

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization

A Division of the

Southern Oklahoma Development Association

2704 N. 1st Avenue

Durant, Oklahoma 74701

<http://www.soda-ok.org/scortpo/>

ADOPTED BY THE

SCORTPO Policy Board _____

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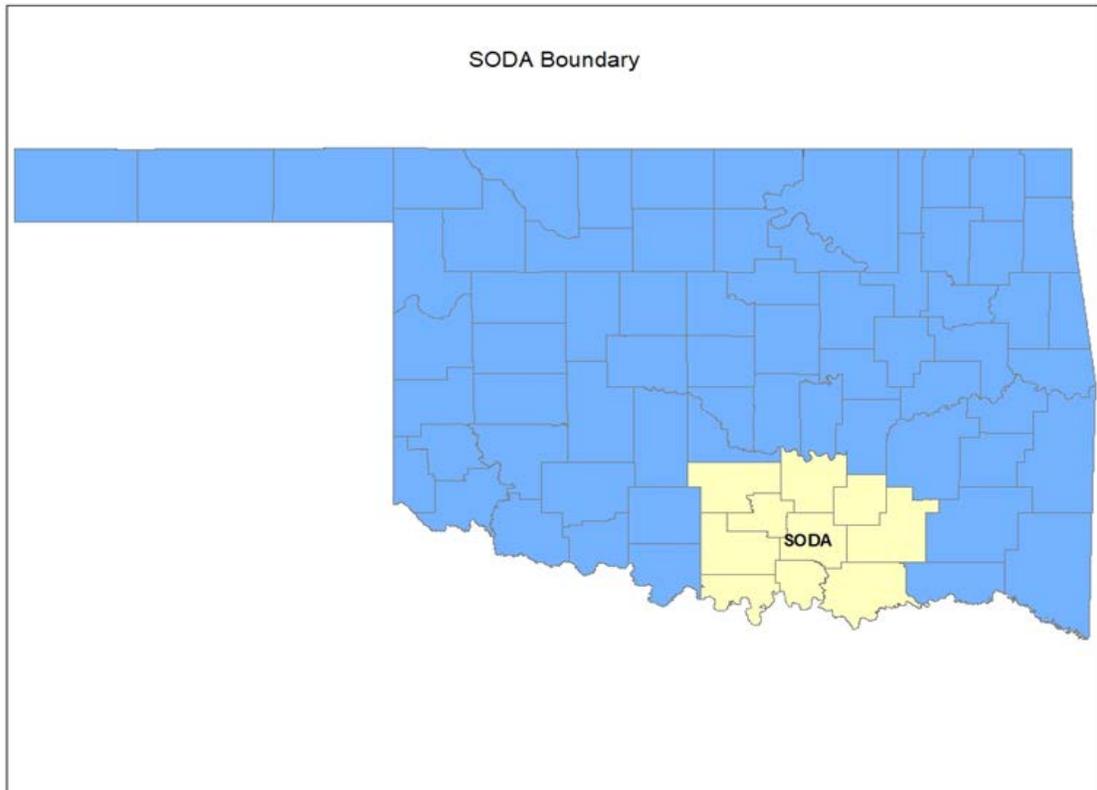
The South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SCORTPO) complies with all civil rights provisions of federal statutes and related authorities that prohibit discrimination in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance. Therefore, SCORTPO does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion or disability, in the admission, access to and treatment in SCORTPO programs and activities.

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Introduction

The South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SCORTPO) is the agency responsible for regional transportation planning for sixteen counties in South Central Oklahoma (Map 1). Current transportation bill, Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) was signed into law on December 4, 2015, and public involvement remains a hallmark of the transportation planning process.



Map 1: SCORTPO Regional Map

Specific public involvement requirements detailed in federal legislation include the following:

- Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Employing visualization techniques to describe transportation plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs)
- Making public information available in electronically accessible format and means.
- Requiring a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised.
- Providing timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects.

- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes and including written and oral comments received on the draft transportation plan or TIP as a result of the public involvement process, as an appendix of the plan or TIP.
- Being consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal assistance from the United States Department of Transportation; and moreover, seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low income and minority households.
- Identifying actions necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) provides the public and interested parties with opportunities to be involved in the regional transportation planning process. Efforts will be made to encourage participation in the transportation planning and programming process by traditionally underserved individuals, including elderly, low income and minority individuals, persons with disabilities, and persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Per SCORTPO'S Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, strategies will be developed to provide notices of programs, services, or activities to limited English proficiency (LEP) populations by using appropriate media and brochures (also in languages other than English). Community groups serving LEP populations will be contacted, as well as schools, church groups, chambers of commerce, and other relevant entities as part of the regular public participation plan.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings or individuals with limited English proficiency should contact SCORTPO Staff at least 48 hours prior to the scheduled meeting. As per SCORTPO'S LEP Plan, SCORTPO will provide oral and written translation; written interpretation and translation; and sign language, if requested, or because of an LEP analysis on any given project or projected program, requiring translation or interpretation.

Electronic and Digital Information

Ensuring that there is an opportunity for public comment at committee meetings, the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Public Participation Plan (PPP), the Planning Work Program (PWP), the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, and other important documents shall be made available by SCORTPO in an electronic format for the public to review on the SCORTPO website (www.soda-ok.org/scortpo/). For those without Internet service, libraries may offer free Internet access and should be contacted to determine if this service is available. All plans and documents will also be available at ASCOG and SODA offices and copies of the LRTP will be distributed to all public libraries in the region, County Commissioner offices, elected state and federal officials, transportation commissioners, ODOT Division Engineer, Transportation Technical and Policy Board members. Copies of other plans or projects will be distributed to the SCORTPO Transportation Technical Committee (Appendix A) and Policy board members (Appendix B). Any person or agency

may also request a copy of any of SCORTPO's plans via telephone, fax, mail, email, or in person at any time. A small copying fee may apply.

- SCORTPO will employ visualization techniques to describe LRTP. These may include the following formats: project location maps, photographs, narrative project descriptions, charts, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and sketches. Staff will continue to monitor and investigate developing technologies to improve the visualization process.
- The agenda of all SCORTPO Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board meetings shall be available to the public 7 days before they occur apart from emergency meetings when less time is allowed under the State of Oklahoma Open Meetings Act.
- Information pertaining to the adoption, revision, or amendment of all SCORTPO adopted documents shall be available in accordance with Table 1.
- All meetings of the SCORTPO Transportation Technical Committee and Policy Board will be open to the public except as allowed by the State of Oklahoma Open Meetings Act.

Civil Rights and Environmental Justice

Pursuant to Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, dated February 11, 1994, and the subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation Order 5680.3, issued April 15, 1997, the South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization promotes Environmental Justice in all aspects of the Regional Transportation Planning Organization process. These procedures augment and reaffirm the SCORTPO policy to adhere to and advance the principles of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI), the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 (URA) as amended, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) as amended, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) and other statutes, regulations and guidance that address or affect infrastructure planning and decision making; social, economic, or environmental matters; public health; and public involvement. To these ends, notices of meetings and public hearings will be specifically provided in minority and ethnic gathering places to promote participation in the transportation planning process. Minority and ethnic communities will be monitored through census data to guarantee their inclusion in the process as populations fluctuate over time. Special accommodations (e.g. interpreter, sign language interpreter, large print copy, etc.) may be requested of the SCORTPO staff during normal business hours at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. SCORTPO staff will attempt to accommodate all such requests.

SCORTPO does not and shall not discriminate based on race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or military status, in any of its activities or operations. These activities include, but are not limited to, hiring and firing of staff, selection of volunteers and vendors, and provision of services. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, clients, volunteers, subcontractors, vendors, and clients.

Public Meetings, Notification and Participation

All SCORTPO Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings are open to the public and will be conducted in a location that complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). A reasonable period for comments from members of the public will be provided prior to the adjournment of said meetings.

In order to ensure adequate public notice and provision of timely information, all meetings of the South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization Policy Board and all subcommittee and focus groups are subject to the provisions of the Oklahoma Statutes, Title 25 § 301-314 Open Meetings Act.

Official notification of Public Meetings, Public Hearings, and Public Review and Comment periods will also be posted on the SCORTPO and Southern Oklahoma Development Authority (SODA) website and may be provided for posting at the following locations and other locations identified by SCORTPO staff to encourage minority and other underserved populations to participate in the process:

- The Administrative Offices of each local member jurisdiction
- Departments of Human Services
- Libraries
- Newspapers (Appendix C)
- Ethnic and minority gathering places (see paragraph under Civil Rights)

A copy of legal notices shall be retained by SCORTPO for a period of three (3) years after the end of the Federal Fiscal Year. When, and if, non-English newspapers of general circulation are initiated in the South Central Oklahoma region, SCORTPO staff will work with these newspapers to have meeting notices printed in the appropriate language in their publications.

The SCORTPO staff is available during normal business hours to discuss technical and policy information with citizens and other interested parties. The SCORTPO offices are located at 2704 N 1st Ave, Durant, Oklahoma. SCORTPO staff is available to meet with outside groups after normal business hours, arrangements must be made at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. Copies of all available documents and other materials are available for the cost of postage.

SCORTPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Table 1: SCORTPO’s Primary Document Participation Process Summary

| | Public Comment Period | Public Hearing Meeting Notice | Technical Committee | Policy Board |
|------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| L RTP | Public notice of 30-day comment period prior to the Policy Board considering the Plan placed on the SCORTPO’s website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C | Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting. | Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the L RTP to the Policy Board | Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments at a public meeting prior to adopting the L RTP by resolution |
| L RTP AMENDMENT | Public notice of 10-day comment period on SCORTPO’s website and distributed to the sites listed in Appendix C. | Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting. | Technical Committee meeting makes recommendation on the amendment to the Policy Board. | Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments prior to adopting the amendment by resolution. |
| PPP | Public notice of 45-day comment period prior to the Policy Board meeting placed SCORTPO’s website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C. | Legal notice to be published in the local newspaper 15 days prior to the Policy Board Meeting. | Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the PPP to the Policy Board. | Policy Board holds a public hearing to solicit comments at a public meeting prior to adopting the PPP by resolution. |
| PWP | Public notice of 10-day comment period prior to the Policy Board considering the PWP placed on SCORTPO’s website and distributed to agencies in Appendix C. | | Technical Committee at a public meeting makes recommendation on the PWP to the Policy Board | Policy Board at a public meeting adopts the PWP by resolution. |

SCORTPO WORK PRODUCTS

SCORTPO's primary work products are listed below along with a brief description. Table 1 summarizes this information and the public participation schedule.

Long Range Transportation Plan

Review and updates to the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) will be conducted every five (5) years. The South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SCORTPO) will host stakeholder meetings or other public meeting and/or provide notice of availability for public outreach to involve interested parties in the early stages of the plan development. Notices of public hearings and/or notice of availability for public outreach for the Long-Range Transportation Plan will be published and posted as stated in Table 1. After the draft LRTP is developed, SCORTPO will host public meetings, public hearing, and/or notice of availability for public outreach to solicit comments on the draft plan. A final draft will be presented to the SCORTPO Technical Committee and when requested any appropriate focus group for review and comment prior to recommendation to the SCORTPO Policy Board for adoption. All public comments received will be made a part of the final adopted document

LRTP Amendment

An amendment is a major revision to a LRTP, including adding or deleting a project, major changes in project/project phase costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope (e.g., changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes). Changes to projects that are included in the LRTP only for illustrative purposes (such as in the financially unconstrained "vision" element) do not require an amendment. An amendment requires public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based on expected funding, and/or a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation conformity mandates.

Planning Work Program (PWP)

The Planning (PWP) is a description of the proposed transportation planning activities of the South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SCORTPO) during the coming federal fiscal year. The program is prepared annually and serves as a basis for requesting Federal planning funds. It also serves as a management tool for scheduling, budgeting, and monitoring the planning activities of the participating entities. The PWP will be made available on the SCORTPO website 10 days prior to action by the SCORTPO Policy Board.

Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Review of the Public Participation Plan will be conducted annually, and amendments will be adopted as necessary. SCORTPO will hold at least one (1) public meeting to involve interested parties in the update process. The public comment period will be 45 calendar days. Notices of public review and comment period for the Public Participation Plan will be published and posted as stated in the Public Notification and Participation section above. The Public Participation Plan will be presented to the SCORTPO Technical Committee for review and for a recommendation to the SCORTPO Policy Board for adoption.

Interagency and Tribal Government Consultation Procedures

SCORTPO considers agency consultation as a continuum starting with the regional transportation planning process. SCORTPO will coordinate with each other agencies to identify transportation programs and projects of mutual interest. There federally recognized Native American tribes in SCORTPO's region are identified in Appendix D. SCORTPO invites the tribes to participate in the regional transportation planning process.

Oklahoma Department of Transportation Coordination and Consultation

Periodically SCORTPO receives information from the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) concerning meeting dates, public notices for meetings and information related to projects. Upon receipt of the information SCORTPO will

- Include the information on the website (www.soda-ok.org/scortpo)
- distribute information to media
- distribute information to the agencies/names on the distribution list (Appendix E)

Public Participation Techniques

SCORTPO uses various techniques to inform the public, other agencies and governmental units of transportation planning activities. The techniques and PPP will be reviewed annually for effectiveness (Appendix F). Below are techniques that SCORTPO follows:

Public Meetings/Workshops

- Offer customized presentations to existing groups and organizations,
- Co-host workshops with community groups, social service or business associations, etc., and
- Encourage opportunities for public input directly to policy board members.

Visualization Techniques

- Maps,
- Charts, illustrations, photographs,
- Table-top displays,
- Web content, and
- PowerPoint slide shows.

Surveys

- Conduct statistically valid surveys,
- Electronic surveys via web, and
- Printed surveys distributed at meetings, on-board transit vehicles, etc.

Focus Groups

- Participants recruited randomly from telephone polls, and
- Participants recruited by interest area.

Targeted Mailings/Flyers

- Work with community-based organizations to distribute flyers,
- Maintain a master list of contacts to include:
 - Members of the Technical Committee and Policy Board,
 - Elected state and federal officials,
 - Transportation Commissioners,
 - Locally elected officials,
 - ODOT Division Engineers,
 - Transit providers,
 - Tourism Groups,
 - Airport authorities,
 - Freight Companies,
 - Traffic enforcement agencies,
 - Railroad companies,
 - Environmental organizations,
 - Neighborhood associations,
- Interested citizens,
- Organizations representing the interests of: The elderly, Minorities, disabled, economical disadvantaged groups, ethnic/cultural groups, Native American Tribes,
- E-mail to targeted database lists, and
- Distribute flyers to key community organizations.

Utilize local media

- News releases,
- Invite reporters to news briefings,
- Meet with editorial staff,
- Opinion pieces/commentaries,
- Place speakers on Radio/TV talk shows, and
- Develop content for public access/cable television programming.

Use of the Internet/Electronic Access to Information

- Website with updated content.
- Use social media to reach a larger audience.
- Electronic duplication of open house/workshop materials.
- Interactive web with surveys, comment line.
- Use the web to provide interaction among participants.
- Access to planning data (such as maps, charts, models, forecasts, census data, research reports), and
- Provide information in advance of public meeting.

Techniques for Involving Low-Literacy Populations

- Train staff to be alert to and anticipate the need of low-literacy participants in meetings, workshops,
- Robust use of “visualization” techniques, including maps and graphics to illustrate trends, choices being debated, etc. and
- Use of community and minority media outlets to announce participation opportunities.

Techniques for Involving Limited-English Proficient Populations

- Train staff to be alert to and anticipate the needs of Limited-English Proficient participants in meetings, workshops,
- Translated documents and web content on key initiatives,
- Translate materials; have translators available at meetings as requested,
- Include information on meeting notices on how to request translation assistance,
- On-call translators for meetings,
- Translated news releases and outreach to alternative language media, such as radio, television, newspapers and social media, and
- When conducting statistically valid polls, surveys or focus groups, offer the information in other languages such as Spanish.

Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| ADA | Americans with Disabilities Act |
| EJ | Environmental Justice |
| FAST Act | Fixing America’s Transportation Act |
| FHWA | Federal Highway Administration |
| FTA | Federal Transit Administration |
| GIS | Geographic Information System |
| LEP | Limited English Proficiency |
| LRTP | Long Range Transportation Plan |
| MPO | Metropolitan Planning Organization |
| ODOT | Oklahoma Department of Transportation |
| PPP | Public Participation Plan |
| PWP | Planning Work Program |
| SCORTPO | South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization |
| STIP | Statewide Transportation Improvement Program |
| SODA | Southern Oklahoma Development Authority |
| TIP | Transportation Improvement Program |

Definitions

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) - Passed in 1990, the ADA is civil rights legislation that protects individuals with disabilities. It guarantees equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in public accommodations, employment, transportation, state and local government services, and telecommunications.

Environmental Justice (EJ) - A 1994 Presidential Executive Order requiring agencies receiving federal funds to review if the benefits and burdens of transportation investments appear to be distributed evenly across the regional demographic profile and, if necessary, mitigation of such effects.

Limited English Proficient Individual - Persons who do not speak English as their primary language, who have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. These individuals may be entitled to language assistance under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, with respect to a particular type of service, benefit, or encounter.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan – Each agency and each recipient of federal financial assistance must take reasonable steps to provide meaningful access to LEP individuals. Among the factors to be considered in determining what constitutes reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access are: (1) the number or proportion of LEP persons in the eligible service population; (2) the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program; (3) the importance of the service provided by the program; and (4) the resources available to the recipient. These four factors are further explained in the DOJ LEP Guidance found on the FCS website and published in the Federal Register on August 16, 2000.

Long Range Transportation Plan - Every state, MPO and organizations receiving FHWA transportation PL or State Planning and Research funds must develop a long-range transportation plan (LRTP) identifying existing and future employment and population projections and transportation improvements, including a bicycle and pedestrian element. The LRTP looks twenty (20) years ahead and is revised every five (5) years.

Public Hearing – A legal ad advertises the date, time and location of a meeting for the purpose of discussing and seeking comments on a transportation planning document prior to adoption.

Public Notice – A notice providing meeting location, date and time and general purpose of the meeting. For example, stakeholder meetings would need a public notice.

Planning Work Program (PWP) – The PWP is a description of the proposed transportation planning activities of the South Central Oklahoma Regional Transportation Planning Organization (SCORTPO) during a federal fiscal year. The program is prepared annually and serves as a management tool for scheduling, budgeting, and monitoring the planning activities of the participating.

Public Participation Plan (PPP) - a planning document that provides guidelines and standards when soliciting general public comments on local transportation plans and programs.

Title VI - Section 601 of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Appendix A: SCORTPO Technical Committee Members

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Lisa Taylor | Eco Development Director, Durant, Oklahoma |
| Danielle O’Neal | Community Development Director, Durant, Oklahoma |
| Jim Sallee | Choctaw Nation |
| Josh Randell | Assistant City Manager, Ardmore, Oklahoma |
| Pat Jones | SODA |
| Chris Fuhrmann | ODOT District 7 |

Appendix B: SCORTPO Policy Board Members

| | |
|------------------|--|
| Stephen Wellman | Kiamichi Railroad |
| Spencer Wheatley | Kiamichi Railroad |
| Johnny Ward | Coalgate, Oklahoma |
| Roger Cospers | Kingston, Oklahoma |
| Lisa Taylor | Eco Development Director, Durant, Oklahoma |
| Danielle O'Neal | Community Development Director, Oklahoma |
| Ron Abney | Choctaw Nation |
| Jim Salee | Choctaw Nation |
| Josh Randell | Assistant City Manager, Ardmore, Oklahoma |
| Steve Mills | SODA |
| Chris Fuhrmann | ODOT District 7 |
| Daniel Castaneda | Eco Development Specialist, Ada, Oklahoma |

Appendix C: SCORTPO Newspaper Contact information

| Organization | City | County | Frequency | Public Notice | Legal Hearing |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Ada Evening News | Ada | Pontotoc | Daily | X | X |
| TheDaily Ardmoreite | Ardmore | Carter | Daily | X | X |
| Durant Democrat | Durant | Bryan | Daily | X | X |
| Pauls Valley Demorate | Pauls Valley | Garvin | Daily | X | X |
| The Atoka Times | Atoka | Atoka | Weekly | X | X |
| Coalgate Register | Coalgate | Coal | Weekly | X | X |
| Johnston County Sentinel | Tishomingo | Johnson | Weekly | X | X |
| Madill Record | Madill | Marshall | Weekly | X | X |
| Marietta Monitor | Marietta | Love | Weekly | X | X |
| Sulphur Times | Sulphur | Murray | Weekly | X | X |
| | | | | | |

Appendix D: SCORTPO Native American Tribes

| TRIBE | COUNTY |
|------------------------------|--|
| Chickasaw Nation of Oklahoma | Bryan, Carter, Garvin, Johnston, Love, Marshall, Murray, |
| Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma | Atoka, Bryan, Coal, Pontotoc |

Appendix E: Distribution List

- Elected state and federal officials,
- Transportation Commissioners,
- Locally elected officials,
- ODOT Division Engineers,
- Transit providers,
- Tourism Groups,
- Airport authorities,
- Freight Companies,
- Traffic enforcement agencies,
- Railroad companies,
- Environmental organizations,
- Neighborhood associations,
- Organizations representing the interests of: The elderly, minorities, disabled, economical disadvantaged groups, ethnic/cultural groups,
- Bicycle and pedestrian organizations,
- Healthy living organizations,

Appendix F: How to measure effectiveness of PPP

Questions for Evaluation of the Public Participation Process

1. Were all meetings held in accessible locations? Were the locations accessible by the fixed route public transportation system? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the time or location of the public meetings?
2. Were all public meetings publicized? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the public notice efforts?
3. Were comments received and responded to in the specified time?
4. Was the public notification mailing list updated at least annually?
5. How many documents were available on the web site?
6. How many visits did the Lawton Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Website receive?
7. If the LRTP or the TIP varied significantly from the version that was initially available for public comment, was an additional public meeting held?