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**CHIPPEWA-EAU CLAIRE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Background

The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), signed into law in August of 2005, continued the requirement laid out in previous federal transportation acts that all urbanized areas have a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing planning process to guide effective use of federal funding assistance. SAFETEA-LU planning requirements reemphasize those laid out in previous acts, ISTEA and TEA-21, including the integral relationship between land use and transportation services and infrastructure, as well as the need to address mobility with a multimodal perspective. Additional areas of challenge under SAFETEA-LU include:

- Improving safety;
- Reducing traffic congestion;
- Improving efficiency in freight movement;
- Increasing intermodal connectivity; and
- Protecting the environment.

The planning process is to be carried out by the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for each urbanized area. The Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible, under the provisions of SAFETEA-LU, for carrying out this planning process, to include the development of a long range transportation and land use plan with a horizon of at least twenty years, and for the development of an annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Eau Claire Urbanized Area, providing a program for federal and state funded transportation projects and programs for a minimum of four years. The urbanized area represented by the Chippewa-Eau Claire Area MPO includes: portions of Chippewa and Eau Claire counties; the cities of Altoona, Chippewa Falls, and Eau Claire; the Village of Lake Hallie; and portions of the towns of Brunswick, Eagle Point, Hallie, Lafayette, Pleasant Valley, Seymour, Tilden, Union, Washington, and Wheaton. The 2000 census figures show the population of this area to be 91,647. As an integral part of the development of these plans and programs, the MPO is responsible for developing and carrying out a plan to provide public involvement opportunities to all residents of the urbanized area, the Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Purpose

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to allow for, encourage, and monitor participation of all citizens in the metropolitan planning area, including but not limited to low income and minority individuals, and those with limited English proficiency. While traditional

means of soliciting public involvement may not reach such individuals, or might not allow for meaningful avenues of input, it is the intent of this policy to take reasonable actions throughout the planning process to provide opportunities for historically under-served populations to participate.

This document will lay out procedures to provide opportunities for all area citizens to participate in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the Eau Claire Urbanized Area, and the Long-range Transportation/Land Use Plan (LRP) for Chippewa-Eau Claire Metropolitan Planning Area, and other planning documents that may be developed. The TIP is produced annually, which compiles all federal and state funded transportation projects and programs in the planning area, and documents the selection of transportation projects under the STP-Urban program. The LRP is a document which is updated every five years, and looks at a 20+ year horizon. The LRP relates future land use expectations to transportation needs in the planning area and makes recommendations for projects and programs to meet those demands.

Also, this document is intended to meet federal civil rights requirements included in Title VI – Civil Rights Act of 1964. Environmental Justice provisions, adopted in Executive Order #12898, require that no population, particularly minority and low-income, be subject to a disproportionate share of adverse impacts, or are denied benefits of a program. Environmental Justice adds specific protected status of low income individuals to the Title VI requirements, to provide all members of the public equal access to federal aid programs.

Goals and Objective for the Public Participation Plan

Goal: The goal of the PPP is to offer real opportunities for the engagement of all citizens of the Chippewa-Eau Claire area in the development of transportation plans and programs.

Objectives:

- Continue public involvement practices that have been found successful in providing opportunities for engagement for the majority of citizens in the Chippewa-Eau Claire area
- Determine what non-English language and other cultural barriers exist to public participation within the Chippewa-Eau Claire area.
- Provide general notification of meetings, particularly forums for public input, in a manner that is understandable to all populations in the area.
- Hold meetings in locations which are accessible and reasonably welcoming to all area residents, including but not limited to, low-income and minority members of the public.
- Provide a framework of actions appropriate to various types of plans and programs, as well as amendments or alterations to any such plan or program.
- Use various illustrative visualization techniques to convey the information, as appropriate, including but not limited to charts, graphs, video, maps, photos, computer simulation, and the internet.

Identification of Stakeholders

Stakeholders are those who are either directly or indirectly affected by a plan, or the recommendations of that plan, or by the projects included in a program of projects. Traditional means of encouraging public involvement are able to reach the vast majority of the population

of the Eau Claire metropolitan planning area. Some of the methods of gathering input from the general public are representative methods. The principal elected officials participating on the MPO Policy Committee represent the public interest of their respective municipalities in the development of TIPs, TIP amendments, plans and work programs. Others, such as publicly noticed public forums provide opportunity for more direct engagement. Those who may be adversely affected, or who may be denied benefits of a plan's recommendation(s) or project(s), are of particular interest in the identification of specific stakeholders. The stakeholders may vary from one planning effort to another. A broad planning effort, such as that necessary for the update of an LRP, involves many stakeholders. It is a great challenge to draw input from all those stakeholders, and their identification is critical in making appropriate opportunities available. In a more small scale neighborhood, or corridor plan, the stakeholder pool may not be as broad, but identification is a key first step in any planning process. Therefore, it is important to know the makeup of the community. The historically under-represented populations, such as low income, non-English speaking, and minority populations first need to be identified.

Minorities and low-English proficiency populations: Minority populations make up a fairly small percentage of the population in the Eau Claire urbanized area. (See Table 1.) Asian races make up the largest minority, accounting for nearly 3 percent of the population. Black persons and American Indians each make up approximately one half of a percent of the population, and Hispanic persons, about three-fourths of one percent. Persons of mixed race, two or more races, account for just over one percent of the population.

| Category | Number | Percent of Population |
|-------------------------------|--------|-----------------------|
| Total | 91,647 | 100.00% |
| Total one race | 90,618 | 98.88% |
| White | 86,675 | 94.57% |
| Black | 473 | 0.52% |
| American Indian/Alaska Native | 573 | 0.63% |
| Asian | 2,604 | 2.84% |
| Hawaiian & Pacific Islander | 4 | 0.00% |
| Other | 289 | 0.32% |
| Two or more races | 1,029 | 1.12% |
| Hispanic | 718 | 0.78% |

Persons with a low proficiency in speaking English also make up a small portion of the population of the Eau Claire urbanized area. (See Table 2.) While Asian languages or Spanish languages are spoken in a number of households in the area, linguistic isolation is quite rare. A linguistically isolated household is one in which no one, over the age of 14, can speak English without some difficulty.

While the numbers of minority and low-English proficiency populations may be small, engaging these populations may be disproportionately challenging. In addition to language, cultural differences may not be compatible with the more traditional means of engaging the public in the planning process. General public meeting notices and even input sessions might not attract the attention or involvement of some cultural minorities. In where such groups are identified as a part of the stakeholder pool, focus groups or involvement with agencies or venues common to the particular groups may be necessary. Advocacy groups or agencies can have insight into the needs of the under-represented populations, as well as providing valuable contacts or arenas for input. Contacts with local translators should also be identified and used as requested and needed.

| Category | Number | Percent of Households |
|--|------------|-----------------------|
| Total Households | 36,355 | 100.00% |
| English speaking only | 33,808 | 92.99% |
| Spanish speaking | 965 | 2.65% |
| linguistically isolated | 66 | 0.18% |
| Other Indo-European languages | 951 | 2.62% |
| linguistically isolated | 75 | 0.21% |
| Asian and Pacific Islander | 549 | 1.51% |
| linguistically isolated | 121 | 0.33% |
| Other languages | 82 | 0.23% |
| linguistically isolated | 18 | 0.05% |
| Total households linguistically isolated | 280 | 0.77% |
| ¹ A linguistically isolated household is one in which all members, 14 years old and over, have at least some difficulty speaking English. | | |

Low-income populations: Low income households, those under 150% of the poverty level, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, account for just fewer than 20 percent of the population, based on 1999 incomes. Over eleven percent of households fall below the poverty level. (See Table 3.) This is a particularly significant population of under-represented individuals. Low income persons of the Eau Claire planning area should be given every reasonable opportunity to provide input on transportation plans and programs, to avoid disproportionate harm, or lack of benefit from transportation programs and projects.

| Table 3 | | |
|--|--------|-----------------------|
| Eau Claire Urbanized Area - Low Income Status | | |
| Category | Number | Percent of Population |
| Total Population (for whom poverty status is determined) | 86,232 | 100.00% |
| Population under 150% of poverty level | 17,047 | 19.77% |
| Population under the poverty level | 9,933 | 11.52% |

While low-income individuals may have access to all of the traditional means of public involvement, discussed earlier, they may be less likely to become involved, or offer input. Some methods of gaining input either directly or indirectly from this portion of the population include focus groups, informal interviews, and agency/advocacy group contacts.

Public and Private Transportation Agencies: Public agencies can provide valuable input to the planning process, in addition to assisting in gaining participation from traditionally under-represented populations. Pertinent public agencies include those that provide funding for transportation services, provide actual transportation services for their clients, or have clients who fall into under-represented populations, including but not limited to minorities, low-income, and limited English proficiency households. These agencies have great insight into the transportation needs of their clients and are useful partners in overcoming difficult barriers that may not be understood by professionals dealing more distinctly with the provision of transportation services.

Transportation agencies are obviously critical to the planning process. All agencies and private providers of transportation services have a vested interest in the plan's recommendations, and their input to the process helps to smooth implementation of those recommendations. The MPO maintains a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of federal, state and municipal representatives for highways and transit, as well as private sector transit representatives. Multi-modal representation on the TAC is encouraged and open to qualified interests. A mailing list of local private transit operators is maintained and used for direct notification and solicitation of input for the development of TIPs, work programs and multi-modal transportation plans. Eau Claire Transit and existing transit coordinating committees serve as valuable resources.

Private Organizations and Businesses: Private organizations and businesses offer a number of perspectives that are valuable to the transportation planning process. Participation from privately operated modes, such as railroads and trucking companies can be more difficult to obtain than from those that are publicly owned and operated, but these modes are especially critical in topics related to highway congestion and freight movement. Often, transportation for employees is of critical concern to private sector employers. What is frequently a larger issue is freight movement. The ability to access major highways, and using the proper mode of transportation (truck or rail), is at the root of business decisions and, of concern to local officials, the area's economic development potential. For these reasons, representation of private business interests will be included in the planning process, particularly on long-range plan committees. A good resource for making contacts and sparking participation of this group are the local chambers of commerce.

Environmental agencies: SAFETEA-LU includes requirement for further consultation with State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation in the development of the LRP. The consultation is intended to offer a comparison of the transportation plans to plans and inventories under these agencies' jurisdictions. Environmental mitigation activities, including strategies, policies, programs, actions, and activities that, over time, will serve to avoid, minimize, rectify, reduce, or compensate for the impacts to or disruption of elements of the human and natural environment associated with the implementation LRP, will also be incorporated into the planning process for the LRP. The intent of the environmental consultation and mitigation requirements is to reinforce balanced comprehensive planning by responsibly accounting for a respecting natural and human resource features, needs, and plans in providing for a transportation system that serves the overall character, need and limitations of the region.

The Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) will be the main local contact for resource agency consultation. WDNR will refer issues stemming from the planning process and recommendations on to the agency of jurisdiction, as appropriate. (This is in concurrence with discussions which took place at the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO environmental consultation meeting, June 6, 2007.) The other resource agencies will, at a minimum, be made aware of recommendations in the plan, prior to plan adoption.

Actions

To meet the requirements of the current federal transportation legislation and to meet the needs for an open and transparent planning process, a number of actions necessary in the development of the LRP, the TIP, and in other planning studies.

Long-range transportation/land use plan: The Public Participation Plan (PPP) should be reviewed and updated at the beginning of each long range planning process. This will include a review of the stakeholders list, a preliminary schedule of the planning process, anticipated public involvement activities, key meeting dates, public information meetings, review periods, and anticipated approval dates.

Public involvement is important at all stages of plan development. An initial input session and at least one review and comment period, at a minimum, will offered, and there will be opportunities to provide input at each major stage of the process, including: needs identification, plan goals and objectives, alternatives, policies, draft document, and amendments to the plan.

At some stages, particularly needs identification and alternative review and comment, particular techniques could be used to gather valuable input directly from the public at large or from under-represented subgroups of the population. Some such techniques include nominal group exercises, focus groups, a citizens' advisory committee, surveys, and an interactive website. Through the use of the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's website, people can obtain information about each plan element and provide input to the process immediately by email. The website address is: www.wcwrpc.org.

Other stages of the planning process, like reviewing objectives or policies compiled by the MPO staff and the MPO TAC, or reviewing draft documents or summaries, are more conducive to

other techniques. Printed materials in English will be made available at the L.E. Phillips Public Library in Eau Claire, the Altoona Public Library, and the Chippewa Falls Public Library, and other locations that may be frequented by low-income, or minority citizens, with comment cards or other appropriate contact to submit comments. If materials are requested in Spanish, Hmong, large type, and/or Braille, MPO staff will make reasonable attempts to accommodate those needs. Presentations to targeted groups or representative organizations, and availability on the website are also good techniques for this review and comment function.

Other techniques could also be determined to be useful at any particular stage of the process, and different techniques will be utilized as deemed appropriate by the MPO.

Relative to new SAFETEA-LU environmental consultation requirements, contacts with State, local, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation will be made, and planning functions coordinated to the maximum extent practicable. Federal and state land management and regulatory agencies will also be consulted during the metropolitan transportation planning processes, concerning the development of environmental mitigation strategies and activities.

Consultation will be implemented under the recommendation of the *Guidance for Environmental Consultation and Mitigation in Wisconsin MPO Transportation Plan Updates*, as prepared by FHWA Wisconsin Division and Wisconsin Department of Transportation (April, 2007). In short, the appropriate Federal, State, and local agencies which are not already members of the MPO committee structure, will be asked to attend a briefing meeting or supplied with information during the early stages of development of the plan, and during draft plan stages. Some individual meetings may be necessary to receive input and coordination with particular agencies, as appropriate to the issues at hand. Outreach efforts, as well as comments and input received, will be documented and given careful consideration, and incorporated into the final plan as appropriate.

Other Planning Studies: The MPO's major planning studies will typically involve a process similar to that of the LRP: issue identification, formulation of goals and objectives, alternative analysis, development of recommendations, draft document, approval, and potentially amendment. Specific determination of public involvement actions will be similar to those discussed for the LRP, but ultimately determined as appropriate to each study. Some outreach opportunities to be considered include:

- Broad input opportunities, such as visioning sessions, neighborhood meetings, broad distribution surveys
- Meetings with professional in various fields, as appropriate (planners, engineers, transit professionals, educators, social service providers, business persons, etc.)
- Meetings or presentations to elected officials and appointed board members (common council members, planning commission members, etc.)
- Development of advisory or steering committees
- Presentation to citizen or student organizations
- Articles in community newsletters
- Press releases and meetings with local media representatives
- "Drop-in" meetings with business owners and others.
- Informal conversations with individuals and small groups.
- Interviews with people who are or could be affected by study recommendations.

- Presentations by experts on various transportation-related subjects.
- Telephone and on-board transit surveys.
- Surveys and questionnaires concerning various planning issues.
- Posting transportation-related studies and plans on the MPO website.

The MPO will also experiment with other techniques to determine the best methods of involving all segments of the metropolitan area population in the planning process. A specific public involvement process will be developed and approved at the start of any major planning efforts.

TIP: The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is compiled annually, and therefore lends itself to a more structured schedule of planning process, as well as the public input to that process. The TIP compiles all federally- and state-funded transportation projects within the planning area. Another purpose of the TIP is to document the prioritization and selection of STP-Urban projects.

All candidate TIP projects submitted to the MPO by local municipalities are subject to the public involvement process mandated by the State's open meeting laws prior to the approval by the local unit of government. The MPO also makes every effort to coordinate with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs and to reduce redundancies and costs.

The following is a rough schedule presents a framework for the compilation of the TIP and key points for public involvement opportunities.

**TIP Process Schedule
Eau Claire Area MPO**

| Est. Time | Public Involvement Activity | MPO Action |
|------------------|---|---|
| June | Public notice of requests for projects | Projects requested of municipalities and state |
| Early July | Deadline for project submittals | Deadline for project submittals |
| July | | Staff ranking of STP-Urban project and development of draft document |
| Mid August | TAC meeting | TAC meets to recommend STP-Urban projects for funding and review draft document |
| August-September | 30-day public review and comment period | Staff review and incorporation of comments |
| Late September | End of 30-day public review period | MPO approval |

Public notices are employed to inform the general public of the availability of all draft TIPs, plans and work programs. The notices provide a 30-day review period to submit comments and indicate the times, dates and locations of the next public meetings at which the referenced documents will be discussed and/or acted upon. These notices will also offer the opportunity to request a public hearing prior to the formal approval by the MPO Policy Committee. When written and oral comments are received on the content or development process of the draft transportation plan or TIP, as a result of the public involvement process, a summary analysis and report on the disposition of comments will be made part of the final plan and TIP. Public

input on the TIP is solicited for confirmation of the projects in the TIP. The Policy Committee will also be apprised of the comments received prior to their taking formal action.

The Policy Committee will also be responsible for approving TIP amendments according to the following TIP amendment guidelines:

TIP Amendment Guidelines

No Amendment Required

- Schedule
 - ◇ Changing the implementation schedule for projects within the first four years of the TIP.
- Scope
 - ◇ Changes in scope (character of work or project limits) while remaining reasonably consistent with the approved project.
- Funding
 - ◇ Changing the source (Federal state, local); category (IM, NHS, STP, earmarks); or amount of funding for a project without changing the scope of work or schedule for the project or any other project within the first four years of the TIP.

Minor Amendment (processed through MPO committee structure and WisDOT)

- Schedule
 - ◇ Adding a preservation project to the first four years of the TIP, including advancing a project for implementation from an illustrative list or from the out-years of the TIP.
 - ◇ Moving a preservation project out of the first four years of the TIP.
- Scope
 - ◇ Changing the scope (character of work or project limits) of a preservation project within the first four years of the TIP such that the current description is no longer reasonably accurate.
- Funding
 - ◇ Change in project funding that impacts the funding for other projects within the first four years of the TIP forcing any preservation project out of the four-year window.

Major Amendment (public involvement opportunity and processed through MPO committee structure and WisDOT)

- Schedule
 - ◇ Adding an expansion project to the first four years of the TIP, including advancing a project for implementation from an illustrative list or from the out-years of the TIP.
 - ◇ Moving an expansion project out of the first four years of the TIP.
- Scope
 - ◇ Significantly changing the scope (character of work or project limits) of an expansion project within the first four years of the TIP such that the current description is no longer reasonably accurate.

- Funding
 - ◊ Adding or deleting any project that exceeds the lesser of:
 - 15 % of the total Federal funding programmed for calendar year, or
 - \$1,000,000.

Annual Listing of Obligated Projects: As required by SAFETEA-LU, an Annual Listing of Obligated Projects, including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, for which Federal funds have been obligated in the preceding year shall be published or otherwise made available by the cooperative effort of the State, transit operator, and metropolitan transportation improvement program (TIP).

This provision is intended to increase the transparency of government spending on transportation projects and strategies in metropolitan areas to State and local officials, and to the public at large. Realizing this objective involves promoting accuracy and responsiveness in financial planning and adoption of a proactive approach to sharing information with the public in a meaningful way, at an appropriate time, and in a user-friendly format.

The Annual Listing of obligated projects is available upon request, or is online at the West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission's website: www.wcwrpc.org.

Public Participation Plan: This document, upon its adoption, is to serve as the PPP for the Chippewa-Eau Claire MPO. The adoption of this process will not occur before a pre-comment period consultation and a public review and comment period of at least 45 days. The consultation is intended to receive input from affected agencies, as listed in Appendix A, concerning the appropriateness of the public involvement procedures and the scope of the outreach. Comments received during the consultation will be documented and incorporated into the plan, prior to the 45-day public comment period. Availability of the policy for review will be advertised in a manner reasonably expected to reach the general public as well as minority populations, low-income persons, and other traditionally under-served populations. This could occur through contacts mentioned earlier in this document and listed in Appendix A, in addition to traditional public notices in local newspapers.

Any comment received during the 45-day comment period will be considered by the MPO Policy Board, and incorporated as appropriate. If such comments prompt significant change to the policy, or if significant changes are prompted by internal review, such that a population protected by under Title VI is adversely affected, or disproportionately loses benefits included in the original policy, a 30-day review period will follow prior to final action by the MPO Policy Board.

The MPO will periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan by documenting public attendance at meetings, repeat participants, number of stakeholder groups, and the types of comments received. The MPO will also review these public involvement processes periodically and revise as necessary to assure that the process provides full and open access to all. Any revisions will incorporate a 45-day public review period with public notices provided to the local news media and posted on the WCWRPC website prior to the start of the review period.

Appendix A

Public Involvement Contact List

Aurora Community Services
Garlick's Community Based Residential Facility Inc.
Hope Gospel Mission Inc.
Hmong Mutual Assistance Association
ARC Eau Claire
Chippewa Family Services Inc
Easter Seals Wisconsin
PATH Inc
REACH Inc
Rosebud & Friends Drop-in Center
United Cerebral Palsy of West Central WI
National Alliance for the Mentally Ill - Eau Claire area
Chippewa Valley Technical College
UW- Eau Claire
L.E. Phillips Public Library
Altoona Public Library
Chippewa Falls Public Library
Chippewa County Dept. of Human Services
Eau Claire County Dept. of Human Services
Chippewa River Industrial
Chippewa County Dept. of Aging
Eau Claire County Dept. of Aging
Eau Claire Area School District
Chippewa Falls Public Schools
Catholic Area Schools of the Eau Claire Deanery
SAFE Steps
The Salvation Army
The Salvation Army
Goodwill Industries
Chamber of Commerce - Chippewa Falls Area
Chippewa County Economic Development Corp.
Eau Claire Chamber of Commerce
Eau Claire County Economic Development Corp.
Momentum Chippewa Valley
Western Dairyland Economic Opportunity Council

Environmental Consultation List

| | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|
| County Extension | |
| Chippewa Co. | CNRED |
| | Ag. Agent |
| Eau Claire Co. | Ag. Agent |
| Land Conservation | |
| Chippewa Co. | Co. Conservationist |
| | Watershed Manager |
| Eau Claire Co. | Planning Director |
| | Land Conservation |
| DNR Wildlife Services | |
| West Central Region | Wildlife Biologist |
| USDA Area Office | Area Resource |
| | Conservationist |
| Municipal Planning | |
| City of Eau Claire | City Planner |
| City of Chippewa Falls | City Planner |
| Economic Development | |
| Chippewa Co. Economic Dev. Corp. | |
| Eau Claire Co. Economic Dev. Corp. | |
| Momentum Chippewa Valley | |
| Historic Preservation | |
| Chippewa Valley Museum Society | Society President |
| Chippewa Valley Museum Society | Director |
| Chippewa County Historical Society | Society President |