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PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

The public involvement process for the 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan began with a series of four public workshops held in November, 2003 (Mint Hill, Huntersville, Charlotte and Monroe), followed by two public meetings in July, 2004 (Charlotte and Monroe). In an effort to augment its public involvement efforts, and in particular to reach out to groups not traditionally involved in the transportation planning process, MUMPO used the assistance of a consulting firm. With their aid, the public involvement program focused not only on participation of the general public but also emphasized the involvement of traditionally underserved populations in the Mecklenburg-Union MPO area. The program helped raise public awareness of MUMPO and its role and, in the long run, will increase public participation in future MUMPO activities.

3.1 Public Involvement Activities

The LRTP Update process included four major activities:

- compiling a master **database** of organizations within the MUMPO area;
- holding three **public meetings** and conducting a citizen survey;
- producing and distributing a Spanish and English MUMPO **brochure**; and,
- holding seven **small group sessions** with organizational leaders and members.

Contact Database

A contact database of over 10,400 organizations within Mecklenburg and Union Counties was compiled by merging a variety of existing databases with new contacts.

- ▶ The database includes federal, state, county and city agencies, neighborhood and homeowners associations, Environmental Justice and traditionally underserved organizations, cultural and social groups, faith-based and volunteer organizations, English and non-English speaking groups, advocacy groups, and interested individuals with no specific affiliation.

The database is intended to be as inclusive as possible in order to engage as many segments of the populations as possible, including the Environmental Justice and traditionally under-served populations. The database will evolve and change as new issues and projects are addressed, and new groups and individuals are identified. Because of its ever-changing makeup, it was used not only in the LRTP update process but can also be used in subsequent MUMPO activities. More detailed information about the database can be found in Appendix B.

Public Meetings

Three public meetings were held in October 2004 for organizational leaders and members, and the general public. The purpose of the meetings was to conduct a ranking survey of LRTP objectives and roadway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, air, rail and environmental policies. In addition, the meetings served to:

- gather input on the Goals, Objectives and Policies of the LRTP;
- present some of the projects under consideration for inclusion within the LRTP;
- educate the public about MUMPO, its activities and its role in the transportation planning process; and,
- inform citizens on how they can get more involved and keep updated on MUMPO activities.

More detailed information about the public meetings, and the survey and its responses can be found in Appendix B, pages B-2 through B-6. The survey was also posted on the MUMPO website.

MPO Brochure

A full-color MUMPO brochure was produced in both English and Spanish. The 8.5-inch by 11-inch tri-fold brochure was produced to serve several purposes including:

- introduce MUMPO, MUMPO's Policy Board and the LRTP;
- explain their functions;
- describe opportunities for the public to participate in the LRTP update;
- identify avenues to obtain additional information about MUMPO activities; and,
- introduce the MUMPO website, and provide MUMPO contact information.

The brochure was mailed to those on the contact database, distributed to attendees at the public meetings and small group sessions, and made available at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center and other town halls throughout the MUMPO area. A copy of both brochures can be found in Appendix B, pages B-19 through B-22.

Small Group Sessions

Seven small group sessions were held in December 2004 and January 2005. The purpose of the small group sessions was to gather input from civic, business, community groups, agencies and individuals throughout the MUMPO area. More specifically, the sessions served to:

- introduce MUMPO and its activities to these organizations;
- educate these organizations as to how they can get involved and/or stay updated on MUMPO activities; and,
- gather input from these organizations on the transportation issues that are most important to them.

More detailed information about the small group sessions can be found in Appendix B, pages B-7 through B-15.

Public Hearings

Two public hearings were held in March, 2005, to allow for public review of the *2030 Long Range Transportation Plan* and the "Conformity Analysis and Determination Report Demonstrating Conformance of the 2030 Long Range Transportation Plan." The purpose of the meetings was to allow citizens an opportunity to comment and ask questions regarding both documents. Meeting notices and summaries can be found in Appendix B, pages B-xx through B-xx.

3.2 Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations

In order to be a truly public involvement plan, the process must provide all populations with meaningful access to transportation decision-making information and effective feedback mechanisms so their voices can be heard and their concerns and issues addressed. Providing meaningful access goes beyond providing physical mobility to understanding that these populations often are faced with low literacy skills, limited English proficiency, below-poverty level incomes, second and third shift jobs or second jobs, zero vehicle households, female single heads of households, different cultural backgrounds, etc. The public involvement process must recognize the abilities and constraints of these populations to participation and provide opportunities that not only allow but encourage these populations to participate on equal terms.

■ Overview of Joint Certification Review

A Joint Certification Review, completed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration in 2004, concluded that:

"MUMPO needs to evaluate the effectiveness of its public involvement plan and it should also address how low-income and minority populations [Environmental Justice populations] are included in the planning process . . ."

As a result of the corrective action, a contact database has been compiled, three public meetings have been held, a bi-lingual MUMPO brochure has been produced and distributed, and seven small group meetings have been held. This is a start to creating an inclusive public involvement plan. that ensures all populations have meaningful access to the transportation planning process and decision-making information.

■ Environmental Justice and Traditionally Underserved Populations

Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations* (1994) is a product of *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* and the *Stafford Act* (1974). *Title VI* prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin and the *Stafford Act* prohibits discrimination based on distribution of benefits based on income. Executive Order 12898 and the U.S. Department of Transportation Order on Environmental Justice address persons belonging to any of the following groups:

- *Blacks* – a person having origins in any of the black racial groups of Africa;
- *Hispanics* – a person of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race;
- *Asian Americans* – a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent, or the Pacific Islands;
- *American Indians and Alaskan Natives* – a person having origins in any of the original people of North America and who maintains cultural identification through tribal affiliation or community recognition; and,
- *Low-income* – a person whose household income (or in the case of a community or group, whose median household income) is at or below the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services poverty guidelines.

For the purposes of this LRTP Public Involvement Plan, traditionally underserved populations – not covered by *Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964*, the *Stafford Act*, Executive Order 12898 and the U.S. Department of Transportation Order on Environmental Justice – include those that are elderly, disabled or have limited English proficiency. These populations are protected under the *Age Discrimination Act*, the *Rehabilitation Act/Americans with Disabilities Act*, and Executive Order 13166, respectively.

■ Steps Taken to Address Environmental Justice and Traditionally Underserved Populations within Each Step of the Public Involvement Program



A contact database was compiled from other local databases that included Environmental Justice organizations and individuals. In addition, many new Environmental Justice organizations were added to the database.

The three Public Meetings held in October 2004, and the seven Small Group Sessions held in December 2004 and January 2005, were located throughout the Mecklenburg-Union MPO area, at different times of the day and night, on different days of the week and weekend, and with and without an interpreter present, as indicated in the table. (The meetings and sessions are listed in *Table 3-1* on the facing page.)

The objective of this schedule was to give first, second and third shift workers who worked Monday-Friday and on the weekends a variety of geographic opportunities to attend a public meeting and/or a small group session. The primary consideration in locating these meetings and sessions was proximity to public transit so that those who did not have personal transportation could attend.

Information about the locations and times of the Public Meetings was available on the MUMPO website, appeared in *The Charlotte*

TABLE 3-1: Public Involvement Meeting Schedule

Meeting	County	City/Town	Time and Date	Day of Week or Weekend	Interpreter Present
Public Meeting 1 Worldplay Children's Festival	Mecklenburg	Downtown Charlotte	11:00-2:00 10/09/04	Saturday	Spanish
Public Meeting 2 Cornelius Town Hall	Mecklenburg	Cornelius	5:00-8:00 pm 10/13/04	Wednesday	Spanish
Public Meeting 3 Stallings Town Hall	Union	Stallings	5:00-8:00 pm 10/14/04	Thursday	Spanish
Small Group Session 1 Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church	Mecklenburg	Downtown Charlotte	1:00-2:30 pm 12/05/04	Sunday	Spanish
Small Group Session 2 West Service Center	Mecklenburg	Charlotte	6:00-7:30 pm 12/06/04	Monday	none
Small Group Session 3 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Govt. Center	Mecklenburg	Charlotte	2:30-4:00 pm 12/07/04	Tuesday	none
Small Group Session 4 Sugar Creek Library	Mecklenburg	Charlotte	6:00-7:30 pm 12/07/04	Tuesday	none
Small Group Session 5 Matthews Town Center	Mecklenburg	Matthews	6:00-7:30 pm 12/08/04	Wednesday	none
Small Group Session 6 North County Regional Branch Library	Mecklenburg	Huntersville	6:00-7:30 pm 12/13/04	Monday	none
Small Group Session 7 Monroe City Hall	Union	Monroe	5:00-9:00 pm 01/25/05	Tuesday	none

Observer on October 1, 2004 and was the subject of an October, 4, 2004 media advisory sent via fax to 45 media contacts throughout the MUMPO area. A Spanish interpreter was available at each meeting.

For the Small Group Sessions, letters of invitation were prepared in English and in Spanish, and mailed to approximately 800 organizations – including approximately 140 organizations representing Environmental Justice populations.

The December 5, 2004 meeting was held at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church to coincide with scheduled Sunday Masses and other activities. A Spanish interpreter was available at this session. An article in the December 8-14, 2004 edition of *La Noticia*, a Spanish language newspaper, described this Small Group Session. In addition, an article in the January 29, 2005 edition of the Monroe Enquirer Journal described the January 25, 2005 Small Group Session held at the Monroe City Hall.

■ Evaluation of the LRTP Public Involvement Program in Meeting Goals

A limited Public Involvement Program with three primary goals was proposed for the LRTP because of time and financial constraints. These goals were:

1. Compile a database that includes representation from all segments of the population.
2. Create a MUMPO brochure that introduces MUMPO to the area and the populations that it serves.
3. Hold a series of meetings throughout the MUMPO area to introduce MUMPO, discuss its mission and the LRTP, and provide opportunities for the public to ask questions and provide input.

A database of 10,000 individuals and 800 organizations was compiled and provides a baseline condition for MUMPO to build upon. All who attended meetings and submitted comments by letter, fax, website or telephone, were added to the database. Searches can be made by business, civic and community groups, faith-based organizations, and Environmental Justice and traditionally underserved contacts.

A MUMPO brochure was prepared in English and in Spanish and distributed at each meeting and small group sessions. This brochure is the first mass marketing piece to explain MUMPO, its mission and the LRTP to the general public, and to reach out specifically to the Hispanic community. In conjunction with the 2025 LRTP, these media pieces provided basic background on MUMPO and the 2030 LRTP.

The ten meetings (see *Table 3-1* on page 3-5) were held at various transit accessible locations, at different times of the day and night, on various days of the week and weekend, in Spanish and in English, to provide opportunities for the public to attend. Presentations were made, question and answer periods were provided, an initial survey was conducted, and newspaper articles were generated.