

CHAPTER 17

TITLE VI &

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT





A PRODUCT OF THE
Western Piedmont
Council of Governments

Greater Hickory Metropolitan
Planning Organization

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In order for transportation planning to be effective, MPOs must take active steps in order to encourage public participation. The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (GHMPO) has been focusing its efforts to include the public in five key ways:

1. Website and Social Media
2. Surveys
3. Flyers
4. Developing Diverse Contact Lists
5. Conducting Public Events and Meetings

WEBSITE AND SOCIAL MEDIA

The GHMPO uses the Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) website as a communication tool for important updates and public meeting announcements. Public involvement and awareness is further improved by cross posting these items on WPCOG's Facebook page and using the Facebook "Live" feature for select meetings. The effectiveness of GHMPOs social media outreach is monitored by using analytics software to determine how many people have been reached. On average, each post typically reaches anywhere from 300 to 1,000 people. GHMPO has also updated its website and social media platforms to include information about the:

- » Adopted 2045 MTP Chapters Long Range Transit Plan (LRTP);
- » Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – General background information to give the reader a basic understanding of what an MTP is and why it is being updated;
- » Public Involvement Policy (PIP) adapted on October 28, 2020;
- » Title VI documents with general background information to give the reader a basic understanding of Title VI and discrimination complaint procedures
- » Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan (MTIP) – displaying all fully- funded and future projects in the area;
- » Greater Hickory MPO Interactive Map showing area projects under evaluation for the State Transportation Investment Program (STIP) and currently programmed under Locally Administered Project Program (LAPP);
- » Air Quality - The GHMPO is in the process of partnering with Clean Air Carolina to collect data from air quality monitors set up throughout the Western Piedmont region. Once the monitors are placed and the trial period is complete, citizens should have access to constant air quality updates;
- » Burke County Quality of Life Explorer (a newly updated GIS program);
- » Schedule of public meetings;
- » Ways the public can make suggestions, offer plan input, and participate in meetings and surveys;
- » Survey results from the 2050 Proposed LRTP.

SURVEYS

Surveys serve as a useful public input tool for the GHMPO. The GHMPO in the past has used Survey Monkey to gather input, gauge the public's general interest in potential projects and determine public sentiment regarding transportation issues. The GHMPO recently started using MetroQuest, an online engagement platform that is designed for transportation planning.

- » 2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan Survey – This survey opened on March 30,
- » 2017 and received 670 responses. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the transportation needs of citizens in the Hickory Metropolitan Statistical Area, and to better prioritize future transportation investments.
- » Lake Hickory Trail System Survey - This survey opened for responses on March 21,

- » 2017 and received 245 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the interest of Hickory area residents in developing an extended bicycle and pedestrian network.
- » Freight Movement in North Carolina's Western Piedmont: Trucking Survey – This survey opened on July 18, 2016 and received 18 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gain a better understanding of the obstacles affecting freight mobility in the region and create specific solutions to these obstacles. Paper copies were also hand delivered to freight producing facilities throughout the region.
- » Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Survey – This survey - which received 983 responses - was released in both English and Spanish on February 3, 2017. The purpose of the survey was to inform WPCOG's CEDS Committee about how to encourage and equip the region with strategies to improve economic conditions and the quality of life for all residents.
- » 2017 Local Coordinated Public Transportation Plan Survey – This survey was released on January 4, 2017 and received 26 responses. Timed to coincide with the Local Coordinated Plan update, the purpose of this survey was to obtain feedback for use in enhancing public transportation within the four county region.
- » Proposed Burke County Transit Route Industry and Business Survey – This survey opened on December 28, 2016 and received 8 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gauge the interest of private industries in a proposed fixed-route transit service.
- » Burke County Fixed Route Bus Service Survey – This survey was released in both English and Spanish on July 18, 2016 and received 516 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gauge public interest in and preferences for potential fixed route public transportation in Burke County. With input from the public, the proposed fixed route service was designed to improve access to health care, full service grocery stores, educational institutions and recreation facilities. Paper copies of this survey were also distributed at bus stops, medical facilities, the Department of Social Services, the Community Foundation of Burke County and other key locations.
- » Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan – Survey – This survey opened on April 22, 2014 and received 259 responses. The purpose of this survey was to gather information on cycling habits, roadways in need of improvement, and ideas for reducing conflicts between cyclists and motorists.

FLYERS

To reach as many segments of the public as possible, GHMPO also distributes informational flyers about upcoming public meetings and workshops. These flyers explain the importance of public participation in developing inclusive and relevant plans. Flyers have been used to advertise:

- » Select Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meetings
- » Long Range Transportation Plan Meetings
- » Metropolitan Transportation Plan Meetings
- » Workshops and Public Input Events
- » Active Surveys for LRTP, Local Coordinated Public Transit (LCP), and others

For the events listed above, flyers were distributed at bus stops, GHMPO-sponsored meetings, freight-producing industries, town halls throughout the GHMPO planning area, and were made available on the GHMPO website, Facebook and Twitter platforms.





We Need Your Participation!

Everyone who uses the transportation system (a road, a railroad, a bike path, a sidewalk, or a transit route) has a role in developing the area's...

Metropolitan Transportation Plan.



If you would like information on how you can participate or need information in a different format, please let your WPCOG staff member at this public meeting know. Your participation is very important to us!

We may need to contact you after this meeting to provide enhanced services that meet your specific need. So, please provide your contact information at the meeting sign-in table and let us know how we can best provide services for you.

Persons who speak Spanish and do not speak English, or have a limited ability to read, speak or understand English, may receive interpretive services upon request prior to the meeting by calling 1-800-481-6894.

Your Input in the MTP Process Is Important

There is a role for you in every step we take!

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    graph TD
      A[MTP Vision] --> B[Needs Assessment]
      B --> C[Analyze Alternatives]
      C --> D[Develop Final Plan]
      D --> E[Plan Adoption]
  
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On the web: <http://www.wpcog.org/transportation>

WPCOG
Planning & Transportation

WE NEED YOUR COMMENTS ON THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization is currently seeking public input for the 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan.



The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) provides an opportunity for community dialog on transportation needs, options, and issues.

For more information, visit the following webpage:

<http://trans.wpcog.org/>

Comments will be collected through Friday, November 1st.



A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) serves as an area's defining vision for future transportation needs for expected growth and development over a 20 year period. The plan is updated every 4 years.

DRIVING



WALKING AND BIKING



RIDING THE BUS OR TRAIN



ARE ALL INCLUDED IN A METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

To find out more information about the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, please contact:

Averi Ritchie
828-485-4248 or averi.ritchie@wpcog.org

A Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is important because:

- It's required by both state and federal law
- It helps local officials make informed decisions about land use.
- It positions the area's transportation system to best serve the **community** as it grows and develops.
- It helps keep the transportation system **safe, efficient, and effective** by identifying where future travel demand will generate the need for improvements.
- It is the **first step** in competing for limited transportation funding.
- It **balances** local priorities with regional and statewide goals

Community input is needed from you throughout the process!



LE NECESITAMOS EN NUESTRA TALLER PÚBLICO!



Acompáñenos para platicarnos de ciclismo y dárnos consejo de Rutas Mas Utilizadas y Destinos Significados Seguridad y Educación Mejoras en la Infraestructura

FECHAS Y DIRECCIONES
Todos los eventos estarán Spm - *pm y puede venir y ir.

Alexander County Tuesday, April 11, 2017 CVCC Alexander County Campus 349 Industrial Drive Taylorsville, NC 28681	Caldwell County Tuesday, April 11, 2017 Caldwell County Library Room 0 120 Hospital Avenue Lenoir, NC 28645
Buncombe County Tuesday, April 11, 2017 Burke Senior Center 101 N Green Street Morganton, NC 28655	Catawba County Tuesday, April 11, 2017 Western Piedmont COG Offices 1093 2nd Ave, NW Hickory, NC 28601

© Western Piedmont Bike Plan (WPBP). Intenciones es mejorar la seguridad, el acceso y la accesibilidad para los ciclistas desalentando un uso de rutas asfaltadas que vinculan las ciudades y otros destinos principales en la región y promoviendo una mayor conciencia de las necesidades en los caminos que existen, priorizar las mejores, y encontrar un plan de senderos para marcar las rutas identificadas.

Para mas información visite:
<https://wpbikeplan.wordpress.com>
 y "Like" en Facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/wpbikeplan>



INCREASED CONTACT LISTS

The GHMPO takes seriously its responsibility to keep clear lines of communication open to all people. During the development of the WPCOG's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) in 2017, the MPO staff worked with CEDS Committee Members to identify additional community groups to be included in the region's planning process. The GHMPO believes that the transportation planning process must take active measures to ensure public involvement in decision-making processes. To that end, the CEDS development process provided a springboard for MPO staff to expand its contact lists. The CEDS Committee's 15 members were deeply-rooted in community involvement throughout the region, and were able to provide highly useful information on a range of community groups and non-profit organizations whose perspectives could significantly contribute to the GHMPO's transportation planning process.

To increase public involvement and overall awareness, the information obtained during the CEDS development process and other contacts, including "citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, and representatives of the disabled" (23 CFR 450.316) were included in an updated database.

PUBLIC EVENTS & MEETINGS

The GHMPO actively encourages collaborative decision-making by implementing strategies designed to maximize public input. Providing the public with an opportunity to learn more about plans and programs through staff-sponsored events is a vital component of GHMPO outreach efforts.

Despite consistent efforts to publicize events and meetings, public turnout may occasionally be lower than anticipated. To address this reality and still reach the broadest possible range of citizens, the GHMPO leverages outreach opportunities resulting from staff members' attendance at meetings and events hosted by other organizations.

Reaching Title VI and Environmental Justice communities is a major public involvement priority for the GHMPO. Determining optimal meeting locations, times and meeting notification methods are all crucial factors considered by the GHMPO when planning a meeting or an event. The GHMPO has found that attendance at meetings by Title IV and Environmental Justice community members can be substantially improved by ensuring that leaders of these groups are not only clearly informed about events, but are also involved in identifying the most effective community outreach methods. The "Title VI and Environmental Justice" chapter provides an in-depth evaluation of GHMPO's Title VI and Environmental Justice communities.

The list below includes recent public meetings and events. Public meetings were held in accordance with all public meeting notification requirements:

MONTHLY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO) MEETINGS

Each month a Transportation Advisory committee (TAC) and a Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) participate in transportation planning for the MPO. Regular joint meetings are held with MPO representatives.

The GHMPO and the North Carolina Department of Transportation assist the region's four counties and twenty-eight local governments in the regional transportation planning process. GHMPO planners also reach out to communities in each county and town in order to encourage the development of a multi-modal transportation system that facilitates the safe, efficient movement of people and goods. The MPO has had a unique chance to create a partnership to coordinate all phases of transportation planning for the Unifour area.



NOTABLE RECENT MPO MEETINGS INCLUDE

- » Average Annual Daily Traffic Counts presentation - Taylor Dellinger, GHMPO Data Analyst, presented the 2015 Traffic Count Data for the Hickory MPO area.
- » Superstreet presentation - James Dunlop, NCDOT Regional Engineer, presented
 - » on the overall design and function of a superstreet. Mr. Dunlop addressed comments and concerns from the general public as well as elected officials.
- » Freight workshop - the GHMPO held a freight workshop following the monthly MPO meeting. Many individuals from the trucking industry attended to mark areas of improvement on maps of the four county region.
- » MPO Travel Demand Model Presentation - Leta Huntsinger, Senior Transportation
- » Systems Engineer, provided an overview of the GHMPO Travel Model design, calibration results, and potential model applications.
- » Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) adoption meetings - The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) identifies the transportation projects and strategies that GHMPO and NCDOT plan to undertake over the next ten years. All projects receiving federal funding must be in the TIP.
 - January 23, 2015 - Hickory Daily Record publicizes Draft STIP
 - July 22, 2015 - MTIP released for 30 day public comment period
 - August 26, 2015 - MTIP adopted
 - August 23, 2017 – Reviewed Draft STIP FY 2018 – 2027 and called for 30 day public comment period
 - August 29, 2017 - Draft STIP sent out to local newspapers
 - September 27, 2017 – Approval of the 2018-2027 MTIP
- » MTIP Amendments - any changes made to the MTIP must be approved by the
- » Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) during public meetings.
 - October 28, 2015 - MPO opened a 30 day comment period for Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority (WPRTA) MTIP amendments
 - December 16, 2015 - Approval of WPRTA MTIP Amendments
 - August 24, 2016 - MTIP Amendment for Surface Transportation Block Grant - Direct Attributable (STBG-DA) funds and opening of 30 day comment period
 - September 28, 2016 - Approval of MTIP Amendments
 - December 14, 2016 - MPO opened a 30 day comment period for WPRTA MTIP Amendments
 - January 25, 2017 – Approval of MTIP Amendments for WPRTA
 - March 22, 2017 - MPO opened a 30 day comment period for MTIP Amendments for the City of Hickory, City of Morganton, and Burke County
 - June 21, 2017 – Approval of MTIP Amendments for the City of Hickory, City of Morganton, and Burke County
- » Surface Transportation Block Grant - Direct Attributable (STBG-DA) project final selections
- » Strategic Transportation Prioritization (SPOT) project final selections
- » MTP Advancements
 - January 25, 2017 - Reviewed Public Transportation Chapter for public comment
 - March 22, 2017 - Reviewed Current and Existing Conditions Chapter and Safety and Security Chapter for public comment
 - June 21, 2017 - Discussed MTP Survey Results

OTHER GHMPO STAFF-ATTENDED EVENTS AND MEETINGS

The following list includes other events and meetings attended by GHMPO staff. Public meetings were held in accordance with all public meeting notification requirements:

- » Greenway Board of Directors Monthly meetings - Western Piedmont Regional
- » Transit Authority, Conover, N.C.
- » Greenway Transportation Advisory Board quarterly meetings - Western Piedmont
- » Regional Transit Authority, Conover, N.C.
- » NCDOT hosted public meetings for Divisions 11, 12, and 13 STIP projects - location dependant upon division and project

- » Railroads and Regional Economic Development Conference - U.S. Cellular Center
- » Banquet Room - Asheville, N.C.
- » Freight Workshop - Land-Of Sky Regional Council, Asheville, N.C.
- » Regional Freight Mobility Plan Meeting - Centralina Council of Governments, Charlotte, N.C.
- » N.C. Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Quarterly Meetings - Greensboro City Hall, Greensboro, N.C.
- » Unifour Planners Forum - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » Annual GIS Symposium - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » Annual Regional Locally Administered Projects Program (LAPP) Training - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » SPOT Workshop - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » Growing Greenways: Greenway Symposium - N.C. Arboretum, Asheville, N.C.

FIXED ROUTE PUBLIC TRANSIT MONTHLY MEETINGS

In an effort to bring fixed route public transit to all four counties, the GHMPO regularly attends meetings with elected officials, Western Piedmont Regional Transit Authority, City and Town managers, various industries along potential routes, and many other key stakeholders.

Currently, Alexander and Catawba Counties offer fixed routes services. Burke and Caldwell Counties offer demand-response services and are working to provide fixed route services in the near future.

- » The GHMPO has met monthly with stakeholders in Burke County since 2015 to develop funding mechanisms to establish a fixed transit route that links Valdese and Morganton. Although the route remains contingent upon funding, the establishment of a future trial route appears likely.
- » Though early in the process, stakeholders in Caldwell County have invited the GHMPO staff to participate in several grassroot meetings to establish fixed route public transit.



PUBLIC WORKSHOPS AND MEETINGS HOSTED BY GHMPO STAFF

Public meetings were held in accordance with all public meeting notification requirements:

- » Newton Strategic Plan Workshop and Walking Audit Meetings - Newton City Hall, Newton, N.C.
- » Claremont Comprehensive Plan Public Meetings - Claremont City Hall, Claremont, N.C.
- » Sawmills Comprehensive Plan Public Meetings - Saw Mills Town Hall, Granite Falls, N.C.
- » Rutherford College Comprehensive Plan Public Meetings - Town Hall of
- » Rutherford College, Rutherford College, N.C.
- » Glen Alpine Comprehensive Plan Public Meetings - Glen Alpine Town Hall, Glen Alpine, N.C.

- » Lenoir Comprehensive Pedestrian Plan Public Meetings - Lenoir City Hall, Lenoir, N.C.
- » Lenoir Bicycle Plan Public Meetings - Lenoir City Hall, Lenoir, N.C.
- » Overmountain Victory Trail Public Meetings - Lenoir City Hall, Lenoir, N.C.; Morganton City Hall, Morganton, N.C.
- » WalkRCV Pedestrian Plan Public Meetings - Town Hall of Rutherford College, Rutherford College, N.C.; Town Hall of Valdese, Valdese, N.C.
- » Western Piedmont Bicycle Plan Public Meetings - Club Cola Banquet Hall, Granite Falls, N.C.; Morganton Senior Center, Morganton, N.C.; Hickory City Hall, Hickory, N.C.; CVCC Alexander Center for Education, Taylorsville, N.C.; Morganton City Hall, Morganton, N.C.; Granite Falls Recreation Center, Granite Falls, N.C.; Caldwell County Library, Lenoir, N.C.
- » Locally Coordinated Plan Workshop - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » Freight Workshop - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.
- » Western Piedmont Air and Water Quality Quarterly Meetings - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.



ADDITIONAL PUBLIC OUTREACH EVENTS

- » Annual Earth Day/Arbor Day Event - SALT Block, Hickory, N.C.
- » Annual Air and Water Quality Conferences - Lenoir-Rhyne University: Belk Centrum, Hickory, N.C.
- » Air and Water Quality Presentations - Thomas Chapel A.M.E. Zion Church, Conover, N.C.; East Burke High School, Connelly Springs, N.C.; Freedom High School, Morganton, N.C.; Hickory High School, Hickory, N.C.; R.L. Patton High School, Morganton, N.C.; St. Stephens High School, Hickory, N.C.
- » Annual Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) School Tours - Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.; N.C. Center for Engineering Technologies, Hickory, N.C.; Maiden Middle School, Maiden, N.C.; Jacobs Fork Middle School, Newton, N.C.; Arndt Middle School, Hickory, N.C.; Newton-Conover Middle School, Conover, N.C.
- » STEM Teacher Workshops - Lenoir-Rhyne University: Belk Centrum, Hickory, N.C.; Western Piedmont Council of Governments, Hickory, N.C.; N.C. Center for Engineering Technologies, Hickory, N.C.



Please visit <http://www.wpcog.org/transportation-documents> to view the GHMPO's Public Involvement Policy (PIP).

