

# Whitfield County

## Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization

### Public Participation Plan

Adopted: **May 5, 2016**

Prepared By  
Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization

In Cooperation with the  
Georgia Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
Federal Transit Administration



### Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization

In accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other nondiscrimination laws, public participation is solicited without regard to religion, age, race, color, national origin, sex, disability, familial, or income status.

**The public involvement process for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is used to satisfy the Georgia Department of Transportation public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).**

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Table of Contents

- I. Overview ..... 1
  - A. Historical Background ..... 1
  - B. Purpose..... 1
  - C. Importance of Public Participation ..... 2
- II. Transportation Planning..... 2
  - A. Planning Process ..... 2
  - B. Greater Dalton MPO Committees and Professional Staff..... 3
  - C. The Six Core Functions of a Metropolitan Planning Organization..... 4
- III. Regulatory Requirements..... 5
  - A. SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, and FAST Act ..... 5
  - B. Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994: ..... 7
  - C. Georgia Planning Act of 1989 ..... 8
  - D. Georgia Open Meetings Act ..... 8
- IV. Participation Plan Process ..... 8
  - A. General Guidelines..... 8
  - B. GDMPO Policy for Citizen Input: ..... 9
- V. Participation Opportunities for MPO Planning Documents:..... 10
  - A. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP): ..... 10
  - B. Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP): ..... 10
  - C. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): ..... 10
  - D. Participation Plan (PP): ..... 11
- VI. Outreach Methods: ..... 11
  - A. GDMPO Website: ..... 11
  - B. Meeting Notification: ..... 11
  - C. Project Workshops/Open Houses: ..... 11
  - D. Public Hearings: ..... 12
- VII. Visualization Techniques: ..... 12
  - A. Maps..... 12
  - B. Photographs..... 12
  - C. Posters and Flyers ..... 12
  - D. Visual Presentations ..... 12
- VIII. Participation Strategies, Techniques, and Procedures: ..... 13

A. Public Awareness and Understanding.....	13
B. Public Input.....	13
C. Stakeholder Outreach.....	14
D. Environmental Justice.....	15
IX. Performance Measures.....	15
X. Appendices.....	1

## **I. Overview**

### **A. Historical Background**

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a transportation policy-making organization composed of representatives from local governments, transportation agencies, and technical advisors. The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 required the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. In 2010, the U.S. Census declared Whitfield County's population to be 102,599. MPOs were created to ensure existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) planning process. Federal funding for transportation projects and programs are channeled through this planning process.

As a result of the 2000 Census, the U.S. Bureau of the Census designated Dalton, Georgia as a new Urbanized Area (UA) on May 1, 2002. The Dalton UA is now required by Title 23, Section 134 of the United States Code to have a comprehensive transportation planning process to be eligible for federal transportation funds.

Through resolutions adopted by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners and the Mayor and Council of the City of Dalton and upon request of the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation, the Governor of Georgia designated the North Georgia Regional Development Center (NGRDC) as the MPO for the Dalton Urbanized Area and as the recipient of Federal transportation planning funds. The NGRDC operated the MPO through 2009.

Through resolutions adopted by the Whitfield County Board of Commissioners, the Murray County Sole Commissioner, Mayor and Council of the Cities of Dalton, Tunnel Hill, Cohutta, Varnell, and upon request of the Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Transportation and the Governor of Georgia re-designated the GDMPO through Whitfield County as the MPO for the Dalton Urbanized Area and as the recipient of Federal transportation planning funds.

This re-designation placed the Dalton-Whitfield County Urban Area under the provisions of the Federal-Aid-Highway Acts and the Urban Mass Transportation Act of 1964, as amended, which require a "continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C)" transportation planning process. Subsequent to this re-designation, the GDMPO established the Policy and Technical Coordinating Committees.

### **B. Purpose**

The objective of the Participation Plan is to assure that the concerns and issues of everyone with a stake in transportation decisions are identified and addressed in the development of the policies, programs, plans and projects being proposed for the area. The Participation Plan is developed through a consultation process to provide realistic opportunities for interested parties to express their views on transportation issues and to become active participants in the regional planning and transportation "3-C" metropolitan decision making process.

### C. Importance of Public Participation

Without meaningful public participation, there is a risk of making less than optimal decisions due to lack of input from interested parties who can bring comments and opinions to edify the local transportation decision process. Public participation should be more than just fulfilling a statutory obligation. Neglecting public participation can result in unnecessary delays, litigation, and erode public trust. True public participation is central to good decision-making.

## II. Transportation Planning

### A. Planning Process

Transportation planning in the Greater Dalton Metropolitan Area can provide the information, tools and public input needed to improve the performance of its transportation system. Transportation planning should reflect the metropolitan area's vision for its future. It should include considerations of possible strategies; an evaluation procedure that include different viewpoints; participation by relevant transportation agencies and organizations; and, an open, timely, and meaningful involvement of the public. Consideration of the links between transportation and other needs of the community should be crucial in transportation decision-making. These links are illustrated below:

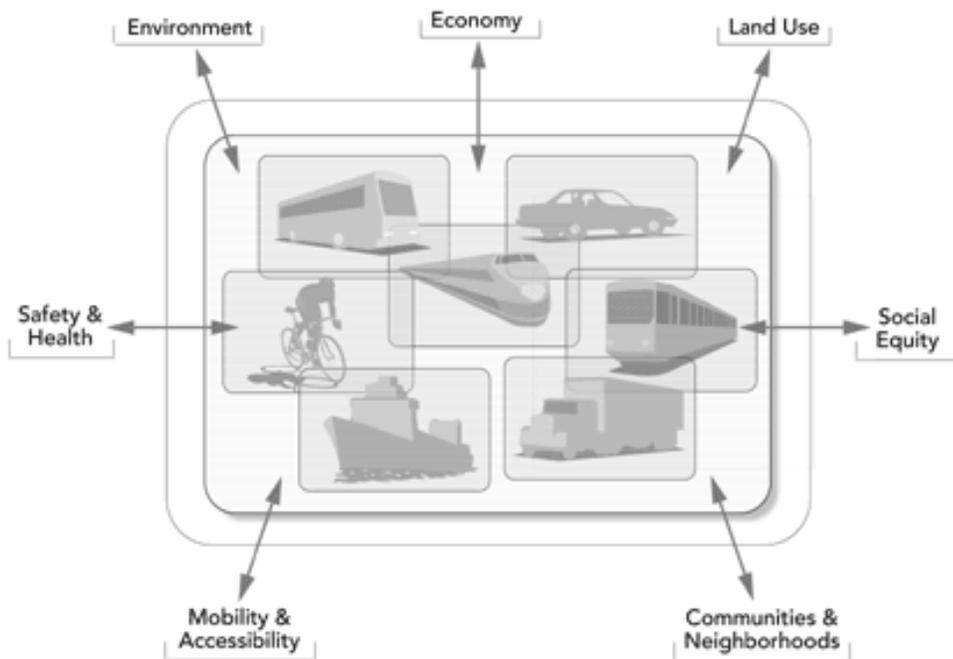


Figure 1 (The Metropolitan Planning Process: Key Issues, 2001)

The goal of the GDMPO is to maintain a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. Led by two MPO committees, described in Section B below, the process is designed to encourage involvement by all interested groups, such as the business community, neighborhood associations, environmental organizations, social service agencies, educational institutions and the general public. The GDMPO coordinates with local governments, local transportation agencies, the Georgia Department of Transportation and Federal Highway and Transit Administrations to facilitate the planning process. It is essential to extend public participation to include people who have been traditionally underserved by the transportation system and services in the metropolitan area. The transportation process is illustrated below:

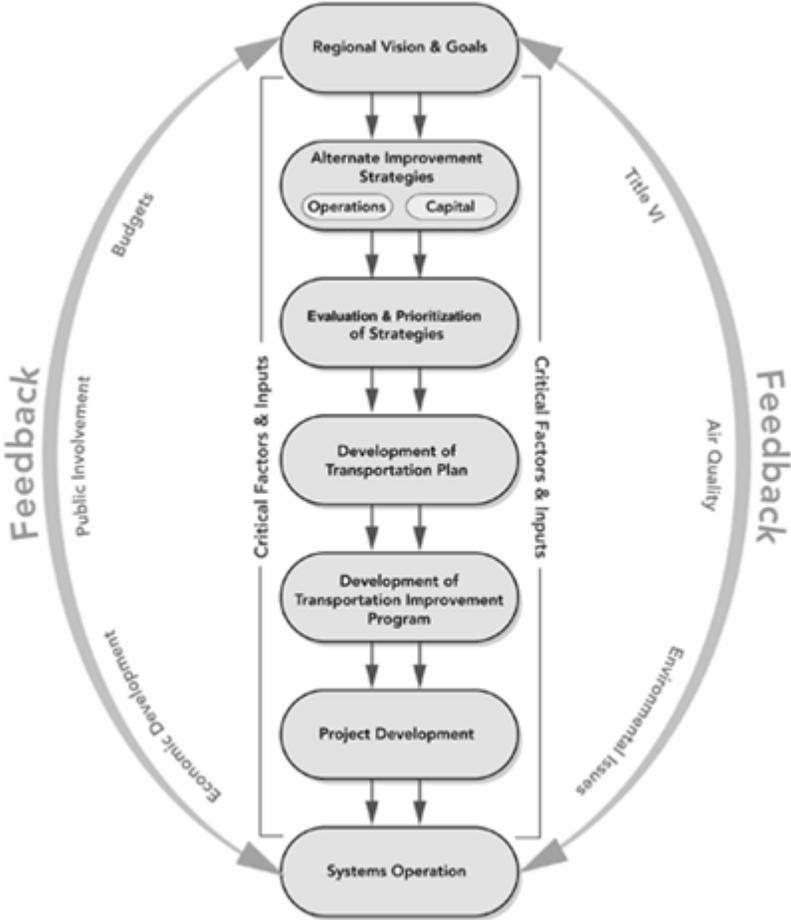


Figure 2 (The Metropolitan Planning Process: Key Issues, 2001)

**B. Greater Dalton MPO Committees and Professional Staff**

1) Policy Committee

The Policy Committee is the forum for cooperative decision-making and is composed of the principal elected officials of the participating governments as well as appointed officials of agencies that oversee or operate major transportation modes within the MPO area. The Policy Committee can make recommendations for consideration for members of the Technical Coordinating Committee, but they do not appoint TCC

members. The Policy Committee reviews and approves all transportation plans and programs resulting from the Dalton-Whitfield County Urban Transportation Study and ensures that a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process is maintained. The PC meets as needed on a quarterly to bi-monthly basis with designated public comment period set-aside on every meeting agenda. The PC meeting schedule is listed on the MPO's website.

2) Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC):

The Technical Coordinating Committee is composed of representatives from public agencies having transportation or transportation related planning, programming, and/or implementation responsibilities within the Urban Area. The TCC provides technical assistance to the Policy Committee and recommends transportation plans and programs for consideration and approval by the Policy Committee. The TCC meets as needed with a designated comment period set-aside on every meeting agenda. The TCC meeting schedule is listed on the MPO's website.

3) Technical Advisors (TA):

The TA educate and inform the PC and TCC on matters of public interest important to individuals and citizen groups regarding the Dalton-Whitfield County Urban Area Transportation Plan, study findings, and recommendations. The advisors assist in the development and maintenance of the PP, and all members are invited to attend all PC and TCC meetings. Technical Advisors are asked to serve the GDMPO, but they are not formally appointed.

4) Whitfield GDMPO Staff

The Whitfield County GDMPO is designated as the MPO for Dalton and Whitfield County and it employs professional engineers, planners, and coordinators who provide professional services for the MPO committees.

**C. The Six Core Functions of a Metropolitan Planning Organization**

1) Establish a Setting

Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision making in the metropolitan area.

2) Evaluate Alternatives

Evaluate transportation alternatives in context with the geography, nature of existing transportation issues and available options. Evaluation is included in planning activities outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

3) Develop a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Develop an annual work program outlining the transportation planning activities to be performed by the MPO.

4) Maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

Develop and update a LRTP for the Urban Area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years to promote the following:

- a) Mobility, access, and safety for people and good.
- b) Efficient transportation system performance and preservation.
- c) Quality of life.

5) Maintain a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

Develop a program based on the LRTP and designed to serve the area's goals, using expenditure, regulations, operating, management and financial tools.

6) Public Involvement

The MPO, through meeting notices, announcements and publications, involves the general public, including the underserved population, in the five functions listed above.

### **III. Regulatory Requirements**

#### **A. SAFETEA-LU, MAP-21, and FAST Act**

The planning activities described in the Participation Plan act as a response to multiple regulatory requirements. The Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), of 2005, defines the structure of the metropolitan planning process. The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (MAP-21) Act, signed into law on July 6, 2012, modified the metropolitan planning process by requiring metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to establish and use a performance-based approach to transportation decision making and development of the planning documents. The UPWP has been developed to comply with MAP-21 requirements, with respect to metropolitan planning. In accordance with MAP-21, the following eight (8) planning factors are used in the development of plans or programs:

- 1) Supporting economic vitality of the metropolitan area, by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency, and by promoting consistency between transportation improvements and state and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- 2) Increase safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- 3) Increase security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- 4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
- 5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- 6) Enhance integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- 7) Promote efficiency of management and operation;
- 8) Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system.

On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act, or "FAST Act" - the first Federal law in over ten years to provide long-term funding certainty for surface transportation. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for the Department's highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology and statistics programs. With its enactment, States and local governments may now move forward with critical transportation projects, like new highways and transit lines, with the confidence that they will have a Federal partner over the long term.

The FAST Act continues the Metropolitan Planning program and establishes a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive framework for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas. Program oversight is a joint FHWA/FTA responsibility. The Act continues the MAP-21 approach to formula program funding, authorizing a lump sum total instead of individual authorizations. The FAST Act has the following program features:

1) Selection of MPO Officials

The FAST Act clarifies that metropolitan planning organization (MPO) representation is selected by an MPO according to its bylaws/enabling statute. It also changes the selection criteria for MPO officials to:

- grant a representative of a transit provider authority equal to that of other MPO officials; and
- allow a representative of a transit provider to also represent a local community.

2) Consultation with other Planning Officials

The FAST Act continues to encourage MPOs to consult with officials responsible for other types of planning activities. It adds to the list of such activities tourism and the reduction of risk of natural disasters.

3) Scope of Planning Process

The FAST Act expands the scope of consideration of the metropolitan planning process to include:

- improving transportation system resiliency and reliability;
- reducing (or mitigating) the stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- enhancing travel and tourism.

4) Capital Investment and other Strategies

The FAST Act continues to require a metropolitan transportation plan to include strategies to meet current and projected transportation infrastructure needs.

5) Resilience and Environmental Mitigation Activities

The FAST Act expands the focus on the resiliency of the transportation system as well as activities to reduce stormwater runoff from transportation infrastructure. In addition, it newly requires strategies to reduce the vulnerability of existing transportation infrastructure to natural disasters.

6) Transportation and Transit Enhancement Activities

The FAST Act continues to require a metropolitan transportation plan to include transportation and transit enhancement activities. When proposing these activities, the plan must now include:

- consideration of the role that intercity buses may play in reducing congestion, pollution, and energy consumption in a cost-effective manner; and
- strategies and investments that preserve and enhance intercity bus systems (including those that are privately owned and operated).

7) Participation by Interested Parties in the Planning Process

The FAST Act explicitly adds public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs to the list of interested parties that an MPO must provide with reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.

8) Congestion Management

The FAST Act adds examples of travel demand reduction strategies for congestion management in a transportation management area (TMA). While retaining the requirement for a congestion management process for MPOs that serve a TMA, the law also allows an MPO that serves a TMA to develop a congestion management plan (distinct from the congestion management process) that will be considered in the MPO's transportation improvement program. Any such plan must include regional goals for reducing peak hour vehicle miles traveled and improving transportation connections must identify existing services and programs that support access to jobs in the region, and must identify proposed projects and programs to reduce congestion and increase job access opportunities. The FAST Act specifies certain consultation requirements MPOs must use in developing the plan.

**B. Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994:**

*“Each Federal Agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”*

The MPO, created through Federal law, has the responsibility of incorporating environmental justice into transportation planning. The goal of environmental justice is to ensure that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race,

national origin or income, and that they have access to meaningful participation in transportation planning. Through the following, this goal can be achieved:

1. Avoiding, minimizing or mitigating disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations.
2. Ensuring low-income and minorities are properly notified of public meetings and documents through announcements in their cultural media and centers.
3. Ensuring that statistics be collected about minority/low-income communities, and that data is used to properly assess and improve possible inequities.
4. Incorporating this information and data into the decision making process.

### **C. Georgia Planning Act of 1989**

Under the rules of the Georgia Department of Community Affairs created by the Georgia Planning Act, the planning process, *“must be conducted with adequate public participation, to insure that identified needs, vision, goals and implementation strategies adopted by the community are reflective of community values, drives and intentions and can be implemented (with adequate public support) through community investments, initiatives, regulations and programs.”*

### **D. Georgia Open Meetings Act**

The Georgia Open Meetings Act governs the methods by which public meetings are conducted. All requirements are articulated in Chapter 14, Section 50.14.1-6 of the Official Georgia Code Annotated. For detailed view of the law, visit the Attorney General’s Webpage at:

[http://law.ga.gov/sites/law.ga.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit\\_1210/62/49/186393706OMA\\_M\\_2012\\_Act\\_correctly\\_formatted.pdf](http://law.ga.gov/sites/law.ga.gov/files/imported/vgn/images/portal/cit_1210/62/49/186393706OMA_M_2012_Act_correctly_formatted.pdf)

## **IV. Participation Plan Process**

### **A. General Guidelines**

The Participation Plan is intended to develop reasonable opportunities for public participation of interested parties. The plan is intended to establish best practices that will allow for proper decision making of the transportation plans that are developed by the MPO. In the public participation process the MPO shall adhere to the following:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, transportation agencies and providers 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 public access to technical and policy information used in creating the LRTP, the TIP, and other transportation plans and projects, and conduct open public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered.
3. Give adequate public notice of public involvement activities and sufficient time to allow for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of the LRTP, the TIP and other transportation plans and projects. If the final draft of any transportation plan differs significantly from the one made available for public comment, additional viewing opportunities will be made available by the MPO.

4. Respond in writing to public input. When significant comments are received on draft transportation plans through public participation or interagency consultation processes, reports on the disposition of comments will be part of the final plan.
5. Request the needs of those traditionally underserved by the current transportation planning process such as, minorities, the transportation disadvantaged, elderly, persons with disabilities and low income households.
6. Provide forty-five calendar day public comment/review period prior to adoption of the Participation Plan and/or amendments. Notice to be advertised in the Dalton Citizen, social media websites, and La Voz newspapers with general circulation throughout Whitfield County. Prior notice will also be sent to the entire MPO mailing list.
7. Provide thirty calendar day public comment/review period prior to adoption of the LRTP, the TIP, Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Plans, Transit Plans, any formal amendments or updates and other suitable transportation plans and/or projects.
8. Coordinate the Participation Process with statewide Participation Processes whenever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs (The GDMPO will follow public participation protocol as outlined in the GDOT Amendment Process).

**B. GDMPO Policy for Citizen Input:**

Public participation is important in the transportation planning process to gain citizen insights and ideas about transportation needs, issues and improvement proposals. Because of this, citizens and groups are welcome to attend all MPO Committee meetings. The GDMPO has implemented the following official policies and procedures for citizen's wishing to address the MPO Committees at meetings:

1. All meetings of the GDMPO are open to the public and 15 minutes are designated for the public to address questions or comments on any agenda item for that meeting. Each individual may speak up to three minutes in the order they signed in. If many people wish to talk on the same subject, with the same concerns or issues, it is suggested a spokesperson be selected to represent the group in order to cover all issues and avoid redundancy.
2. Following a citizen address in item #1 above, the matter can be added to the agenda of the Committee meeting for discussion/action by a majority vote of the members present and/or the matter can be referred to other resources, (i.e., staff, consultant, GDOT, TCC) as determined by the committee, for study, analysis, and recommendations.
3. A citizen or representative of a group desiring to formally address an MPO Committee on any MPO or agenda related item shall make a request to do so with the MPO Transportation Planner ten days prior to the meeting. The MPO Transportation Planner shall place the item on the agenda of the next meeting of the committee for a decision by a majority vote of the members present on the request.
4. All citizens and representatives of citizen groups directly addressing an MPO Committee shall sign in with their full name and provide contact information that shall at a minimum include an e-mail address and telephone number to enable follow up contact for reporting actions, recommendations or referrals made by the committee.

5. A record of citizen addresses shall be made in the minutes of the committee meeting and may include meeting recordings, maps, written submissions, photographs, video, etc. provided by citizens at the committee meeting.
6. When an issue is not resolved at an MPO Committee meeting, a report of the follow up action shall be provided in writing to the citizen at the e-mail address provided.

## **V. Participation Opportunities for MPO Planning Documents:**

### **A. Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP):**

The MPO committees will review proposed transportation planning activities for inclusion in the UPWP. This work program will serve as the basis for the preparation of a transportation-planning contract for the following fiscal year.

#### 1) UPWP Opportunity for Review and Comment:

The draft UPWP will be presented to the Policy Committee along with comments from other MPO committees. After periodic review/input by the MPO committees and the GDOT, the UPWP will be adopted and sent to the GDOT. *–Additional participation opportunities: If the draft UPWP changes significantly from the version given to the MPO committees, an additional review period will be provided by the MPO.*

### **B. Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):**

The LRTP is the MPO's 20-year plan and outlines the MPO's goals and objectives. The GDMPO staff will review demographics, land use patterns, environmentally sensitive areas, and economic development in the MPO boundary area to identify trends, patterns, and transportation system needs in creating the 2040 LRTP Update which is currently under development.

#### 1) LRTP Opportunity for Review and Comment:

Input is gathered from the MPO committees, local governments, citizens and interested parties through formal and informal meetings when LRTP updates or amendments are needed. The revised document is available through the MPO and on the MPO website and a public hearing is held for public review. After the public hearing the draft LRTP is available for review and comment for thirty days at public sites and will then be officially adopted by the MPO. Every five years from the adoption of the initial LRTP, the plan will be reappraised, updated and approved by the MPO Policy Committee. This cycle will allow the LRTP to always maintain a 20-year horizon. *-Additional participation opportunities: If the draft LRTP changes significantly from the previous version, an additional review period will be provided for by the MPO.*

### **C. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):**

The TIP outlines transportation improvements for a four-year period and is prepared annually. The TIP describes the type, costs, location, completion schedule, and funding sources for projects first identified in the LRTP. The TIP also contains an annual listing of projects completed in the previous year. Special consideration will be given to bicycle and pedestrian projects.

1) TIP Opportunity for Review and Comment:

Draft TIPs are made available for public review and comment for a 30-day period at the public sites listed in the Section IV.D.4 of this plan and will then be officially adopted by the MPO. *–Additional participation opportunities: If the draft TIP changes significantly from the previous version, an additional review period will be provided for by the MPO.*

**D. Participation Plan (PP):**

The PP provides the GDMPO a formal process to allow interested parties to get involved and understand the transportation decision making process. The PP is developed in consultation with interested parties listed in Section III.C.1. Final approval of the PP is by the MPO Policy Committee.

1) PP Opportunity for Review and Comment:

Federal regulations require a 45-day comment and review period. Comments are taken, addressed, and filed with the MPO. *-Additional participation opportunities: If the draft plan changes significantly from the version given to the public to review, and additional review period will be provided by the MPO.*

**VI. Outreach Methods:**

**A. GDMPO Website:**

The site was established to provide information about the MPO process, members, meeting times, and contact information. Work products, like the TIP, LRTP, UPWP, etc. are also available on the website. Special announcements are made when these documents are up for public review and comments. The documents are made available for view online at all times. Online comments are delivered directly to the MPO Transportation Planner, who responds to the comment and files it. The website also lists current information on all meetings for all MPO committees, planning studies, publications, and related public events. The GDMPO website address is: <http://www.whitfieldcountyga.com/eng/mpo.htm>.

**B. Meeting Notification:**

The MPO serves public notice to local newspapers regarding upcoming MPO meetings. The notices contain the date, time and location of the meeting and are published at least 24 hours in advance of the meeting. The notices are published in The Daily Citizen and the Hispanic publication La Voz Newspapers in efforts to reach Dalton’s Spanish-speaking community.

**C. Project Workshops/Open Houses:**

These are open and informal public meetings where MPO staff interacts with the public on an individual basis. Short presentations may be given, but the purpose of these meetings is to be project specific and to provide project information and solicit public comment and priorities. These types are meetings are typically held for special projects requiring heavy citizen input.

#### **D. Public Hearings:**

These are formal public meetings used to solicit public comment on projects or issues being considered for adoption by the MPO and they are primarily held for the LRTP and TIP. Comments from these meetings are recorded in the meeting minutes and the GDMPO staff typically responds (as needed) to comments from the public. The LRTP and TIP documents are made available for public review at the Dalton City Library, Dalton City Hall, Whitfield County Administrative Buildings #1 and #2, Chamber of Commerce, Varnell City Hall, Tunnel Hill City Hall and the NWGRC Offices. Electronic copies of the documents are also made available on the GDMPO website.

### **VII. Visualization Techniques:**

When appropriate, the following techniques are used to display information at meetings, hearings, on the website or any place information is being disseminated. The GDMPO staff is aware that different people interpret and analyze documents differently and will do everything possible to make information available in different formats. Some of the techniques listed below may not always be available at the GDMPO.

#### **A. Maps**

The maps utilized by the GDMPO display the project area, alternatives to the proposed project, evaluations of the alternatives, and data or changes to data regarding a specific project.

#### **B. Photographs**

When available, photos may be used to show examples of projects. For example, if a geometric change is proposed at an intersection, a picture and/or a rendering showing the geometric change of a similar intersection may be displayed.

#### **C. Posters and Flyers**

Posters and flyers may be used to announce meetings and events and may also be used as display materials at public meetings to visually show transportation plans and/or projects. They may contain project descriptions, meeting purpose, location, dates, times, and they may also be used to attract audiences in different languages.

#### **D. Visual Presentations**

Presentations will be made available to all MPO committees, local and state agencies, and other interested parties by the MPO staff. These presentations will contain information about LRTP and TIP updates and other MPO functions. These presentations will be used to explain the impact of these plans to the area and/or affected agency.

## **VIII. Participation Strategies, Techniques, and Procedures:**

### **A. Public Awareness and Understanding**

The goal is to raise public awareness and understanding of the transportation planning process, functions, responsibilities and programs of the MPO and identify how interested citizens can become involved through:

1) Speaking Engagements:

Members of the MPO professional staff and volunteer members of the Committees will speak to civic clubs, schools, churches, senior citizen groups, neighborhood groups, and other special interest groups interested in transportation issues. Speaking engagements will inform citizens of the purpose and process of the LRTP and the TIP and gather input.

2) Media Relations:

Newspapers and television, radio stations serving Dalton and Whitfield County will be notified of all MPO Committee meetings, activities and products like the LRTP and the TIP. A list of reporters/contacts representing each media outlet will be compiled to utilize regarding transportation-planning activities. Special efforts will be made to educate media representatives on the transportation planning process and the role they play in citizen awareness and participation.

3) Transportation Planning Guide:

A citizen's transportation planning brochure will be prepared and distributed to stakeholders on the mailing list and available to everyone. The brochure will include a history of planning efforts, an outline of the MPO functions, explanation of the planning process, summary of the impacts of transportation, and a form to allow citizens to participate in special planning projects. Copies of these brochures will be made available at meetings for citizen to review and take.

4) Website:

The GDMPO utilizes the aforementioned website, which provides access to MPO transportation documents and will include announcements of all MPO meetings regarding transportation plans, programs, and/or projects.

### **B. Public Input**

The goal is to provide the public with early, ongoing and reasonable opportunities for involvement in the transportation planning process through the following:

1) Open Houses

Copies of a plan or report will be placed in public places for public review over a period of time. This will be used for review of this PP, the LRTP and the TIP. Open houses will be located in various locations around Whitfield County. Occasionally, MPO staff members will be present to answer questions regarding the item(s) under review.

2) Public Meetings and Hearings

Public meetings are more informal and are used during the development of transportation plans and projects to inform and gather input from the public. Public meetings will be used in the development of the LRTP, the TIP and other major planning projects. Public hearings are more formal and comments from the public are usually recorded. Before the LRTP and TIP are adopted, the MPO, in coordination with the GDOT, will hold a public hearing.

3) Focus Groups/Listening Sessions

Focus groups and listening/brainstorming sessions assist in developing the LRTP and other major plans or projects. Through small groups comprised of the attendees of public meetings to establish goals and objectives, identify transportation issues, locate problem areas and offer possible solutions.

4) Public Comment Forms

Forms will be provided at all public meetings to allow attendees to write comments and concerns related to the plans/projects under review.

5) Surveys

Surveys will be distributed at various public meetings and hearings to gather input into the plans/projects under review. Surveys will also be available on the MPO website to gather input from people unable to attend public meetings.

**C. Stakeholder Outreach**

The GDMPO will maintain timely contact with key stakeholders throughout the transportation planning process through the following:

1) Stakeholder Task Forces

Stakeholders are identified to provide guidance in preparation of the LRTP, TIP and other major plans and projects. The MPO Technical Advisors assist in naming stakeholders that can assist with transportation planning, such as MPO Committee members, local elected officials, administrators and operators of public works departments, transportation service agencies, leaders of bicycle clubs, major businesses and industries in Whitfield County, administrators of public schools and Dalton College, and leaders of major civic groups with interests in transportation issues.

2) Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder Interviews are used with the members of the stakeholder task forces to guide the development of the LRTP and other major plans by encouraging them to write or give oral expressions to specific concerns or ideas for solutions.

## **D. Environmental Justice**

The GDMPO will identify and involve traditionally underserved sectors such as the minorities, low income, elderly or disabled in the transportation planning process.

### 1) Outreach to Minority

Business alliances, faith organizations, community and neighborhood organizations, low-income, elderly or the disabled. Outreach will then include the compilation of lists of key persons, groups, agencies, churches and special interests. Demographic information will also be gathered to assess their special concerns and needs relative to transportation. Special efforts will be made to establish communication links with these groups which may include the publication of materials in Spanish, and upon request, provide translators at meetings. Also, special efforts will be made to conduct meetings in areas where minority groups live and to provide transportation to persons without a vehicle or who are physically handicapped.

### 2) Accessible Public Meetings/Workshops

All public meetings will be held at places handicapped accessible. Public meetings, whenever practical, will be held in or near the affected neighborhood. Special workshops on how to more effectively serve communities with high concentrations of minority, low income, elderly or disabled populations, will be held. Participants will include MPO staff members, persons skilled in working with these special groups and volunteer members living in these communities.

### 3) Establish Title VI and Environmental Justice Training and Briefing Sessions

MPO staff members will invite GDOT, FHWA, FTA professionals trained in the knowledge and applications of the provisions of Title VI and Environmental Justice to participate in briefing sessions to inform and educate MPO staff persons, committee members and others on the provisions of Title VI and Environmental Justice.

## **IX. Performance Measures**

Performance Measures serve as a means for the general public, state and federal reviewers, the GDMPO Committees and staff to evaluate the level of public participation in the creation of transportation documents, transportation policies and transportation improvements regarding transportation issues in the GDMPO planning area. Public participation is crucial to the process to ensure all sectors of the community are being served and have the opportunity to be heard and/or become more educated on the transportation issues affecting them. Public participation also serves as a check and balance for the GDMPO committees to ensure that anyone wishing to participate in the transportation planning process is free to do so in a public, open and friendly environment.

Performance Measures are collected through the various means described in the chart below as a way to better inform, educate and involve the general public and all interested parties in the transportation planning process for the GDMPO planning area.

Performance Measures are constantly reviewed, analyzed and updated or revised by the GDMPO committees and staff to ensure all sectors of the community are being notified of

their right and opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process. Comments from the general public, public meeting attendees, members of the Policy and Technical Coordinating committees and the technical advisors are all documented and taken into consideration in the creation of all transportation planning documents and policies which directly affect transportation issues in the GDMPO planning area.

If any of the performance measures listed in the following chart fail to generate public involvement, that measure is evaluated for effectiveness, and if needed, revised and improved, so the general public and all interested parties can be better informed to increase their involvement in the public participation process and in the creation of all transportation planning practices, documents and policies affecting transportation issues in the GDMPO transportation planning area.

<b>Performance Measures for the GDMPO</b>		
Description	Quantitative	Qualitative
Participation Program	Number of participants Number of issues identified Number of issues addressed	Level of full and open access to all in transportation planning process Timing of information about transportation issues/processes Accessibility of technical and policy information Timing of public notifications of meetings and public comment periods Consideration of public input during transportation planning process Level of coordination with statewide and other major public involvement processes
Technical Advisors	Number of advisors Frequency of contact	How the Technical Advisors guidance is addressed in UPWP, LRTP, TIP
Public Meetings	Number/type of public notifications Number of attendees Number of comments received Number of comment responses Number of avenues used to reach EJ populations	Public understanding of transportation planning process Availability of educational opportunities Timing of public involvement activities How public input was used in UPWP, LRTP, TIP development Meeting convenience: time, place, and accessibility Effectiveness of meeting format Effectiveness of notification and communication tools
Stakeholder Interviews	Number of participants Number of issues identified by group Number of issues addressed in plan	How stakeholder's issues were addressed in UPWP, LRTP, TIP
Contact/Mailing List	Number of contacts Description of diversity of list Frequency of contact	Effectiveness of members and advisors
Website	Number of hits Number of comments received Number of comment responses	Quality and content of comments received

Performance Measures for the GDMPO		
Description	Quantitative	Qualitative
Media Relations	Number of media contacts Number of press releases distributed Amount of media coverage	Effectiveness in reaching the public and attaining participation
Brochure	Number of brochures distributed	Quality of brochure content Clarity of technical information and processes Availability of brochures Timing of distribution

## **X. Appendices**

## Appendix A

### GDMPO Members List

#### Whitfield County, Georgia Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization

Policy Committee			
Name	Appointment	Company	Term Expiration
Ty Ross	Chairman	Administrator, City of Dalton	*No Committee Terms
Mike Babb	Vice - Chairman	Chairman, Whitfield County Board of Comm.	*Officers elected annually
Mark Gibson	Member	Administrator, Whitfield County	
Mike Brown	Member	Administrator, City of Varnell	
Tate O' Gwin	Member	Councilman, City of Dalton	
Ken Gowin	Member	Mayor, City of Tunnel Hill	
Radney Simpson	Member	Assistant State Planner, GDOT	
Brittney Pittman	Member	Sole Commissioner, Murray County	
Ron Schimmick	Member	Mayor, City of Cohutta	

**Contact:** Jacob Bearden

**Purpose:** The function of the Policy Committee is to review and approve all transportation plans and programs resulting from the D - W Urban Transportation Study and to ensure a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process is maintained.

**Terms:** Officers should be reelected annually, but members can serve without term limits.

Technical Coordinating Committee			
Name	Appointment	Company	Term Expiration
Kent Benson	Chairman	Engineer, Whitfield County	*No Committee Terms
Benny Dunn	Member	Director, Dalton Public Works	*Officers elected annually
Dave Cox	Member	West GA Planner, GDOT	
TBD	Member	Dalton Utilities	
Tamara Christian	Member	FHWA	
TBD	Member	Manager, Dalton Municipal Airport	
Rick Holsomback	Member	Operations Director, Whitfield County Schools	
Rusty Lount	Member	Operations Director, Dalton City Schools	
DeWayne Hunt	Member	Director, Whitfield County Public Works	
Megan Weiss	Member	Transportation Planner, GDOT	
Cherie Marsh	Member	District 6 Engineer, GDOT	

**Contact:** Jacob Bearden

**Purpose:** The function of the Technical Coordinating Committee is to review and make recommendations regarding transportation plans, programs, and other special projects for the professional staff and Policy Committee of the MPO.

**Terms:** Officers should be reelected annually, but members can serve without term limits.

Advisory Committee			
Name	Appointment	Company	Term Expiration
Barnett Chitwood	Member	Northwest Georgia Regional Commission	*No Officers
Jean Garland	Member	Whitfield County Planning & Zoning Administration	

Staff		
Name	Title	Company
Jacob Bearden	GDMPO Coordinator	Whitfield County

## Appendix B

### Media Resources

<b><u>Newspapers</u></b>	<b><u>Television</u></b>
<p><b>The Daily Citizen</b> Attn: Tim Rogers P.O. Box 1167 Dalton, GA, 30722 Ph. 706-217-6397 Fax 706-275-6641 Email Address: <a href="mailto:timrogers@daltoncitizen.com">timrogers@daltoncitizen.com</a></p>	<p><b>WELF-TV 23</b> Attn: Ms. Richter 384 S. Campus Rd. Lookout Mountain, GA 30750 Ph. 706-278-0013 Fax 706-820-1735 Email Address: <a href="mailto:orichter@tbn.org">orichter@tbn.org</a> <a href="mailto:ktenney@tbn.org">ktenney@tbn.org</a></p>
<p><b>La Voz Newspaper</b> Attn. Francisco Palacios 102 W. Cuyler St. Dalton, GA 30720 Ph. 706-272-0435 Fax 706-272-0442 Email Address: <a href="mailto:lavoz@optilink.us">lavoz@optilink.us</a></p>	<p><b>WDNN/TV N. Georgia Television</b> Attn: Calvin Means 101 South Spencer St. Dalton, GA 30721 Ph. 706-278-9713 Fax 706-278-7950 Email Address: <a href="mailto:cmeans@wdnntv.com">cmeans@wdnntv.com</a></p>
	<p><b>WRCB Channel 3</b> Attn: Derrall Stalvey 900 Whitehall Road Chattanooga, TN 37405 Ph. 423-267-5412 Fax 423-756-3148 Email Address: <a href="mailto:dstalvey@wrcbtv.com">dstalvey@wrcbtv.com</a></p>
	<p><b>WTVC NEWS Channel 9</b> Attn: Tom Henderson 4279 Benton Drive Chattanooga, TN 37406 Ph. 423-756-6397 Fax 423-757-7401 Email Address: <a href="mailto:thenderson@newschannel9.com">thenderson@newschannel9.com</a></p>
	<p><b>WDEF Channel 12</b> Attn: Dutch Terry 3300 Broad Street Chattanooga, TN 37408 Ph. 423-785-1227 Fax 423-785-1273 Email Address: <a href="mailto:news@wdef.com">news@wdef.com</a></p>

## Appendix D

### Stakeholders

Various provisions require expanded consultation and cooperation with Federal, State, Local and Tribal agencies responsible for land use, natural resources and other environmental issues. The following is a list of Federal, State, and Local agencies the State DOT or MPO may choose to consult with:

Georgia Department of Economic Development	State Parks & Historic Sites, DNR
Georgia Department of Community Affairs	Georgia Ports Authority
Georgia Forestry Commission	Coastal Resources, DNR
Georgia Department of Natural Resources	Federal Highway Administration
Georgia Department of Human Services	Federal Transit Administration
Historic Preservation Division, DNR	Federal Aviation Administration
Environmental Protection Division, DNR	

SAFETEA-LU also expands the listing of “interested parties to be engaged during the development of the Participation Plan, Statewide and MPO Transportation Plans and MPO Transportation Improvement Programs to include:

County Commissioners, Whitfield County	Mayor and City Council, Dalton, Georgia
City Council, City of Tunnel Hill	City Council, City of Varnell
City Council, City of Cohutta	City of Dalton Public Works Department
City of Dalton Fire and Police Department	City of Dalton Dept of Comm. Development
City of Dalton Housing Authority	Whitfield County Public Works Department
Whitfield County Sheriff’s Department	Whitfield County Fire Department
Dalton Utilities	Dalton Downtown Development Authority
DOT, Dalton City Board of Education	DOT, Whitfield Co. Board Of Education
City of Dalton Municipal Airport	Norfolk/Southern Railroad
CSX Railroad	Dalton Bike Club
Nature Conservancy	Conasauga River Alliance
Trust for Public Land	Whitfield-Murray Historical Society, Inc.
City of Dalton Fire and Police Department	Whitfield Co. Emergency Management Agency
Dalton-Whitfield County Chamber of Commerce	Carpet Industries
Whitfield Co/Georgia Convention & Visitors Bureau	Northwest Georgia Transportation Club
NGCAA, Inc., Mountain Area Transportation System	Georgia Motor Trucking Association

Appendix E

Glossary of Terms

<b>GDMPO</b>	The <b>Greater Dalton Metropolitan Planning Organization</b> is the transportation policy-making organization made up of representatives from local governments, transportation agencies and citizens appointed to serve in an advisory capacity.
<b>3-C process</b>	MPOs are created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs are based on a <b>comprehensive, cooperative and continuing (3-C)</b> planning process.
<b>PP</b>	The <b>Participation Plan</b> is a guide to assure that the concerns and issues of everyone with a stake in transportation decisions are identified and addressed in the development of transportation policies, programs, plans, and projects being proposed in the community.
<b>GDOT</b>	The <b>Georgia Department of Transportation</b> .
<b>PC</b>	The <b>Policy Committee</b> is the forum for cooperative decision-making and is composed of the principal elected officials of participating governments as well as appointed officials of agencies that oversee or operate major transportation modes within the MPO area.
<b>TCC</b>	The <b>Technical Coordinating Committee</b> is composed of representatives of public agencies having transportation or transportation related planning, programming, and/or implementation responsibilities within the MPO area.
<b>TA</b>	<b>Technical Advisors</b> advise the Policy and Technical Coordinating Committees on matters of public opinion from individual citizens and citizen groups regarding transportation plans, study findings, and recommendations.
<b>L RTP</b>	The <b>Long Range Transportation Plan</b> is 20-year horizon plan that includes both short-range and long-range strategies/actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. The plan must be updated every five years.
<b>TIP</b>	The <b>Transportation Improvement Program</b> is a 3-year program of projects, updated annually, listed by priority, location, type, project phase, cost, and funding source and it is prepared in cooperation with the Georgia Department of Transportation,. Projects listed in the TIP have been identified in the adopted Long Range Transportation Plan.
<b>UPWP</b>	The <b>Unified Planning Work Program</b> is an outline of the transportation planning tasks to be performed in the MPO study area. The descriptions of the tasks include objectives, methodology, products, responsible agency, costs, and funding source.
<b>23 CFR450C, Sec. 450.322</b>	<b>23 CFR450C, Sec. 450.322</b> is the regulation listed in the Federal Register pertaining to the requirement of Title 23 United States Code regarding the transportation planning process and the development of the Transportation Plan.
<b>Travel Demand</b>	<b>Travel demand</b> can be measured by the amount of traffic that is generated by various land uses or by the amount of vehicles that pass a certain point along a roadway.
<b>Intermodal Transportation System</b>	An <b>intermodal transportation system</b> is an integration of transportation facilities that function interdependently with various modes of transportation. For example an intermodal system might include a parking area for motorists who would complete a trip by using a bus while their car is parked.

<b>Intermodal connections</b>	<b>Intermodal connections</b> are links between modes of transportation, like a park & ride area for transit services or carpooling, or parking for airline passengers, or a trailhead for bicyclists or pedestrians who park their vehicles and continue on by bicycle or walking.
<b>23 CFR 450C, Sec. 450.316(b)</b>	<b>23 CFR 450C, Sec. 450.316(b)</b> is the regulation listed in the Federal Register pertaining to the requirement of Title 23 United States Code regarding public involvement in the transportation planning process.
<b>EPA</b>	The <b>Environmental Protection Agency</b>
<b>FHWA</b>	The <b>Federal Highway Administration</b> of the U.S. Department of Transportation.
<b>TMA</b>	Urbanized areas exceeding populations of 200,000 are designated as <b>Transportation Management Areas</b> . In addition to the transportation planning requirements of areas of less than 200,000 people, these areas must also establish a congestion management system. If a TMA is also classified as nonattainment regarding air quality standards, special requirements are imposed to assist in gaining attainment status.
<b>Nonattainment</b>	<b>Nonattainment</b> refers to urbanized areas that do not meet the air quality standards set by the EPA
<b>Executive Order 12898</b>	The <b>Executive Order 12898</b> was issued by President Clinton on February 11, 1994 that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”
<b>O.C.G.A. § 50-14-1 et seq.</b>	The Official Code, Georgia Annotated, paragraph 50-14-1 and following (et seq.) is the Georgia law that requires that meetings of decision-making bodies be open to the public.
<b>SWTP</b>	<b>Statewide Transportation Plan</b> developed by the Georgia Department of Transportation.
<b>STIP</b>	<b>State Transportation Improvement Program</b> developed by the Georgia Department of Transportation. This program is updated annually.
<b>Environmental Justice</b>	The goal of <b>environmental justice</b> is to ensure that services and benefits are fairly distributed to all people, regardless of race, national origin, or income, and that they have access to meaningful participation in the development of services.
<b>Title VI</b>	<b>Title VI</b> of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that “no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”