

# **Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency and Title VI Plan Summary for 2019-2022 TIP Update**

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), in conjunction with the Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization (NEPA MPO) Technical Planning Committee and Policy Board, has developed its Public Involvement Plan and related documents to maintain compliance with the Title VI requirements of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42U.S.C. 2000d) as amended by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 (P.L. 100-209).

It is the NEPA MPO's objective to:

- Ensure that the level and quality of transportation planning and related activities are conducted without regard to race, color, disability, gender, age, low income, national origin, language or limited-English proficiency;
- Identify and address, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects of the MPO's programs and activities on minority populations and low-income populations;
- Promote the full and fair participation of all affected populations in transportation decision-making;
- Prevent the denial, reduction or delay in benefits related to programs and activities that benefit minority populations or low-income populations;
- Ensure meaningful access to programs and activities by persons with Limited-English Proficiency (LEP).

## **BACKGROUND**

The Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA), as a Local Development District (LDD), encompasses all of Carbon, Lackawanna, Luzerne, Monroe, Pike, Schuylkill, and Wayne Counties. NEPA is also designated as a Metropolitan Planning Organization serving as the coordinating agency for transportation planning and programming in Carbon, Monroe, Pike, and Schuylkill counties. Since 1991, the Alliance has had an annual work program with PennDOT. This work program requires that NEPA convene a transportation planning committee on a

regular basis. This committee has evolved over the years into Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization Technical Planning Committee and Northeastern Pennsylvania Metropolitan Planning Organization Policy Board.

The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee is comprised of sixteen (16) voting members that include two (2) representatives from each of the four MPO counties, three (3) transit representatives, a representative from the Urbanized Area, the planning and programming engineer from PennDOT Districts 4-0 and 5-0, a PennDOT Central Office representative, and a representative from NEPA. The NEPA MPO Policy Board is comprised of 5 voting members that include one representative from each of the four MPO counties, appointed by the NEPA Alliance Board of Directors and a transportation professional from PennDOT Central Office. The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee and NEPA MPO Policy Board are guided by Operational Procedures, which were adopted in October 2013.

The NEPA MPO Technical Planning Committee and NEPA MPO Policy Board review the area's TIP, which is the primary funding source for the counties' highway and bridge projects, and transit system improvements. Through the TIP, transportation projects are identified and advanced to provide for the restoration and development of a multi-modal transportation infrastructure, which supports economic development by creating a safer and more efficient travel environment for the movement of people and goods.

## **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN AND RELATED DOCUMENTS**

In 2015, the NEPA MPO revised its Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI Plan to ensure compliance with statutes and reflect the transition from an RPO to an MPO. A Scope of Services was developed with the MPO's consultant, McCormick Taylor, to complete the Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI plan.

At the onset of the development of the plan, Environmental Justice meetings were held on August 20, 2015 in Stroud Township, Monroe County and Pottsville, Schuylkill County. The purpose of the meetings was to engage individuals and agencies that work with underserved populations to determine issues affecting those groups and ways to reach them.

Following an extensive demographic analysis of the region's communities and cultural attributes, a draft of the Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI Plan were provided to NEPA and the MPO Technical Committee in early September 2015. The plan provides specific actions to be taken by the MPO depending upon the type of outreach and critical actions the MPO is considering, as it relates to the potential impacts upon specific communities or the public at-large. A conference call to review the draft plans was held on September 9, 2015. The draft plans were put out for public comment beginning on September 16, 2015. Notice of the Public Comment Period was placed in six newspapers. Copies of the plans were available at 10 locations and on the NEPA website.

A public meeting to receive comment on the plan was held on October 22, 2015 at the Monroe County Transportation Authority in Swiftwater. Remote access to the meeting in Swiftwater was

setup at locations in Jim Thorpe Borough, Pottsville and Milford to accommodate the public in the other MPO counties. The public comment period closed on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

At the November 17, 2015 MPO Technical Committee meeting, the committee recommended the adoption of the Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI Plan to the NEPA MPO Policy Board. The Policy Board followed with their approval of the Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI Plan at the November 18<sup>th</sup> Policy Board meeting.

Final versions of the Public Involvement Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan and Title VI Plan are available on the NEPA website at

<http://www.nepa-alliance.org/transportation/transportationpublic-involvement/>

### **2019-2022 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN OUTREACH**

The NEPA MPO followed the procedures outlined in the Public Involvement Plan and related documents for the public comment period for the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Plan. The NEPA MPO held a 30-day public comment period on the draft TIP beginning on June 15, 2018 and ending on July 17, 2018. Notice of the Public Comment Period was placed in six newspapers. Copies of the plans were available at 10 locations and on the NEPA website.

A public hearing was held on Tuesday, July 17, 2018 at 9:30 AM at the Monroe County Transportation Authority, 134 MCTA Drive, Swiftwater, PA 18370. Additional meeting locations that had remote access to the public meeting are listed below.

- Carbon County Courthouse Annex, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 2 Hazard Square, Jim Thorpe, PA
- Pike County Administration Building, 506 Broad St., Milford, PA
- Schuylkill Transportation System, Union Station, 1 Progress Circle, Pottsville, PA

A press release announcing the opening of the public comment period and public meeting will be shared with media outlets. Notification of the public comment period will be sent to various Native American Tribes and Nations that have or may have interest in our MPO region.

A copy of the Checklist included in the Public Involvement Plan is attached to this summary.

## Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Update

Applies to the regular update of the TIP/STIP and Twelve-Year Program (TYP) according to the statewide program.

- 1** Release the DRAFT TIP.
  - Provide the public with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the DRAFT TIP, including a public comment period of 30-days (minimum).
  - Provide the DRAFT TIP Update to FHWA, FTA, EPA and PennDOT for review prior to the beginning of the public comment period.
  - Make DRAFT TIP available in an accessible electronic format on the NEPA MPO website.
  - Make DRAFT TIP available in a hard copy format at the NEPA MPO Office, county government offices, public transit agency offices, and PennDOT District 4 and District 5 Offices.Optional and non-required activities to support TIP public involvement:
  - Upon the discretion of the NEPA MPO, the MPO staff may meet with local stakeholders and county staff and commissioners at their regularly scheduled and advertised meetings.
- 2** Notify public and agencies of opportunities to comment.
  - Publish notifications prior to the beginning of the public comment period start date and at least 14 calendar days prior to the public meeting date:
    - ✓ Legal Notice to appear in local newspapers, at a minimum.
    - ✓ Press Release distributed to other newspapers and broadcast media outlets.
    - ✓ Interested Parties notified via email using distribution list.
    - ✓ Web notification on the NEPA MPO webpage in an accessible electronic format.
  - Conduct at least one (1) public meeting at an accessible location.
  - Distribute related documents in hard copy by mail or electronically to the various Indian Tribes and Nations with interests in the counties that comprise the MPO region.
- 3** Document the public involvement effort and record in the Activity File.
  - Document the involvement activities conducted (Meeting Venue Checklist, Public Involvement Meeting tracking form).
  - Compile comments received and generate responses to unique and significant comments that indicate how the comment was incorporated or why a different approach was taken.
  - Post comment responses on the NEPA MPO website in an accessible electronic format within 14 calendar days of the close of the public comment period.
  - Provide notification (by email) of the Comment Responses to the Interested Parties and all those who commented and provided email contact information.

#### Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Update (continued)

- 4 If the final version of the TIP Update differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment, provide an additional 7 calendar day public comment period.
  - Provide notification (by email) of the additional public comment period to the Interested Parties and all those who commented previously and provided email contact information prior to the beginning of the public comment period start date.
  - Provide revised DRAFT TIP to FHWA, FTA, EPA and PennDOT for review prior to the beginning of the additional public comment period.
  - Make revised DRAFT TIP available in an accessible electronic format on the MPO website.
  - Distribute related documents in hard copy by mail or electronically to the various Indian Tribes and Nations with interests in the counties that comprise the MPO region.
- 5 Adopt the TIP.
  - MPO adopts the final version of the TIP by vote of the NEPA MPO committees at duly advertised scheduled public meetings.
  - Make final version of the TIP available on the NEPA MPO website in an accessible electronic format.
  - Post notice of the TIP adoption to the NEPA MPO webpage.