

Section 2. Public Participation

Introduction

As the cooperative forum for regional collaboration, planning, and public decision-making as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Local Development District, SPC is charged with developing both the regional long range transportation plan and the regional comprehensive economic development strategy for Southwestern Pennsylvania. While mandated by different federal regulations and requirements, SPC integrates these two plans into a coordinated regional program of projects and actions that are guided by the principle that the relationship between economic development and the region's transportation system is fundamental.

SPC brings transportation planning directly to the region's communities through Public Participation Panels, which host public input meetings in each of the ten counties

Public Input, Review and Comment

As the projects contained in the 2040 Plan will have a significant impact on the future of Southwestern Pennsylvania, SPC has sought public involvement in various ways throughout the Plan's development.

Early Public Input

SPC partnered with Sustainable Pittsburgh once again for the 10th Annual Southwestern PA Smart Growth Conference, "*Regional Collaboration: Investing in Sustainable Communities*", with an audience of over 300, serving as an initial public input session as part of the 2040 Regional Plan Update.

In formulating input for the update of the region's plan, participants heard from presenters from state, federal and local governments, community groups and civic leadership on the status of efforts to improve livability and sustainability of communities. Conferees heard about the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities among HUD, DOT and EPA which established six livability principles that will act as a foundation for their interagency coordination, and discussion was held on ongoing initiatives and development concepts at state and local levels that were consistent with these federal livability concepts:

1. Provide more transportation choices.
2. Promote equitable, affordable housing.
3. Enhance economic competitiveness.
4. Support existing communities.
5. Coordinate policies and leverage investment.
6. Value communities and neighborhoods.

Project Region policies and ongoing development planning is focusing the region on development within existing communities and corridors that link them, recycled brown field sites, and sites with good transportation access in order to leverage economic opportunity. The plan focus on revitalizing existing communities was commended.

Participants developed further recommendations for ongoing development of initiatives and performance measures around the plan policies in an SPC facilitated discussion. Suggestions included: promotion of walkable communities design across regional, county, and local planning; breaking down barriers to integrating housing, transportation, and land use; advancing innovative methods to achieve sustainable urban infrastructure; working to ensure the benefits of shale gas while mitigating both short and long term community impacts; enhancing community engagement by effectively engaging historically disenfranchised populations; and developing metrics to measure what equates to sustainable and livable success for our region.

Participants expressed interest in development of additional performance measures, such as:

- Revenue and expenses for infrastructure
- Stable, predictable funding for transit
- Housing affordability
- Economic prosperity
- Percent of communities with sidewalk ordinances
- Population increase
- Reduction in vehicle miles traveled (VMT)
- Implementation of neighborhood/community cooperation programs
- Healthy population
- Decrease in energy consumption
- Equity, regional unity, local self-reliance, safety

Public Participation Panels

In accordance with its Public Participation Plan (revised April 2011), SPC conducts its primary public outreach through Public Participation Panels (Panels). Citizens need not travel outside their own county to participate in the planning process, because SPC comes to them. County Commissioners appoint Panel members and Co-Chairs for two-year terms, following guidelines to assure that panel members represent the county's diverse population



and varied transportation interests. Members come from many geographic areas of the county, and include minorities, senior citizens, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations.

Near the beginning of each term of appointment for Panel members, SPC conducts orientation sessions to help members understand the transportation planning process and how they can play an important role in generating public involvement. We use new and creative ways to help the public learn how to be effectively involved.

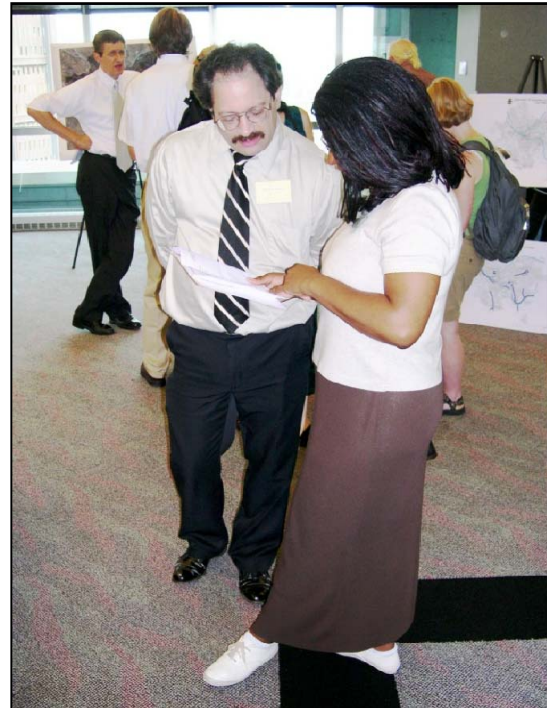
Materials designed to educate community members on the public involvement process and on the transportation planning process in the region have been developed and widely distributed to facilitate local public involvement.

Every two years, the Panels hold public meetings to collect public input on transportation priorities that people would like to see addressed in SPC's four-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and in the state's Twelve-Year Program. While the fiscal constraints on the TIP limit the number and scope of projects that can be programmed in the next four years, the input collected at these meetings is significant in focusing attention on priorities for subsequent years in the long range plan.

The draft 2040 Plan resulting from this review and update process has been posted on SPC's website and distributed to county planning departments and public libraries throughout the region for public examination.

Review and comment on the draft 2040 Plan was solicited in a 30-day public review process, in accordance with SAFETEA-LU requirements. During this review process from May 18, 2011 through June 17, 2011, public comment was solicited at ten Public Participation Panel meetings. Public comment was accepted at the meetings or via mail, email or fax at any time during the public comment period. A list of meeting dates and locations is provided below.

- May 24, 5:00 p.m., Room 104, Courthouse Square, 100 West Beau Street, Washington
- May 25, 5:00 p.m., Conference Room, Fayette Chamber of Commerce, 65 West Main Street, Uniontown
- May 26, 6:00 p.m., Public Meeting Room, County Government Center, 124 W. Diamond Street, Butler



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- May 31, 5:00 p.m., Commissioners Conference Room, County Courthouse, 810 Third Street, Beaver
- June 1, 6:00 p.m., Large Group Instruction Room, Indiana Area Junior High, 245 N. Fifth Street, Indiana
- June 2, 6:00 p.m., Commissioners Meeting Room, Lawrence County Courthouse, 430 Court Street, New Castle
- June 7, 6:00 p.m., Commissioners Conference Room, Armstrong Courthouse Annex, 450 Market Street, Kittanning
- June 7, 6:00 p.m., Commissioners Meeting Room, Courthouse Square, 2 N. Main Street, Greensburg
- June 8, 6:00 p.m., 31st floor, Regional Enterprise Tower, 425 Sixth Avenue, Downtown Pittsburgh
- June 9, 6:00 p.m., Waynesburg University, Stover Hall, 3rd Floor, Waynesburg

During the public comment period, public input was also solicited on three companion documents to the 2040 Plan:

- Environmental Justice Benefits and Burdens Assessment for the 2040 Plan
- Air Quality Conformity Determination for the Pittsburgh Transportation Management Area
- Southwestern Pennsylvania Public Transit Human Services Coordinated Transportation Plan Update

Comments received during this comment period were compiled, responded to, and presented to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission for their consideration prior to adoption of the 2040 Transportation and Development Plan for Southwestern Pennsylvania.