



M E C K L E N B U R G - U N I O N
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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TO: MPO Members
FROM: Robert W. Cook, AICP
MUMPO Secretary
DATE: November 23, 2007
SUBJECT: FY 07 Public Involvement Performance & Evaluation Report

MUMPO's Public Involvement Plan (PIP) requires the preparation of an annual performance and evaluation report. Attached please find the report for fiscal year 2007. Please contact me at 704-336-8643, or via email at rwcook@ci.charlotte.nc.us, if you have any questions.

cc: Jim Humphrey, TCC Chairman
Bill Coxe, TCC Vice-Chairman

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FY 07 Annual Performance & Evaluation Report on Public Involvement

This document has been prepared in accordance with the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) of the Mecklenburg-Union Metropolitan Planning Organization (MUMPO). Chapter IV, Section G of the PIP requires the annual preparation of a report that describes and evaluates MUMPO's public involvement efforts for the preceding fiscal year.

FY 07 Public Involvement Efforts

Website

Following on its strong efforts in FY 06 to make the website a more useful tool for disseminating information to its customers, MUMPO staff continued to frequently update the website. Efforts were made to ensure that a wide range of information was available, with an emphasis on critical products such as the 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program and the Unified Planning Work Program.

“MUMPO 101” Sessions

Staff periodically contacts its TCC and MPO members reminding them of its availability to conduct “MUMPO 101” sessions to their governing bodies, planning boards, the general public, etc. A standardized Power Point presentation has been developed that provides an overview of MUMPO's roles and responsibilities. The presentation, which can be modified to meet the needs of a particular audience, was given five times during FY 07:

- Indian Trail public meeting to discuss the Chestnut Connector project (July 24)
- UNC-Chapel Hill planning school students (March 7)
- Waxhaw Board of Commissioners (March 13)
- UNCC Transportation Planning class (March 15)
- Joint meeting of the Waxhaw Board of Commissioners and Waxhaw Planning Board (April 30)

Display Panels

Staff worked with the City of Charlotte's Corporate Communications staff to create two highly visible portable panels that prominently display MUMPO's name and its role in the regional transportation planning process. Both panels are over six feet tall and allow a MUMPO booth to stand out at public events. These are used at all public meetings organized by MUMPO or at meetings that MUMPO staff has been invited to attend. The website address is noted on the panels.

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Monroe Connector/Bypass Public Meetings

The North Carolina Turnpike Authority (NCTA) sponsored two public meetings regarding the Monroe Connector/Bypass project (June 25 & 26). A MUMPO station was established at both meetings, allowing staff to discuss MUMPO's role in the decision-making process regarding toll collection on the Bypass portion of the project, as well as its role in the regional transportation planning process. Over 400 people attended the two meetings.

MPO Meetings

The bi-monthly MPO meetings are open to the public. The usual meeting place is the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center (CMGC), which is centrally located in MUMPO's planning area, is fully handicapped accessible, and is located two blocks from the Charlotte Area Transit System's transportation center. Meeting notifications are supplied to local media outlets. Meeting agendas are posted on MUMPO's website at least one week prior to the meeting. Each meeting agenda includes a general public comment period at which time anyone may discuss a transportation-related topic, regardless of whether or not the subject pertains to an agenda item. Public comments related to specific agenda items are usually made at the time that item is reached during the meeting.

The meeting locations can be shifted if it is anticipated that a large number of people will attend a meeting due to a specific item on an agenda. This took place two times in FY 07 when the MPO's July and September 2006 meetings were held at South Piedmont Community College in Monroe. The location change was in response to a request by the North Carolina Department of Transportation for MUMPO to amend its 2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan to include Section A of the Monroe Bypass. Section A significantly affected two neighborhoods and it was assumed that many residents of the affected neighborhoods would be interested in attending the meetings.

2007-2013 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

MUMPO held four public meetings to obtain public input on the 2007-2013 TIP:

- October 3-Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
- October 5-Monroe City Hall
- February 6-Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
- February 8-Monroe City Hall

These meetings were advertised in the following publications:

- Charlotte Observer
- Monroe Enquirer-Journal
- Charlotte Post
- Que Pasa

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2030 Long-Range Transportation Plan Amendments & Conformity Determinations for the 2007-2013 TIP and 2030 LRTP

MUMPO held two public hearings to receive comments on the above issues. These meetings were held at the following dates and locations:

- April 18-Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center
- April 24-Monroe City Hall

These meetings were advertised in the following publications:

- Charlotte Observer
- Monroe Enquirer-Journal
- Charlotte Post

A 30-day public comment period was associated with this public participation process. The conformity determination document and the LRTP amendment information was distributed to libraries and town halls in MUMPO's planning area.

Northlake Area Plan

The City of Charlotte began work on a Northlake Area Plan during FY 07. MUMPO staff participated in three meetings where a MUMPO booth was present and information on its role in the regional transportation planning process was disseminated to the public. The meetings were held on the following dates:

- November 2 at Assurance Methodist Church
- January 16 at Northlake Mall
- January 18 at Northlake Mall

Neighborhood Symposium

The City of Charlotte held a Neighborhood Symposium on Saturday, March 31, 2007 at the Charlotte Convention Center that was attended by over 600 people. MUMPO staffed a booth at this event and distributed over 100 brochures and signed up 29 people for its email distribution list.

NC 73 Council of Planning

MUMPO staff conducted a presentation at the July 27, 2006 NC 73 Council of Planning annual meeting where an update on MUMPO and its activities in the NC 73 corridor was provided.

University City Partners Meeting

University City Partners held a meeting on September 21, 2006 to kick-off its efforts to update the City of Charlotte's Northeast District Plan for University City's municipal service district area. MUMPO staffed a booth at this event that was attended by over 200 people.

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Other Events

- Two presentations were made to the staff at Allen Tate Real Estate's Lake Norman office: February 6 and June 5. Approximately 35 people attended each meeting. The February 6 presentation focused on providing background on MUMPO's role in the transportation planning process and specific Lake Norman-area project information; the June 5 meeting focused on specific projects and on how best to work with the real estate community.
- A focus group of Allen Tate Real Estate Lake Norman staff was held in response to the above-mentioned June 5 meeting. The purpose of the meeting was to have an in-depth discussion on how better to provide transportation information to the real estate community and to the general public researching prospective property.
- A presentation was made in Raleigh, NC to the state's Interagency Leadership Team Resource Agency Workshop on March 29 to discuss MUMPO's role in coordinating and consulting with resource agencies.

FY 07 Public Involvement Evaluation

Successes

Partnering with Other Events MUMPO built upon its public involvement advances made during FY 06. Its most successful efforts to reach out to the general public were at major events organized around other topics: Neighborhood Symposium; Monroe Connector/Bypass public meetings; Northlake Area Plan public meetings; University City Partners meeting. It was at these events that many people likely had their first exposure to MUMPO and metropolitan planning organizations in general. MUMPO will continue to pursue involvement at similar events in the future.

MUMPO 101 While the total number of people reached at MUMPO 101 presentations is much smaller than the large-scale gatherings mentioned above, the opportunity to truly engage the attendees is far superior. At the larger events MUMPO is one of many participants, or the meeting's focus is on an issue not directly related to the MPO. In contrast, the MUMPO 101 events permit staff to provide details about the MPO and to interact with the attendees.

Website The website will remain a major vehicle for publicizing MUMPO's activities. Staff has worked closely with the MPO's lead planning agency (Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Department) webmaster to frequently update the website and provide useful and wide-ranging information.

There are legitimate concerns that an over-reliance on the Internet may result in low-income populations being excluded from the transportation planning process. However, a recent study*of Internet access among low-income populations that receive assistance under the Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program found that nearly half of the

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Website (cont.)

study's participants owned a computer and that 52%–95% have “easy access” (defined as access from home, work, parent's home, or friend's home) to the Internet.

Challenges

Traditional Public Meetings/Hearings The six TIP/TIP-LRTP update and conformity determination meetings were poorly attended. This is not unusual for MUMPO and the other MPOs in North Carolina. It is difficult to engage the public in transportation planning activities unrelated to a specific project. Because MUMPO did not sponsor any major Thoroughfare Plan amendment public meetings during FY 07, our outreach efforts were not as comprehensive as in the past. While Thoroughfare Plan amendment meetings are not focused on educating the public about MUMPO, they have a corollary benefit of providing a captive audience and an opportunity to circulate information.

Staffing The FY 06 evaluation noted that MUMPO's small staff limits the number of public involvement efforts it can organize on its own. The evaluation mentioned that a key to improving outreach was to partner with other agencies, and in particular, its member jurisdiction. Staff was successful in doing so this year by working with the City's Corporate Communications staff to develop the display panels and by using its resources in advertising its TIP and conformity determination public meetings.

Outreach to Environmental Justice Communities MUMPO must improve its outreach efforts to low-income and minority communities. A significant obstacle to doing so is the lack of staff that can devote the needed resources to this endeavor. As of the writing of this report, staff is working to develop a list of organizations, churches, clubs, neighborhood groups, etc. that can provide effective ways to gain feedback from low-income and minority communities.

* Internet access among low-income WIC populations

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From the American Public Health Association (APHA) website: www.apha.org
November 6, 2007