

TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE FOR THE NORTHERN MIDDLESEX REGION

PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN

The Draft Public Outreach Plan has been developed in concert with members of the Northern Middlesex Metropolitan Planning Organization (NMMPO) and the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG). As the Plan update advances, elements of the Public Outreach Plan may be changed or modified in response to the interests of the NMMPO, NMCOG, Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) and members of the public, or as further information is gathered to better define the issues that warrant additional public input.

INTENT OF THE PLAN

The involvement and engagement of the public in the decision-making process is integral to successful transportation planning in the Northern Middlesex region. All outreach activities are derived from the desire to encourage broad and active participation by a wide cross section of the public that includes area residents, local officials, and special interest groups.

PUBLIC OUTREACH GOALS

1. To inform the public of transportation meetings, workshops, and other events associated with the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update;
2. To educate members of the public regarding their role in the transportation planning and decision-making process;
3. To provide ample opportunities and forums for public involvement, early and often during the Plan update process;
4. To reach out to a diverse cross-section of the region's population, with special emphasis on engaging individuals who may have been underserved or underrepresented; and
5. To continuously seek ways to improve public outreach activities throughout the Plan development process.

PUBLIC OUTREACH TOOLS

A number of public relations tools will be used to distribute information and facilitate input into the development of the Plan, and to provide updates on the progress of the Plan. These public relations tools include the following:

- Electronic mailings.
- Newspaper articles and advertisements.
- Project website.

- Interactive local meetings and public workshops.
- Public Surveys.

The application of these techniques will be described and documented in the Public Outreach chapter of the RTP.

PRE-PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Early activities will focus on soliciting input regarding transportation issues from the NMMPO advisory committee, NMCOG, LRTA, local communities, local and regional interest groups, and members of the public. All materials associated with the Plan update will be posted on the NMCOG website. The following steps will be taken during pre-plan development:

- Initiate the formation of an advisory committee to the NMMPO and meet with this group at least twice during the pre-plan development period to discuss regional transportation goals, objectives, and priorities.
- Disseminate a transportation needs assessment survey to communities in the Northern Middlesex region to gauge local needs and priorities.
- Activate and promote a Plan Update website via the existing NMCOG website. This website will announce all Plan-related activities, provide a question and answer section regarding the transportation planning process, and will allow members of the public to electronically submit comments directly to the NMMPO. All comments and suggestions received will be acknowledged, catalogued, and summarized for the NMMPO, NMCOG, the LRTA, and State transportation agencies.
- Prepare and disseminate an informational pamphlet that describes the roles and responsibilities of the NMMPO and summarizes the transportation planning process. This pamphlet will also function as a resource guide for members of the public and local officials who want to stay informed and have a voice in the transportation decision-making process.
- Attend various meetings in the Northern Middlesex region to solicit input on transportation issues from local boards (Planning Board, Selectmen, etc.), chambers of commerce, economic development committees, public works departments, environmental organizations and neighborhood and civic organizations. The purpose of attending these meetings will be to identify transportation issues in the region.
- Develop an electronic mailing list to be utilized to distribute informational material in order to keep local government officials, local transit operators, local media outlets, State transportation officials, neighborhood and civic organizations, environmental organizations and economic development

interest groups abreast of Plan-related events, such as workshops and meetings.

POST-PLAN DEVELOPMENT

Activities during the post-plan development period will involve the circulation and presentation of the draft Plan to the NMMPO, NMCOG, LRTA, local communities, and the public to solicit comments. All materials associated with the formation of the draft Plan will be posted on the NMCOG Plan update website. Public workshops will be held to provide an additional venue for input. The following tasks will be undertaken :

- Post the draft Plan on the NMCOG website to allow for the electronic submission of comments. All comments received via this avenue will be acknowledged, catalogued, and summarized for the NMMPO and NMCOG.
- Utilize local media outlets including newspapers, radio stations, and local cable access stations to announce the availability of the draft Plan and associated materials for public comment.
- Hold widely advertised public workshops to present the draft Plan to members of the public, local officials, and regional interest groups. Presentation materials associated with the public workshops will be posted on the NMCOG website.
- Present the draft Plan, along with a summary of all the public comments received from the website and the public workshop, to the NMMPO, NMCOG, and the LRTA.