is required at specific intervals by federal regulation, at least one public information meeting will be held in addition to the above participation efforts to gather public input.

- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – WinFred MPO website posting and newspaper publication notifying the public of the opportunity to review documents and provide input will be at least twenty (20) days prior to the Policy Board final approval at a public meeting. Visualization techniques will be utilized to help illustrate the location of individual TIP projects. Public Notices will explain where the public can view information and provide input on the proposed TIP, and will provide an invitation to the Policy Board public meeting at which the TIP will be considered for final approval. The above requirements for Policy Board approval apply to a major update of the entire TIP, or amendments to one or more line items in the current TIP as defined in Section IX. TAC and CAC will review and recommend approval of major updates to the entire TIP at public meetings. The Winchester Transit Department utilizes the WinFred MPO as the vehicle for its public participation process; the public notice of public involvement activities and time established for the public review and comments regarding the Transit Transportation Improvement Program will satisfy the Winchester Transit Department project requirements.
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - TAC and CAC will review and recommend approval at public meetings. MPO Policy Board review and approval at a public meeting will be required. WinFred MPO website posting and newspaper publication notifying the public of the opportunity to review documents and provide input will be at least one (1) week prior to each of these public meetings related to final recommendation for approval or final approval. Additional public comment and review prior to Policy Board approval may be provided when requested by the Policy Board. The Public Notice will explain where the public can view information on the proposed transportation plan or program amendment(s), explain how they can provide input, and will provide an invitation to the Policy Board public meeting at which the plan or program amendment(s) will be considered for approval. The above requirements apply to initial approval of the UPWP that occurs annually. Changes to the UPWP during the fiscal year will require MPO Policy Board review and approval at a public meeting; the need for and duration of any additional public comment period related to approving changes to the UPWP during the fiscal year will depend on the nature of these changes, and will be determined by Policy Board on a case by case basis.

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- Other Major Plans and Programs - TAC and CAC will review and recommend approval at public meetings. MPO Policy Board review and approval at a public meeting will be required. WinFred MPO website posting and newspaper publication notifying the public of the opportunity to review documents and provide input will be at least one (1) week prior to each of these public meetings related to final recommendation for approval or final approval. Additional public comment and review prior to Policy Board approval may be provided when requested by the Policy Board. The Public Notice will explain where the public can view information on the proposed transportation plan or program amendment(s), explain how they can provide input, and will provide an invitation to the Policy Board public meeting at which the plan or program amendment(s) will be considered for approval. These requirements apply to initial approval of these major plans and programs. The need for public comment and the duration of the public comment period required for amendments to major plans and programs will depend on the nature of these amendments, and will be determined by Policy Board on a case by case basis.
- Administrative modification to the CLRP and TIP – Administrative modifications may be approved by the MPO without being subject to formal public comment and review. Public comment and review prior to Policy Board approval of administrative modification(s) to the CLRP or TIP may occur when requested by the Policy Board. Administrative modifications to the TIP and CLRP are described in Section IX. If public comment is requested, the Public Notice will explain where the public can view information on the proposed administrative modification(s), explain how they can provide input, and will provide an invitation to the meeting at which the plan or program amendment will be considered for approval.
- Newspaper publication will be no less than one (1) week prior to all public meetings of the WinFred MPO Policy Board. All public notices for WinFred MPO Policy Board meetings will be published as a block advertisement in the legal section of the Winchester Star newspaper.
- Notification of all Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) public meetings will run no less than one (1) week prior to the meeting in the Community Meeting section of the Winchester Star newspaper.
- Information regarding all public meetings and events as well as current document releases will be placed and maintained on the Win-Fred MPO web site (www.winfredmpo.org). Notification and agendas for all MPO public meetings, and information related to major plans or programs being considered for recommendation or approval at any MPO public meeting, will be posted on the MPO website no less than one (1) week prior to the meeting or longer as described elsewhere in this document.
- Email listings will be created and maintained by WinFred MPO staff for interested parties, State and local resource agencies, stakeholders, organizations, or others that have requested or are required by federal MPO planning regulations to receive notifications of public meetings, copies of agendas, and notification of upcoming approval of new or amended major plans and programs. The MPO website and email will be the primary means of communication for notifications and distributing information. Hard copies will generally not

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be sent if these interested parties, agencies, stakeholders, organizations or individuals have email capability.

- The CAC will assist with citizen outreach and community involvement.

In addition to the above public participation and notification efforts, the Win-Fred MPO may utilize the following techniques to disseminate information to the public:

- Public service announcements and interviews on radio and cable television local community channels to explain the subject matter and promote public participation.
- Articles and Press Releases for the newspaper or other widely circulated publications, including those that are known to serve low income and minority households.
- Informal presentations at regional sites, open houses, round tables, or other community forums.
- Formal presentations to various service clubs, civic and professional groups.
- Emails, or mailings for those without email capability, to select individuals, groups or organizations that have expressed interest or made comments at meetings.
- Distribution of information flyers on public transit buses.

Section III: Access to Information

The Win-Fred MPO will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to meeting schedules, agendas, and minutes, and technical and policy information relating to the data or content used in the development of transportation plans, programs and projects. Documents will be available for public inspection on the Win-Fred MPO web site (www.winfredmpo.org) and at the office of the MPO staff (Northern Shenandoah Valley Regional Commission) located at 400 Kendrick Lane, Suite E, Front Royal, VA during normal working hours.

Copies of draft major plans and programs for public review will also be placed at the following locations during public comment periods:

- Frederick County Department of Planning & Development, 107 N. Kent Street, Winchester, VA
- City of Winchester Planning Department, Rouss City Hall, 15 N. Cameron Street, Winchester, VA
- Town of Stephens City Municipal Office, 1033 Locust Street, Stephens City, VA
- Handley Regional Library, 100 W. Piccadilly Street, Winchester, VA

- Bowman Regional Library, Tasker Road, Stephens City, VA

Section IV: Public Meetings

Public meetings will be held at various locations in the Winchester – Frederick County area to inform the public of the planning process and to solicit ideas, input and feedback. Regular public meetings of MPO Policy Board and other Committees will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. The intent of holding these public meetings at diversified locations is to solicit broad public comments. Many regular public meetings will be at the Frederick County Board of Supervisors meeting room, Winchester City Hall City Council chambers, and the Timbrook Public Safety Center Public Meeting Room in the City of Winchester. Other public meetings may also be held at locations such as banks, churches, or community centers.

All regular and special meetings of the MPO Policy Board, TAC, and CAC will provide a public comment period after the meeting is called to order and the minutes of the prior meeting(s) have been approved. This comment period may be used by citizens to address their concerns, provide input, etc. to matters on the agenda or of a general nature as long as they relate to metropolitan transportation planning. Additionally, when new or amended major plans and programs as articulated in Section IX are placed on the agenda for potential final approval by the Policy Board or final recommendation by a Committee, public comment time shall be provided at the beginning of discussion of that agenda item. Public comment may also be received about any meeting agenda item via e-mail, mail, etc. during the public notice period prior to the meeting. In these cases, copies shall be provided to the Board or Committee members and noted for the public record during the meeting. Explicit attention to and consideration of public comments will be given and responses, when appropriate, provided to questions asked. When significant oral and written comments are received on the draft Constrained Long Range Plan and TIP as a result of the participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final Constrained Long Range Plan and TIP.

Notice of public meetings will be given in accordance with and as listed in Section II. A reasonable attempt will be made to notify organizations representing minority and disabled people and a request made that they provide their members with meeting notice and information.

Special arrangements will be made to accommodate persons with disabilities, low income, and people who do not speak English. For meetings involving individuals without transportation and the disabled, the Win-Fred MPO will schedule meetings during the time public transit and para-transit services are operating or will make special arrangements to ensure that individuals have an opportunity to access transportation to the meetings. Interpreters will be provided, when advance notice of at least seven (7) working days is given of the need, and an interpreter can be located to accommodate non-English speaking individuals.

Section V: Opportunities for Participation

The Win-Fred MPO will take a proactive approach to providing the opportunity for the public to be involved early and with a continuing involvement in all phases of the planning process. The MPO will provide extensive public notice of public meetings as listed in Section II and access to information as listed in Section III. The MPO will maintain lists of names and addresses of citizens and organizations that will be contacted on a continued basis to serve as a base of interested parties and resource agencies for input and comment as described in Section II. This list will be expanded as additional citizens attend the informational public meetings and make comments. Meeting agendas for all MPO committees will include a public comment period.

Section VI: Response to Public Input

Responses to questions and comments from the public concerning the public participation process, draft transportation plans, programs, or public agency consultation process will be made directly to the individual by email, letter, telephone call or other appropriate means. Rationale for policy decisions will be available to the public in writing if requested.

Section VII: Advisory Committees

MPO Bylaws define the establishment of and membership on MPO Advisory Committees. Advisory committees have been formed to advise the Win-Fred MPO Policy Committee and staff in the preparation and review of public participation plans, transportation plans, programs, and other related matters. There are currently two types of committees:

1. Technical Advisory Committee (TAC): The TAC is composed of technical, planning and/or managerial staff representatives from each of the participating agencies of the Win-Fred MPO. Voting membership on this committee is defined in the MPO bylaws. Subcommittees of the TAC may be utilized to study issue areas not requiring full TAC participation.
2. Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC): The CAC is comprised of members representing a diverse background in the Winchester-Frederick County region, whom are appointed by each of the local governments participating in the Win-Fred MPO. Voting membership on this committee is defined in the MPO bylaws. In addition, the VDOT Staunton District Equal Employment Manager and District Planner work with the CAC to provide information and offer assistance on various issues. The CAC also solicits input and recommendations from other citizen groups and interested parties when reviewing various transportation plans and programs.

Section VIII: Title VI Requirements

As part of the transportation planning process to meet the requirements of Title VI, and to better serve the community, the Win-Fred MPO will reach out to members of the low-income, minority, and disadvantaged communities to ensure participation. Localized meetings to discuss transportation issues may be held periodically to encourage participation. Public notifications

outlined in Section II will be conducted to attempt to get the word out about upcoming meetings and hearings. Citizens that express interest or make comments at a public meeting will be put on a mailing list to be notified of other meetings and any proposed actions as described in Section II. Section IV describes other efforts to allow and encourage all citizens to attend MPO public meetings.

Section IX: Revisions, Amendments, and Administrative Modifications to Major Plans and Programs

Revisions to the PPP, and amendments to the TIP and CLRP are subject to formal public review and comment, will be approved by Policy Board only after the public has been notified of an intent to amend the plan, and only after the public has had adequate time to review and comment on the proposed substantial changes.

The following sections describe typical revisions and amendments:

- PPP – Any and all changes are considered revisions.
- TIP - Amendments represent a major change that involves the addition or deletion of a project, a major change in project or project phase initiation dates, or a major change in project design concept, scope or cost.
- CLRP - Amendments represent a major change that involves the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in design concept or scope.

Public Notification, access to information and all public meetings will be in accordance and as listed in Sections II, III, and IV respectively.

Administrative modifications to the TIP and CLRP are not subject to formal public review and comment, and may be approved administratively by MPO staff after adequate review. These modifications will be posted on the MPO website after administrative approval.

The following sections describe administrative modifications to major plans and programs:

- TIP – Administrative modifications represent a minor revision that includes minor changes to project / project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project / project phase initiation dates. Some examples of administrative modifications include allocation / obligation cost changes for a project or project phase, breakout of an existing project into multiple projects or into multiple line items for different aspects of that existing project, funding changes to or identification of specific projects from current grouped funding sources (often shown as districtwide, statewide, interstate, primary, etc., funding sources for purposes such as signs, pavement markings, traffic signals, guardrail, enhancement, roadway safety, rail safety, bike/pedestrian safety, maintenance, operations, etc.), obligating funds to open the next phase of a project already in the MPO TIP, and minor changes to project description or project termini that do not impact travel demand models or CLRP recommendations

- CLRP - Administrative modifications represent a revision that includes minor changes to project funding sources, minor changes to project description or scope, and minor changes to costs of previously included projects.

Section X: Policy Board Action

The Policy Board of the Win-Fred MPO will hold the final public meeting on approval of new or amended major transportation plans and programs. Notice of the time and place of the public meeting will be provided in accordance with the notification requirements listed in Sections II, III, and IV. After due consideration of all public comments received in writing and/or presented in person at the meeting/hearing, the Policy Board will deliberate upon all information that it has received and make a decision, on the major plan or program. However, an additional period of public comment will be provided to stakeholders and interested parties if the final TIP or CLRP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts. Approval of new or amended major plans and programs will be documented by Resolution signed by the Policy Committee Chair or designee.

Section XI: Follow-up and Continuing Efforts

This PPP establishes the basic techniques for disseminating information to the public and engaging the citizens in interactive discussions about the transportation planning process. MPO staff will work to develop performance measures in order to quantify results of public participation efforts and generate an annual report. These reports will give a summary of public input for the past year and compare current results to prior years. In this way the MPO can gauge the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan and highlight opportunities for improvement. Staff may track the following activities to quantify public input in the transportation planning process:

- Attendance and input at public information meetings and public hearings
- Number of organizations and groups to which mailings are sent
- Number of members on email listings
- Communications received from public whether they use mail, email, and comment at public information meetings or public hearings
- Presentations given to public groups outside of regular MPO public meetings

In addition, commission staff will continue to research new and innovative ways to further involve the public in the MPO transportation planning process.