Public Involvement

The Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln MPO involved the public throughout the MTP development process, in adherence to the GCLMPO’s Public Participation Process, amended and approved July 28, 2017. The GCLMPO’s Public Involvement Plan outlines procedures and policies for public participation.

The GCLMPO’s Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and MPO Board, including elected officials, city/town managers, planning and engineering staff, and representatives from aviation, public transportation, and economic development agencies from the MPO’s three counties, formed the backbone of outreach efforts to the community. All TCC and MPO Board meetings were open to the public, included a public comment period, and were advertised in local area newspapers. The handouts and public comment forms were also available in Spanish.

PUBLIC INPUT AT MPO MEETINGS

The MPO enjoyed strong participation from both voting members and members of the public at its TCC and MPO Board meetings during the MTP development process. Several members of the local state legislative delegation attended and participated in the project identification and evaluation process, along with members of the public. The most frequent topic of discussion for citizens and legislators attending these meetings or submitting comments was regarding the Catawba Crossings project and the widening of I-85. Residents and legislators spoke during public comment sessions both for and against the Catawba Crossings, with the majority supporting this project.

PROJECT IDENTIFICATION INPUT PROCESS MEETINGS

The MPO staff began the project identification process by starting with projects from the previous plan, the 2040 MTP, reviewing them with the TCC and MPO Board in several meetings between March and September 2017. MPO staff solicited projects in April 2017, with a 30-day public comment period from April 1 – April 30. Staff then loaded the project information into a project database for ranking. In July 2017, the MPO’s TCC and MPO Board approved the release of a Fiscally-Constrained Draft Project List for a 30-day public comment period from August 1 – August 30. During this time a public comment meeting was held in each of the three counties in Lincolnton, Gastonia, and Shelby. The project lists were distributed to all MPO member city halls and county administration buildings for comments as well. A description of the project ranking process can be found in Chapter 10 – Financial Plan and Project Prioritization.
AIR QUALITY CONFORMITY AND DRAFT PLAN COMMENT MEETINGS
The MPO staff released the draft MTP and supporting conformity document on January 29, 2018 for a 30-day public comment period. The two documents were presented to the public at a series of workshops in Shelby, Lincolnton, and Gastonia during that time. Comments were received and presented to the TCC and MPO Board for consideration at their March 2018 meetings. The TCC and MPO Board recommended and approved the 2045 MTP and corresponding conformity report at their March 14 and March 22, 2018 meetings.

Environmental Justice (EJ)
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE / TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT
Overview
In 1994, Presidential Executive Order (E.O.) 12898 directed every Federal agency to make Environmental Justice (EJ) part of its mission. The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT), North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT), and the GCLMPO are all committed to a comprehensive, inclusive approach to accomplishing this mission.

“Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” E.O. 12898.

“Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations” requires each Federal agency to “make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” E.O. 12898 and the accompanying Presidential Memorandum underscore the importance of utilizing existing laws-including National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to ensure that all persons live in a safe and healthy environment. Specifically, Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Consistent with Title VI and the E.O., the USDOT Order emphasizes the importance of ensuring that programs or activities funded by USDOT which affect human health or the environment do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations

The GCLMPO Title VI Policy Statement states:

“It is the policy of the Gaston-Cleveland-Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (GCLMPO) to ensure that no person shall, on the ground of race, color, sex, age, national origin, or disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity as provided by the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and any other related non-discrimination Civil Rights laws and authorities.”

To respond to the ever-changing demographics of our population a range of methods is used to reach all populations. The end goal is to involve minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations in the transportation decision-making process. Differing techniques are utilized for adequate, effective, and meaningful participation of these populations to assist in understanding unique needs, cultural perspectives, and financial limitations of different socioeconomic groups. These include, but are not limited to, the groups outlined below.

- **Limited English Proficiency** - the Census Bureau has a range of four classifications of how well people speak English. The classifications are ‘very well’, ‘well’, ‘not well’, and ‘not at all’. For GCLMPO’s purposes, we are considering people that speak English ‘not well’ or ‘not at all’ as Limited English Proficient persons.

- **Blacks/African Americans** – a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa.

- **Hispanics/Latino** – a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race.

- **Asian Americans** – a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands.

- **American Indians and Alaskan Natives** – a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition.

- **Low-income** – a person whose household income (or in the case of a community or group, whose median household income) is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.
**Figure 4-1** shows the GCLMPO distribution of population by race and ethnicity, and **Figure 4-2** shows the GCLMPO density of households with no vehicle available.

The MPO attempted to increase participation by these groups by translating public input documents into Spanish, holding public input meetings outside traditional meeting places, and by holding multiple meetings. The bulleted list EJ Public Outreach section that follows contains specific activities targeted to increase public awareness and participation in the MTP within EJ communities.

**EJ PUBLIC OUTREACH**

Public engagement and participation in decision making is a fundamental principle of EJ, and is critical to achieving outcomes that reflect the needs of all affected stakeholders to the greatest extent possible. Low-income and minority communities have historically borne disproportionately high or adverse human health or environmental effects of infrastructure projects. Active participation of all affected communities will help ensure that transportation plans and projects avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts on low-income and minority populations. For this reason, DOT is committed to developing and using public engagement to encourage EJ populations to participate during the planning and implementation of Federal and State DOT programs, policies, and activities.

The GCLMPO is committed to engaging low-income and minority populations in the transportation decision making process from the earliest stages of planning through project implementation in geographic areas with high concentrations of low-income and minorities.
The GCLMPO staff continues to explore traditional and nontraditional strategies for engaging low-income and minority populations, including regional workshops with State and local officials and online announcements, documents relevant to EJ organized in an easily searchable location on the GCLMPO’s website (www.gclmpo.org). On the website, GCLMPO can facilitate informal dialogue and feedback from EJ stakeholders and representatives, as needed. GCLMPO strives to ensure that geographic areas or communities with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations have access to information to the fullest extent feasible and that their participation in providing input into decision making is encouraged.

Public involvement activities related to EJ that occurred during the MTP development process include the following:

- Press Releases and Public Meeting flyers were translated into Spanish
- Flyers in Spanish were posted at the WOW Supermarket in Gastonia (Spanish grocery store)
- Public meeting flyers were posted at Gastonia Transit – Bradley Station
- A GCLMPO Staff member fluent in Spanish was present at all public meetings
- Press Releases and Public Meeting flyers are posted on the GCLMPO website (both in English and Spanish)
- Legal advertisements announcing the public comment periods were sent to major, local publications including the Gaston Gazette, Shelby Star, and Lincoln Times-News
- Public Meeting information was available at Gaston County Health Department
- GCLMPO staff spoke at the Highland Community Meeting (a minority neighborhood in Gastonia) letting residents know about the upcoming MTP public meetings and requesting public comments
OTHER EJ LEGISLATION AND GUIDANCE RESOURCES

- Title VI Requirements in Metropolitan and Statewide Planning
- Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act
- Title VI Regulation 49 CFR 21
- 23 U.S.C. 140 -- Nondiscrimination
- Executive Order on Environmental Justice
- DOT Order on Environmental Justice
- FHWA Order on Environmental Justice
- 23 CFR 200.5 -- Title VI Definitions
- 23 CFR 200.7 et.al. -- Title VI Policy and State Responsibilities
- Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970
- Impacts of the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 on FHWA Programs
- Title VI Legal Manual, US. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division
- The Council on Environmental Quality coordinates federal environmental efforts and works closely with agencies and other White House offices in the development of environmental policies and initiatives.

Along with the federal and state resources listed above, the GCLMPO maintains a Limited English Proficiency Plan (LEP) and Title VI Complaint and Investigation Procedures. These additional resources can be found on the GCLMPO website at www.gclmopo.org.
Figure 4-1

Distribution of Population by Race & Ethnicity

Legend:
- Highways
- Major Roads
- Municipalities
- Counties
- Regional Waters
- All Minorities Population
  - 0 - 15%
  - 15.1 - 30%
  - 30.1 - 60%
  - 50.1 - 100%
  - 75.1 - 100%
  - 60.1 - 100%

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2045 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN
Figure: 4-2
GCLMPO Density of Households
With No Vehicle Available

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2045 METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN