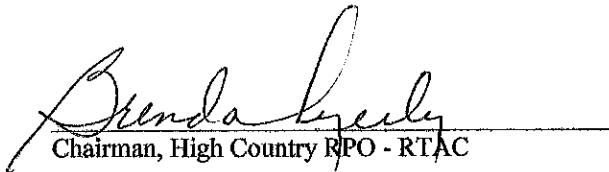


HIGH COUNTRY RURAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION (RPO)

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

August 2013

Approved by High Country RPO Rural Transportation Advisory Committee, August 21, 2013.


Chairman, High Country RPO - RTAC


Secretary, High Country RPO - RTAC

**High Country RPO
468 New Market Blvd.
Boone, NC 28607
828-265-5434**

I. Purpose

The purpose of the High Country Rural Transportation Planning Organization (RPO) Public Involvement Plan (Plan) is to provide guidance and policy in engaging the public in the transportation planning process. The Plan has the following objectives:

- Create a well-informed public that contributes to transportation decision-making in a meaningful way
- Engage the public early and continuously in the transportation planning process
- Assist the High Country RPO in developing specific transportation projects that reflect the interest and needs of the community
- Gain the support and trust of the public
- Satisfy the requirements of N.C.G.S. § 136-212 regarding duties of a RPO

The Plan is not intended to preempt any public involvement activities conducted by the North Carolina Department of Transportation (NCDOT) or any local governments within the High Country RPO region.

II. Forms of Public Involvement

A. Public Outreach

Public Outreach is the process of informing the public about the transportation planning process, specific transportation projects, and activities of the High Country RPO. Typical public outreach strategies include, but will not be limited to, the following:

Press Releases

High Country RPO will periodically issue press releases detailing significant actions of the RPO. These actions may include:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Endorsement of Long-Range Transportation Plans
- Adoption of Priority Needs List

Posting of Draft and Final Planning Documents

Copies of draft and final versions of certain planning documents will be posted on the High Country Council of Governments' website, and be distributed to High Country RPO member governments for posting on individual county and town websites.

Notification of Meetings

Notification of High Country RPO meetings will be sent to news media in the region. Meeting agendas will be posted on the High Country Council of Governments' website, and meeting notification will include link to agendas.

The High Country Council of Governments will maintain a database of media outlets in the region that will receive meeting notification.

Other Public Outreach

As deemed necessary or advisable by the RPO, the following public out reach methods may be used for specific activities/projects:

- Presentations to civic organizations
- Public informational meetings/workshops

B. Public Input

Public Input is the process of gathering the views, opinions, and ideas of interested individuals and groups in the transportation planning process. Opportunities for public input provided by the High Country RPO include, but are not limited to, the following:

Public Comment at High Country RPO Meetings

High Country RPO meetings are open to the public and provide opportunity for public comment.

Public Hearings

Public hearings will be held by the High Country RPO's Rural transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) prior to taking formal action on specific planning documents. These actions will include:

- Adoption of annual Planning Work Program
- Amendment to Planning Work Program
- Endorsement of Long-Range Transportation Plans
- Adoption of Priority Needs List

Surveys

Surveys will be developed to gauge citizen opinion on specific transportation planning issues and/or projects. Survey content, method of distribution, and geographic target area will be dependent on the specific transportation planning issue or project.

III. Schedule of Public Involvement

A. Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

- Planning Documents - All documents, resolutions, meeting minutes, etc. adopted by the High Country RPO are kept at the High Country Council of Governments (LPA) offices at 468 New Market Blvd., Boone, NC. These documents will be made available for public review upon request.
- Meetings - Regular meetings of the High Country RPO's Rural Transportation Coordinating Committee (RTCC) and Rural Transportation Advisory Committee (RTAC) are open to the public, and will include opportunity for public comment. Notification of the meetings will be sent to news media in the region.
- Public Hearings - Notification of all public hearings held by the High Country RPO will be sent to news media in the region.
- Press Releases - All press releases issued by High Country RPO will be sent to news media in the region.

B. Public Involvement for Specific Activities

Public involvement strategies will vary depending on the particular issue or project for which public comment is desired. Typical actions for specific activities of the High Country RPO may include, but are not limited to:

1. Long-Range Transportation Plans

- Workshops
- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Public Hearing
- Posting of Draft and Final Document

2. Prioritization of Projects for Recommendation to State's TIP

- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Public Hearing
- Posting of Draft and Final Document

3. Specific Projects/Issues

- Press Releases
- Workshops
- Regular Meetings of RTCC and RTAC
- Surveys

IV. Response to Public Input

Public involvement may be documented in a variety of ways. Any comments received during a meeting of the High Country RPO's RTCC or RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Also, any comments received during a public hearing held by the High Country RPO's RTAC will be included in the meeting minutes. Comments received during workshops, will be summarized, and kept on file. Results of surveys will be compiled, and kept on file.

Public comments may be included as appendices in formal documents or plans for which they were made.

The RTCC or RTAC may direct High Country RPO staff to respond directly to public comments via letter.