

Regional Transportation Study ***Tompkins, Tioga, Cortland, Chemung, Cayuga, Seneca, Schuyler Counties***

Public Involvement Plan

Introduction

This Public Involvement Plan has been developed to guide Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council (ITCTC) and its partners in the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition in implementing a comprehensive and transparent community outreach process for the Regional Transportation Study (RTS or Study) in the seven-county area including the counties of Cayuga, Chemung, Cortland, Schuyler, Seneca, Tioga, and Tompkins. This seven-county area will be referred to as the *Study Area* for purposes of this document.

The Study Team (the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition, the Client Committee and the Wendel Consultant Team) is committed to a continuous and comprehensive public outreach program providing the opportunity for frequent and meaningful public feedback. The Team strives to foster open communication and will work in collaboration with Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council and its partners in the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition and the Client Committee to implement a Public Involvement Plan that establishes a strong foundation for building consensus and meets the requirements for public involvement in Federal transportation planning regulations (established with the *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient, Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users*, enacted in 2005). Informing, involving and engaging the public is essential in regional mobility planning that is responsive to community values, builds an understanding of the purpose and benefits to the area of proposed plans and initiatives, and that enlists their participation in the process.

Project Description

The Regional Transportation Study (RTS) is a planning project developed by the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition, a group of community leaders representing county governments, higher education, transit, human services, and planning interests, to study transportation in the seven-county area. The Study will result in a strategic plan of programmatic and policy solutions to address transportation infrastructure, systems and/or operational improvements, and enhancements needed to accommodate projected transportation needs. It is a regional mobility study which will:

1. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing mobility services across all modes,
2. Develop and market real mobility choices to the public, and
3. Enable coordination among counties to provide the best possible cost effective transportation.

The RTS process will examine existing services and needs, project future demands, incorporate stakeholder input and develop a series of recommendations in a phased implementation plan and a sustainable process that will address: alternatives to reduce drive-alone automobile trips and to provide realistic options to persons who are unable to or choose not to drive; reductions in commuter traffic on the highway network; potential expansion of bus transportation, including

commuter bus and intercity services; incorporation of coordinated mobility programs, such as van pools, guaranteed ride home, ridesharing, and human service transportation; and improvements in communication and technology to improve customer information and agency interaction.

Project Vision Statement

The RTS will develop a Regional Mobility Strategy building on the range of community mobility services and programs currently offered in order to better connect communities and destinations, broaden mobility options, provide cost effective solutions and improve the quality of life for the region's residents, workers, students and visitors.

Project Stakeholders

The Regional Transportation Study concept resulted from a collaboration among the ITCTC, the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition, the RTS Client Committee, a consultant group of transportation planning professionals, area governments, agencies, stakeholder groups and the public.

This plan will actively seek the input of a broad range of perspectives in the development of mobility proposals and outline their views regarding the challenges and opportunities of the various approaches presented. The goal is that through the process of public involvement, the community will develop a shared vision for the future of the Study Area.

Study Team

The Study team includes the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition, the Client Committee and the Wendel Consultant Team. The Study team will meet as needed throughout the project and work in collaboration to achieve the study objectives.

Client Committee

The Client Committee, a subset of the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition, comprises member agencies within the Study Area, representing key City, Town, Village, and County government officials, transit providers, education and human service agencies, major employers, and others. The Committee will help focus the effort on specific local planning projects and issues that may influence mobility in the region and will ensure that specific local land use plans, laws, ordinances, issues and projects are appropriately considered. These key stakeholders are tasked with relaying information from the study to the community and encouraging constituent participation and feedback.

The Client Committee will convene several times during the course of the Study. These meetings will provide a regular check-in point to gain technical insights from Study Area members. In collaboration with ITCTC, the Wendel Team will prepare meeting agendas prior to each meeting and meeting notes that will be incorporated into regular reports submitted via e-mail.

Wendel Consultant Team:

Wendel Duchscherer, Architects & Engineers, P.C.
Arch Street Communications
The Bronner Group
Jack Reilly, Ph.D.

Public Involvement Goals & Objectives

The goals of the Public Involvement Plan are:

- To create stakeholder and community awareness of the study to ensure that the public is informed about the study and any recommendations for their communities.
- To demonstrate a commitment to the community outreach process.
- To work toward consensus among communities and agencies regarding issues of importance and workable solutions.
- Make certain that local stakeholders and citizens have early access and input into the decision-making process.
- To understand stakeholder and community issues, values and concerns related to the study objectives.
- To provide that under-served populations have an opportunity to participate in shaping mobility decisions.
- To promote mutual understanding between the study team and local stakeholders and build consensus for project advancement and implementation.

Achieving the goals of the Public Involvement Plan requires fulfillment of the following objectives:

- The effective combination of public information meetings, directed stakeholder outreach, and public communications to inform and engage the community in the study process
- Creation of a multi-faceted effort to advise the community of the study progress and findings
- Meaningful dialogue between a broad cross-section of the population and the agencies involved in the study

Internal Public Involvement Strategy

The internal public involvement process for the RTS involves an ongoing effort to share information and solicit input from the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition and Client Committee stakeholders. This outreach effort will assist the study team in developing and advancing recommendations for public consideration through collaboration of ideas and projects and developing consensus on study recommendations and potential action items. In addition, the internal communication process will facilitate the sustained effort to improve mobility options in the region.

Internal Outreach Tactics

To generate Client Committee and Coalition input, and support their inventory and analysis of existing transportation services, programs and resources, the study team will use the following outreach tactics:

Stakeholder interviews

In-depth stakeholder interviews will be conducted by the study team to gain input and direction from these groups through facilitated discussions conducted in each county to discern local needs and preferences.

Client Committee Communiqués

To facilitate internal stakeholder communication and a regional perspective, the study team will create and distribute (by email) at least six Client Committee Communiqués (one page updates) to share project milestones and inform client committee members about transportation-related efforts underway or being planned within the study area, with a focus on those that may influence the RTS. Client Committee members will be tasked to provide information to the study team for inclusion in these updates.

E-mail notifications

The study team will use email notifications to inform and solicit input from the Client Committee and RTPC members, as well as to provide participants with agendas, meeting summaries and supporting documentation. Where appropriate, these materials will also be posted on a project webpage.

Ongoing meetings and discussions

As this is an iterative process, there will be regularly scheduled meetings and frequent ongoing communications with the Client Committee and the Regional Transportation Planning Coalition.

External Public Involvement Strategies

The external public involvement strategies for the RTS features: 1) public information meetings, 2) public communications using a combination of print and electronic media, and 3) maintaining a communications portal (webpage) with current study updates and materials.

Public Information Meetings

The study team will conduct up to two (2) general public information meetings to be scheduled for key milestones of the Study to solicit input from participants regarding mobility recommendations being considered by the Client Committee. These meeting will be publicized through an electronic invitation to the stakeholder list, media outreach and other communication mechanisms to generate widespread attendance.

Where possible, meetings will be held in venues that are familiar and convenient within the Study Area to facilitate access by potential participants. Such venues could include schools and community centers, among other locations. All public meetings will be held in ADA compliant locations.

In collaboration with Ithaca-Tompkins County Transportation Council, the Study team will prepare meeting agendas prior to each meeting, will provide appropriate public notice of each meeting and generate summaries (both print and electronic) as a matter of public record.

Arch Street Communications will coordinate preparation of presentation materials and, with the rest of the study team, other materials needed for the meetings, such as sign-in sheets, comment sheets, and handouts. The ITCTC Project Manager will review and approve all agendas, meeting materials and summaries prior to their release to participants and the public.

Project Communications

The goal of all public communications is to engage a broad representation of the public in the study process, and provide opportunities to ensure a diversity of ideas and viewpoints is incorporated into discussions of mobility and transportation infrastructure.

The outreach effort for this Study will include a specific approach to engage local populations, where appropriate. In addition, we will reach out to ADA and disadvantaged populations through the public agencies and support groups that represent these populations. Every effort will be made to provide materials accessible to the broadest possible audience.

Public Outreach Tactics

To build awareness about the project and generate community input, a comprehensive communications and outreach program will incorporate a broad range of communications and outreach activities:

Study webpage

To provide a focal point for the public and the media, the study team will communicate project progress cost effectively and in a timely way by posting information to a project webpage, which will reside within the ITCTC website. This enables stakeholders and interested parties to stay informed about meetings and key topics, and provide input through comment forms. This page will also provide a library of materials developed through the Study including reports, presentations and meeting notices. Using an opt-in feature, stakeholder email information may be collected in a database for future outreach communications. The ITCTC website will serve as a portal to the project website which will be hosted by the study team and enable opportunity for comments and the potential to receive project updates by providing an email address. (See public involvement database, below).

E-mail notifications

The study team will create email notifications to inform and solicit input from agencies, stakeholders and the public in the study. An effort will be made to obtain e-mail addresses online and at meetings for future notifications to reduce postal costs and facilitate stakeholder communication.

Media relations

Background information will be supplied to the media regarding the study and to generate media placements regarding public meetings. Unless authorized by the ITCTC Project Manager, the Wendel Team will not speak for or make representations about the findings or conclusions of the study outside of the context of arranged public information meetings. Area newspaper and newsletter editors will be provided with press releases about major milestones, meeting notices and meeting recaps and encouraged to publish such information to enhance the awareness and involvement. News outlets will also be encouraged to direct their readers to the study webpage.

Public Involvement Database

A database of persons and agencies interested in the study will be developed and updated on an ongoing basis. The study team will specifically target the outreach to groups representing elderly, persons with disabilities, limited English proficiency and other transportation disadvantaged populations—all transit constituencies that will be a resource for planning and developing the study. The database will be used to communicate with those who request to be placed on the Study's contact list. Those included on the list will receive periodic messages regarding the Study, such as updates and meeting notices. Members of the public will be encouraged to join the study mailing list by way of comment forms distributed and collected at public meetings and through the study webpage comment form.

The public involvement database may be supplemented by the names of residents, businesses community groups and agencies in the study area, through available data sources provided by members of the RTPC or Client Committee.