CHAPTER 6: Public Participation Procedures

The MPO will adhere to the following procedures to ensure public participation in the transportation planning process.

Public Participation Plan

The MPO makes every attempt to coordinate its public participation process with state and local governments to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs. A new or updated PPP will be produced at least once every two years so as to continuously improve our outreach strategies to encourage public participation.

Adopting or amending the PPP requires a 45-day public review and comment period and includes:

- A legal advertisement placed in the aforementioned media outlets, thereby initiating the 45-day public review period;
- Notice of the public review and comment period is posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The PPP Draft is made available on PlanHillsborough.org under “Current Projects and Drafts,” as well as in the Planning Commission Library during regular business hours, for at least 45 days prior to MPO consideration;
- A post is made to the Hillsborough MPO’s social media accounts with a link to the PPP Draft;
- Formal presentations are made to the MPO Advisory Committees (CAC, TAC and Policy at a minimum) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment prior to MPO Board consideration;
- Public comments will be accepted at each MPO Board and Advisory Committee meeting, and forwarded to the Board prior to adoption;
- Reviews and comments will be solicited from FDOT and other interested partner agencies.

The PPP will be evaluated and reviewed at least once every two years by MPO staff, Advisory Committees and the MPO Board. This process assures that the process complies with all statutory requirements, encourages complete and continued participation from all interested parties, and that it adapts in response to changing technologies, outreach strategies, and effectiveness results. A PPP Measures of Effectiveness (MOE) report will be presented to the MPO and its CAC, TAC, Policy, and TDCB committees at least once every two years. The MOE will summarize the MPO’s participation activities, measure the effectiveness of the MPO’s public engagement over the past two years, and analyze the results to inform recommendations for continued improvement. Comments received will be reproduced in the MOE presentation to the MPO for consideration.
The PPP frames the MPO’s approach to involving the public in its decision-making. Specific public outreach strategies may be pursued for individual projects. Such strategies may be tailored to fit unique circumstances or project requirements, but will conform to the PPP.

**PPP Amendment**

For major amendments, updates, or new PPP documents, the procedures listed above will be followed. Minor changes and additions between LRTP update periods will be implemented through the advisory committee process. The appendices are provided for information and are not subject to amendment requirements. Public comment on the PPP will be taken at any time, considered, and implemented with the bi-annual review, as appropriate. Creative suggestions are encouraged throughout the process.

**Long Range Transportation Plan**

The LRTP identifies transportation improvements necessary to maintain adequate mobility and accommodate anticipated growth. The LRTP includes a comprehensive listing of highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian and freight movement needs, and identifies cost affordable projects through a 20-year horizon. Major public participation tools are noted in Appendix B of this document.

Federal legislation requires the LRTP development to incorporate consultation with state and federal environmental protection, tribal government, wildlife management, land management, and historic preservation agencies. The MPO accomplishes this through Florida’s Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process, which uses a web-based tool to solicit comments and provide information and map data to affected agencies. Other procedures include:

- Coordination with FDOT, HART, the jurisdictions and other partner agencies throughout LRTP development;
- Extensive public involvement plan developed and executed to provide early and continuing opportunities to participate in the development of the LRTP;
- Coordination with American Indian entities such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida, through contacts furnished by tribal governments and FDOT (these are listed in Appendix G);
- Concerted efforts to identify and engage groups and areas which may have been under-represented in the past (e.g., low income, minority, LEP, and disabled populations);
- MPO newsletters, web posts, social media, direct mail, email blasts and ads in newspapers are used at various points to notify the public of participation opportunities;
- Key technical documents posted for public review and comment on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The Draft LRTP is posted on the PlanHillsborough.org and available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours;
• A 30-day public review and comment period as required, followed by a Public Hearing for MPO adoption of the LRTP;

• A good faith effort is made by posting signs, direct mail, or other means to inform the affected areas and notify parties potentially affected by the proposed LRTP;

• Two newspaper advertisements placed:
  - The first announcing the 30-day public review period and announcing the upcoming Public Hearing,
  - The second for the 10-day notice of the upcoming Public Hearing;

• Notice of the public review period and Public Hearing posted on the PlanHillsborough.org website;

• Formal presentations made to the MPO advisory committees as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the MPO Board considers adoption;

• In-person, written and electronic public comments accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting;

• Soliciting review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other partner agencies;

• Adoption by a roll-call or hand-counted vote of the MPO.

**LRTP Amendment**

An amendment is a major revision to the LRTP, such as adding or deleting a project, a major change in project costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope, such as changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes. Changes to the LRTP on projects included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment.

An amendment requires public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed within expected funding, and where appropriate, a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation air quality conformity mandates. The following outlines public participation procedures for an LRTP Amendment:

• A 15-day public review and comment period is required followed by a Public Hearing for an LRTP Amendment;
• One legal advertisement is placed announcing the 15-day review period, availability of the proposed LRTP Amendment on PlanHillsborough.org, and announcing the upcoming Public Hearing;

• Notice of the public review period and Public Hearing is posted on PlanHillsborough.org;

• The proposed LRTP Amendment is posted on PlanHillsborough.org and is available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours for at least 15 days prior to MPO consideration;

• Formal presentations are made to the MPO advisory committees (CAC, TAC and Policy Committee at a minimum) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the MPO Board considers adoption;

• In-person, written or electronic public comments are accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting;

• Evaluate and document whether any adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts to the community at large and to the underserved population, in particular, would result from implementation of the amended or updated plan;

• Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies is solicited.

LRTP Administrative Modification

An administrative modification is a revision to the LRTP for minor changes to a project including project phase costs, funding sources, and/or initiation dates.

An administrative modification requires neither public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based within expected funding, nor a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation requirements. LRTP administrative modifications are executed as follows:

• No public review requirement;

• Approved by the MPO Executive Director;

• LRTP document is modified and posted on PlanHillsborough.org.
Transportation Improvement Program

Revised annually to incorporate those projects in the LRTP having the highest priority and an ability to be funded, the TIP contains all transportation projects programmed for the upcoming five fiscal years. Projects are grouped by jurisdictional responsibility, which indicates the year, funding source and levels for each phase of the project. From a policy perspective, the TIP is particularly important in that it establishes the priorities for scheduling improvements to the Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), including freight and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) strategies, federal Interstate highway system, local roadways and MPO priorities concerning transit, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments, and transportation demand management programs. The MPO updates its priorities every year and includes them in the TIP document.

Federally funded projects and most state funded projects must be included in the TIP, and are subject to MPO approval. Locally funded projects are included for informational purposes and are not subject to MPO approval.

When an updated TIP and new priorities are proposed, a Public Hearing is held to adopt them. The new priorities are used by FDOT for programming the new fifth year to be integrated into FDOT’s Work Program. The MPO adopts the updated TIP at a Public Hearing held the following summer to meet the July 15th state deadline for submittal each year. Steps in the process include:

- Coordination with FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other partner agencies throughout TIP development;

- A 30-day public review and comment period before the TIP Public Hearing;

- Newspaper advertisements are placed to provide a 10-day notice of the TIP Public Hearing,

- Notice of the Public Hearing is also posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
• The Draft TIP document is posted on PlanHillsborough.org and available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours for at least 30 days prior to MPO consideration;

• A good faith effort is made by posting signs, direct mail, or other means to inform the affected areas and notify parties potentially affected by the proposed TIP;

• Formal presentations are made to the MPO advisory committees as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the MPO Board considers adoption of the TIP;

• In-person, written and electronic public comments are accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting;

• Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies are solicited;

• The TIP is published annually and posted on PlanHillsborough.org. In addition, the website features an interactive version of the TIP that allows users to search and map individual projects listed in the document.

TIP Amendment

A TIP Amendment is a major change to the TIP, including: adding or deleting a project; changes in project phase costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope, such as changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes; or a cost increase greater than 20% and $2 million. An amendment requires public review and comment and re-demonstration of fiscal constraint. The following outlines public participation procedures for a TIP Amendment:

• A public review and comment period will coincide with the formal presentations made to the MPO advisory committees (at a minimum CAC, TAC and Policy Committee) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the MPO consideration, which includes posting
on PlanHillsborough.org one week prior to the CAC meeting (the first of these committee meetings each month, ordinarily occurring at least three weeks before the MPO meeting);

- In-person public comments are accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting;

- Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies are solicited, with public discussion opportunities among agencies at the TAC meeting;

- Approved by a roll call vote of the MPO Board;

- Amended TIP document is updated and posted on PlanHillsborough.org.

**TIP Administrative Modifications**

A TIP modification includes minor changes to an already adopted project’s costs or to the cost of a project phase; minor changes to funding sources; changes to the initiation dates within the same fiscal year; changes to projects that are not federally funded; changes to information and projects included for illustrative purposes only; changes to information outside of the TIP period or not required to be included in the TIP per federal regulations; or changes to correct simple or data entry errors. Administrative modifications are executed as follows:

- No public review;

- Approved by the MPO Executive Director¹;

- TIP document is modified and placed on the PlanHillsborough.org website.

**Annual Listing of Obligated Projects**

To make the project funding process as transparent as possible, no later than 90 days after the end of the program year (i.e., the fiscal year ending September 30th), in combination with FDOT, HART and other public transportation operators, the MPO develops a list of projects in

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¹ Federal Aid Technical Bulletin 10-03 from FDOT’s Federal Aid Office
Hillsborough County – including bicycle and pedestrian projects – for which federal transportation funds were obligated (i.e., funds contractually committed to a project) in the previous program year. Based on the TIP, the list describes the project by name, to/from limits, type, funding source, and amounts obligated to specific project phases. The MPO posts this information each year on PlanHillsborough.org.

**Air Quality Conformity Determination**

Hillsborough County has attained air quality standards for ozone (a contributor to smog), and therefore, is not required to determine whether its Plan will have an adverse impact on air quality, an analysis known as a conformity determination.

**Unified Planning Work Program**

The UPWP defines the transportation planning activities and products to be developed by the MPO and other transportation planning agencies for a two-year period. Updated bi-annually, it is the basis for allocating federal, state, and local funds for transportation planning activities.

UPWP public participation opportunities are included in the process as follows:

- The UPWP requires a 30-day public review and comment period;
- A UPWP Draft will be available by March 15th for transmittal to FDOT and federal agencies;
- Notice of the public review period to be posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The UPWP Draft is posted on PlanHillsborough.org under “Draft Publications” at least 30 days prior to MPO consideration;
- Formal presentations to the MPO advisory committees (CAC, TAC and Policy Committee at a minimum) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the MPO Board considers adoption;
- In-person, written or electronic public comment is accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting.

**UPWP Revisions**

Revisions to the UPWP involving FHWA and FTA funds fall into two categories:

1. **Modifications**: do not change the FHWA approved FHWA and FTA budget or scope of the FHWA funded work tasks.

2. **Amendments**: change the FHWA approved budget, change the scope of the FHWA funded work tasks, or add or delete a work task.

UPWP Modifications are executed as follows:
• Notify the District MPO Liaison and the FHWA within the consultation process prior to its execution by the MPO (no approval is required);

• No public review requirement;

• Approved by the MPO Executive Director;

• The revised UPWP is posted on PlanHillsborough.org.

UPWP Amendments must be approved by the FHWA. Since the UPWP is updated bi-annually, there is likely to be at least one amendment when state and federal budgets are approved each year. The Hillsborough MPO will provide opportunities for public review and comment of UPWP amendments as follows:

• Draft UPWP Amendment is posted on PlanHillsborough.org with the meeting packets at least seven days prior to each meeting;

• Formal presentation to the Policy Committee for recommendation to the MPO Board;

• In-person, written or electronic public comment to be accepted at each MPO Board and advisory committee meeting;

• Final approval by the MPO Board.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Established by the Hillsborough MPO in 1990, the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB) serves as the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for Hillsborough County in order to guide and coordinate transportation services with the goal of improving quality of life for:

• Children who are at high risk;

• The elderly;

• Those who have physical or mental disabilities; and

• Low income or economically disadvantaged.
Public participation is a priority as outreach is targeted to people in our community most in need of services. Created by the TDCB’s Outreach & Awareness subcommittee, the Ride Guide is a great example of outreach material consolidating relevant information for the transportation disadvantaged in Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough Counties. An annual evaluation of the Sunshine Line (paratransit service) is conducted by the TDCB, including a direct-mail survey of more than 8,000 customers of the service. Other forums and public engagement opportunities are used to continue public involvement throughout the year.

In consultation with the Sunshine Line, our Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) and TDCB, the MPO develops and annually updates a Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan. The TDSP is developed in a manner that assures the local planning agencies responsible for preparing comprehensive plans have the opportunity to review and comment on it. The TDSP must be consistent with applicable local government comprehensive plans, the Long Range Transportation Plan, transit development plans, and other local, regional and state transportation plans. The TDCB’s Planning subcommittee, which includes representatives from HART and FDOT, provide input throughout the plan’s development. The Planning Commission is also given the opportunity to review and provide comments. Once the TDCB approves the plan, the MPO Board reviews and approves the Plan before it is forwarded to the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged (CTD) for certification.

According to the CTD Handbook, the TDSP planning process must allow representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation; human services providers; and the public to participate.
Stakeholders may include:

- **Transportation planners and providers** – area transportation planning agencies; public transit and ADA transit providers; and private transportation providers such as brokers, taxi operators, vanpool providers, ride-share providers and intercity bus operators.

- **Passengers and advocates** – existing and potential riders; protection and advocacy organizations; representatives from independent living centers; advocacy organizations working on behalf of targeted populations.

- **Human service partners** – agencies that administer health, employment or other support programs for targeted populations; job training and placement agencies; housing agencies; health care facilities; and mental health providers.

- **Others** – emergency and security management agencies; tribes and tribal representatives; economic development organizations, faith-based and community based organizations; representatives of the business community (employers); appropriate local or state officials and elected officials; and school districts.

**Title VI Checklist**

The MPO is in the process of developing a checklist for interacting with Communities of Concern. This internal process is intended to identify Communities of Concern surrounding project areas, and proposes different steps depending on the demographics of the area for how meetings should be conducted. For instance, a Community of Concern that contains low-income populations may more easily access a meeting held after business hours.

**Other MPO Plans & Studies**

The MPO often prepares plans and studies focusing on particular sub-areas, corridors or specific project areas. These may be carried out by staff and/or consultants, and the scope and level of detail of such products can vary greatly, as can the level of public involvement and engagement technique. There are no set requirements but the MPO makes a practice of engaging the community in such plans and studies early and continuously. The MPO strives to identify affected parties and invite them to collaborate as stakeholders.

Ideally, constituents will be invited to participate throughout the process and help shape the plan or study by:

- Identifying the issues or problem statement;
- Defining goals, objectives and prioritization factors;
- Developing alternative solutions;
• Reaching a consensus on the preferred alternative; and
• Reviewing and commenting on draft plans and studies.
• At a minimum, the MPO will provide timely notification of all such plans or studies as they develop in draft form, and allow the public ample opportunity to review and comment on them before being adopted or approved by the MPO. Staff will forward all relevant comments to the MPO board prior to acting, along with a synopsis and response to all pertinent issues.