

# **Dougherty Area Regional Transportation Study**

## **PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**Adopted April 27, 2007**

**PARTICIPATION PLAN**  
**DOUGHERTY AREA REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION STUDY (DARTS)**

**I. PURPOSE**

The Participation Plan as required under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act-A Legacy for Users (SAFTEA-LU) requires and defines the 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 comment on the transportation plan or be involved in the planning process.

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. The SAFTEA-LU Act identifies the following eight (8) planning factors that must be integrated into the planning process:

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. This includes such specific areas as updates to the DARTS transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

**II. General Public Outreach Efforts** – *it should be noted that special participation procedures have been developed regarding the Transportation Plan and the TIP (see sections III and IV).*

- 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.

### **III. Process to Solicit Public and Private Input in the Development and Update of the Long Range Plan (see figure 1).**

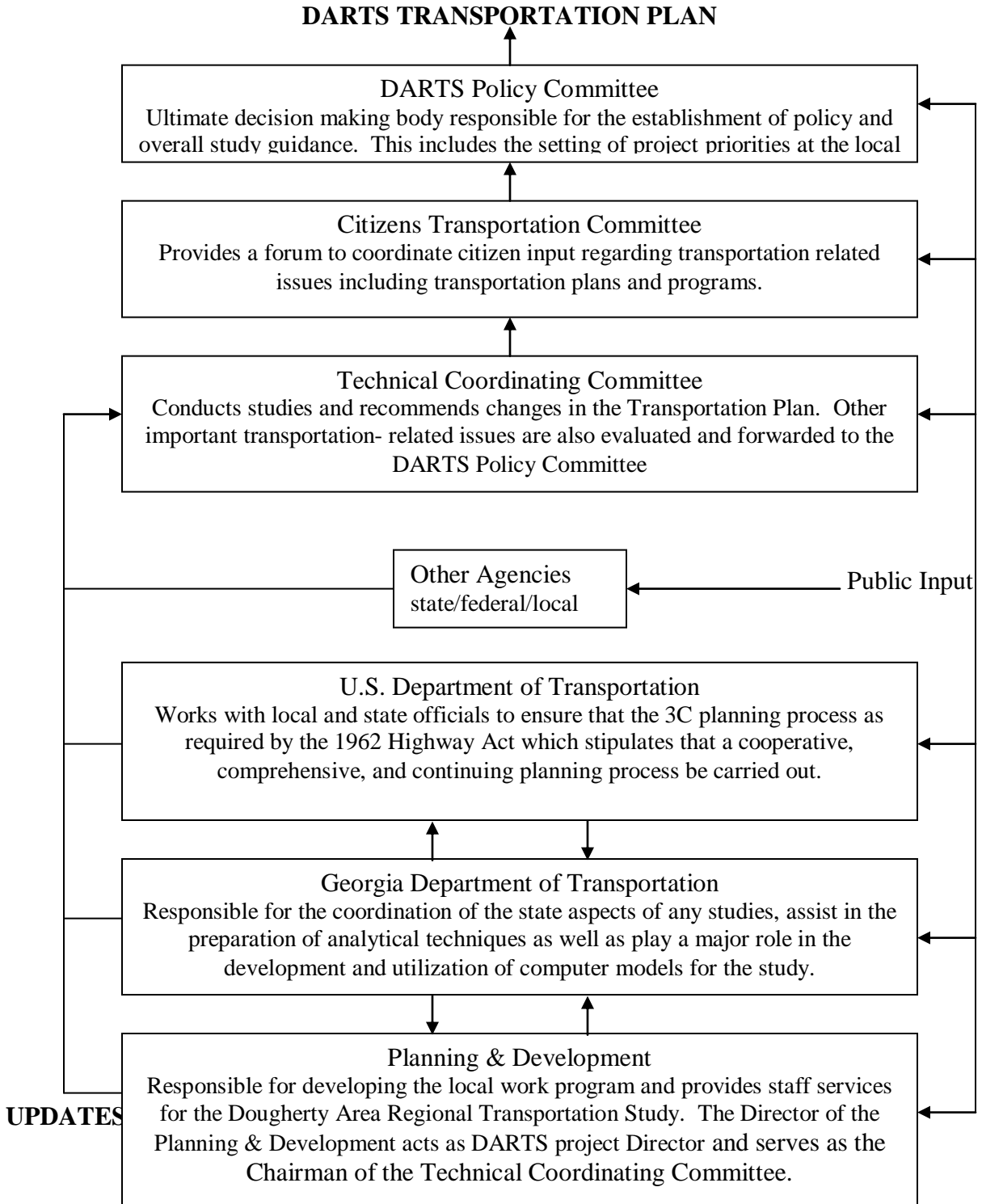
#### **INITIAL ADOPTION PROCESS:**

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**



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.

**IV. 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.

**V. 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. Paratransit 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.