

Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance Rural Planning Organization Environmental Justice Analysis Determination 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Update June 3, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance's (NEPA Alliance) Public Involvement Plan has been developed to address the Title VI requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. 2000d) as amended by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-209). In addition to the implementation of the Public Involvement Plan, NEPA Alliance has developed an Environmental Justice analysis protocol to comply with Title VI regulations.

Environmental Justice (EJ) is a component of Title VI which includes three fundamental principals which can be related to the transportation planning and public involvement process:

Transportation Planning & Public Involvement Plans should:

- *avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and/or adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic, on minority populations and low-income populations.*
- *ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.*
- *prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.*

BACKGROUND

NEPA Alliance serves as the coordinating agency for rural transportation planning in the rural region that includes Carbon, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne counties. Designated by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) as the Rural Planning Organization (RPO) for these counties, NEPA Alliance is contracted to engage in various transportation planning and programming activities, including the administration of the RPO's Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). As a result of the agreement with PennDOT, NEPA Alliance convenes the Northeastern Pennsylvania Rural Transportation Planning Organization (NPRTPO) Committee who is responsible for evaluating the transportation needs and priorities in the rural region. The NPRTPO Committee is comprised of 14 voting members that include one primary and at-large representative from each of the five RPO counties, transportation professionals from PennDOT District 4-0, District 5-0, and Central Office (Harrisburg), and a representative from the NEPA Alliance Board of Directors. The NPRTPO Committee is guided by *Operational Procedures*, which were adopted in August 2002 and amended on February 19, 2008.

2011-2014 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP) UPDATE

The TIP is an agreed upon listing of transportation priorities for a region that covers a four year period. The TIP represents the first for years of the Twelve Year Program (TYP) and is updated every two years as mandated by Act 120 of 1970. The TIP is developed cooperatively by PennDOT and PennDOT's planning partners which are known as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO's) and Rural Planning Organizations (RPO's) for each of their respective regions. The TIP is a project specific and fiscally constrained by year, transportation program of highway, bridge, and transit priorities for a region. The TIPs from the 23 MPOs and RPOs (including the interstate MPO) across the state are merged into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) which is a federally required document that is fiscally constrained by year, conforms to federal Air Quality standards and requires public review.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE ANALYSIS DETERMINATION

In addition to the implementation of the Public Involvement Plan, NEPA Alliance has developed an Environmental Justice analysis protocol to comply with Title VI regulations. This protocol includes:

- demographic research and analysis;
- public outreach and information dissemination initiatives;
- education; and,
- evaluation and documentation.

Demographic Research & Analysis - NEPA Alliance staff completed a demographic analysis for the rural region that includes the counties of Carbon, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill and Wayne. Staff analyzed the 2000 Census of Population and Housing data for the region utilizing our GIS (see attached maps). This analysis identified and mapped low-income and minority populations in the rural region to assist us in public outreach initiatives and information dissemination.

Based on the analysis of family income and minority populations in the region, NEPA Alliance has determined that seven municipalities within the region give reason for additional information dissemination initiatives.

Public Outreach Initiatives & Information Dissemination – In accordance with the provisions of the Sunshine Law and current federal transportation legislation (SAFETEA-LU), staff disseminated information about the TIP public comment period and hearing through legal advertisements in seven area newspapers, the bi-weekly NEPA Alliance e-newsletter entitled the "Alliance Insider" and on the NEPA Alliance website. A copy of the Public Notice is attached. Furthermore, information was disseminated to the NPRTPCO Committee members and alternates, NEPA Board of Directors and over 70 transportation stakeholders in the region.

NEPA Alliance has also disseminated information to PennDOT District's 4-0 and 5-0 Community Relations Coordinators (CRC) and to our Central Office Representative for further distribution through existing PennDOT channels.

NEPA Alliance has also identified two publications that target minority populations in the region which include:

- The Melanian News (melaniannews.com), which targets the black community in Lackawanna, Luzerne & Monroe counties, is published 6 times per year and has a circulation of 5,000. Unfortunately, we were unable to utilize the publication as a resource to reach the black community in these counties due to the strict time line on this TIP Update process.
- The La Voz Latina Mensual (www.lavoznepa.com), which targets the Latino and Spanish speaking communities in Lackawanna, Luzerne & Monroe counties is published 12 times per year (monthly) and has a circulation of 15,000. Unfortunately, we were unable to utilize the publication as a resource to reach the Hispanic and Latino communities in these counties due to the strict time line on this TIP Update process.

Although, NEPA was unable to reach these publications in time to print a legal advertisement, we have sent a press release announcing the public comment period and the public hearing to over 50 media contacts in the region.

Overall, the NEPA Alliance staff has made the 2011-2014 TIP and related documents available at the offices of the five county planning commissions, two PennDOT District Offices (4-0 and 5-0), and at the NEPA Alliance offices. In addition to these efforts, NEPA Alliance has also made the 2011-2014 TIP and air quality conformity analysis documents available online at www.nepa-alliance.org. Furthermore, NEPA disseminated the 2011-2014 TIP and related documents to nine tribes/nations whose ancestors had at one time lived in the lands of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Based on the demographic analysis, NEPA Alliance has faxed the 2011-2014 TIP Public Notice to the following municipalities:

- Lehman Township, Pike County
- Coolbaugh Township, Monroe County
- Mount Pocono Borough, Monroe County
- Foster Township, Schuylkill County
- West Mahanoy Township, Schuylkill County
- Canaan Township, Wayne County
- Hawley Borough, Wayne County

Furthermore, NEPA faxed a copy of the Public Notice to Pocono Country Place and Pocono Farms, large residential communities in Monroe County requesting that the Public Notice be posted on their community bulletin board.

Education – NEPA Alliance has added information on our website to assist in educating the public on the Transportation Improvement Program and how citizens can become involved in the transportation planning process. Furthermore, NEPA staff has made numerous presentations to various individuals and stakeholder groups in the region throughout the year. These individuals and groups include legislators, planners, municipal officials, public work officials, chambers of commerce, and councils of government.

Evaluation & Documentation - A record of the public involvement process and environmental justice determination analysis will be compiled at the close of the public comment period and submitted to PennDOT Central Office. Additionally, NEPA Alliance will evaluate the effectiveness of the public involvement and environmental justice initiatives.