

Chapter IX Public Involvement

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) requires that the public have reasonable opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs. A public involvement process must be explicitly set forth and adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) which receives federal transportation funds.

TEA-21 mandates that the process for planning and project selection is open to the public and includes people from the business community, environmental groups, low income, elderly, minority communities and those with disabilities. It seeks to include people interested in alternative forms of transportation such as trails advocates, bicyclists, pedestrians and the transit dependent. According to the Code of Federal Regulations, “a pro-active public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and Transportation Improvement Program....” is required.

The Grand Valley Metropolitan Council adopted a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) on April 6, 1995. Prior to adopting the process, GRETS sponsored a public comment period of 45 days which involved a newspaper notice and a public hearing for the DRAFT PIP. The GVMC PIP includes the identification of public opinion and needs by means of public forums and surveys, especially those whom are under served; opportunity for public comment at all public meetings; easily accessible public information; notification of meetings both by the media and direct mail; appropriately timed public meetings; timely response to comments; and an annual review of the public involvement process itself. The process described in the PIP applies to regional plans developed by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) and the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP).

Under the guidance of the PIP, the public is involved in the development of the Transportation Improvement Program. During the month of February, a list of projects was sent to individuals and groups on the public involvement mailing list for review and comment. Citizens whom comment on the transportation planning process throughout the year are automatically added to the public involvement mailing list along with representatives from social service agencies, local units of government and community service groups. Comments were received in writing and heard formally at a public hearing on March 26, 2003 (please see appendices A - F). Copies of this document in draft form were sent to local libraries and offices of the City Clerk. An article was placed in the Grand Rapids Press to notify the general public of the public hearing and the availability of the Draft TIP document.

Opportunity for public comment on the air quality conformity analysis was

provided through the approved PIP for the Grand Rapids metro area. The conformity analysis results were reviewed and discussed as part of the agenda at several scheduled MPO Technical and Policy Committees meetings during the months of May, June and July of 2003. Furthermore, the public was afforded a final chance to comment on the final FY2004-2006 TIP air quality conformity results at a public meeting held on June 6, 2003 (please see appendices A - F). No significant comments were received regarding conformity.