

***PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN***

**FOR**

**SPARTANBURG AREA TRANSPORTATION STUDY  
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**



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***List of Acronyms***

<b>SPATS</b>	Spartanburg Area Transportation Study
<b>LRTP</b>	Long Range Transportation Plan
<b>MPO</b>	Metropolitan Transportation Organization
<b>SAFETEA-LU</b>	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
<b>SCDOT</b>	South Carolina Department of Transportation
<b>TEA-21</b>	Transportation Equity Act for the 21 <sup>st</sup> Century
<b>TIP</b>	Transportation Improvement Program
<b>UPWP</b>	Unified Planning Work Program

## INTRODUCTION

The Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS) Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) policy is to support and encourage public participation and to adhere to the principles of Environmental Justice in the metropolitan planning process. The MPO's public participation policy is designed to ensure opportunities for the public to express its views on transportation issues, including the provision of public mass transit service, and to become active participants in the decision-making process.

## I. BACKGROUND

Since its inception in 1967, the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (SPATS) has been responsible for area-wide transportation planning and for the programming of funds for federally funded transportation projects. As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urban portions of Spartanburg County, SPATS' borders encompass Cowpens to the east, Lake Bowen and Lake Blalock to the north, US 221 to the south, and borders the GPATS (Greenville Pickens Area Transportation Study) boundary to the west. Also included within the SPATS area are the incorporated communities of Spartanburg, Wellford, Duncan, Lyman, Inman, Chesnee, and Pacolet, and the unincorporated communities of Roebuck, Moore, Valley Falls, Boiling Springs, Glendale, and the Clifton Converse area. The SPATS area is approximately 450 square miles.

The governing board of the Spartanburg Area Transportation Study is the *SPATS Policy Committee*. The policy committee is comprised of citizens, business leaders, and state and local elected officials representing the SPATS member governments. Specifically, the membership of the SPATS Policy Committee includes: members of the legislative delegation, mayors of the incorporated municipalities within the urban area, members of Spartanburg County Council, a member of Spartanburg City Council, the chairs of the Spartanburg County and City of Spartanburg planning commissions, a representative from the Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce, the SCDOT Commissioner from the Fourth Congressional District, and a "Private Sector Representative." This board meets quarterly to establish transportation policies, evaluate transportation needs, and approve specific project funding.

The *SPATS Technical Committee* is responsible for evaluating and making recommendations on all SPATS transportation plans and programs to the Policy Committee. Members of the technical committee include local, state, and federal planners and engineers. This committee provides technical expertise in the development of transportation plans and programs for the MPO area, and is chaired by the Senior Transportation Planner for SPATS.

The principal responsibilities of the MPO include the development of a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and related planning studies and projects deemed necessary to address transportation issues in the SPATS area. Local transportation needs are re-evaluated annually. Based on this evaluation, project priorities are established and made part of the SPATS's biennial Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). By Federal law, all multi-modal transportation improvement projects

must be included in and consistent with (to the maximum extent feasible) the MPO's LRTP in order to be eligible for Federal funding. Therefore, the MPO LRTP is the primary plan that guides all federally funded transportation improvements in the SPATS area.

## **II. GOVERNMENTAL REQUIREMENTS**

With the passage of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) in 1998, the 15 metropolitan and 23 statewide planning factors from the old regulations were consolidated into seven (7) factors. With the recent passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005, these factors were expanded to eight (8), namely safety and security were separated into separate planning factors. In addition, the planning factor on protect/enhance the environment was expanded to include "...promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns". The eight (8) planning factors of SAFETEA-LU are:

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.

Additionally, MPOs are required to develop and adopt a long-range transportation plan and a transportation improvement program. In developing these documents, by federal statute, a reasonable opportunity to comment must be provided.

## **III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS**

### ***A. General Guidelines***

The *SPATS Public Participation Plan* is intended to provide direction for public participation activities to be conducted by the SPATS MPO and contains the vision, goals, objectives, and techniques used by SPATS for public participation. As noted earlier, SPATS has been designated by the federal government to serve as the regional

MPO for the SPATS Transportation Program. Therefore, in its public participation process, SPATS will strive to:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, freight shippers, 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 and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdiction concerns).
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects, and conduct open public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered. Such access would also include, if necessary, the conversion of the key planning documents into Spanish (or any other language).
3. Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to, the approval of the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects. If the final draft of any transportation plan differs significantly from the one available for public comment by SPATS and raises new material issues, which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan shall be made available.
4. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan (including the financial plan) as a result of the public participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan.
5. Solicit the needs of those traditionally under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to minorities, elderly, persons with disabilities, persons with limited English proficiency, and low-income households.
6. Provide a public comment period of 15 calendar days prior to the adoption of the *SPATS Public Participation Plan* and/or any amendments for the groups listed in Item 1 above. Notice of the 15-day comment period will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation prior to the commencement of the 15-day comment period and on the Spartanburg County and SPATS's websites. Notice will also be mailed to the entire SPATS mailing list prior to the commencement of the 15-day comment period.
7. Provide a public comment period of not less than 30 calendar days prior to adoption of the LRTP, TIP, UPWP, Transit Development Plans, any amendments or updates, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.

8. Coordinate its Public Participation Process with statewide Public Participation Processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and to reduce redundancies and costs.

9. Periodically review the Public Participation Process to ensure it provides full and open access to all. Portions of the process, that are found not to meet the needs of the constituency, will be revised.

The SPATS public participation process is used by and satisfies the public participation requirements for developing the Program of Projects (POP) for both mass transit providers in the area (City of Spartanburg's SPARTA and Spartanburg County's Transportation Services Bureau or TSB); federal funding sought by these mass transit providers are included in the MPO's TIP.

## ***B. Public Participation Plan Vision, Goals & Policies***

The vision for the public participation plan is that the public will be provided thorough information on transportation planning services and project development in a convenient and timely manner. To this end, the following goals and policies have been established.

*Goal 1: To actively engage the public in the transportation planning process according to the policies contained in Federal and State law as well as in this Public Participation Plan.*

A. SPATS shall maintain an up-to-date database of contacts including at a minimum the following persons:

- Federal, state, local agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, consideration, and historic preservation
- Elected Officials
- Local Government Staff
- Transportation Agencies (freight, port, airports, transit, etc.)
- Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
- Representatives of Users of Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation
- Representatives of the Disable
- Local Media
- Homeowners' Associations
- Civic Groups
- Special Interest Groups
- SPATS Area Public Libraries (for public display)
- Individuals expressing an interest in transportation planning activities.

B. SPATS shall, when feasible, electronically send and/or mail meeting announcements (invitations) to SPATS contact list or to targeted groups for upcoming activities.

C. SPATS shall employ visualization techniques to depict transportation plans. Examples of visualization techniques include: charts, graphs, photo interpretation, maps, use of GIS, artist renderings, physical models, and/or computer simulation.

D. SPATS shall maintain a robust website and social media presence that will offer, to the greatest extent possible, public interaction with and participation in SPATS transportation planning efforts.

*Goal 2: SPATS shall keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continuous basis.*

- A. SPATS shall make all publications and work products available to the public via the website, social media, staff office, and will employ visualization techniques to describe transportation actions as part of the LRTP.
- B. SPATS shall be available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of groups such as homeowners' associations with reasonable notice.
- C. SPATS shall maintain a robust, informative, and interactive website.
  - 1. The website shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current information available.
  - 2. The website shall, at a minimum, contain the following information:
    - Current MPO Staff contact information (i.e. name, title, mailing address, phone, fax, and e-mail)
    - Meeting calendars and agendas
    - Brief descriptions of current projects
    - Work products and publications (e.g. TIP, LRTP, UPWP)
    - Comment/Question form
    - Links to related agencies (e.g. SCDOT and the Spartanburg Area Transportation Authority (SPARTA)).

*Goal 3: SPATS shall encourage the participation of all citizens in the transportation planning process.*

- A. Target audiences shall be identified for each planning study conducted by SPATS, including residents, business and property owners and those traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations, including but not limited to, low income and minority households, within the study area.
- B. SPATS shall, whenever feasible, hold public meetings at a scheduled time, location, and building facility convenient to potentially affected citizens.
- C. SPATS will provide an additional opportunity for public comments, if the final LRTP or TIP differs significantly from the version that was initially made available for public comment.
- D. SPATS will actively use its website and social media to encourage and solicit public participation. New techniques like "internet town meetings" may be organized and utilized if feasible.

*Goal 4: SPATS shall strive to continuously improve public participation.*

A. SPATS shall continuously evaluate public participation techniques, according to the procedures contained in this Public Participation Plan.

B. The Public Participation Plan shall be reviewed and adopted, with revisions if necessary, at least every three (3) years.

C. The website and social media will include intermittent surveys in order to ascertain and improve present and future public participation.

*Goal 5: SPATS shall participate in public participation activities for individual transportation improvement projects from the planning phase through construction.*

A. SPATS shall actively assist SCDOT, local governments and transportation agencies in the development and implementation of public participation techniques for planning and other studies, including Major Investment Studies and Project Development and Environmental studies.

#### **IV. Public Participation Techniques**

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the MPO. An effective public participation process is characterized by techniques and procedures that enable citizens to become well informed. This section contains descriptions of public participation tools of which SPATS currently uses and proposes to use in the future. These tools are as follows:

- Annual Newsletters
- Charrettes
- Comment Forms
- Consultation
- Display Ads
- Direct Mailings
- E-mail Announcements/Internet Message Boards
- Fact Sheets
- Legal Advertisements
- MPO Master Database
- MPO Website
- Press Releases
- Public Information Meetings/Hearings
- Public Notices
- Social Media
- Small Group Meetings
- Surveys
- Title VI & Environmental Justice Review
- Visualization

##### ***Annual Newsletter***

**Description:** MPO (SPATS) staff will produce an annual newsletter that will be distributed to citizens, municipalities, media and other agencies. Citizens will be added to the distribution list by their own request.

Opportunities to request being added to the list occur during public meetings hosted by SPATS, on the SPATS web site, and when citizens contact SPATS staff. Each issue of the newsletter includes staff contact information, upcoming meeting schedules, the SPATS web site address, project highlights, and current planning project status reports. When appropriate, information regarding significant transportation issues, MPO awards, and other one-time activities are also included.

**Activities:** The newsletter is used to report planning studies, publications and work products from the past year.

## ***Charrette***

Description: Charrettes are typically intense, possibly multi-day meetings involving municipal officials, planning officials and local residents. A charrette is instrumental in identifying key issues early, promotes joint ownership of the solution and attempts to diffuse traditional confrontation between stakeholders.

Activities: Project specific meetings, corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies and workshops.

## ***Comment Forms***

Description: Comment forms are often used to solicit public comment on specific issues being presented at a workshop or other public meeting. Comment forms can be very general in nature, or can ask for very specific feedback. For example, a comment form may ask for comments on specific alignment alternatives being considered during a corridor study, or may ask for a person's general feelings about any aspect of transportation. Comment forms can also be included in publications, on websites and on social media to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or website.

Activities: Public workshops, open houses, hearings and other meetings, general MPO activities.

## ***Consultation***

Description: As part of SAFETEA-LU regulations in encouraging more cooperative planning, SPATS will consult, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities that are affected by transportation within the SPATS area. To coordinate the planning function to the maximum extent practicable, such consultation will entail comparing LRTPs and TIPs as they are developed with the plans, maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies. This consultation will include, as appropriate, contact with the following groups: State, local, Indian Tribal, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, consideration, and historic preservation. SPATS maintains an open consultation policy, whereby any private citizen or entity responsible for transportation in the SPATS area may contact SPATS and be included in the consultation process.

Activities: Public hearings/meetings, copies of this plan on the SPATS website (for viewing/downloading purposes), meetings with SPATS Staff.

### ***Display Ads***

Description: These ads are used to promote meetings that are not regularly scheduled, such as corridor study workshops. They are published in the local section of the newspaper in order to reach a larger audience than those that typically read legal ads.

Activities: Project specific meetings, workshops, open houses or hearings, and the LRTP.

### ***Direct Mailings***

Description: Direct Mailings are used to announce upcoming meetings or activities or to provide information to a targeted area or group of people. Direct mailings are usually post cards, but can be letters or fliers. An area may be targeted for a direct mailing because of potential impacts from a project. Groups are targeted that may have an interest in a specific issue, for example avid cyclists and pedestrians may be targeted for pathways and trail projects.

Activities: Project-specific meetings, workshops, open houses, corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

### ***E-mail Announcements/Internet Message Boards***

Description: Meeting announcements and MPO information would be e-mailed to interested persons that have submitted their e-mail addresses to SPATS staff. Interactive message boards may be used to facilitate discussion and solicit public comment regarding specific MPO projects or issues.

Activities: Corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies, regular meetings, public hearings, workshops, open houses, and other major MPO activities.

### ***Fact Sheets***

Description: Fact Sheets will be used to provide summary information regarding MPO policy, programs and projects. Fact sheets can be distributed at public meetings, on the SPATS website, and in public places such as libraries and community centers. Individuals and special interest groups can request fact sheets directly from the SPATS staff office.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies, project priorities process, updates to the LRTP and TIP and other MPO activities.

### ***Legal Advertisements***

Description: SCDOT requires a minimum thirty (30) day advertisement of any public meeting where a decision could be made that would make a significant change to an existing plan or program. Ads are published to solicit public comment and/or review of the requested change or plan update. The ads provide a description of the meeting agenda, including contact information.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, project priority process, major TIP amendments, updates of the LRTP and UPWP, and other major MPO activities.

### ***MPO Master Database***

Description: Staff will maintain a master database of all contacts, both business and public, on a continuous basis. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, fax numbers, and e-mail addresses. The database will be used for maintaining up-to-date committee membership lists, special interest groups and homeowner association contacts, and the newsletter mailing list. Membership lists generated using the database may be provided to the public, municipalities and other agencies upon request. The database will be used to establish and maintain a list of e-mail contacts for electronic meeting notification and announcements.

Activities: The database is used to enhance other public participation activities.

### ***MPO Website***

Description: The site provides basic information about the services of SPATS, the MPO process, its members, projects, and committee and contact information. The site has been vastly expanded to include information about specific projects undertaken by SPATS, publications and work products, such as the UPWP, TIP, LRTP, and the Public Participation Plan, and other pertinent information related to the workings of the MPO. The site provides many links to other transportation related sites from the local to the national level. The site currently has two links to the SPATS Facebook page as well as a link to the SPATS Flickr page. In the future other social media account links will be added. Citizens will be able to submit comments and sign up to be added to the various distribution lists maintained by SPATS. The site is maintained and updated by SPATS staff. The website's address is [www.spatsmpo.org](http://www.spatsmpo.org).

Activities: The site will be used to promote regular and special meetings, planning studies, publications and work products.

### ***Press Releases***

Description: Formal press releases are sent to local media (newspaper, TV and radio) to announce upcoming special meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the MPO or their committees.

Activities: Specific corridor or other planning studies, workshops, open houses, public hearings, and other special MPO activities.

### ***Public Informational Meetings***

Description: These are public meetings that are generally open and informal, with project team members interacting with the public on a one-on-one basis. Short presentations may be given at these meetings. The purpose of public informational meetings is to provide project information to the public and to solicit public comment.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, project priority process, certification review, LRTP update, and other major MPO activities.

### ***Public Notices***

Description: The MPO regularly advertises meetings of the SPATS Policy Committee, the SPATS Technical Committee, and the SPATS Enhancement Committee.

Activities: Regular meetings, other public meetings.

### ***Social Media***

Description: The goal of our social media sites is to disperse the most up-to-date information regarding events, meetings, studies, etc going on in Spartanburg County. Currently the SPATS Facebook page has had wonderful feedback on the posts, status updates, and event “invitations” created for certain public hearings. There are many other social media techniques that SPATS will be pursuing in the future.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, workshops, open houses, public hearings, other planning studies, and other special MPO activities

### ***Small Group Meetings***

Description: During projects such as planning studies, meetings are held with small groups that have an interest in the project. Meetings could be with homeowners or neighborhood associations, civic groups, special interest groups, or other groups of affected or interested parties.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, and other MPO activities.

### ***Surveys***

Description: Surveys will be used when very specific input from the public is desired. A survey can be used in place of comment cards to ask very specific questions such as whether a person supports a specific alignment in a corridor study. Surveys may also be used to gather technical data during corridor and planning studies. For example, participants may be asked about their daily travel patterns.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies and other planning studies.

## ***Title VI & Environmental Justice Review***

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination in federally assisted programs and activities on the basis of race, color, and national origin. In 1994, Presidential Executive Order 12898 directed every Federal agency to make Environmental Justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on "minority populations and low-income populations." In complying with the aforementioned federal laws and policies, the MPO's Environmental Justice initiatives will strive to involve the potentially affected public through a Public Outreach Program. This program consists of MPO staff activities designed to develop partnerships with, and enhance their participation in the transportation planning process, by groups and individuals of "traditionally underserved" communities. These communities include minorities, low income, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Staff activities may include MPO staff participation in groups and coalitions serving within these communities, targeted communications with local media outlets, conducting meetings at times and locations that are accessible to transit dependant or non-driving individuals when possible, and publication of MPO documents in non-technical, accessible formats when needed. The goal of the MPO's Public Outreach Program is to ensure that all citizens, regardless of race, color, religion, income status, national origin, age, gender, disability, marital status, or political affiliation, have an equal opportunity to participate in the MPO's decision-making process.

Description: SPATS will take reasonable steps to ensure that all persons, including those with a disability or language barrier, have meaningful opportunities to participate in the transportation planning and programming process, and will strive to address environmental justice issues at all stages of the planning process. This includes implementing the following strategies to reduce participation barriers for under-served groups and engage them in the decision-making process:

- Representatives of minority, disability, low-income, and limited English proficiency groups will be identified and included in MPO mailings.
- If needed, documents will be translated and public notices broadcast for Spanish-speaking populations.
- The SPATS website will have a language translator button to better assist those not fluent in English.
- Whenever possible, meetings will be held at locations accessible to persons with disabilities, bus riders, and bicyclists and that are convenient to neighborhoods with a concentration of minority and low-income persons.
- Where meeting facilitators are used, SPATS will seek to use persons that represent the diversity of the community and/or have expertise in working with under-served groups

- Translators/interpreters will be provided for meetings, if requested.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, LRTP update and other major MPO activities.

## **Visualization**

Description: SPATS recognizes that an important element to public participation is to provide the public, when possible, with visual as well as written descriptions of transportation projects. Through visual imagery, the complex features of proposed transportation plans, policies, and programs can be portrayed at appropriate scales—region, local, project architecture, etc.—and from different points of view. To this end, SPATS will utilize various visual and architectural design techniques; some of which may include: sketches, drawings, artist renderings, aerial photography, mapping, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive geographical information system (GIS), GIS-based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation and computer simulation.

Activities: Planning studies, TIP amendments, and other MPO activities.

## V. Summary Table of Public Participation Policies

Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Notes
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	2 meetings prior to SPATS Board approval	30 days	A summary of all oral or written comments will be provided to the SPATS Board and made available for public review
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Opportunity for public input 30 days prior to SPATS Board approval	30 days	
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	N/A	30 days	
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	N/A	15 days	Will be held for updates of the PPP as needed
Amendments			
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	2 meetings if requested prior to SPATS Board approval. A public meeting will be held on major amendments	30 days	
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	1 meeting if requested prior to SPATS Board approval. A public meeting will be held on major amendments	30 days	
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	N/A	30 days	
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	N/A	45 days	
Open Meetings			
SPATS Policy Committee	Regular meetings held the Second Monday of February, June, August, and November		
Technical Committee	These meetings precede the regular SPATS Policy Committee meetings		

## **VI. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION TECHNIQUES FOR FUTURE CONSIDERATION**

Other techniques used for future consideration include:

### ***Project-specific Web Sites***

**Description:** For individual projects, such as corridor studies, that are typically performed using consulting services, project-specific web sites are often used. These sites are used when project information is too extensive to be included on the SPATS site. Project web sites can contain study area maps, meeting announcements, descriptions of potential alternatives, comment forms, user surveys and project team contact information.

**Activities:** Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies and major MPO projects.

### ***Project-specific Newsletters***

**Description:** For individual projects, such as corridor studies, that are typically performed using consulting services, newsletters are often used to address specific project issues. These newsletters are mailed to targeted residents, elected officials representing that area, businesses and property owners in the area that are expected to be impacted by a particular study. Information regarding upcoming project meetings, alternatives being proposed in the area, and other project news is reported in these newsletters.

**Activities:** Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

### ***Other Newsletters***

**Description:** When project-specific newsletters are not used, articles may be prepared for publication in other newsletters produced by municipalities, homeowners' associations, church groups, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the project. These articles are subject to the publication dates and space restrictions of the individual publishers.

**Activities:** Corridor studies, sub -area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

### ***Formal Public Hearings***

Description: These are public meetings used to solicit public comment on a project or issue being considered for adoption by the MPO. Hearings provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments to the MPO or another decision-making body. They are recorded and transcribed for the record.

Activities: LRTP and TIP updates, corridor studies, project development & environmental studies, and other planning studies as needed for other MPO activities.

### ***Government Access Television***

Description: The local cable network provider as part of basic cable service maintains local channels of government and business advertisements. Government Access Television can broadcast rolling message scripts and regular and special meetings; both live and pre-recorded, as well as short informative programs about departmental activities or projects of interest to the entire population.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, regular and special MPO activities.

### ***Posters and Fliers***

Description: Posters and fliers are used to announce meetings and events and are distributed to public places such as city halls, libraries and community centers for display. The announcement may contain a brief description of the purpose of a meeting, the time(s) and location(s), and contact information. Posters and fliers may be used to reach a large audience that cannot be reached using direct mailings and/or newsletters.

Activities: Corridor studies, sub-area studies, other planning studies, regular and special MPO activities.

## **VI. EVALUATION METHODS AND PERFORMANCE GOALS**

In order to determine the effectiveness of the public participation tools, they must be evaluated and compared to established performance goals. The typical methods for evaluating the effectiveness of public participation tools are surveys and quantitative statistical analysis. This section briefly describes evaluation methods to be used by SPATS. For each public participation tool, performance goals and methods for meeting those goals have been identified.

### ***Surveys***

Surveys typically consist of short, specific questions regarding public participation tools that are ongoing or that were used on a specific project. Surveys can be conducted in person, by phone, mail or e-mail. Face-to-face and telephone surveys provide quick responses and can be used when a respondent's answer may lead to a follow-up question. For example, respondents may be asked if advertisements are an effective notification tool. If the response is no, the surveyor can ask the respondent why advertisements are not effective and also what other tools they would prefer. In person and telephone surveys can target specific areas or groups or can be random sampling. Mail surveys may be used to provide written record of respondent's answers. Mail-back surveys can be distributed at meetings, inside other publications, or by mailing directly to potential respondents. Respondents can be a targeted group, such as members of special interest groups or residents of specific areas, or they can be randomly generated. Return postage for mail surveys typically can be pre-paid by the MPO, or can be the responsibility of the respondent. E-mail surveys, like mail surveys, provide a written record of responses. Unlike mail-back surveys, there is little to no reproduction or distribution cost to the MPO to send out the surveys, and little to no cost to respondents to return a response. To use e-mail surveys, it is necessary to have e-mail addresses for the targeted respondents, and random distribution is not really an option. Surveys will be used to evaluate citizens' responses on the effectiveness of the public participation tools. In addition, a survey component will play an instrumental role within the SPATS website.

### ***Statistical Analysis***

Statistics can be used to determine the "return on the investment" of producing public participation tools. For example, the number of persons attending an activity can be compared to the number of persons that were notified of the activity. This type of evaluation can be an indicator of whether or not the tools used for public participation are actually reaching the intended audience, or which tools had a greater response rate. Statistical analysis will be used to evaluate survey responses and the results of the analysis will be compared to the evaluation measures to determine the rate of success of the public participation tools.

## **VII. IMPROVEMENT STRATEGIES**

SPATS (MPO) continually strives for improved public participation. Improvements should be made to increase public awareness and to improve the quantity and quality of information provided to the public. The decisions made by SPATS affect the entire population, both residents and visitors. Therefore, seeking public input on those decisions is vital to the success of SPATS as the organization responsible for transportation planning. Within one month after the completion of an activity or at milestones during an activity, evaluation of public participation tool should occur. For ongoing activities, evaluation should occur at least quarterly. Each time a public participation evaluation is performed, a list of improvement strategies should be identified. If improvement is needed for an ongoing public participation task, a reasonable completion date should be established. If improvement is needed for one-time activities, such as corridor studies, the improvement should be implemented where appropriate on future activities.

## Summary Table for Evaluation Public Participation Tools

Public Participation Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goals	Methods to Meet Goals
MPO Web Site	Number of Hits	Min. of 50 hits per month, 5% increase in hits per quarter	Use other public involvement tools and links to increase advertisement of the web site.
MPO Master Database	Number of returned items	Max. of 2% return rate per mailing	Make immediate corrections when items are returned.
Legal Advertisements	No Measure / Required by South Carolina Statutes	N/A	N/A
Annual Newsletter	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of returns	N/A. Return rate is addressed under MPO Master Database	Continue items that receive favorable comments and correct or improve mistakes or items that receive negative comments.
Display Ad	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of persons contacted	Min. of 15% of meeting attendees / survey respondents indicated that they saw the ad. Ad formats may be modified based on specific comments received.	Pursue publication in a prominent location in the paper. Increase the size or modify the layout to make ads more visible.
Direct Mailings	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of persons contacted	Min. of 15% of meeting attendees / survey respondents indicated that they received the mailing <b>-OR-</b> reaches a min. of 85% of persons that <i>are affected by a project</i>	Increase / decrease mailing list to more accurately target affected areas. Use the most up-to-date information from a variety of sources to maintain the mailing list.
Press Releases	Calls, letters, etc.	No standard. Format may be modified based on specific comments received	Encourage publication of press releases by keeping the media informed.

Small Group Meetings	Calls, letters, etc.;  Met the expectations of the group	N/A.  These meetings are held at the request of affected groups	MPO staff and any consulting staff should be available in a timely manner to hold small group meetings regarding any MPO activity or issue. The meeting should be formatted to provide specific information requested by the group and should highlight issues that are of interest to the group.
E-mail Announcements & Internet Message Boards	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of persons reached	Min. of 5% of meeting attendees / survey respondents indicated that they saw the announcement	Increase e-mail list by advertising the availability of email announcements using other public involvement tools, including the website and social media.
Public Hearings	Calls, letters, etc.	3% - 5% of affected population (based on study area) in attendance	Schedule hearings at convenient and accessible times and locations. Use other public involvement tools to increase awareness of hearings.
Comment Forms	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of persons contacted	45% of meeting attendees fill out form - <b>OR-</b> 2% of visitors to a web site submit a form - <b>OR-</b> 15% of mail recipients return the form	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving comments in order to improve the planning process.
Surveys	Calls, letters, etc.;  Number of responses	45% of contacted persons participate in the survey - <b>OR-</b> 15% of mail recipients return the survey	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving feedback to improve the planning process.
Facebook / Flickr / Social Media	Number of followers	No standard. Goal of all social media is to quickly and efficiently distribute relative information to the public	Generate interest in participation by reaching citizens through photos, statuses, event invites, etc.

