

DOUGHERTY AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY



12/15/2015

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

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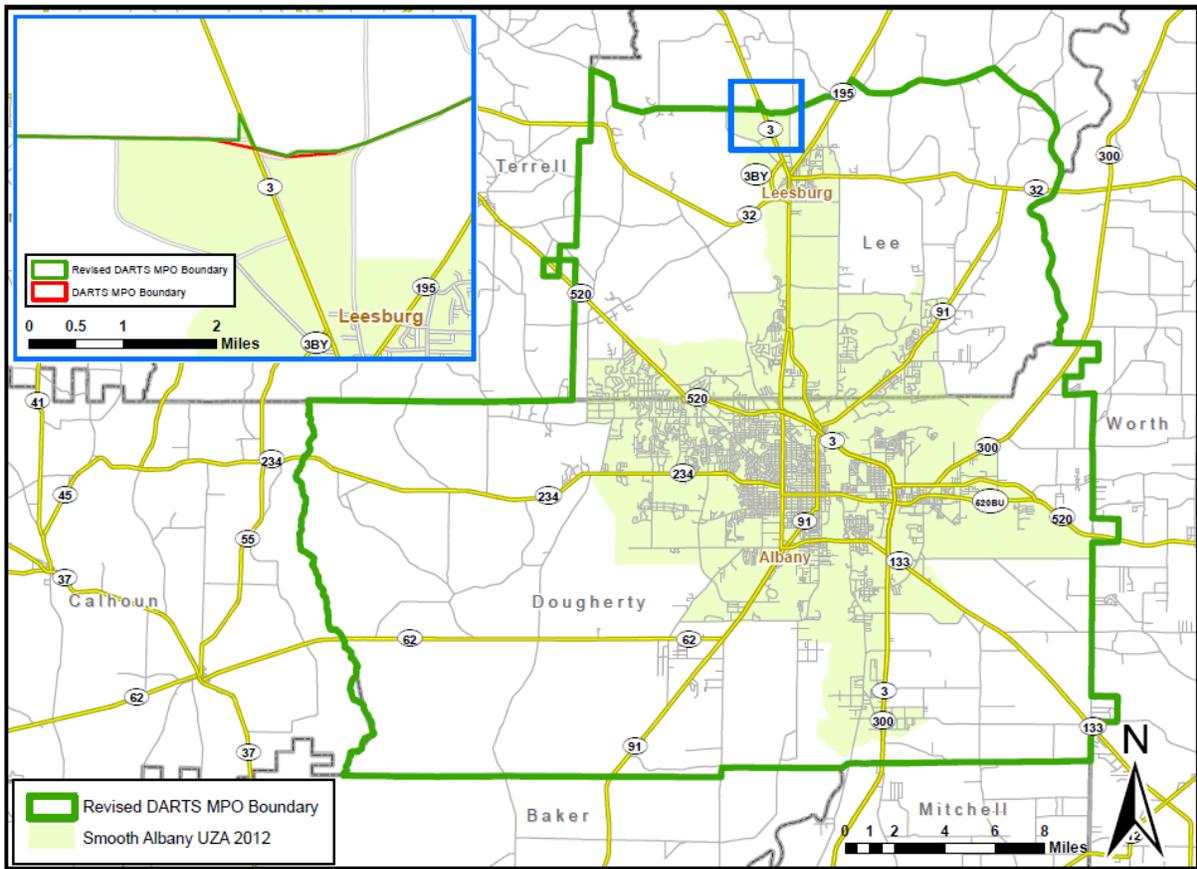
Overview:

In accordance with 23 CFR 450.316, Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study (DARTS) is required to engage in a metropolitan planning process that creates opportunities for public involvement, participation, and consultation throughout the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program. Under this requirement, DARTS must allow for:

- Adequate public notice of public activities
- Review and comment at key decision points in the development of the MTP and TIP
- Multiple, accessible participation formats, including electronic and in-person
- Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved

DARTS should develop a collaborative and comprehensive Public Participation Plan, in full collaboration with the public and stakeholder communities, to be used in the development of the MTP and TIP, as well as to frame the strategies for public and stakeholder communication and collaboration in all phases of the planning process. The participation Plan itself must be prepared by DARTS with a 45-day public review and comment period.

Revised DARTS MPO Boundary



DARTS TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

POLICY COMMITTEE VOTING MEMBERS

Lee County Commission Chairman
Vice-Chair, Mayor, City of Albany
Dougherty County Administrator
Albany City Manager
Dougherty County Commission
Lee County Administrator
Mayor, City of Leesburg
Leesburg City Manager
GDOT Commissioner
GDOT District Engineer, District 4

CITIZENS' TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Dougherty County Appointments (3)
Lee County Appointments (2)
City of Leesburg Appointment (1)
City of Albany Appointments (3)
Albany Dougherty Planning Commission Appointment (1)

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Director, Planning & Development Services
Albany Chief of Police
Public Works Director (City)
Vice-Chair, Albany Director of Engineering
Transportation Director
Albany Facilities Management
Dougherty County Public Works Director
Dougherty County Engineering Manager
Dougherty County Chief of Police
Lee County Director of Planning & Engineering
Leesburg Public Works Director
Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
Transportation Planner, DARTS MPO
Transit Planner, DARTS MPO
GDOT Office of Planning, Transportation Planner, Atlanta
GDOT Assistant District Engineer, District 4
Albany Traffic Engineering Manager
Destiny Tours
Marine Corp Logistic Base

TECHNICAL COORDINATING COMMITTEE Non – Voting Members

Planning Manager

GDOT Office of Intermodal Programs, Atlanta

GDOT, District 4 Intermodal Programs

GDOT, West Georgia Branch Chief

U. S. Department of Transportation, FHWA

Albany Dougherty Planning Commission

Citizens' Transportation Committee Representative

Leesburg City Manager

PARTICIPATION PLAN

DOUGHERTY AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY (DARTS)

PURPOSE

The Participation Plan is required by law under the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21) which underscores the need for public involvement. It requires metropolitan planning agencies such as DARTS to provide a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private 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 a reasonable opportunity to respond to key transportation issues that affect the DARTS region.

The MPO in coordination with local governments, local transportation agencies, the Georgia Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration conducts the transportation planning process. MAP-21 has not changed the existing Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) planning goals or the process of administering federal planning funds to the MPOs. Under MAP-21 these planning factors remain unchanged. The eight (8) planning factors are as follows:

1. Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
2. Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
3. Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
4. Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
5. Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
6. Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
7. Promote efficient system management and operation, and;
8. Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Among the specific areas identified by DARTS, the state and federal government to consider in designing this process include:

1. Transportation planning process shall include a proactive participation process that provides complete information and involvement in developing plans and programs to be distributed to local and state agencies.
2. Requires a minimum 45 days public review and comment period before the participation process is initially adopted or revised.
3. Must provide timely information to segments of community affected by plans, programs, and projects.

4. Provide reasonable public access to information used in development of plans and TIPS; and provide open public meetings where matters related to federal-aid highway and transit are considered.
5. Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities including but not limited to plans and TIPS.
6. Demonstrate consideration of and response to public input.
7. Seek out and consider needs of the traditionally under-served, including but not limited to low-income and minority households.
8. When significant comments on the draft transportation plan or TIP are received, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP and shall be copied to these commenters.
9. Significant revisions of the plan or TIP will require an additional period of public review.
10. The participation process will be periodically reviewed by the MPO for effectiveness in providing full and open access.
11. The participation process will be reviewed by FHWA and FTA to assure the process provides full and open access to the decision making process.
12. The metropolitan participation plan process shall be coordinated with the statewide participation plan process when possible.

The following sections illustrate efforts to incorporate a proactive citizen participation process into the DARTS planning process. The public involvement process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is used to satisfy the Georgia Department of Transportation's public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP). This includes such specific areas as updates to the DARTS transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

General Public Outreach Efforts – it should be noted that special participation procedures have been developed regarding the Long Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program and other required planning documents.

- a) **Regularly Scheduled DARTS Transportation Meetings:** The time, place, and date of all regularly scheduled meetings will be posted in the Governmental Building and in the office of the Albany Dougherty Planning and Development. The media will be provided notices of all Policy, TCC, and CTC meetings. Televised meeting notices will be also given on the local community access channel for regularly called Policy Committee meetings. In addition to the notices, an agenda of items to be discussed is also provided. Notice will be provided to the media and placed on the City's website fifteen (15) days prior to regularly called Policy Committee meetings.
- b) **Special-Called Meetings:** The Chairman of each DARTS committee may call a special meeting provided that a notice of the time, place, and date of the meeting is posted twenty-four hours in advance of said meeting. The media will be notified of these meetings.
- c) **Agendas and Minutes:** Agendas for each regularly-called Policy Committee meetings will be available to committee members and the general public prior to each committee meeting. The minutes of all DARTS committees will be available at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the committee. Agendas and minutes will be posted on the City's website.

- d) **Open Meetings:** All committee meetings will be open to the public. Exceptions to this policy will be as provided by Georgia law.
- e) **Citizen Resource List:** A database of interested parties will be maintained and they shall be notified of all pertinent DARTS meetings. This list will be continually updated.
- f) **Public Notice/Review Period Guidelines for Miscellaneous Plans:** Public notices will be placed in local media, prior to all public review periods for miscellaneous plans. Public review periods for draft plans will run at least 15 days. Plans shall be made available for public review at the office of Planning & Development and Dougherty County libraries. If the final plan or program differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen, an additional 15 days for public comment on the reviewed plan shall be made available.
- g) **Responses to Public Input:** When significant public input is received on draft plans as a result of the public involvement process, a summary analysis, or report on the content of the comments and the responses shall be prepared and made part of the final document and shall be copied to those commenters.
- h) **ADA Consideration:** Public notices will provide that any special needs for a hearing participant will be requested in writing ten days prior to any public hearing. Other actions identified by the Policy Committee, which are necessary to comply with the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 and the U.S. DOT regulations "Transportation for Individuals With Disabilities: will be implemented as part of the Public Involvement Process.

Process to Solicit Public and Private Input in the Development and Update of the Long Range Plan

INITIAL ADOPTION PROCESS:

1. In an effort to facilitate a proactive citizen participation process in the early development of the Plan, staff will schedule meetings with interested groups and other citizens in the community. These meetings will be scheduled early in the process of the preparation of the plan, and before it is presented to the DARTS Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens' Transportation Committee (CTC), and the Policy Committee.
2. The process of these meetings will be to solicit the participants' opinions regarding transportation goals and priorities for the planning area. Notes will be taken at these meetings and any findings incorporated into the planning process.
3. Staff will schedule a general public hearing regarding the transportation plan early in the planning process. The public hearing will be held by the Citizens' Transportation Committee. The Chairperson of the Citizens Transportation Committee will act as Chairperson for the meetings. Notice of the public hearing will be published in the local newspapers and given to the TV media 15 days before the hearing. Notice will also be given to the database of interested parties encouraging their participation. Where possible, this public hearing will be taped and made available for rebroadcast on community-access television.
4. The purpose of this meeting will be to solicit public-private participation and assist in establishing goals early in the process of preparing the Transportation Plan.

5. A series of public informational meetings will be held at various locations in the study area to solicit local public and private input to the planning process. The locations will include 1: a location in east Albany, 2) a location in west Albany, and 3) a location in Lee County. Notice of these meetings will be given to a local newspaper at least 15 days before the meeting. Also, notice of the meetings will be at least 15 days before the meeting on the community-access channel on local TV. The meetings will be held in facilities that are ADA compliant and located near transit routes.
6. Copies of the Plan will be available for public review at the offices of the Albany Dougherty Planning Commission and also at the various locations of the Dougherty County Library system.
7. Public comment regarding the Plan will be responded to in the appendix of the final Plan.
8. The Plan will be submitted to the appropriate state and federal agencies for A-95 Clearinghouse Review.

FIGURE 1

PARTICIPATION PLAN PROCESS FOR THE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

DARTS TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Public Input

UPDATES TO THE ADOPTED TRANSPORTATION PLAN

DARTS Policy Committee

Ultimate decision making body responsible for the establishment of policy and overall study guidance. This includes the setting of project priorities at the local level.

Citizens Transportation Committee

Provides a forum to coordinate citizen input regarding transportation related issues including transportation plans and programs.

Technical Coordinating Committee

Conducts studies and recommends changes in the Transportation Plan. Other important transportation-related issues are also evaluated and forwarded to the DARTS Policy Committee

Other Agencies

state/federal/local

U.S. Department of Transportation

Works with local and state officials to ensure that the 3C planning process as required by the 1962 Highway Act which stipulates that a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuing planning process be carried out.

Georgia Department of Transportation

Responsible for the coordination of the state aspects of any studies, assist in the preparation of analytical techniques as well as play a major role in the development and utilization of computer models for the study.

Planning & Development

Responsible for developing the local work program and provides staff services for the Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study. The Director of the Planning & Development acts as DARTS project Director and serves as the Chairman of the Technical Coordinating Committee.

1. An Update to the Transportation Plan will consist of the deletion of a project from the Plan, the addition of a project to the Plan, or major changes in the design or scope of a project.
2. Updates to the adopted Transportation Plan will follow the DARTS committee structure for the review of projects. This consists of review of the changes by the following committees: 1) TCC, 2) CTC, and 3) the Policy Committee. The TCC and the CTC will forward any comments or recommendations regarding the change to the Policy Committee.
3. Notice of changes to the Transportation Plan will be given in local newspapers at least 15 days before the proposed amendment is reviewed by the CTC. The public notice will invite public comments at this meeting. The CTC will forward a recommendation to the DARTS Policy Committee regarding the proposed Plan amendments.
4. The general public will be given yearly the opportunity to comment on the projects in the Transportation Plan. This will generally be coordinated with the public informational meeting associated with the TIP.
5. If an individual or group is concerned about a transportation project or policy, they shall address the CTC regarding the issue. The CTC will forward a recommendation to the Policy Committee regarding the matter. The Chairperson of the CTC, who is a voting member of the Policy Committee, will brief the Policy Committee regarding the CTC's findings. The individual or group may also address the Policy Committee with their concerns.

Process to Solicit Public Input in the Development and Update of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

INITIAL ADOPTION PROCESS:

1. In an effort to facilitate a proactive citizen participation process in the early development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), staff will schedule meetings with interested groups and other citizens in the community. These meetings will be scheduled early in the process of the preparation of the plan, and before it is presented to the DARTS Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens' Transportation Committee (CTC), and the Policy Committee.
2. Before the TIP is initially adopted by the DARTS Policy Committee, a public informational meeting will be held at least 15 days before the meeting at which the TIP is given approval. Notice of this meeting will be published in a newspaper of general circulation at least 15 days before the meeting. Also, notice of the meeting will be made on community-access television. The presentation will be taped and made available for television on community-access channels.

3. The general public will be given yearly the opportunity to comment on the projects in the TIP. This will generally be coordinated with the public informational meeting associated with the Transportation Plan.

Process to Solicit Public Input in the Development and Update of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Citizen participation is encouraged in the development of the UPWP through the DARTS process which provides opportunities for input into various planning tasks and project review. The DARTS Committees consist of a Citizen Advisory Committee, the Technical Committee and the Policy Committee. The implementation of the Unified Planning Work Program is the responsibility of the MPO. The DARTS Policy Committee is responsible for adopting the final Unified Planning Work Program. In addition, any amendments to the UPWP must be approved by the DARTS Policy Committee. The UPWP is readily available to the public in hard copy and on the MPO website.

Process to Solicit Public Input in the Development and Update of the Public Participation Plan (PPP)

A public review period will be required for the adoption or subsequent revision to the Public Participation Process for the Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study (DARTS). Public notice will be given for this comment period by publishing an advertisement in a newspaper(s) for general circulation at least forty-five (45) days before the final public participation process is adopted or subsequently revised by the Policy Committee. The public notice will be placed on MPO website as well as other places of general interest. The public review notice will also be made available to other interested parties (i.e. public transit agencies, freight companies and bike/ped users). In addition, the public review period notice will be made available in minority publications and on public transit buses for minority and low income groups. The proposed Public Participation Plan will be made available to the public at the Albany Dougherty Planning and Development Service Office and on the DARTS website located at www.dartsmmpo.org.

Amendment Process

In some cases, it may be necessary to amend certain planning documents. The information below summarizes the amendment process under the DARTS program in case revisions are needed.

Long Range Transportation Program (LRTP) and Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

If the Policy Committee determines it is necessary to amend the final LRTP and/or TIP, the proposed change will be brought before the Interagency Coordinating Committee (IAC) for review and comment. IAC is a statewide body consisting of staff representatives throughout the state who are responsible for executing their respective regional transportation programs, plus staff from GDOT, FHWA and FTA. At

the time the proposed change is brought before IAC, it will be classified as either an Administrative Modification or an Amendment.

Administrative Modifications

The following actions are eligible as Administrative Modifications to the LRTP/TIP:

- Revise a project description without changing the project scope, conflicting with the environmental document or changing the conformity finding in nonattainment and maintenance areas (less than 10% change in project termini according to GDOT). This change would not alter the original project intent.
- Splitting or combining projects
- Federal funding category change
- Minor changes in expenditures for transit projects as stipulated by GDOT
- Roadway project phases may have a cost increase less than \$2,000,000 or 20% of the amount to be authorized.
- Shifting projects within the TIP as long as the subsequent annual draft was submitted prior to September 30
- Projects may be funded from lump sum banks as long as they are consistent with category definitions

An administrative Modification can be processed in accordance with these procedures provided:

- It does not affect the air quality conformity determination
- It does not impact financial constraint
- It does not require public review and comment

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Amendment Process

For alterations to a specific fiscal year UPWP related to the types of changes described in the TIP and LRTP process:

Administrative modifications to the UPWP can be achieved by MPO staff coordinating with GDOT and the relevant Federal partner agency (i.e., FHWA or FTA);

Full amendments to the UPWP must be brought forward by MPO staff and approved by the DARTS Policy Committee, then submitted to GDOT and the relevant Federal partner agency (i.e., FHWA or FTA) for final approval.

All planning documents are readily available to the public through the use of printed materials, newsletters and the DARTS website located at www.dartsmpo.org.

General Responsibilities of the Citizens' Transportation Committee (CTC) Regarding the Public Involvement Process

1. The CTC will be a central actor in coordinating public involvement in the DARTS planning process.

2. The CTC will make recommendations on transportation-related issues to the Policy Committee. The Chairperson of the CTC will sit as a voting member of Policy Committee.
3. If a party disagrees with or has a concern regarding a DARTS transportation-related issue, they shall first present their concerns to the CTC. The CTC shall forward a recommendation of the issue to the Policy Committee if so desired. The Chairperson of the CTC will brief the Policy Committee on the CTC's findings.
4. All public hearings regarding transportation plans and programs shall be coordinated through the CTC. This shall include the annual review of the Transportation Plan and the TIP. The Chairperson of the CTC will present a synopsis of these meetings to the Policy Committee.
5. The CTC will be given the opportunity to comment on transit-related issues including route changes and fare increases.
6. A recommendation will be made to enlarge the CTC to include representatives from the following groups/advocates for a total membership of 17 persons:
 1. SOWEGA Council on Aging
 2. Mayor's Committee on Disability
 3. Para transit Review Board
 4. Department of Family Children's Services (DFACS)
 5. NAACP
 6. Dougherty County (one additional representative)
 7. City of Albany (one additional representative)
 8. Lee County (one additional representative)

Number 1-5 are nominated by the individual organizations. The Board of Commissioners of the City of Albany will appoint numbers 1, 3, and 5. Numbers 2 and 4 will be appointed by the Dougherty County Commission.

ACRONYMS USED IN THIS DOCUMENT

- 3C: Continuing, Comprehensive, Cooperative
- APTA: American Public Transit Association
- APA: American Planning Association
- ATS: Albany Transit System
- CFR: Code of Federal Regulations
- CTC: Citizens Transportation Committee
- DARTS: Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study
- EPA: Environmental Protection Agency
- FHWA: Federal Highway Administration
- FRA: Federal Railroad Administration
- FTA: Federal Transit Administration
- GDOT: Georgia Department of Transportation
- GIS: Graphic Information Systems
- HPMS: Highway Performance Monitoring System
- HSIP: Highway Safety Improvement Program
- ITS: Intelligent Transportation Systems
- LEP: Limited English Proficiency
- LRTP: Long Range Transportation Plan
- MAP-21: Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
- MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization
- NEPA: National Environmental Protection Act
- PC: Policy Committee
- PEL: Planning and Environmental Linkages
- PL: Planning Funds (Highway) Allocated for the MPO
- RTP: Regional Transportation Plan
- SRTS: Safe Routes to School
- STIP: State Transportation Improvement Program
- SWGRC: Southwest Georgia Regional Commission
- TCC: Technical Coordinating Committee
- TDP: Transit Development Plan
- TAZ: Traffic Analysis Zone
- TE: Transportation Enhancement
- TIP: Transportation Improvement Program
- UPWP: Unified Planning Work Program