



Atlanta Regional Commission

Regional Transportation Participation Report

2008 Update



The contents of this report reflect the views of the persons preparing the document and those individuals are responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the Department of Transportation of the State of Georgia. This report does not constitute a standard, specification, or regulations.

Table of Contents

Section I: Framework for Participation	1
1.1 You are Invited to Participate!	1
1.2 Planning at the Atlanta Regional Commission	1
1.3 ARC Transportation Planning Area	3
1.4 ARC’s Official Commitment to Participation	4
1.5 Purpose of the <i>Transportation Participation Plan</i>	4
1.6 <i>Transportation Participation Plan Goals</i>	5
Section II: ARC Planning and Participation Processes	6
II.1 Regional Transportation Plans and Programs	6
II.2 RTP/TIP Planning Process	8
II.3 ARC Official Policy for Citizen Input	10
II.4 ARC Transportation Participation Process	10
II.5 ARC Transportation Plan Approval Structure	11
II.6 Transportation Plan Revisions	13
II.7 Participation Plan Revisions	13
II.8 Regional Participation Coordination	13
Section III: Participation Guidelines	17
III.1 Access to Participation	17
III.2 An Invitation to Participate	18
III.3 Environmental Justice Considerations	19
III.4 Guidelines for Providing Oral or Written Comment	20
III.5 Participation Techniques	20
III.6 Information Resources	21
III.7 Participation Evaluation	24
APPENDICES	27
APPENDIX A: Rules and Regulations Governing the Participation Process	29
APPENDIX B: Organizational Structure of the Atlanta Regional Commission	32
APPENDIX C: ARC Official Policy for Citizen Input	36
APPENDIX D: Transportation Plan Amendment Process	38
APPENDIX E: Public Participation Spectrum	42
APPENDIX F: Acronyms and Abbreviations	43
APPENDIX G: Transportation Participation Plan Update Process	44
APPENDIX H: Adopting Resolution	51

Regional Transportation Participation Plan

Section I: Framework for Participation

1.1 You are Invited to Participate!

All residents in the metro area have the right to participate in transportation planning and investment decisions that affect their daily lives. You have that valuable knowledge and insight about problems and needs in your own community and beyond. You can contribute to those factors required to be considered in the planning process; factors that reflect community values and sometimes not easily quantifiable. Plans should reflect broad and diverse input, have community support and be implementable. These important reasons undergird this *Transportation Participation Plan*.



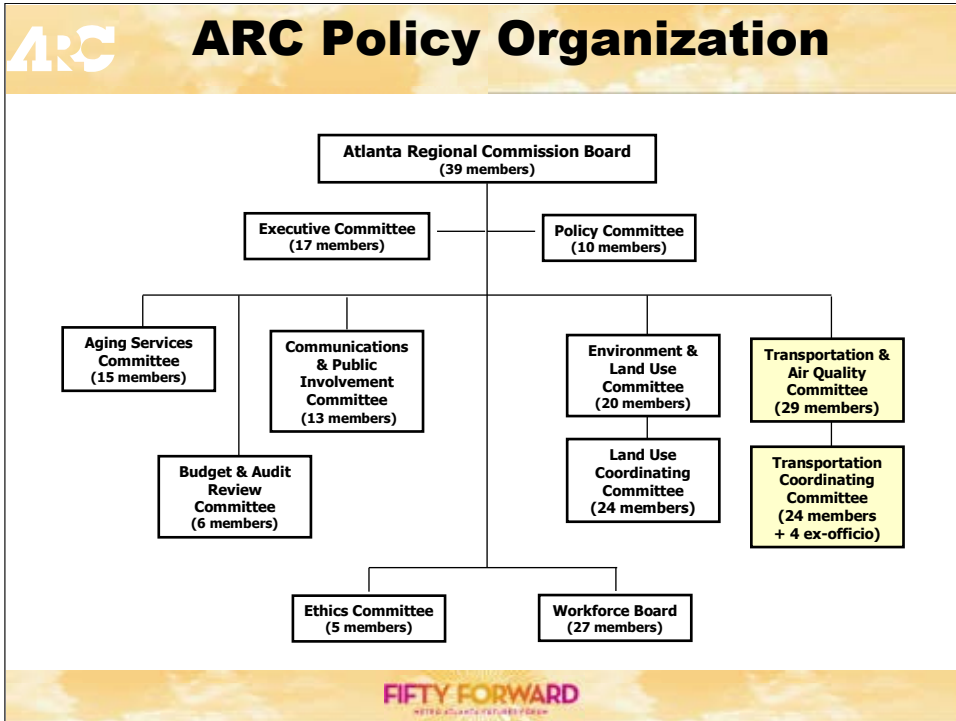
1.2 Planning at the Atlanta Regional Commission

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is the regional planning and intergovernmental coordination agency for metro Atlanta counties and the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for transportation planning. As the comprehensive planning agency for the Atlanta region, ARC coordinates planning efforts in the areas of:

- ▶ Aging services
- ▶ Community services
- ▶ Environmental planning
- ▶ Governmental services
- ▶ Workforce development
- ▶ Economic development
- ▶ Land use and development and
- ▶ Transportation planning



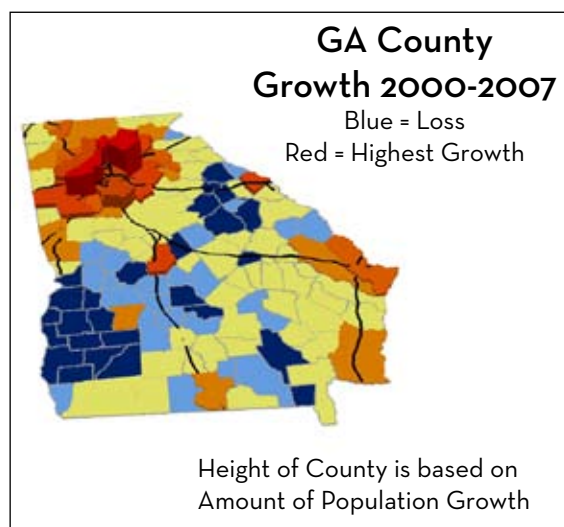
ARC receives local, state and federal funds to administer programs, develop plans and subcontract funds to local governments and other operating agencies. In addition, ARC is a regional center for pertinent planning information and has broad data-gathering and analysis capabilities. ARC maintains an extensive planning database that includes U.S. Census information, current population estimates, as well as demographic and economic forecasts. Much of this information is easily accessible on the ARC website: www.atlantaregional.com



Growth and Challenges in the Atlanta Region

ARC has documented and developed plans for a region that has experienced significant growth and change throughout the agency’s 60-year history. During the past few decades, in particular, as the Atlanta region has experienced explosive growth, ARC has faced both opportunities and challenges in preparing for the continued success of this dynamic area.

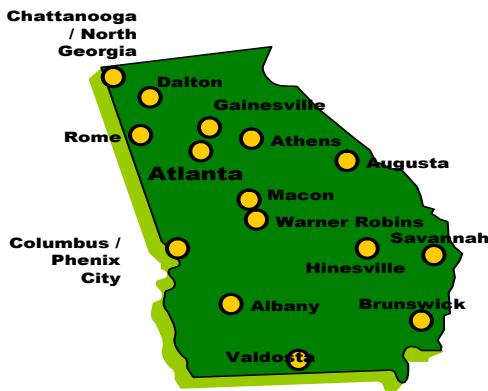
ARC predicts the Atlanta region will grow from 3.7 million people in the year 2000 to over 7 million people in the year 2030, becoming home to 2.3 million new residents by 2030.



As the region works to build the systems, infrastructure and programs to handle this growth, ARC will face challenges as never before. But, with those challenges comes even greater opportunity to attain an enhanced quality of life, economic progress and prosperity by working together with the region’s residents.

1.3 ARC Transportation Planning Area

As the state-designated comprehensive planning agency for the Atlanta region, ARC coordinates planning efforts for member counties. It is also a federally-mandated agency for transportation planning for the metro Atlanta area. Under the requirements of SAFETEA-LU (*Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users*), signed into law by President Bush on August 10, 2005, ARC serves as the regional forum for cooperative transportation decision-making as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Atlanta metropolitan transportation planning area.



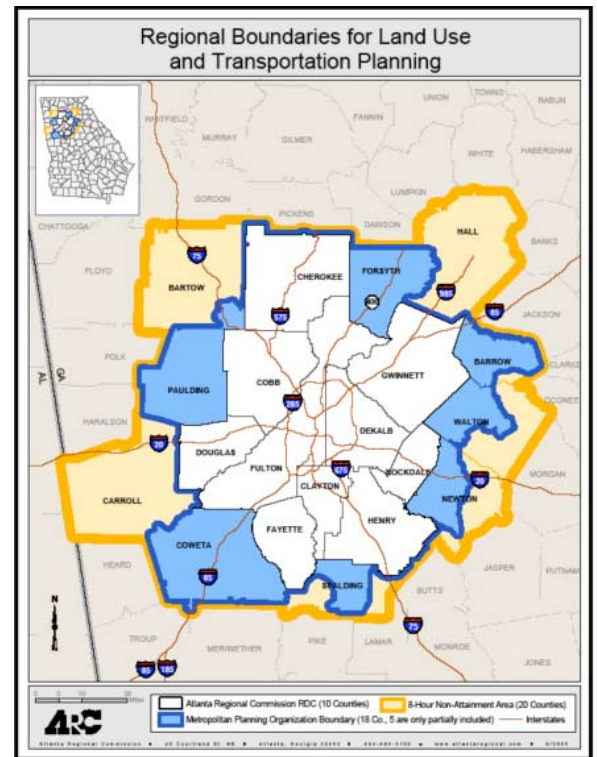
MPOs in Georgia

- **Federal designation**
- **Urbanized area**
- **Responsible for comprehensive, coordinated, and continuing transportation planning process**
- **Regional forum to address transportation, air quality and project implementation issues**
- **15 MPOs across the state of Georgia**

An MPO designation refers to a federally required body responsible for transportation planning and project selection in its region. The Governor of Georgia designates an MPO in every urbanized area with a population of over 50,000 people. An MPO is responsible for developing transportation plans for the urbanized area it represents.

In October 2003, the ARC adopted an expanded transportation planning boundary that includes all or portions of 19 counties based on the expanded Atlanta Urbanized Area identified in the 2000 Census.

This area includes the ARC’s ten member counties¹ plus all or portions of Barrow, Bartow, Coweta, Forsyth, Hall, Newton, Paulding, Spalding and Walton Counties. In April 2004, the Governor of Georgia approved this expanded planning boundary. ARC bylaws were amended in March 2004 to provide limited ARC membership to these counties (except Hall) for the limited purpose of transportation planning only. For the portion of the boundary within Hall County, transportation planning responsibilities were assigned by formal agreement to the new Gainesville-Hall MPO.



¹ Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Rockdale Counties and the City of Atlanta.

1.4 ARC's Official Commitment to Participation

ARC's Mission Statement

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) is dedicated to creating a superior living environment for all citizens in the Atlanta region. This mission is accomplished through professional planning initiatives and the provision of objective information. In addition, it is made possible through the involvement of the community in collaborative partnerships that encourage healthy economic growth compatible with the environment, improve the Region's quality of life and provide opportunities for leadership development.

Framework for Coordinating and Implementing Participation Practices

The aim of ARC's participation efforts is to create a better product by:

- ▶ Facilitating dialogue with a broad cross section of citizens in the regional planning process.
- ▶ Organizing and recording what was learned in a format for consideration and use by ARC staff, planning partners and the ARC Board.
- ▶ Informing citizens about the impact their input had on the development of regional policies and plans.

1.5 Purpose of the *Transportation Participation Plan*

The *Transportation Participation Plan* has three purposes. The plan is:

- ▶ the transportation participation guide for the transportation-interested public.
- ▶ the official participation policy for transportation planning for ARC.
- ▶ an ARC response to the U. S. Department of Transportation directive to develop a participation plan for the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program².

To accomplish this, the *Transportation Participation Plan*

- ▶ provides information about planning processes and how to get involved.
- ▶ explains the structure of ARC, how it conducts its transportation planning activities and details what one can expect from the planning process.
- ▶ discusses these activities in terms of procedures, strategies and desired outcomes of the process.



The *Transportation Participation Plan* is developed through a consultation process with all interested parties as identified in the Invitation to Participate (Section III.2) of this plan. U.S. DOT defines consultation when “one or more parties confer with other identified parties in accordance with an established process and, prior to taking action(s), considers the views of the other parties and periodically informs them about action(s) taken. (23CFR Section 450.104 Definitions).

² See **Appendix A** for official guidance on public participation on a state and federal level.

1.6 Transportation Participation Plan Goals

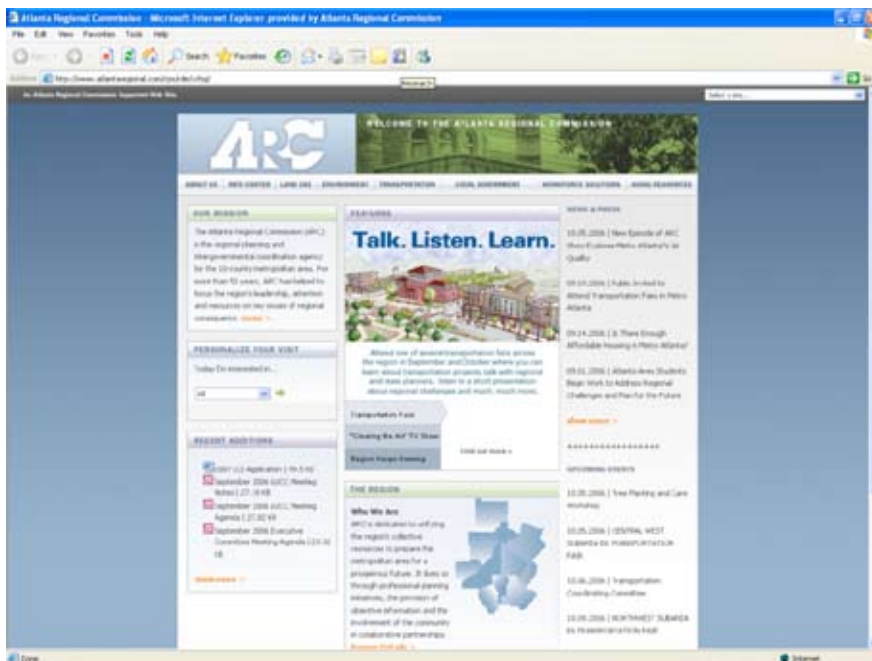
The *Transportation Participation Plan* was last updated and adopted by the ARC Board in December 2006. The update incorporated the directives of federal SAFETEA-LU legislation and regulation found in the 23 CFR (Code of Federal Regulations) Section 450.

Formed through the ARC transportation participation process, ARC's goals and strategies are to:

- ▶ enhance the impact of participation on transportation decision-making. To accomplish this goal, ARC strives to:
 - ◆ increase the number of people participating in the process.
 - ◆ increase the number of opportunities to participate.
 - ◆ increase the understanding of transportation planning.
 - ◆ evaluate the effectiveness of participation processes.

- ▶ increase the coordination of participation activities between ARC, local jurisdictions and transportation agencies in the Atlanta Region to more effectively provide outreach mechanisms for:
 - ◆ sharing activities and results.
 - ◆ implementing shared agendas.
 - ◆ communicating coordination results.

This plan provides in detail how these goals and strategies are met through official participation policies of ARC as an agency and policies particular to transportation planning processes, including agency coordination, participant invitations, participation techniques, information resources and ongoing evaluations.



Section II: ARC Planning and Participation Processes

II.1 Regional Transportation Plans and Programs

A substantial focus of transportation planning participation on the transportation plans ARC is charged with providing the State of Georgia and U.S. Department Transportation. Most of the activities carried out by transportation planners at ARC are to support the development of these plans.

There are five primary transportation documents that ARC, as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the metro Atlanta region, must regularly prepare and obtain approval from the ARC Board:



Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): The RTP is the policy plan that guides transportation planning for at least 20 years into the future. At least every four years in air quality nonattainment areas like the Atlanta region, goals and policies are revisited with public and agency consultative discussion as scenarios are developed and tested. Participation activities include visioning exercises, dialogues on needs assessment, small group discussions to get input on draft elements of the plan, open houses on draft plans, public opinion surveys and public hearings.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The TIP is the priority spending program developed out of the RTP. A new TIP is prepared, at a minimum, every four years and is recognized as the metro Atlanta area's portion of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Participation activities may include public and private entities as well as the public giving input on prioritizing a project list, public opinion surveys on the impact of the TIP and open houses for reviewing documentation in the draft TIP. The TIP is developed concurrent with updates or amendments of the RTP.

Conformity Determination Report (CDR): For a nonattainment area such as Atlanta, the CDR is a report accompanying a regional transportation plan that signifies that emissions from travel on the metro area's transportation system, shown in the plan, are consistent with the area's goals for air quality. Air quality goals are prescribed by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the federal Clean Air Act. Participation activities may include a review of the technical analysis and projected plan impacts on air quality, consideration of layman descriptions of these impacts and commenting on concerns from this review. During the 4-year time frame, the RTP and TIP may be amended and a new CDR may be required.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): The MPO is responsible for the development, in cooperation with the state and operators of publicly-owned transit, of a Unified Planning Work Program. The UPWP is an instrument for coordinating transportation and comprehensive planning in the metro region. It is developed annually with the transportation planning agencies in the MPO area and is available for public review on the agency website or in hard copy prior to Board adoption.

Transportation Participation Plan: The Participation Plan provides ARC with a formal participation policy and specifies procedures. It also provides interested parties with an understanding of what to expect in the transportation planning process and how to get involved. The Plan is updated regularly by assessing prior participation evaluations and through a public consultation process, including small group discussions and public opinion surveys. Participation activities include review of the draft plan in electronic or hard copy format and commenting on plan impacts.



Other Regional Plans

There are other regional planning efforts that use guidance from the Participation Plan. ARC develops a **Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan** through a process that includes representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation and human services providers, as well as the general public. This plan is required to access Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding for special transportation needs for elderly individuals and individuals with disabilities.

In addition, ARC regularly updates the **Congestion Management Process (CMP)** and the **Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan**, as well as performing special transportation studies, such as corridor studies or studies of particular modes of travel or service delivery. ARC provides funding for the development of **Livable Centers Initiative (LCI)** planning studies and implementation, as well as county-level **Comprehensive Transportation Plans (CTPs)** that are incorporated into a county's overall comprehensive plan as required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The results from these and other agency planning efforts eventually feed into the RTP process.

II.2 RTP/TIP Planning Process

The general methodology for developing transportation plans, with comment input and consultation at every stage, is as follows:

Identify a Need

A transportation project begins with an idea or an identified need. This need may be identified by a member of the public who then garners support from a public agency to sponsor a solution. *An open dialogue with the public about needs in the community can be promoted through special corridor or mode studies.*

Propose a Project

A proposal is made for a transportation project based on an identified need and is open for public consideration and discussion.

Assess the Proposed Project Benefit

Transportation planners and engineers determine how the project will benefit local and regional networks and be consistent with local, regional, state and federal adopted goals. *The public is asked for its review and opinion.*

Sponsor the Proposed Project

Projects are sponsored by agencies as defined under federal law. These include all county and municipal governments, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA), the Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA) and other transit agencies, ARC and private, non-profit or civic organizations that can coordinate with a government agency. Local sponsors prioritize strategies or projects according to the goals set for their respective jurisdiction and input from the public, as well as provide matching funds.

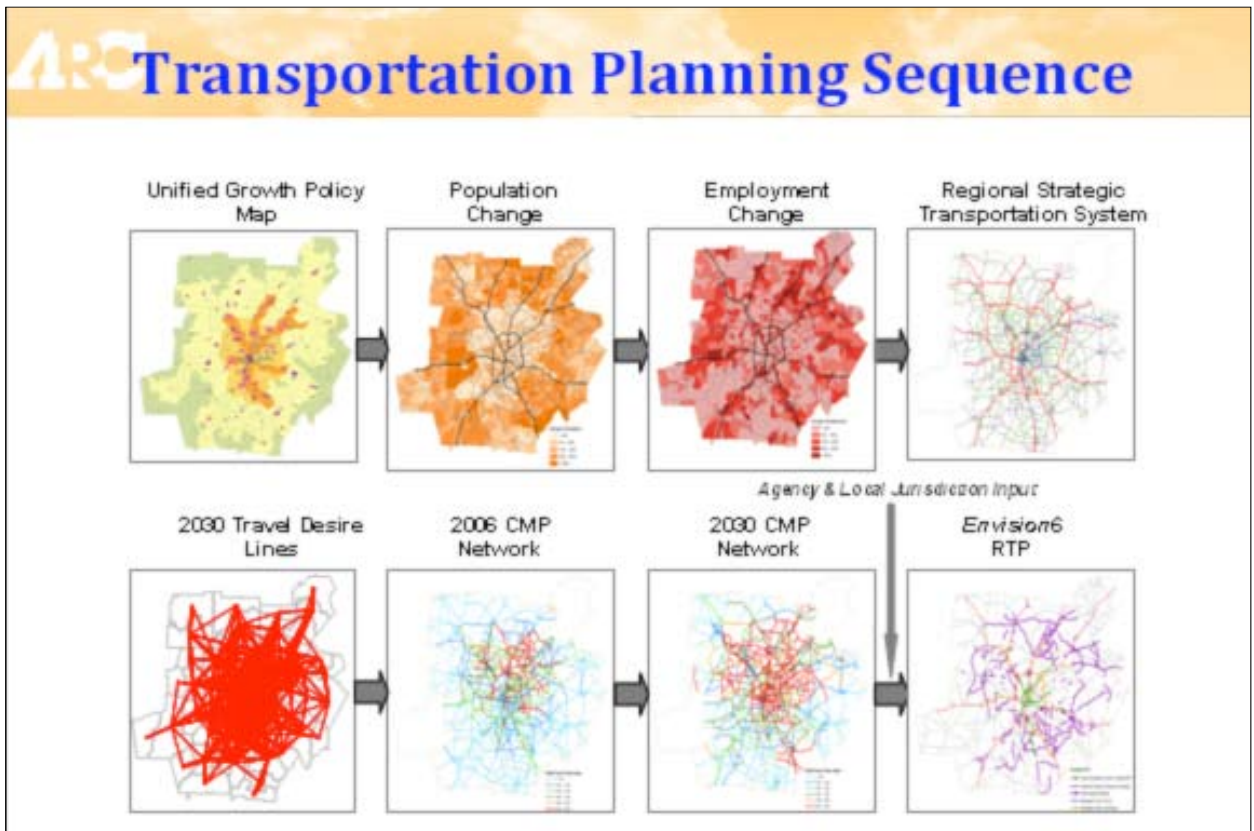
Add Proposed Project to Regional Mix

Strategies are incorporated into the regional priority list by ARC, to begin the regional planning process, to develop the long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that includes regional goals and performance measures.

Regional Transportation Planning Process

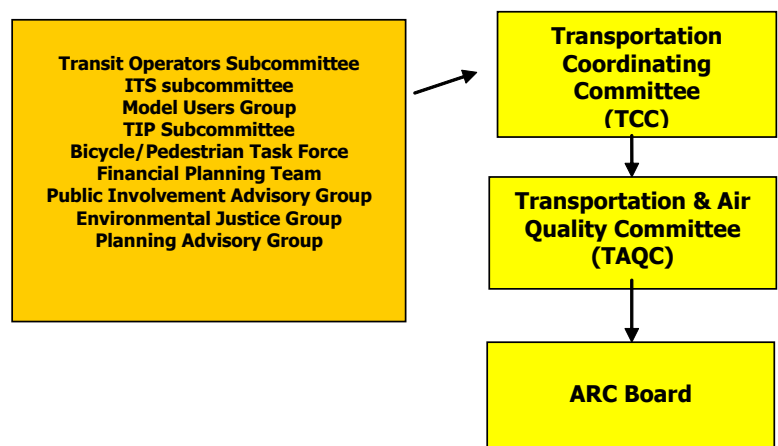
- ▶ *Input from the interested public influences regional policies, goals and strategies that will determine how the regional transportation network will look in the future. Projects are further prioritized based on a technical framework agreed to by transportation planning partners. This framework is shared with the public during its development.*
- ▶ **Alternative scenarios** for the RTP are developed and tested. ARC consults and coordinates with other agencies³, as appropriate, to compare metropolitan transportation plans, as they are developed, with the plans, maps, inventories and planning documents developed by these agencies.

3 Including 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.



- ▶ Once the RTP is drafted, the plan undergoes **testing** for financial constraints and conformity to federal air quality standards. (The TIP is prepared concurrent with an update or amendment of the RTP). *The results of these tests are shared with all interested parties.*
- ▶ The draft RTP (and TIP) and associated documents are released for a 30-day **official review and comment period**. *ARC responds to comments and these are made available to all interested parties.*
- ▶ When written and oral comments are received on the draft RTP or TIP (including financial plans) as a result of the participation process or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a **summary, analysis and report on the disposition of comments** is made as part of the final RTP or TIP and communicated to all commenters and the general public.

- ▶ As the RTP (and TIP) are developed, staff presents and discusses findings and impacts with various internal groups and takes into consideration their advice. The resulting draft plans are presented to ARC technical and policy committees and the ARC Board for consideration and eventual adoption.



Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

On a regular basis, the first four or more years of the highest priority projects are further ranked and evaluated for inclusion into the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

- ▶ Projects are drawn from the current Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and evaluated with the project sponsors to ascertain funding and readiness for implementation. *Project-specific public comment is considered by the sponsor and ARC staff.*
- ▶ The draft TIP is released for official public comment simultaneously with the RTP. If there is a need to run a technical analysis for air quality conformity, the conformity determination report must be provided as documentation. *Public participation activities for a TIP (and RTP) update requires at least one formal public meeting during its development process.*
- ▶ The TIP is presented to ARC committees and Board for consideration and eventual adoption. The TIP is submitted to GRTA for approval on behalf of the Governor and, once approved, is included by GDOT in the state transportation improvement program, or STIP, to be submitted to the USDOT for approval.
- ▶ Once approved by USDOT, federal funds flow from GDOT to project sponsors to be matched with local monies. At that time, preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction can be undertaken.

See **Appendix B** for a list and description of the various planning committees and other groups within ARC that provide input into the planning process.

II.3 ARC Official Policy for Citizen Input

ARC provides an official policy for citizen input (see **Appendix C** of this Plan). The policy provides for citizen input before the ARC Board and ARC Board Committees. For citizens desiring to speak before the ARC Board, arrangements are best made prior to the Board meeting date and scheduled directly with the ARC Director. For the ARC Board Committees, including the Transportation and Air Quality Committee and the Transportation Coordinating Committee, time is set aside before each meeting for citizens to sign up to comment. Public comments are recorded and provided in the minutes of the meeting and conveyed as needed to other planning partners.

II.4 ARC Transportation Participation Process

This section details the processes used to produce a draft RTP and TIP. The participation process provides for inspection of transportation plans as they are being developed and drafted through the time they go into the ARC approval process. As the plan progresses to a draft document that incorporates the MPO's recommendations for ARC Board approval, the interested public can assume that the following procedures will take place:

Public Notice: ARC provides the public notice of a review and comment period through a legal organ (*Fulton County Daily Report*); the ARC website; and through media advisories to major regional and local print and broadcast media. ARC also provides its mailing list of interested parties and targeted audiences with the same. The notice will detail the schedule for review and comment, how to obtain more information and how to comment on the plans.

Reasonable Opportunity for Review and Comment: ARC provides no less than a 30-day review and comment period on the final draft transportation RTP and TIP. This is in addition to an extensive participation period throughout plan development that includes multiple outreach opportunities. All plans are developed in consultation with interested parties (see Section III.2) before the final drafts are submitted to the review process.

For the Conformity Determination Report (CDR), ARC provides public access to technical and policy information associated with the conformity determination at the beginning of the comment period, to include a detailed listing of planning and modeling assumptions used in the conformity analysis and documentation supporting the conformity determination.

For the *Transportation Participation Plan*, there is a 45-day review and comment period where comments are taken, addressed and reported on the draft plan.

Additional Review and Comment Periods: If the final draft plan changes appreciably during the review and comment period, an additional review and comment period is provided.

Comment Documentation and Distribution: Comment is regularly captured in report format and made available to policy makers, interested parties and the general public. (Non-ARC comments are forwarded to planning partners for responses). Each comment is given a response based on the nature of the comment. After the review and comment period on the draft plans concludes, all comments are consolidated into a report and provided to the decision-making committees as well as to the public at large.

This report provides the comment in summary form under categories such as air quality, projects in a certain county, or participation formats, among others. Responses are included in this report under each comment to indicate how action was taken. The public and policy makers are provided a further summary to show how public comment impacted the content in the plan.

II.5 ARC Transportation Plan Approval Structure

The Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program, as well as policies, are approved by the ARC Board. The path that a plan takes to get to that day of adoption encompasses a large and diverse cast of the public, local governing jurisdictions and transportation planning agencies.



The players are engaged together in various teams, task forces, subcommittees and committees throughout a process of study, inquiry and evaluation that may take several years in plan development to complete. These groups work together to address the multiple facets of the metro region's mobility framework, including local and regional needs assessments, financial issues, modal resources, cross-jurisdictional coordination and/or air quality modeling.

The result of matching transportation needs, resources, as well as policy and environmental considerations, is a plan that is then taken through the formal ARC committee structure for approvals and recommendations.

Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC): The first formal ARC committee to recommend the plan or policy for approval is the Transportation Coordinating Committee. The TCC is a technical committee composed of 24 agencies from local government transportation planning staff from the MPO planning area (18 counties) as well as the City of Atlanta and other transportation planning agencies such as the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), MARTA, Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and the Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA).

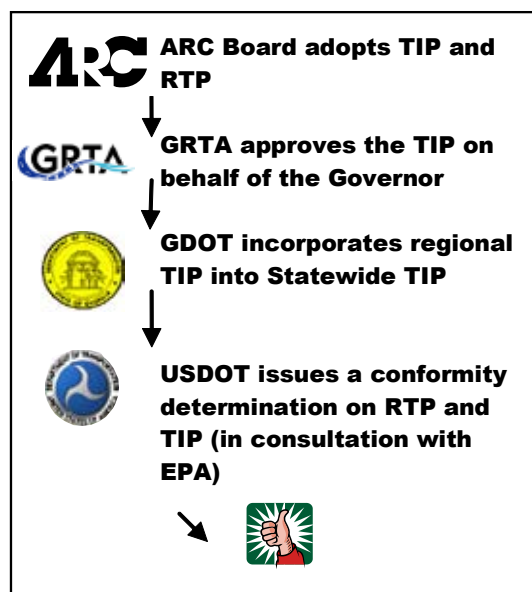
In addition, there are non-voting representatives included in the discussion (the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), GDOT’s Intermodal Office, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Gainesville/Hall MPO and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA)). TCC is responsible for providing technical advice regarding metropolitan or multi-jurisdictional transportation-related matters potentially affecting the Atlanta region. It recommends the plan for approval to TAQC.

Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC): TAQC is the ARC Board policy committee for transportation and air quality issues. It is the MPO policy body recognized for finalizing these planning documents. Its 29 members include the county chairs of the ARC 10 member counties, county chairs of the eight counties in the Atlanta Urbanized Area having limited ARC membership (Barrow, Bartow, Coweta, Forsyth, Newton, Paulding, Spalding and Walton), the Mayor of Atlanta and representatives from the GDOT, MARTA, GRTA and Georgia EPD.

TAQC’s primary function is to develop consensus recommendations from its membership regarding metropolitan or multi-jurisdictional transportation-related policy matters. TAQC takes into consideration TCC’s recommendation for Board adoption of the RTP or TIP through detailed discussions at its monthly meetings. When there is consensus, the TAQC will recommend to the ARC Board that the RTP or TIP should be adopted.

ARC Board: The ARC Board is responsible for regional policy decisions, including the adoption of the regional transportation plans and policies, as well as the public participation policies.

The Board is composed of 23 local elected officials from the 10-county area, 15 private citizens at large from population districts within the region drawn by the State Legislature and a representative of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Once the TIP is adopted by the ARC Board, it then is submitted to the State of Georgia (GRTA) for further consideration. If a CDR was required, it will be submitted to USDOT for approval.



II.6 Transportation Plan Revisions

Between the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program updates, revisions may be made to the plans in the form of administrative modifications or amendments. The forms of these revisions are defined as follows:

Administrative Modifications may include minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously-included projects and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. These types of revisions do not require public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint or a conformity determination.

Amendments are revisions that may involve the addition or deletion of a project or major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes, for example). Amendments require public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal restraint or potentially a conformity determination.

There is a process for each of these revision types that is specified in detail in **Appendix D**. For both types of revisions, the process and information about changes are available on the ARC website, documented in ARC committee meeting agendas, presentations and summaries and through the ARC staff.

II.7 Participation Plan Revisions

From time to time, ARC updates the *Transportation Participation Plan*. This may be due to the changing of official planning regulations and procedures or updating of ARC planning process policies. These draft revisions are considered through a consultation process with impacted parties and ARC planning partners.

A draft revised plan is available for review and comment for not less than 45 days. Comments from the review period are documented and made available to ARC committees and the public. The TAQC and TCC committees and the ARC Board then consider adoption of the plan revisions.

Once adopted, the plan, as amended, becomes the policy document of the agency for purposes of transportation planning participation. Copies of the participation plan are provided to the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration for informational purposes and are posted to the ARC website. (*See Appendix G for a discussion of the current participation plan update process.*)

II.8 Regional Participation Coordination

planning process that includes regional projects, studies, plans and programs. Due to the diverse and multiple activities ongoing at any time in an extensive planning area, it is necessary to coordinate with local, regional and state planning agencies to effectively meet participation goals. Towards this end, ARC works with planning agencies in the region to maintain two important mechanisms: the Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG) and the ARC Regional Study Database.

Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG)

PIAG is composed of transportation planners, public outreach and communications professionals and the general public. Its role is to create a network for participation activities in the region, guidance in preparation of a regional participation plan, share outreach techniques, create citizen educational resources, help prepare for public meetings and ensure that federal and state rules, regulations and guidance are followed.

PIAG activities include distribution of a weekly coordination calendar and announcements, quarterly *PIAG Talks* from practitioners in the field and coordination of public outreach activities.

ARC Regional Study Database

The ARC Regional Study Database has the purpose of keeping track at any point in time of current planning studies, providing contact information, study purpose, phases and timing. ARC publishes an annual brochure for the public that lists studies and plans being worked on in that calendar year.

Regional Communication Coordination

ARC utilizes extensive and creative methods to maximize its reach to the general public. Utilizing ongoing networks helps facilitate this in large measure. A primary vehicle for participation coordination is PIAG.

For effective coordination, the following resources are important to draw upon in communicating with a broad public:

- ▶ ARC internal planning networks (including Transportation Planning Division, Land Use Planning Division, Transportation Demand Management Division, Aging Services Division, Environmental Planning Division, Workforce Development Division, Governmental Services Division and the Office of the Director).
- ▶ Umbrella/regional organizations (including religious, economic development organizations, educational institutions, schools and advocacy groups).
- ▶ Community leadership (including local and regional leadership organizations).
- ▶ Local and regional media.
- ▶ Current ARC database of identified interested persons.
- ▶ Civic/community/homeowners organizations.
- ▶ ARC website.
- ▶ ARC planning partner networks and websites.

Local Government and Project Sponsor Coordination

Jurisdictions sponsoring transportation projects and plans within the Atlanta metropolitan transportation planning area are responsible for providing outreach opportunities for their individual projects or plans and to keep ARC informed. Local projects included by ARC in

regional plans and programs receive additional opportunity for public review and comment as part of the regional plan and program public involvement activities. ARC provides guidance and acts as a resource to enhance the quality of local outreach activities, if needed, so that existing local outreach programs are documented at the regional level for purposes of the TIP/RTP.

Regional coordination of outreach is facilitated by ARC through PIAG, its coordination committee. To help facilitate this coordination, local governments and project sponsors provide data in a timely fashion for the ARC Regional Study Database.

For adjacent MPO studies, plans and programs, ARC coordinates with Gainesville Hall MPO as applicable. To help facilitate this coordination, GMHPO provides data in a timely fashion for the ARC Regional Study Database.

Statewide Transportation Studies/Projects, Plan and Program Coordination

For transportation studies or projects conducted by the State either within the Atlanta metropolitan transportation planning area or impacting the area, the State (Georgia Department of Transportation [GDOT], Georgia Regional Transportation Authority [GRTA], State Road and Tollway Authority [SRTA] or others) are responsible for public involvement activities and provide ARC the opportunity for involvement.

For transportation plans developed by the State, the applicable state agency is responsible for participation activities and for providing ARC with the opportunity for involvement. For the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) developed annually by GDOT which incorporates the ARC Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and all other state MPO TIPs in their totality, the State may consider public involvement activities conducted by the MPOs in their area for their TIPs to be valid for that portion of the STIP. For public outreach activities in any county in the Atlanta nonattainment area that is not included in an MPO planning area, the State is responsible for public involvement activities and provides ARC and GHMPO the opportunity for involvement.

ARC coordinates with the State on regional outreach activities through the Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG) to jointly maximize participation efforts. To help facilitate this coordination, the State provides data in a timely fashion for the ARC Regional Study Database.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan Coordination

Each year ARC awards selected counties funding for the transportation portion of their comprehensive plan. Outreach for these comprehensive transportation plans is guided by the ARC Transportation Participation Plan. These counties coordinate their participation activities with the ARC Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG).

Regarding other studies and plans conducted by local governments, ARC endeavors to connect these activities to regional outreach opportunities where it is advantageous to the local government and applicable to regional plans.

Livable Centers Initiatives Coordination

ARC awards funding annually for Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning studies. These studies have an extensive outreach component and coordinate their activities with the PIAG and use the *Transportation Participation Plan* as guidance for their outreach.



Special Transportation Studies Coordination

ARC regularly conducts special transportation studies on corridors, modes, or other issue areas to provide input into the regional transportation planning process. The consultants chosen to conduct these studies base their participation activities on the ARC *Transportation Participation Plan* and coordinate their activities with the ARC Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG).

Coordination with Other Planning Agencies

ARC will coordinate planning functions to the maximum extent practicable, such as comparing its plans and programs as they are developed, with plans, maps, inventories and planning documents developed by other agencies. These agencies may include 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.

Coordination with Other Planning Activities

The ARC Transportation Planning Division coordinates its transportation outreach activities with other ARC planning activities to the maximum extent possible to connect the impacts of transportation planning with other plans and services.

This coordination includes the Regional Development Plan, other land use activities (e.g., review of county comprehensive plans, greenspace plans), the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's regional water management and supply plans and plans for Human Services Transportation, the Area Plan on Aging and other planning activities for older adult services.



Section III: Participation Guidelines

The guiding principle behind public participation in the transportation planning process is to produce a plan that utilizes practical as well as state-of-the-art planning practices for decision-making. And that these plans are developed in consultation with a diverse and multi-focused array of individuals whose viewpoints are considered and counted. This includes audiences steeped in the intricacies of planning as well as the public at large whose only contact with transportation planning is with its results. The following discussion details how ARC works with audiences broadly and specifically in its participation process.

III.1 Access to Participation

The ability to communicate with ARC and to access ARC planning efforts are primary considerations in developing outreach activities. The goal is for those interested to be able to:

easily, efficiently and effectively participate

To provide for this, ARC ensures that communications channels are open and that its information is available in multiple formats and locations and is understandable by the general public. The accommodations ARC uses enable any age or ability to engage; *all that is required is a person's interest not a person's circumstance.*



Formats Planning information is provided in written and electronic formats. As technological resources progress, increasing amounts of planning materials are provided electronically, cutting down on the costs of printing, but where this is not appropriate for a user, other methods are available, such as audiotape, translations in the major immigrant languages in the metro area, or large font format, among others. Where necessary, ARC produces its information in formats available to the sight and hearing impaired as well as persons with extremity limitations or developmental disabilities.

Times and Locations of Public Meetings Outreach activities for planning studies as well as the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program include meeting with the public to provide direct access to planning information and opportunities to talk with planning staff and decision-makers. When ARC is a sponsor of these meetings, the meetings are held in geographically central locations to the planning work, accessible to transit if at all possible and at times of the day most convenient to the public. These locations, days of the week and hours in the day vary depending on the outreach effort and the audience sought. Effort is always made to join with other planning agencies in providing for these meetings to reduce the number of times the public would be asked to attend planning events. All locations are accessible by wheelchair and other ambulatory devices and are conveniently entered.

III.2 An Invitation to Participate

Anyone who is interested in transportation planning or is impacted by proposed or ongoing transportation plans is the ultimate focus for transportation participation activities. Because this goal is broad, ARC continually endeavors to diversify its communication with the public. The following groups, however, regularly receive planning information and are specifically invited to participate.

- ▶ Interested public (those who have expressed interest in a planning effort by attending meetings or communicating with ARC about a planning activity, or have requested to be kept informed)
- ▶ Local government officials and policy makers
- ▶ Affected public agencies
- ▶ Representatives of public transportation employees
- ▶ Freight shippers⁴
- ▶ Providers of freight transportation services⁵
- ▶ Private providers of transportation
- ▶ Representatives of users of public transportation⁶
- ▶ Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- ▶ Representatives of the disabled
- ▶ Providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than from USDOT⁷
- ▶ Agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations
- ▶ Other interested or impacted groups:
 - ◆ Older adults
 - ◆ Individuals in poverty
 - ◆ Persons with disabilities
 - ◆ Speakers of other languages
 - ◆ Young adults and students
 - ◆ Local/regional/state leadership
 - ◆ Civic and homeowner associations

4 Freight shipper: any business that routinely transports its products from one location to another by providers of freight transportation services or by its own vehicle fleet.

5 Provider of freight transportation services: any business that transports or otherwise facilitates the movement of goods from one location to another for other businesses or for itself.

6 Users of public transportation: any person, or groups representing such persons, who use transportation open to the general public, other than taxis and other privately funded and operated vehicles.

7 These agencies include Department of Family and Children Services, Department of Labor, Area Agencies on Aging, human services stakeholders and ADA coordinators and providers of transportation services for the disabled.

- ♦ Community and advocacy organizations (*including faith organizations and educational organizations*)
- ♦ Business and economic development representatives
- ♦ Environmental, natural resources, airport operations, conservation, historical preservation organization representatives
- ♦ Land use management and planned growth representatives

ARC endeavors to be aware of and work with umbrella organizations regionwide to efficiently communicate with the groups listed above. ARC also maintains extensive contact lists for the above audience categories. Each mailing list is updated and added to on a regular basis. Lists are the foundation for communicating with these individuals and groups by means of the mail or email. This communication provides recipients access to planning information and invites them to give ARC feedback in the manner most appropriate to their circumstances.

III.3 Environmental Justice Considerations

The goal of environmental justice considerations is to ensure that results of transportation plans and programs are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, national origin, or income and that they have access to meaningful participation.



ARC embraces the commitment mandated in Presidential Executive Order 12898 to protect low income and minority communities/citizens from disproportionate adverse impacts collateral to planning and implementation of the transportation improvement program through including members and representatives of protected groups in planning activities.

ARC provides for considerable participation activity towards this environmental justice goal. A major component is opportunity, both formal and informal, for minority and low-income residents to share their ideas and concerns throughout the planning and decision-making process. The utilization of a range of formats for community engagement includes planning teams, advisory groups, special surveys and studies and strategic partnerships with community-based organizations.



To be considered by regional planners

- ♦ How and where will information be disseminated?
- ♦ What information will be disseminated?
- ♦ Where and when will public meetings be held?
- ♦ At what point in the planning process do meetings take place?
- ♦ Are other avenues being used to reach minority/low-income communities
- ♦ How will the process elicit issues of particular concern?

III.4 Guidelines for Providing Oral or Written Comment

Metro residents generally make comments to provide ARC with their:

- ▶ general vision or dreams
- ▶ suggestions as to how ARC can, through its policies, influence quality of life for metro residents
- ▶ reactions to specific projects, plans or programs

These comments are received by ARC through email, survey responses, fax, phone calls, regular mail, telephone conversation, public hearings or face-to-face conversations. In each case, ARC staff considers the content of these comments. Some suggestions are offered below to the general public to maximize the effectiveness of their communication with ARC:

Providing Public Comment.....

- ◆ Find out as much as possible about the project or program in question in order to provide comments based on facts not rumor.
- ◆ Take a few moments to consider how to present the statement in a direct, succinct and informative manner.
- ◆ Clearly state the planning effort the comment is referring to, such as a specific project or location under consideration.
- ◆ Provide information on a project/program impact and why the project/program should or should not have support.
- ◆ Provide concise statements that are to the point and provide direction.
- ◆ If members of an organization consider a project/program important to react to, consider providing a joint comment rather than multiple repetitive form letters.
- ◆ Providing comments in email form will allow ARC to further distribute the comment to a broader audience more efficiently. This also allows the comment to be tagged with the date of comment and provide a return address to respond to the commenter.

III.5 Participation Techniques

Obtaining comment from a diverse audience requires diverse ways to meet and communicate with the public. Because the public needs to be met where they are as much as possible, ARC utilizes the following palette of options:

- ▶ Public meetings including public information meetings, open houses public hearings and transportation fairs to view planning efforts and provide feedback.
- ▶ Workshops and charrettes to work on a specific issue or a specific location.



- ▶ Focus groups, discussion groups and listening sessions to bring a small group of people together who share a common interest or geography.
- ▶ Community or stakeholder interviews to talk directly with individuals who have an interest in the planning work.
- ▶ Forums and summits to bring large numbers of the interested public together to discuss broad transportation issues.
- ▶ Corridor/facility tours to bring together stakeholders in a specific location for fact finding and sharing concerns.
- ▶ Surveys, polls, questionnaires, comment forms, delivered in paper and electronic formats to ask pertinent questions about plans and processes. Telephone surveys conducted scientifically are also used. These can provide for statistically significant results or can provide for an open format for discussion.
- ▶ Citizen advisory committees or stakeholder groups contribute specific feedback from generally knowledgeable participants who meet regularly on a specific planning project. The membership is often recruited for their specific expertise of the subject matter.
- ▶ Use of other venues (*festivals, malls, offices and other places where people gather*)
- ▶ ARC website’s “Contact us” feature on each webpage.
- ▶ Interactive web meetings/conferences.

ARC is further guided by the *Public Participation Spectrum* (see **Appendix E**) developed by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). This spectrum provides guidance on levels of public participation: inform, consult, involve, collaborate and empower with corresponding techniques to accomplish.

III.6 Information Resources

Fortunately for the practice of outreach, there is a plethora of options open to communicate planning activities and policies. Because the public has a variety of ways they naturally access information, ARC must also plan its materials and mechanisms to meet the public at least half way. As increasing numbers of the public log on, it is becoming very efficient to communicate by email and upload planning information on the ARC website. It is equally important that the website be accessible to those who use special text readers, because of visual impairment and that other opportunities are available for those who do not use computers at all.

The following list demonstrates what ARC makes available to the public through its website:

- ▶ Planning schedules and announcements
- ▶ Interactive mapping of transportation projects
- ▶ Planning documentation, presentations and reports
- ▶ Project specific sites for studies and other planning activities
- ▶ Surveys and questionnaires

- ▶ Contact boxes to communicate with ARC or seek information
- ▶ Visualization of planning components and options
- ▶ Audio/video streams of planning concepts, examples of successes and current issues
- ▶ Searchable public comment documentation
- ▶ Information Center page to order materials
- ▶ Events calendars
- ▶ Links to other pertinent webpages, both on the ARC website and others

In addition to providing the opportunity to download or print a document, ARC provides compact discs and DVDs that make thousands of pages of documentation or resource material available. These electronic media have given ARC the ability to provide project information in a variety of presentation formats. Summary lists are sorted and grouped in several different ways, detailed fact sheets are provided for each individual project in the TIP and an Excel spreadsheet of the entire TIP/RTP list can be accessed so that specialized lists can be prepared and analyses be conducted based on user needs. GIS database files are included for users to produce their own maps.



In addition to the internet, ARC provides its planning information in formats that are printed or available at point-of-contact displays such as posters, exhibits, or information kiosks. Street signs can provide the best format for announcing meetings.

ARC also utilizes local, regional and national media by providing content for news stories that discuss planning efforts and results. Media relationships are of major importance to the planning process. When applicable, ARC provides detailed media briefings on important planning issues. ARC routinely publishes newsletters, brochures and fact sheets to summarize planning issues and trends.

To make information available about upcoming events, ARC maintains an events calendar on its website. Event flyers are also distributed by email and mail; media advisories are broadcast; and announcements are made at transportation meetings. Planning partners and citizen groups further distribute this information through their individual communications channels. ARC also provides the region an Events Calendar detailing upcoming events and meetings sponsored by local governments and other organizations.

To provide information on a more personal level, ARC maintains an active speaker's bureau where knowledgeable staff members are available to attend functions region-wide to discuss trends and plans, while distributing newsletters, brochures and fact sheets that summarize planning issues and trends. ARC utilizes local facilities for



distribution of planning information, such as public libraries, community, senior, youth centers, local government centers and government access television.

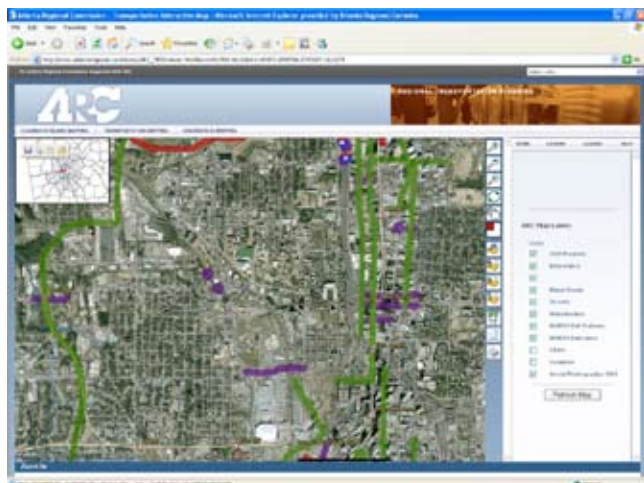
The agency also periodically develops instructional planning games and resources for students and provides several of these programs each year for a variety of ages. ARC sponsors a variety of conferences and forums to discuss planning issues, as well as providing a Community Choices program and a Community Planning Academy (CPA), to bring planning resources and instruction to local communities. The CPA provides training and workshops for appointed citizen planners, local elected officials and local government employees. This training gives planners and decision makers tools to make effective decisions regarding their community's future.

Most important of all the informational resources is the ARC staff itself that are available to provide information about transportation planning. An inquirer can access the staff through email, mail, telephone and fax or at meetings to be provided direct service.

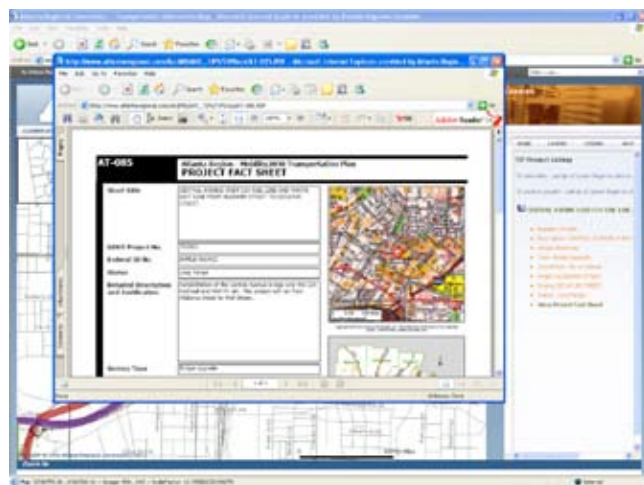
Visualization Resources

To strengthen participation in the planning process and specifically to aid the public in understanding proposed plans, ARC utilizes a variety of visualization techniques. ARC has found that the most popular resource it provides is the interactive mapping feature on its website.

This is GIS-based (and Google-based) and allows a user with a computer and internet access to research projects by location, mode, or county and develop customized maps. When a particular project is selected, the user can then obtain a detailed project fact sheet giving its purpose, schedule, funding level, sponsor and a map. This service also provides maps with aerial photography so the user can increase their understanding of the project's surroundings.



Photographs and video streams have also proven helpful in communicating planning concepts, modes and impacts, especially when considering how transportation and land use planning connect and influence each other. When providing surveys on the internet, photos may also be used to enhance the user's knowledge before responding to a survey question.



ARC extensively uses maps and display boards to communicate visually its planning when in scenario development or demonstrating networks and regional linkages. When developing planning games, the use of strings, Lego's or blocks, construction paper, tacks and rubber bands provide a dynamic visual impact. A visualization technique can be as simple as a marker and a piece of paper for small group discussions examining specific issues.

How Information Resources are Used

The ultimate purpose for the use of all of these resources is to open the planning process and results to any interested person. The resources are used to communicate planning concepts, alternatives, impacts, decisions and results. The goal is to make sure these resources are understandable and provided in “people talk” so they will be of value to the user. Specifically, they are used throughout the planning process to communicate and illustrate and to educate and explain. In all cases, these resources are in formats for and obtainable by any interested user.



III.7 Participation Evaluation

To develop and implement a successful participation program, time must be taken to evaluate what works and what does not work. ARC performs an evaluation process at the conclusion of every RTP or TIP update to assess the effectiveness of public outreach activities associated with it. In addition to these summary evaluations, it is important to conduct interim evaluations as needed on new procedures or products ARC may utilize to optimize its ongoing work.



To evaluate participation activities, participants and planners in the process are contacted for feedback and advice. This may be accomplished through direct interviews, group discussions or questionnaires. For instance, at a public meeting or another organized event, an evaluation questionnaire is provided to gather on the spot input during the event about the activities. In addition, a summary evaluation form is mailed and/or emailed to participants and other interested parties to collect their overall view of techniques used. When the participation plan is updated, consultation results are also used as an evaluation tool.

Indicators of an effective participation process are as follows:⁸

- ▶ Clearly defined purpose and objectives for initiating a public dialogue on transportation issues
- ▶ Specific identification of the affected public and other stakeholder groups with respect to the plans and programs under development
- ▶ Identification of techniques for engaging the public in the process
- ▶ Notification procedures that effectively target affected groups
- ▶ Methods and measures for evaluating the effectiveness of the public involvement program

⁸ as defined by “The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues (A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials and Staff)” published by FHWA/FTA Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program)

- ▶ Education and assistance techniques, which result in an accurate and full public understanding of transportation issues
- ▶ Follow-through demonstrating that decisionmakers seriously considered public input
- ▶ Solicitation of feedback from the public and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the public involvement process.

Quantitative Measures

Evaluation of the ARC transportation participation process is accomplished through referencing its official Goals and Strategies for public participation. The following quantitative evaluation process shows the method of ascertaining achievement in attaining those goals as each process is compared to the process before and targets are established to improve the results:

Goal/Strategy	Measure	Method
Goal One Enhance the impact of participation on transportation decision-making		
Strategy One Increase the number of people participating in the process	Total number of attendees at activities	Sign-in sheets, Comment logs, Survey logs
Strategy Two Increase the number of opportunities to participate	Total number of activities	Summation and documentation of all activities
Strategy Three Increase the understanding of transportation planning	Total number of positive responses	Participant Survey
Goal Two Increase the coordination of participation activities between ARC, local jurisdictions and transportation agencies in the Atlanta Region to more effectively provide outreach mechanisms		
Strategy One Share public outreach activities and results	Total number of shared activities and results	Summation and documentation of shared activities
Strategy Two Implement shared agendas	Total number of implemented shared agendas	Summation and documentation of implemented shared agendas
Strategy Three Communicate coordination results	Total number of coordination communiques	Summation and documentation of coordination communications

Qualitative Measures

Qualitative measures determine how the process worked in terms of content and results. For instance, after the public receives ARC planning information, what then happened? Is the public better equipped to understand what ARC is doing and then what happened? The following qualitative measures are used on a consistent basis:

Process Components to Measure	Information Inputs
Accessibility and Convenience of Process	Open-ended participant survey, one-on-one interviews or focus groups
Diversity of Participants	Determine ranges of participant by age, race/ethnicity, economic situation and home location through surveys and visual accounting
Availability and Timeliness of Information	Did the public have at least 30 days notice of the availability of information before agency action was taken
Adequacy of Public Notice	Did the public have at least 30 days notice of an event or participation opportunity
Effectiveness of Formats and Communication Tools	Open-ended participant survey, one-on-one interviews or focus groups
Plan Changes from Public Comment	Listings of plan changes
How Public Concerns were Addressed	Open-Ended participant survey, one-on-one interviews or focus groups
Availability of Educational Opportunities	Listings of education opportunities and Open-ended Participant Survey

The reporting of results occurs at the conclusion of each evaluation period to ARC staff, policy-makers and the public. These reports provide information about techniques used, how effective they were found and what measures will be provided in the future to improve upon them.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Rules and Regulations Governing the Participation Process

A.1 23 CFR Part 450.316: Interested parties, participation and consultation

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation and consultation.

- (a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, 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, representatives of the disabled and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- (1) The participation plan shall be developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies and desired outcomes for:
 - (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
 - (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
 - (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
 - (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
 - (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
 - (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
 - (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
 - (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
 - (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
 - (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.
 - (2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.
 - (3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

- (b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:
- (1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
 - (2) Governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and
 - (3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204.
- (c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP. (d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP. (e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c) and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

A.2 Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs

Sec. 601. 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.

A.3 The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

Sec. 201. Definition.

As used in this title:

- (1) Public entity. – The term “public entity” means –
 - (A) any State or local government
 - (B) any department, agency, special purpose district, or other instrumentality of a State of States or local government; and
 - (C) the National Railroad Passenger Corporation and any commuter authority (as defined in section 103(8) of the Rail Passenger Service Act).
- (2) Qualified individual with a disability. The term “qualified individual with a disability” means an individual with a disability who, with or without reasonable modifications to rules, policies, or practices, the removal of architectural, communication, or transportation barriers, or the provision of auxiliary aids and services, meets the essential eligibility requirements for the receipt of services or the participation in programs or activities provided by a public entity.

Sec. 202 Discrimination.

Subject to the provisions of this title, no qualified individual with a disability shall, be reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any such entity.

A.4 Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations

This order was signed by President Clinton in 1994 reinforced the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that focused federal attention on the environmental and human health condition in minority and low-income communities:

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.

A.5 State of Georgia's Open Meetings Law (Georgia Code 50-14-1)

Georgia's Open Meetings Law requires that state and local governmental bodies conduct their business so citizens can review and monitor their elected officials and others working on their behalf. The Law requires that government meetings be open to the public. The Law also requires governmental bodies to provide reasonable notice of all meetings. (*Georgia's Sunshine Laws: A Citizen's Guide to Open Government, Office of the Georgia Attorney General, 2001*)

A.6 Georgia Open Records Process (Georgia Code 50-18-70)

Open records requests may be made to any custodian of the desired records. A written request is not required, but is advisable to eliminate any dispute as to what was requested or when the request was made. The records custodian is allowed a "reasonable amount of time" to determine whether the records requested are subject to access under the Law. However, the custodian must respond to all requests within three business days. If the records exist and are subject to inspection but are not available within three business days, a written description of such records and a timetable for their inspection and copying must be provided within that time period. Records maintained by computer shall be made available where practicable by electronic means, including Internet access, subject to reasonable security restrictions preventing access to nonrequested or nonavailable records. If access to a record is denied in whole or in part, the records custodian must provide in writing the specific legal authority exempting such record from disclosure. (*Georgia's Sunshine Laws: A Citizen's Guide to Open Government, Office of the Georgia Attorney General, 2001*)

APPENDIX B: Organizational Structure of the Atlanta Regional Commission

B.1 ARC Board

The Commission is composed of 23 local elected officials, 15 private citizens and one member appointed by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. The public membership of the Commission is as follows:

- ▶ The Chairman of the Board of Commissioners of each of the ten counties within the area.
- ▶ The Mayor of the City of Atlanta
- ▶ The Mayor of one municipality in each of the ten counties (other than the Mayor of the City of Atlanta), elected by a majority vote of all the mayors of that county; except in Fulton County where the Mayor of a municipality located within the northern half of such county elected by majority vote of the mayors of all municipalities located within the northern half of such county serves along with the Mayor of a municipality located within the southern half of such county elected by a majority vote of the mayors of all municipalities located within the southern half of such county.
- ▶ A member of the Atlanta City Council, elected by a majority vote of the members of that body.
- ▶ Public members serve terms of office on the Commission concurrent with their respective terms of public office.
- ▶ The public members elect one citizen member-at-large from each of fifteen districts of equal population. Any elected member of the ARC Board from any county can nominate an individual as long as the nominee lives within the district and fulfills the other stipulations; and that the entire body of elected officials on the ARC Board votes on the citizen members. These citizen districts are drawn by a caucus of state legislators from within the Region. These members-at-large serve staggered four-year terms and may be re-elected. Through amendment of the ARC bylaws in July of 1994, provision was made for a non-voting member to be appointed by the Board of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs. Code Section 50-8-86 specifies that each of the 38 members have an equal voice in Commission decision-making.

B.2 Selected ARC Board Committees

Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC): The 27 member TAQC is the transportation and air quality policy committee of the ARC. The primary function of TAQC is to develop consensus recommendations among ARC (members and limited members representing the 18-county area), Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority (MARTA), Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT), Georgia Regional Transportation Authority (GRTA) and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) regarding metropolitan or multi-jurisdictional transportation related policy matters.

Environmental and Land Use Committee (ELUC): The 20 member ELUC is the environmental and land use policy committee of the ARC. The primary function of ELUC is to develop

consensus recommendations regarding metropolitan and multi-jurisdictional environmental and land use related policy matters, including the Regional Development Plan and Policies, the Livable Centers Initiative, Developments of Regional Impact, regional forecasting and support to the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.

Communications & Public Involvement Committee: The Communications and Public Involvement Committee helps guide and direct efforts to effectively communicate with and involve residents regarding key regional issues and the ARC plans and programs that are addressing them. This is done, for example, through public outreach and involvement efforts, media relations, editorial and graphic design services, Web and digital communications, special events, speeches, publications, newsletters, TV shows and a youth leadership program. The Committee is composed of members of the ARC Board and five non-ARC board members, expert in the field of communications or public involvement.

B.3 Technical Committees

Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC): The 24 member TCC is responsible for providing transportation technical advice. TCC is composed of the Chief of ARC's Transportation Planning Division and a representative (typically the planning or transportation director) from MARTA, GDOT, GRTA, EPD, the City of Atlanta and each of the eighteen (18) counties in the transportation planning boundary. Representatives from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), GDOT Intermodal, GHMPO other municipalities in the region, interest groups and the general public typically attend and participate in the semi-monthly TCC meetings.

Land Use Coordinating Committee (LUCC): Implemented in 2000, the LUCC reports to the ARC Board's Environmental and Land Use Committee (ELUC). Membership includes planning directors or titled equivalents from the planning departments of the ten counties in the ARC planning area and the City of Atlanta and categorical members. LUCC meets monthly to review, discuss and make recommendations on implementation of Regional Development Plan policies. LUCC reviews staff work on traffic analysis zone population forecasts for suballocation areas.

Interagency Consultation Group: The Clean Air Act requires intergovernmental consultation for the development and submittal of applicable State Implementation Plan revisions and before findings of conformity on transportation plans, programs and projects within the SIP, in airsheds designated as nonattainment. To fulfill this requirement, an Interagency Consultation Group facilitated by ARC, was established and meets on a regular basis to discuss and resolve matters relative to air quality and transportation. Formal membership in this group includes ARC, GDOT, EPD, EPA, FHWA, FTA, MARTA and ARC counties receiving federal transportation funding to provide transit services (Cobb, Douglas and Gwinnett). Additional agencies participate including GRTA, the State Road & Tollway Authority (SRTA) and the new Gainesville-Hall MPO (GHMPO).

B.4 Technical Subcommittees

Bike and Pedestrian Task Force; Created in 1993 as ARC began efforts to draft the *Atlanta Region Bicycle Transportation and Pedestrian Walkways Plan*, the Task Force has membership from city and county transportation, recreation and planning departments within the Atlanta region. The Task Force is also open to any interested individual or group. The Task Force continues to meet on an as needed basis to update the plan and address other bicycle and pedestrian issues as part of the long and short term transportation planning process.

Environmental Justice Planning Advisory Group: This group is charged with the identification of important issues and translating overall goals and objectives into more specific strategies and policies while serving as a primary link to environmental justice communities. The Environmental Justice Planning Team was established in 2001 by the ARC as one of nine teams working on the 2030 RTP update. In 2005, the group was restructured to be more representative of the geographic and ethnic diversity in the region and a broader range of stakeholders. Efforts are ongoing to continually ensure the involvement of a diverse range of community stakeholders.

Freight Advisory Task Force: The task force composed of freight community and public sector representatives including railroads, airport, trucking industry, chamber, the port, GDOT and others was established in 2002. The main purpose of the task force is to help ARC in addressing challenges facing the goods movement industry and identifying priority freight corridors and facilities in the region as well as potential solutions. The task force serves as the main forum to identify ways to better incorporate and integrate freight into the regional transportation planning process.

ITS Subcommittee: This subcommittee is composed of all ARC member agencies and planning partners involved in Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) technology planning and deployment in the region as well as other interested parties. The subcommittee serves as a forum for ITS planning, coordination, integration and deployment issues as well as discussions on incorporation of ITS projects into the regional transportation planning process.

Model Users Group: In 1999 the Model Users Group was formed as a subcommittee of the TCC to provide a forum to inform the Atlanta Travel Demand Forecasting community as a part of the transportation planning process. It is a voluntary organization of consultants, planning partners and educational institutions from the metro Atlanta area. Its primary purpose is fostering a cooperative effort in travel demand forecasting and the development and applications of travel demand models throughout the entire Atlanta area.

Public Involvement Advisory Group (PIAG): This group was formed in 1999 as part of the update of the Transportation Public Involvement Plan adopted by the ARC Board in May 1999. The objectives of this group are to create a network for public involvement activities in the region, share public involvement techniques, help to create the *Citizens Guide to Land Use and Transportation Planning*, help prepare for required TIP or RTP public outreach meetings and ensure Title VI and environmental justice guidance for public involvement is followed.

Transit Operators Subcommittee (TOS): Created in 1998, the transit operators subcommittee includes membership from agencies currently providing or scheduled to provide public transportation (MARTA, CCT, Clayton, Douglas and Gwinnett counties and GRTA). Additional, agencies with transit funds programmed in the TIP for future transit service as well as other interested parties are invited to participate. The mission of the TOS is to discuss, evaluate and coordinate regional transit issues for presentation to the TCC and incorporation into the regional transportation planning process.

Other Committees involved in the planning process that meet as needed:

- ▶ Access to Jobs Transportation Coalition
- ▶ Financial Planning Team
- ▶ Job Access and Reverse Commute Management Coordination Team
- ▶ Long Range Regional Forecast Technical Advisory Group
- ▶ Planning Advisory Group
- ▶ TIP Subcommittee

APPENDIX C: ARC Official Policy for Citizen Input

ARC supports many planning and coordination activities including transportation planning and has developed an official policy governing citizen input agencywide. The following is the official ARC Policy for Citizen Input before the ARC Board and all committee meetings (updated on May 23, 2001):

ARC welcomes advice, suggestions and ideas related to regional issues from interested persons from the Atlanta regional community. There are many opportunities and levels of involvement for citizens related to public policy development. ARC encourages citizens to be involved throughout the decision-making process. In certain instances, ARC will host official public review and comment periods to solicit input on draft plans and programs. This particular policy relates specifically to the process for citizens to directly address ARC Board Committees or the full ARC Board. The Commission also encourages interested citizens to become involved at the local government levels to effect public policy in the earliest stages of its formation.

In order to properly hear from interested persons and respond to their comments, the procedures for direct citizen comment to an ARC Board Committee or to the full ARC Board are as follows:

1. Persons wishing to bring a matter before the ARC shall contact the Director's office. If it appears a committee of the Commission should consider the matter prior to the full Board, the Director may arrange for the interested party or parties to attend and speak at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the appropriate committee.
2. All task force meetings or committee meetings are open to the public and time is allowed for the public to ask questions or offer comments. Ten minutes at the beginning of each Committee meeting are designated for the public to address the Committee on any agenda item without obtaining a vote of the Committee
 - a. A summary of public comments presented to a committee will be made part of the committee meeting notes.
 - b. A brief verbal summary of such comments shall be included in the committee's report to the full Board.
 - c. Written comments may be submitted to the Director at any time and will be shared with the appropriate committee.
3. Should the interested party or parties, after addressing the appropriate committee, desire to address the full Board, a request shall be made to the Director at least 10 days prior to the Board meeting. The Director will then place such request on the agenda of the next regular meeting for a decision by a majority vote of the Committee members present as to whether or not to grant the request.
4. Persons appearing at full Board meetings without prior arrangement who wish to address the Board should make their request known to the Director and shall be allowed to address the Commission only if approved by a two-thirds of the Commission members present.
5. When the planning process requires a formal public hearing, one of the hearings will be held before the full Commission at the beginning of its regularly scheduled meeting.

ARC encourages input throughout the decision-making process. Particularly, certain regulatory requirements may prescribe official public review and comment periods where public input is invited on certain policy documents. Comments are generally accepted either in writing or orally at public hearing(s) during the comment period. In instances when an official public review and comment period is held, the full Board and committee as appropriate, will be given the opportunity to discuss the comments received prior to decision-making action.

The full Board meetings at 1:00 pm on the fourth Wednesday of each month, January through October and on the first Wednesday in December. ARC Bylaws require that an agenda listing the items to be considered be sent to the members seven days prior to the meeting.

APPENDIX D: Transportation Plan Amendment Process

ARC maintains a regular update schedule for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). With this goal in mind, ARC works with its planning partners to accommodate revisions to the TIP/RTP as expeditiously as possible within the limits imposed by federal guidelines and regulations. The TIP/RTP revision process should be considered a continual process, with requests accepted at any time and held for processing at the next scheduled opportunity.

There are two types of revisions: administrative modifications and amendments. Depending on the classification assigned to the change request, the timing, public participation and approval processes can vary substantially.

The timing for advancing revisions is determined largely by the nature of the request itself. Requests for minor changes (administrative modifications) are typically reviewed within five business days for completeness and filed quarterly. More significant changes (amendments), however, may take anywhere from two to six months to complete and require significant public and agency coordination, review and approval efforts. The time required depends on whether there are implications on the regional travel demand and air quality modeling processes and the timing of the request within the regular TIP/RTP update schedule. In some situations, the nature of the change may be so extensive or the timing of its submittal may require that it be deferred for incorporation into a full TIP/RTP update (see Section II.2 for more information on the update process).

Administrative Modifications

Administrative modifications to the TIP or RTP are processed by staff with no official action required by the ARC Board. An administrative modification can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided that:

- ▶ It does not affect the air quality conformity determination, nor the network conformity years found in the travel demand model and the plan for the Atlanta nonattainment area.
- ▶ It does not impact financial constraint
- ▶ It does not require public review and comment.

Typical administrative modifications include:

- ▶ Revising a project description without changing the overall project scope and intent (e.g., less than 10% change in project length), conflicting with the environmental document or changing the conformity finding.
- ▶ Splitting or combining projects, provided the overall scope of the phased or consolidated project(s) remains consistent.
- ▶ Changing a federal funding category.
- ▶ Making routine changes in lump sum allocations for transit programs.

- ▶ Increasing the costs of project phases by less than \$2 million or 20% of the amount to be authorized. The 20% scenario amount may not exceed \$10 million.
- ▶ Delaying or advancing one or more phases of a project within the timeframe of the TIP.
- ▶ Breaking out and funding projects from lump sum banks, provided the projects are consistent with category definitions.

Public participation procedures for administrative modifications

There is no formal comment required to process administrative changes, but full advance disclosure of the proposed changes, via appropriate communication channels, will be made to all agencies with a vested interest in the affected project. Administrative modifications will only be undertaken on changes not deemed to be controversial in nature. Determination of what is considered controversial will be based substantially on direct communication by ARC staff with other stakeholder agencies. A final decision will be made by the members of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC), if necessary.

In the event that a stakeholder agency expresses strong dissatisfaction with the proposed change, the request will be deferred for processing as an amendment (or in conjunction with a full TIP/RTP update). Should an administrative modification generate unexpected significant negative reaction after it has already been processed, ARC reserves the right to revoke the administrative modification and require the project sponsor to resubmit the request as an amendment or in conjunction with a full TIP/RTP update.

Amendments

Amendments affect the TIP/RTP conformity determination and require the opportunity for formal review and comment. The impacts on the conformity determination may be due to a scope change which alters the travel demand modeling and air quality conformity analysis and/or a cost adjustment which requires that fiscal constraint of the overall TIP/RTP be thoroughly reviewed. Unlike administrative modifications, TIP/RTP amendments must be formally approved by ARC, GRTA (acting as signatory for the Governor of Georgia) approves the TIP and USDOT must make a conformity determination.

ARC attempts to minimize the number and scale of amendments made outside the context of a full TIP/RTP update due to the length of time and amount of effort involved. ARC will work with sponsors on a case-by-case basis to determine the most appropriate method in which to handle change requests.

The following actions are eligible as amendments to the TIP or RTP:

- ▶ Adding or deleting a federally-funded or regionally-significant project, including earmarks.
- ▶ Adding or deleting a phase of a federally-funded project.
- ▶ Increasing the cost of project phases in excess of the thresholds described in the Administrative Modification section.

- ▶ Making a major change to scope of work of an existing project. A major change would be any change that alters the original intent (e.g., a change in the number of through lanes, a change in project length of more than 10% or a change in location).
- ▶ Shifting federally funded phases moving in or out of the TIP period.

The amendment process is as follows:

- ▶ Project sponsor submits project changes to ARC
- ▶ ARC determines proposed change to be either an administrative modification or an amendment and works with the project sponsor to address any clarifications to submittal. Determination of what is considered controversial will be based substantially on direct communication by ARC staff with other stakeholder agencies. A final decision will be made by the members of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC), if necessary.
- ▶ ARC provides transportation partners with the list of all amendments to be considered. GRTA, in its role as approval agency, will receive this packet with a formal cover letter.
- ▶ ARC will begin a 10-calendar day to 30-calendar day public review and comment period on the amendment list.
- ▶ Comments will be considered and addressed prior to ARC's approval vote.
- ▶ Approval votes will be considered by the Transportation Coordinating Committee, the Transportation and Air Quality Committee and the ARC Board.
- ▶ Upon the ARC Board approval, the amendments will be brought before the GRTA Board for approval on behalf of the Governor of the State of Georgia.
- ▶ Upon GRTA Board approval, the TIP as amended will be incorporated into the Statewide TIP by GDOT.

Public participation procedures for amendments

A formal comment period is required to process amendments and participation procedures will vary as to the content of the amendment. ARC staff will make this determination based on the project change and its impact on the planning process. Because of the wide variability of what an amendment can include, ARC reserves the right to determine what participation procedures are most appropriate as it recognizes outreach measures should fit the amendment content. At all times, however, the interested public, policy makers and agency partners are able to obtain the full extent of information about each project change as well as engage the project sponsor or ARC staff.

The following public participation process will be provided:

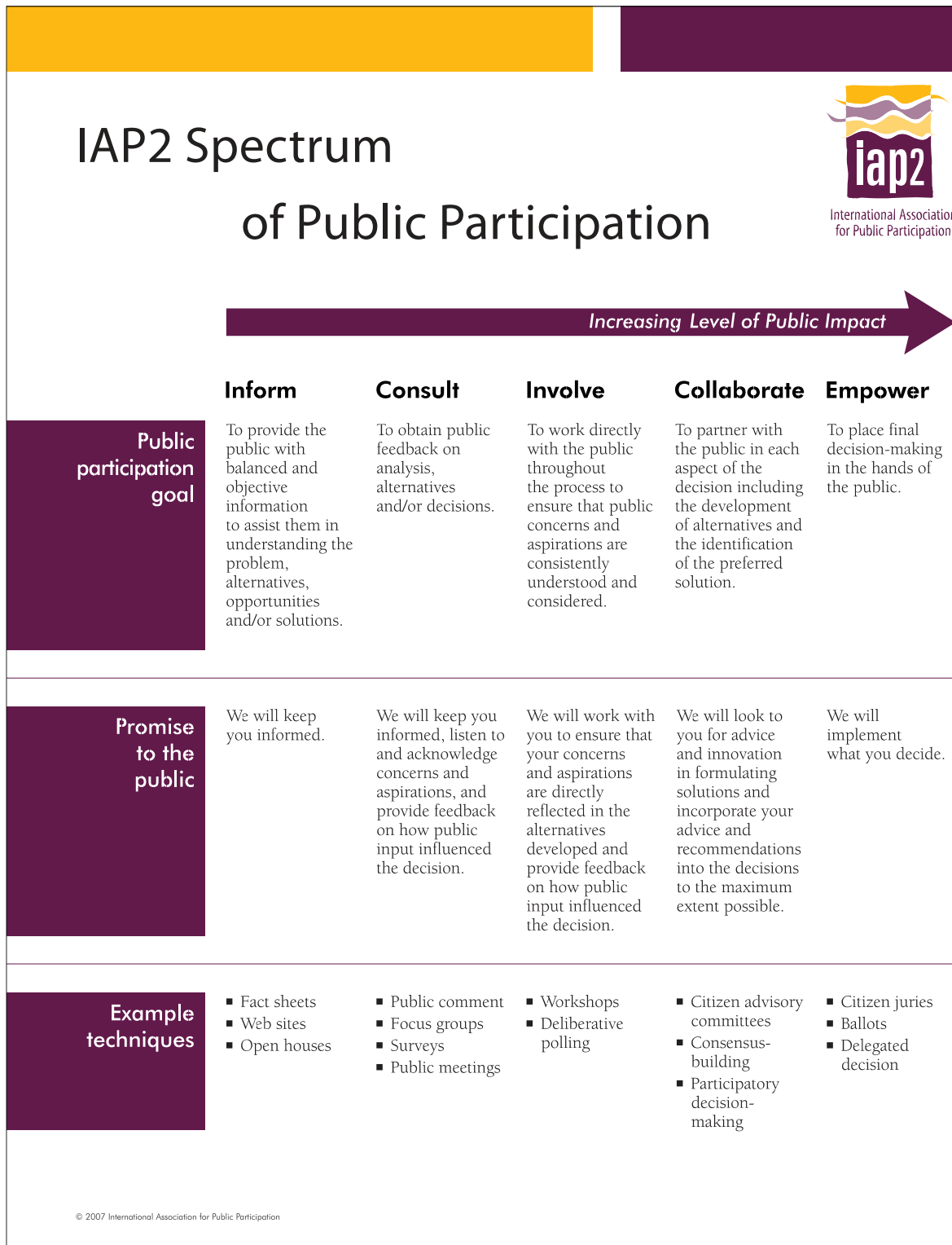
- ▶ Full advance disclosure of the proposed changes, via appropriate communication channels, to all agencies and the interested public concerning affected projects. Those channels will include announcements in ARC's transportation newsletter, at ARC transportation meetings, on ARC transportation website pages, through a display in ARC's Information Center and use of other media as appropriate.

- ▶ Notification of amendments will be published in the *Fulton County Daily Report*.
- ▶ Disclosure of proposed changes will include at a minimum: current status of project, extent of proposed change and justification for the proposed change.
- ▶ Public review periods for amendments will be a minimum of 10 calendar days to a maximum of 30 days, depending on the nature of the amendment and its impact. The length of the comment period will also take into account the scheduled meetings of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) and the Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC). All amendments impacting conformity will have a 30-day comment period.
- ▶ Public hearings or public meetings will be provided as necessary depending on the nature of the amendment and its impact.
- ▶ For all amendments deemed controversial in nature, there will be thorough participation opportunities to hear from the public and agencies regarding their views on the proposed changes. Determination of what is considered controversial will be based substantially on direct communication by ARC staff with other stakeholder agencies, even if those agencies are not the official sponsor of record, or in consultation with the members of the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC).
- ▶ All comments received on amendments will be addressed with the project sponsor and other interested parties and reported to the public as well as the approving transportation committees as to content and resolution.
- ▶ There will be presentations to the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC), Transportation and Air Quality Committee (TAQC) and the ARC Board. TCC, TAQC, ARC Board approvals are required.
- ▶ Depending on the character of the amendment, a conformity determination may be required from USDOT in consultation with U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

APPENDIX E: Public Participation Spectrum

“The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2), working through its members, helps organizations and communities around the world improve their decisions by involving those people who are affected by those decisions”

IAP2 has developed the following guide for involving the public in the various roles it can play.



APPENDIX F: Acronyms and Abbreviations

AAA	Area Agency on Aging
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
ARC	Atlanta Regional Commission
CAA	Clean Air Act
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CDR	Conformity Determination Report
CMP	Congestion Management Process
CTP	Comprehensive Transportation Plan
EJ	Environmental Justice
ELUC	Environmental and Land Use Committee
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
EPD	State of Georgia Environmental Protection Division
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration (of the USDOT)
FTA	Federal Transit Administration (of the USDOT)
GDOT	Georgia Department of Transportation
GHMPO	Gainesville-Hall Metropolitan Planning Organization
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GRTA	Georgia Regional Transportation Authority
IAP ₂	International Association for Public Participation
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LCI	Livable Centers Initiative
LUCC	Land Use Coordinating Committee
MARTA	Metropolitan Atlanta Rapid Transit Authority
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
PAG	Planning Advisory Group
PIAG	Public Involvement Advisory Group
RDP	Regional Development Plan
RTP	Regional Transportation Plan
SAFETEA-LU	State, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SRTA	State Road and Tollway Authority
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TAQC	Transportation and Air Quality Committee
TCC	Transportation Coordination Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOS	Transportation Operators Subcommittee
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
USDOT	U.S. Department of Transportation

APPENDIX G: Transportation Participation Plan Update Process

Purpose of the Participation Plan Update

- ▶ To update the RTP/TIP revision process to conform with the State of Georgia Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process
- ▶ To establish thresholds between administrative modifications and amendments.
- ▶ To add earmarks to the amendment process
- ▶ To establish a process to address revisions to controversial projects
- ▶ To clarify the public participation process for amendments
- ▶ To add quantitative criteria to participation process evaluations
- ▶ To respond to feedback that the participation plan needs to be more customer-friendly.

Update Process

- ▶ Determine areas for updating – past evaluations, regional policy changes and current comments
- ▶ Research what other public agencies are doing
- ▶ Discuss suggestions with planning partners and public outreach professionals
- ▶ Develop first draft for planning partners and interested parties
- ▶ Develop a PIAG survey - June
- ▶ Develop a web survey and email out to interested parties – July
- ▶ Incorporate changes
- ▶ Provide review copy to interested parties for final review and comment
- ▶ Address comments and prepare response report
- ▶ Present final proposed plan for ARC committee consideration and adoption

Update Timeline

- ▶ Consultation with planning partners and public
 - ◆ Consultation with GDOT and GRTA: February-May, 2008
 - ◆ TCC Discussion: June 6, 2008
 - ◆ TAQC announcement: June 12, 2008
 - ◆ ARC Bike/Pedestrian Task Force announcement: June 16, 2008

- ◆ PIAG announcement: June 19, 2008
- ◆ Environmental Justice Planning Advisory Group announcement: June 19, 2008
- ◆ ARC Advisory Committee on Aging announcement: June 27, 2008
- ◆ ARC Communication and Public Involvement Committee announcement: July 10, 2008
- ◆ Survey to Interested Parties: June 20, 2008 – July 18, 2008
- ◆ Changes to Plan through consultation through July 18, 2008
- ◆ Environmental Justice Planning Advisory Group discussions: July 30, 2008 and July 31, 2008

- ▶ Finalize public review draft: July 14 – 18, 2008
- ▶ Legal Ad for public comment period published July 21, 2008
- ▶ 45-day public comment period: July 22, 2008 – September 4, 2008
- ▶ TCC approval: September 5, 2008
- ▶ TAQC approval: September 11, 2008
- ▶ ARC Board approval: September 24, 2008

Fulton County Daily Report Legal Ad Running on July 21, 2008

Atlanta Regional Commission Invites Public Comment on an Update to the Regional Transportation Participation Plan

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) will open a public review and comment period on July 22, 2008 to consider an update to the Regional Transportation Participation Plan.

The Regional Transportation Participation Plan has the following three purposes: 1) as a transportation participation guide for the transportation-interested public; 2) as the official participation policy for transportation planning for ARC*; and 3) as an ARC response to the U.S. Department of Transportation directive to develop a participation plan for the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

A full copy of the proposed update to the participation plan is available on the ARC website at www.atlantaregional.com/transportation or in the Information Center located in the ARC offices.

Written or verbal comments concerning this document are welcome and should be given to ARC at transportation@atlantaregional.com or by phone to 404-463-3272 (this number includes TTY) or faxed to 404-463-3254.

The Public Review and Comment period will run through September 4, 2008. ARC must receive comments prior to midnight on this date in order to be considered in the official record of comments. A summary of all comments received during this period and responses to those comments will be presented to ARC's technical and policy committees and the ARC Board for their consideration before taking action on this update.

Please address your written comments on the proposed update to:

Jane Hayse, Chief
Transportation Planning Division
Atlanta Regional Commission
40 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

*Covering a planning area including the counties of Barrow (partial), Bartow (partial), Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, Coweta, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Forsyth, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry, Newton (partial), Paulding, Rockdale, Spalding (partial) and Walton (partial) and the City of Atlanta.

Comments Received and Responses

The following comments were received during the official 45-day public review and comment period:

General Comments

- ▶ The document is written very well with concise information provided to the reader. It covers all aspects of SAFETEA-LU requirements and uses language that furthers understanding.
- ▶ The ARC website: (I have not been in a while and my apologies if a huge overhauling has occurred.) I find it to be very hard to navigate. The sidebars with upcoming events and meetings are often out of date on pages and the fact that they change from page to page is very confusing. In addition, links are often broken to reports I want to download and on several occasions when I have emailed to report the broken link (and ask for a copy of the document) I have gotten no response and it has not been fixed.

Response: ARC recognizes your difficulty in navigating the website. There is a major effort underway currently to address the very things you mention above. If a report link is broken, you definitely need to report that situation. Please address your website issues to transportation@atlantaregional.com.

Section I: Framework for Participation

No comments

Section II: ARC Planning and Participation Processes

- ▶ II.2 Regional Transportation Planning Process. The following definition in italics is very vague as to the actual decision-making process. No mention is made of the project weighting system (i.e. 70 percent for congestion) and how the prioritization occurs.

Response: The sentence, “Projects are further prioritized based on public input” has been further clarified to read “Input from the interested public influences regional policies, goals and strategies that will determine how the regional transportation network will look in the future. Projects are further prioritized based on a technical framework agreed to by transportation planning partners. This framework is shared with the public during its development.”

- ▶ II.2 ARC board and committees flowchart and following sections. A few too many unexplained acronyms in this section. I know the committees are discussed in an appendix but this section is a bit daunting. In addition it fails to explain how the committees fit into the decision-making process. Later on the role of the TCC and TAQC are explained but, not the other committees. I still do not understand how an issue raised in the EJ Group can get from there to either the TCC, TAQC or full ARC board. (Especially outside of the RTP planning process.) Also what is the difference between a committee, a subcommittee, a users group, a task force, a planning team, advisory group and a group?

Response: ARC went through the section to clarify the acronyms referred to and found that the following needed to be corrected: ITS subcommittee to Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) subcommittee; Conformity Determination Report (CDR).

Regarding how committee work fits into the decision-making process, the following addition was added: “As the RTP and TIP are developed, staff presents and discusses findings and impacts with various internal groups and takes into consideration their advice. The resulting draft plans are presented to ARC technical and policy committees and the ARC Board for consideration and eventual adoption.” The Environmental Justice Advisory Group assists in the identification of issues and helps to translate overall goals and objectives into more specific strategies and policies. They are charged with providing both policy and technical advice. In 2005, the group was restructured to be more representative of the geographic and ethnic diversity in the region and a broader range of stakeholders. During this restructuring, the group also determined that agencies such as FHWA, GDOT, GRTA, MARTA and EPA would no longer be officially represented on this team. The rationale being that ample opportunities exist within ARC’s structure for their involvement. Efforts are ongoing to continually ensure the involvement of a diverse range of community stakeholders. The EJ Advisory Group is currently comprised of the following representatives: ARC Board/citizen representative, Georgia Stand-up, Atlanta Public Schools, Gwinnett Coalition for Health and Human Services, DeKalb Branch of NAACP, City of Atlanta Planning Units, Spelman College, Emory University/Office of Community Partnerships, Atlanta Urban League Young Professionals andP, DisabilityLink, Cobb County Transit Advisory Board member, Latino, Asian-American, African-American and older adult community representatives/advocates.

The differences between committees, subcommittees, user’s group, task force, planning team, advisory group and group are determined based on the kind of work being done and the length of time the group is meeting. There is no hard and fast rule as to the designations. A task force and planning team may only be working for a short time addressing a very targeted aspect of the planning process.

- ▶ II.4 This section starts out by saying “This section, as well as Section II.4 detail the processes used to produce a draft RTP and TIP.” It seems out of place because the section is Section II.4 so I’m not sure what the as well part is referring to.

Response: This has been corrected by deleting reference to Section II.4.

- ▶ II.4 Comment Documentation and Distribution – Stated in parentheses (see further detail in Section II.2). It might be beneficial to just add the specifics here again as a recap about the summary analysis, report on disposition of comments, etc.

Response: Reference to Section II.2 for further detail has been deleted.

- ▶ II.5 When discussing the TAQC and Board relationship to TIP and RTP finalization it needs to be clear that the TAQC is the MPO policy body recognized for finalizing these documents, not the Board. As it states now the TAQC seems to be just a recommending body which it is not.

Response: This has been corrected to reflect TAQC role.

- ▶ II.5 ARC Transportation Plan Approval Structure. In this section you describe the make-up of the ARC board. You say that there are 15 private citizens “representing” districts of approximately the same population. The word “representing” implies some level of interaction between the board member and the population in their district. As far as I know this doesn’t happen and there is no mechanism to ensure any accountability of the ‘private citizens’ to anyone but themselves and their companies. If they are in fact accountable, how citizens can interact with them should be in this manual.

Response: The elected officials on the ARC Board and Committees are the representatives of the citizens of the region. Fifteen private citizens at-large are elected from population districts drawn by the State Legislature. The wording in this section has been expanded. Other points to keep in mind are: 1) there is a public comment period prior to each Board meeting; 2) at-large members co-host public meetings with publicly-elected officials in their respective population district; and 3) the names and addresses and other contact information for all Board members may be found on the ARC website.

- ▶ II.5 On the topic of the private citizens on the board, this manual should include how someone can become one of those people. How do they get appointed? Is there a form to fill out to indicate interest in being a member of the board or any other method besides back room deals with local politicians?

Response: Clarification has been added to Appendix B: Any elected member of the ARC Board from any county can nominate an individual as long as the nominee lives within the district and fulfills the other stipulations; and that the entire body of elected officials on the ARC Board votes on the citizen members.

- ▶ II.7 Appendix D is referenced for discussion of the current participation plan update process. This should be Appendix G from the materials I downloaded.

Response: This has been corrected.

Section III: Participation Guidelines

- ▶ I really liked the Guidelines section (III.4) explaining about providing oral and written comment. Specifically the bulleted items showing what to do and not to do. I hadn’t heard about the Community Planning Academy before. Is this discussed in further detail in another location? Maybe an included link might be good.

Response: The role of the Community Planning Academy has been further explained in the text.

- ▶ Section III.1 Access to Participation Time and Location of Public meetings- This sections states that when the ARC holds public meetings they are “at times of the day most convenient to the public.” This is not true for ARC board meetings and the final public hearing for the RTP since those are held in the middle of the day on weekdays.

Response: Based on ARC’s Bylaws, the commission meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 1:00 pm in the afternoon in January-October (and on the first Wednesday of December). Public hearings may be held at other times in addition to the ARC Board meeting. Before the ARC Board vote on the RTP, it is standard practice to also hold a public hearing before the ARC Board. Leading up to the final vote of the RTP, most public meetings in the process are provided at other times based on the needs of the attendees that want to attend.

Appendices

Appendix A – no comments

Appendix B: The wording in Appendix B on the board structure is very unclear

Response: The citizen member bullet has been expanded and clarified.

Appendix C – no comments

Appendix D – no comments

Appendix E – no comments

Appendix F – no comments

APPENDIX H: Adopting Resolution

A Resolution by the Atlanta Regional Commission Adopting the 2008 Update of the Regional Transportation Participation Plan

WHEREAS, the Atlanta Regional Commission, pursuant to Georgia Code Section 50-8-80 et seq., is the agency responsible for comprehensive regional planning, including transportation planning for the ten-county Atlanta Region; and

WHEREAS, the Atlanta Regional Commission is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the Atlanta Metropolitan Transportation Planning Area which includes all or parts of eighteen counties; and

WHEREAS, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) requires development, adoption and implementation of a transportation participation plan and

WHEREAS, the Commission is committed to carrying out its responsibilities in a manner that provides ample opportunities for early, ongoing and meaningful involvement by federal, state and local government representatives, the private sector and the general public; and

WHEREAS, the Commission adopted the original *Atlanta Region Transportation Public Involvement Plan* on November 27, 1993, an update on May 26, 1999, an amendment on February 28, 2001; an update on October 23, 2002, an amendment on January 25, 2006 and an update on December 6, 2006; and

WHEREAS, the Commission, as part of a continuous effort to increase public involvement and general outreach in the transportation planning process, has developed an update to the previous transportation public involvement plan to update the Regional Transportation Plan/Transportation Improvement Program revision process to conform with the State of Georgia State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) process and establish a procedure to address revisions to controversial projects and clarify the public participation process for amendments and to add quantitative criteria to the evaluation process; and

WHEREAS, the proposed regional transportation participation plan update, as described in the attached document, has been evaluated by the appropriate technical and review processes, including a formal public review period; and

WHEREAS, the proposed regional transportation participation plan update received and responded to public comment during the public review period,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Atlanta Regional Commission adopts the Regional Transportation Participation Plan, 2008 Update.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Atlanta Regional Commission directs staff to begin efforts immediately to implement the provisions of the 2008 update to the Regional Transportation Participation Plan.



Atlanta Regional Commission
40 Courtland Street, NE
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

www.atlantaregional.com

