

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN



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Hattiesburg-Petal- Forrest-Lamar
Metropolitan Planning Organization

Notation of Financial Assistance

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Public Participation Plan

HATTIESBURG - PETAL - FORREST - LAMAR MPO

MISSION STATEMENT:

The HPFL- MPO's mission is to invite cooperating agencies, develop consensus among a wide range of stakeholders with diverse interests, resolve conflict, and ensure that quality transportation decisions are fully explained. These responsibilities will force the transportation projects that are implemented to balance transportation needs, costs, environmental resources, safety, and public input in order to arrive at objective and responsible transportation decisions.

SECTION I

A. Introduction and Purpose

The Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization's (HPFL-MPO) transportation planning decisions affect the lives of people living and traveling through the Hattiesburg Urbanized Area (HUZA). A Public Participation Process will provide an opportunity for people to directly engage in the transportation decision-making process and influence transportation choices in the region. This process will promote diverse input in the transportation planning process as well give the public a sense of ownership of developed transportation solutions.

The participation process must be a proactive process in which governing bodies strive to find innovative ways to identify and engage the affected public, provide a wide variety of opportunities for agencies to become involved, and create a meaningful process that is transparent and ensures effective communication about how public contribution influences transportation decisions. It is also important that a public participation process be continuously evaluated and improved to ensure that under-represented communities are given a voice.

The major component of this document is to provide the HPFL-MPO with information that includes:

- the identification of the locations of socio-economic groups, including low-income and minority populations as covered by the Executive Order on Environmental Justice and Title VI provisions
- the planning process with methods to secure full and fair participation of low-income and minority populations
- a continuing public education process which focuses on the 3-C transportation planning process of continuing, comprehensive, coordinated planning.

- Useful demographic information, which will be used to examine the distribution of the benefits and burdens of the transportation investments across these groups included in the plan and TIP to address these needs.

This includes but is not limited to lower income households, minorities, persons with disabilities, representatives from community services organizations, tribal councils and other public agencies. This element also assists in identifying and addressing environmental justice and social equity issues.

B. Background of the Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are regional transportation planning agencies, which provide a forum for cooperative decision-making concerning area-wide transportation issues. The MPO was created by Federal and State law to develop transportation plans and programs which encourage and promote the implementation of transportation systems that embrace the various modes of transportation in a manner that will maximize the mobility of people and goods. The Federal legislation focuses on planning for urban areas, rather than individual cities. Every urbanized area with a population of more than 50,000 persons must have a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for transportation to qualify for federal highway or transit assistance. All transportation projects should be supported and coordinated with the MPO's long range plans to be eligible for Federal funds.

Mississippi Governor William Winter established the Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization in August 1982. The HPFL-MPO was established when the Hattiesburg central area reached a population status of 50,000 plus. The HPFL-MPO area consists of the City of Hattiesburg, the City of Petal, a portion of Forrest County and a portion of Lamar County. **(Appendix A - Urbanized Area Map)**

The smallest of the MPO's in the State of Mississippi, representatives from the City of Hattiesburg, City of Petal, Forrest County and Lamar County, the Mississippi Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration are involved in the transportation planning process for the MPO. Their purpose is to provide effective leadership in the development of transportation plans and programs.

The HPFL-MPO functions include, but are not limited to, the preparation of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), Public Participation Plan (PPP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and special studies. The MPO is responsible for ensuring all modes of transportation and transportation related projects are included in the planning process.

The Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar MPO Policy Committee serves as the official governing authority for the MPO and is responsible for making policy decisions regarding the transportation planning process. The HPFL-MPO Policy Committee is comprised of local elected and appointed officials representing the counties and municipalities located in the Hattiesburg MPO urbanized area, as well as leadership from the Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT), the Executive Director of the MPO, the Division Administrator for the Federal Highway

Administration (FHWA) and Regional Administrator Federal Transit Administration. The MPO Staff and the Technical Committee assist HPFL-MPO Policy Committee with planning and recommendations.

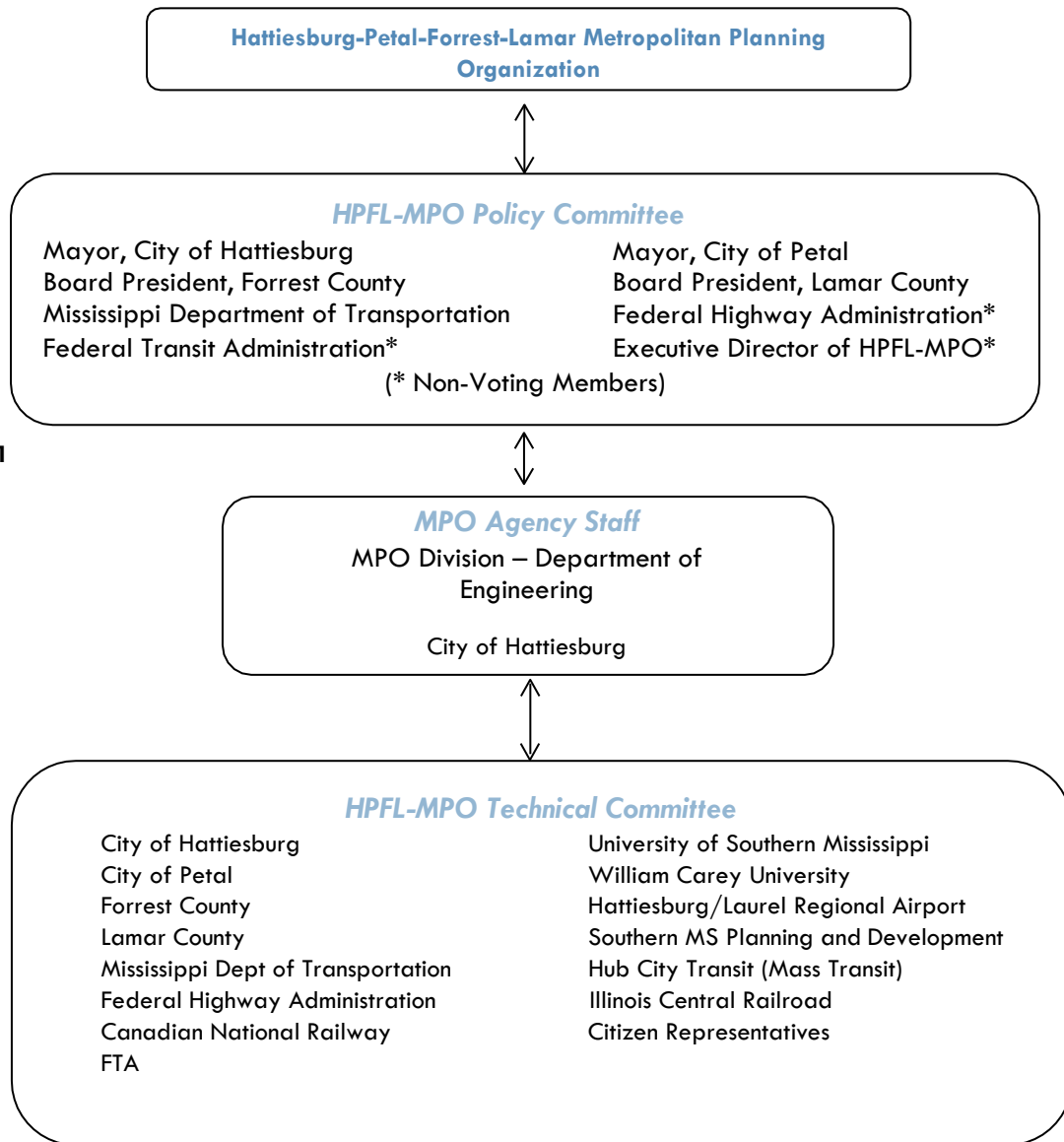


Figure 1

The Mississippi Department of Transportation (MDOT) supports the planning efforts of the HPFL-MPO, which is vital because of the diverse array of projects that can be funded in the HUZA.

The official purpose of the MPO is to develop and coordinate the transportation planning process in the urbanized area. Citizen participation objects include involvement of interested citizens, stakeholders and representatives of community organizations in agency work through timely workshops on transportation issues, fully noticed public hearings and ongoing citizen involvement in the planning and decision-making processes.

Citizen and community participation are crucial to the success of program plans and projects of the HPFL-MPO. Ideas for public participation include:

- Early and continued opportunities for public involvement.
- Timely dissemination of information about transportation plans and programs.
- Reasonable public access to technical and policy information.
- Adequate notice to the public regarding public involvement opportunities and activities early in the planning process.
- Documentation of public comments in MPO plans and programs and provision of reports that are clear, timely and broadly distributed.
- Periodic review and revision of the public participation process.
- Promotion of dialogue and partnership among the community, the business community, organizations, other interested citizens and public officials.

SECTION II FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

C. Guiding Regulations

Public outreach in Long Range transportation plan has long been a federal requirement. Federal law includes a number of specific requirements and performance standards and expectations for state departments of transportation and MPOs to follow during the transportation planning process. These requirements have been amended and reinforced through various transportation and environmental legislation, and related regulations and orders addressing environmental justice and persons with disabilities. Guiding regulations for the transportation process include, but may not necessarily be limited to the following:

- Title 23 United States Code (USC) Sections 134 and 135
- Federal regulation Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R.) Section 450
- Federal regulation Title 49 Code of Federal Regulations (C.F.R) Section 613
- The American with Disabilities Act of 1990, which was updated in 2010, requires coordinating with disabled communities and providing access to sites where public involvement activities occur as well as the information presented.
- Executive Order #12898 of February 11, 1994, reinforces the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focuses attention to address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations.
- Executive Order # 13166 of August 11, 2000, requires federal agencies and other entities that receive federal funds via grants, contracts, or subcontracts to make their activities accessible to persons with Limited English Proficiency.
- Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, Public Law, 114-94, December 2015

- Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), Public Law 112-141, July 2012
- Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU), Public Law 109-59, August 2005
- Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), Public Law 105-178; June 1998
- Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA), Public Law 102-240; December 1991

The Public Participation Plan is a living document and will be periodically reviewed for possible revisions.

The HPFL-MPO will continually strive to consult with agencies that are involved in the transportation planning process in the MPO area. With the unique situation of the HPFL-MPO being the smallest MPO in the state, housed in the Hattiesburg City Hall, the HPFL-MPO functions within the Department of Engineering. Consultation between local planning agencies, engineering consultants and other departments of city, county and regional government (i.e. Emergency Management) is continual.

The HPFL-MPO shall appropriately involve the American Indian Tribes in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan and the TIP. When the HUZA includes Federal public lands, the HPFL-MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

SECTION III PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The HPFL- MPO recognizes that an effective participation process is a vital element in the development and implementation of transportation plans and programs. The process includes the entire community in developing feasible alternatives and encourages community leaders to support the transportation system. The process also increases public awareness of transportation services and programs.

D. MPO Objectives and General Guidelines

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) is intended to provide direction for public involvement activities to be conducted by the MPO for public involvement. In its public participation process, the HPFL-MPO will:

1. Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, 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 Long Range Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and other appropriate 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 participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of the Long Range Transportation Plan, the state, local, transit TIP 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 the MPO 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. Respond in writing, when applicable, to public input. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft Long Range Transportation Plan and TIP (including the financial plans for the TIP and Long Range Transportation Plan developed in cooperation with the Mississippi Department of Transportation 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 LRTP and TIP.
5. Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally under-served by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to the transportation disadvantaged, minorities, elderly, persons with disabilities, and low-income households who may face challenges accessing employment and other services. Fast Act requires that the MPO shall provide reasonable opportunities for affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, 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 with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation planning process via Section 1201(i)(6)(A).
6. Provide a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of the PPP and/or any amendments. Notice of the comment period will be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation and various other publications prior to the commencement of the 45-day comment period. Notice will also be mailed to the entire HPFL-MPO mailing list prior to the start of the 45-day comment period.
7. Provide a public comment period of not less than 45 calendar days prior to adoption of the Long Range Transportation Plan, the TIP, any formal amendments or updates, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.
8. Coordinate the PPP with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduces redundancies and costs.

9. To ensure the MPO provides coordination for the City of Hattiesburg Hub City Transit (HCT) and recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53 (FTA funds), the City's system, Hub City Transit, (HCT) relies on the MPO Public Participation Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Plan processes to ensure public awareness and involvement for the HCT Program of Projects (POP). The Program of Projects listing shall be included within the MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

E. Public Participation Goals and Objectives

The HPFL-MPO shall actively engage the public in the transportation planning process and employ visualization techniques to depict transportation plans. Examples of visualization techniques include: charts, graphs, photo interpretation, maps, use of GIS systems and/or computer simulation.

When feasible, the HPFL-MPO shall electronically mail meeting announcements to the MPO contact list or to targeted groups for upcoming activities. The HPFL-MPO shall maintain an up-to-date database of contacts to assure that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the transportation planning process and products. **(See Appendix B)**

The HPFL-MPO shall keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities on a continued basis by making all publications and work products available electronically to the public via the MPO's web page (via internet) and at the MPO office by furnishing printed or digital media and displaying maps, as a visualization technique, to describe transportation actions as part of the Long Range Transportation Plan.

The HPFL-MPO staff 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 community interest groups with reasonable notice.

The HPFL-MPO provides the website hattiesburgms.com/MPO for the public use. The HPFL-MPO shall maintain a website that will be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled users. The website shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current and accurate transportation planning information available. The website shall, at a minimum, contain the following information:

- A. *Contact Information*
- B. *Current HPFL-MPO Committee Membership*
- C. *Meeting Calendars and Agendas*
- D. *Work Products and Publications (Transportation Improvement Plan, Long Range Transportation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, etc.)*
- E. *Comment/Question Form*
- F. *Links to Related Agencies*
- G. *Current By-Laws and Operating Procedures (including the Public Participation Plan and*

The HPFL-MPO shall encourage the involvement of all area citizens in the transportation planning process. The target audiences shall be identified for each planning study conducted by the MPO, 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. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan identifies populations within the study area with limited proficiency in reading, speaking, or writing in English (**See Appendix C**). The HPFL-MPO shall, when feasible, hold public meetings at a site convenient to potentially affected citizens.

The HPFL-MPO shall participate in public participation activities for individual transportation improvement projects from the planning phase through construction. The MPO shall actively assist the Mississippi Department of Transportation, local governments and transportation agencies in the development and implementation of public involvement techniques for planning and other studies, including Major Corridor/Feasibility Studies, and Project Development and Environmental Studies or other documents to support planning.

In accordance with Federal regulations, the Public Participation Plan (PPP) shall be assessed periodically based on changes in local, state, or federal legislation, and in response to periodic evaluations of the effectiveness of public participation techniques outlined in the PPP. The PPP is a living document that shall be updated as needed. However, at the minimum, the PPP shall be formally reviewed every five-years and modified as needed to expand its usefulness as a tool to encourage public input into the transportation planning process.

F. Public Participation Techniques

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the MPO. Public participation is also an integral part of one-time activities such as corridor studies and regularly repeated activities such as the annual Transportation Improvement Program process and Long Range Transportation Plan updates.

This section contains descriptions of public participation tools currently being used by the MPO:

MPO WEBSITE

Description: The site was established to provide basic information about the MPO process, members, meeting's times and contact information. Work products, such as the Draft, and Adopted, Public Participation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, Transportation Improvement Program, Long Range Transportation Plan, Pathways Master Plan, and other studies are available from the site. The website address is hattiesburgms.com/MPO. HPFL-MPO staff, in conjunction with City of Hattiesburg staff, maintain, update and regularly review the website.

Activities: The website is used to list current and topical information on regular and special meetings, planning studies, publications, related public events and work products.

MPO MASTER DATABASE

Description: HPFL-MPO staff maintains a master database of business, federal, state and local agencies and interested public. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, fax numbers, e-mail addresses and web sites. The database is used for maintaining up-to-date committee membership lists, special interest groups and neighborhood/homeowners association contacts. 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 public involvement activities.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Description: HPFL-MPO staff may utilize social media to further encourage the interaction between the MPO and the public. Facebook may be used to present the public with information concerning the MPO and other programs, projects, activities, events, etc. YouTube, a video-sharing website may be used as an education tool for the public about the MPO and the transportation process. YouTube also presents opportunities for disseminating information to public with low literacy. (See **Social Media Policy, Appendix D**) Designated HPFL-MPO staff maintains and regularly reviews all social media sites.

Activities: Public awareness of projects, meetings, workshops, etc. Provides opportunities for public comment and discussion on various MPO and transportation-related topics.

LEGAL ADVERTISEMENTS

Description: The **Mississippi Open Meetings Act** legislates the methods by which public meetings are conducted. Title 25, Chapter 41, Sections 1-17 of the Mississippi Code define the law. The law requires posting a written notice of any public meeting where a decision could be made or that may be attended by more than one elected official. The MPO regularly posts notices of the HPFL-MPO Transportation Policy Committee and HPFL-MPO Technical Committee meetings.

Activities: Regular and other meetings seeking public input are posted.

DISPLAY ADS

Description: Publication of ads are used to promote meetings that are not regularly scheduled, such as corridor study workshops. They are published in selected newspapers, both English and Spanish, in order to reach a larger audience than those that typically read legal notices.

Activities: Public awareness of project specific meetings, workshops, or open houses.

OTHER MEDIA

Description: Opportunities are sought for articles in other newsletters produced by municipalities, neighborhood/homeowners' associations, church groups, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the MPO. Opportunities are also sought to present to civic and social agencies, participate on radio talk shows, and provide television news highlights.

Activities: Increased opportunities to make public aware of corridor studies, small-area studies, other planning studies or major activities.

DIRECT MAILINGS

Description: 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 flyers. 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.

PRESS RELEASES

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

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

PROJECT WORKSHOPS/OPEN-HOUSES

Description: These are targeted public meetings that are generally open, 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 project-specific meetings is to provide project information to the public and to solicit public comment and a sense of public priorities.

Activities: Metropolitan planning studies, prioritization of projects, public input prior to drafting major multimodal plans such as the Pedestrian Plan and other major MPO activities.

E-MAIL ANNOUNCEMENTS/ CALENDARS

Description: Meeting announcements and MPO information are e-mailed to interested persons that have submitted their e-mail addresses to MPO staff. The dates of Technical Committee, Policy Committee, and all public meetings are posted to the HPFL-MPO website.

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

MPO LOGO

Description: A logo representing the MPO is used to identify products and publications of the MPO. A logo helps the public become familiar with the different activities of the MPO by providing a means of recognizing MPO products.

Activities: A logo is used on all MPO publications; including those developed by consultants working on MPO sponsored projects to create a community awareness of the MPO deliverables.

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.

Activities: Long Range Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, corridor studies, Project Development & Environmental studies, and other planning studies as needed for other MPO activities.

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 and on web sites to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or website. (See Appendix F)

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

SURVEYS

Description: Surveys are used when very specific input from the public is desired. A survey can be used in place of comment forms to ask very specific questions such as whether a person supports a specific alignment in a corridor study. Surveys are also used to gather technical data during corridor and planning studies such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans. For example, participants may be asked about their daily travel patterns or areas of improvement within the multimodal system. The MPO also uses brief one-question surveys through the MPO Website, Facebook page, or other survey applications to gather public input on general transportation planning issues.

Activities: Conduct on-line surveys on issues and needs to provide input into the plans, conduct surveys at the transit terminal station or public meetings, and attach surveys or survey links to flyers and ads.

POSTERS AND FLYERS

Description: Posters and flyers 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 flyers may be used to reach a large audience that cannot be reached using direct mailing and/or newsletters.

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

GROUPING OF PROJECTS

Description: MPOs make use of statewide project groupings in their Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP). MDOT in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration developed statewide programs that are identified by a statewide project number. This number provides a more efficient method of project identification, programming and contracting which minimizes the necessity for TIP revisions.

Activities: The MPO recognizes the use of these grouping categories and will use them as appropriate. Individual projects eligible for statewide project groupings may be included in the MPO/TIP for informational purposes only. The information only project lists will be clearly annotated as such and may be included as an appendix.

ANNUAL PROJECT LISTINGS

Description: MPOs publish an annual listing of projects, which include investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, for which Federal funds were obligated the preceding year. This listing shall be published or otherwise made available by the cooperative effort of the State, transit operator, and metropolitan planning organization for public update. The listing shall be consistent with the funding categories identified in each TIP.

Activities: The HPFL-MPO posts the projects on the website for public review as the projects are let. These posts also include the status of the project throughout the duration of the project.

SECTION IV SUMMARY PUBLIC PARTICIPATION POLICY TABLE

Program Adoption	Public Meetings	Comment Period (minimum)	Purpose/Remarks
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Two meetings prior to Technical Policy Committee approval Updated Every 5 years	45 Days	A summary of all oral and written comments will be provided to the Technical Policy Committee and available for public review and placed in MPO minutes.
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) (Short Range Plan)	Two meetings prior to TPC approval Updated Every 2 years	45 Days	A summary of all oral and written comments will be provided to the TPC and available for public review and placed in MPO minutes.
Unified Planning Work Plan (UPWP)	Presented at MPO Policy and Technical Committee Meeting for public comment.	N/A	Updated every 2 years. Comments received are recorded and placed in MPO minutes for public review.
Public Participation Plan	Public Meeting on Draft and MPO Technical and Policy Committee Public Hearing/Meeting	45 days	Updated every 5 years. Comments received are recorded, distributed and placed in MPO minutes for public review.
Annual Project Listing	Not Applicable	N/A	An Update is provided by the MPO on an annual basis and made available for viewing at the MPO website.
Program Amendments			
Long Range Transportation Plan	MPO Policy and Technical Committee Public Hearing/Meeting	10 days	Amendments are applied as needed.

Transportation Improvement Plan	MPO Policy and Technical Committee Public Hearing/Meeting	10 days	Amendments are applied as needed.
Unified Planning Work Program	MPO Policy and Technical Committee Public Hearing/Meeting	N/A	Amendments are applied as needed.
Open Meetings			
Transportation Policy Committee (TPC)	Regular Meetings are held on a quarterly basis.	N/A	Website is updated with meeting dates.
Transportation Technical Committee (TTC)	Regular Meetings are held on a quarterly basis.	N/A	Website is updated with meeting dates.

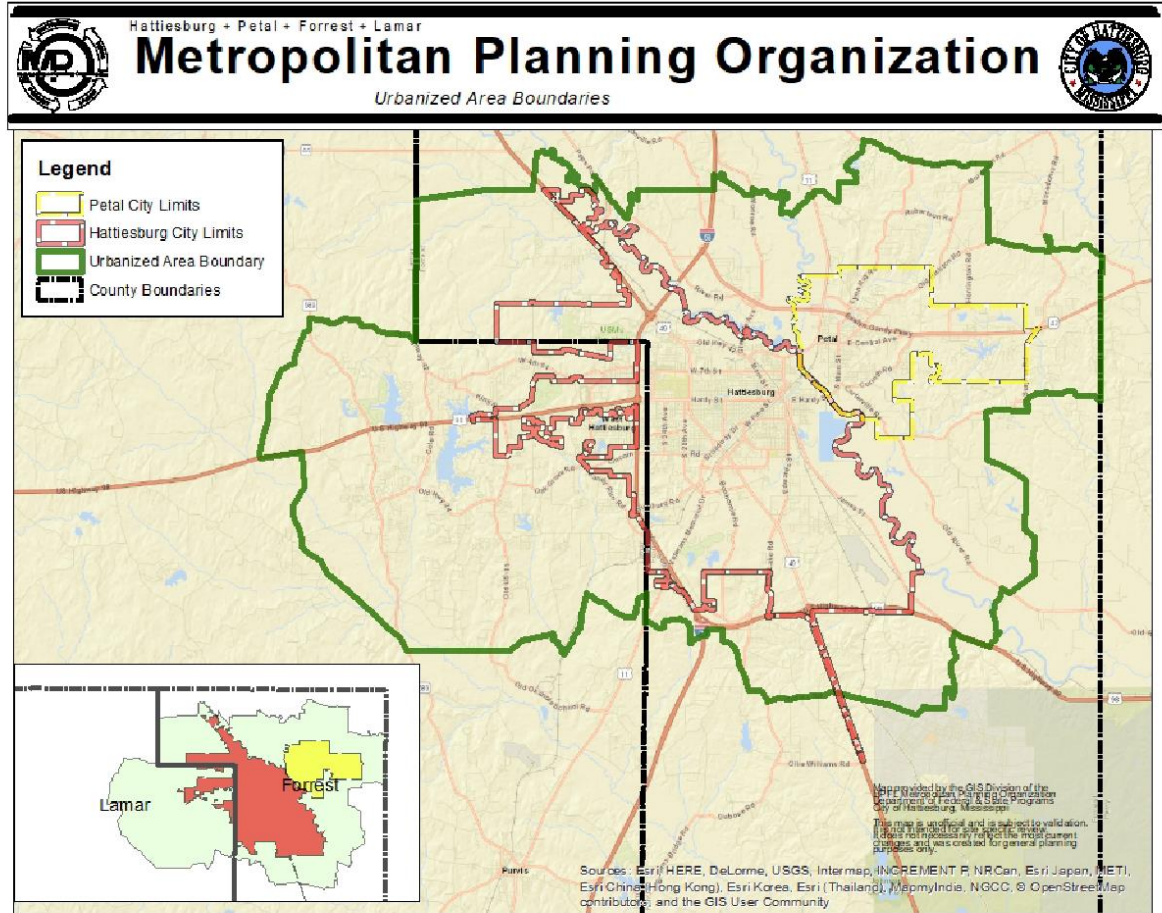


APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:	HATTIESBURG URBANIZED AREA MAP
APPENDIX B:	LIST OF AGENCIES FOR CONSULTATION
APPENDIX C:	LEP PLAN POLICY
APPENDIX D:	SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY
APPENDIX E:	PPP EVALUATION GUIDE
APPENDIX F:	COMMENT FORM

Appendix A

HATTIESBURG URBANIZED AREA MAP



Appendix B

LIST OF AGENCIES FOR CONSULTATION

Various provisions of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) 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, Local and Tribal agencies with which the State DOT or MPO may choose to consult:

- A. Elected Officials
 - B. Local Government Staff
 - C. Transportation Agencies (Airports, Transit, Freight Services, etc.)
 - D. Local Media (TV, Radio, Print, etc.)
 - E. Homeowners Associations/Neighborhood Associations
 - F. Civic Groups
 - G. Special Interested Groups
 - H. Libraries (For Public Display)
 - I. Consultation with Federal, State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, Conservation and historic preservation, and other environmental issues.
 - J. Consultation with parties that would have an interest in the planning and development of the transportation network including affected public agencies in the metropolitan planning area.
 - K. Private Freight Shippers
 - L. Representatives of Public Transportation Employees
 - M. Providers of Freight Transportation Services
 - N. Private Providers of Transportation
 - O. Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
 - P. Representatives of Users of Pedestrian Walkways
 - Q. Representatives of Users of Bicycle Transportation Facilities
 - R. Representatives of the Disabled
 - S. American Indian Tribes
-

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION LOCATIONS

City of Hattiesburg, City Hall (MPO Offices)	200 Forrest Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401
City of Petal, City Hall	102 West 8 th Avenue, Petal, MS 39465
Forrest County Administrative Office	641 North Main Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Lamar County Administrative Office	203 North Main Street, Purvis, MS 39475
Hattiesburg Public Library	329 Hardy Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401
Purvis Public Library	122 Shelby Speights Dr., Purvis, MS
Petal Public Library	714 South Main, Petal, MS
Oak Grove Public Library	4958 Old Hwy 11, Hattiesburg, MS 39401

MEDIA CONTACTS

PRINT MEDIA

Impact of Hattiesburg
The Hattiesburg American
Hattiesburg Post
The Lamar Times
The Advertiser News
The Petal Advocate
The Independent
The Student Printz (University of Southern Mississippi)

TELEVISION MEDIA

WHLT (CBS)
WDAM (NBC)
WLOX (ABC)
WFOX (FOX)

RADIO MEDIA

B-95 Radio – WBBN
Clear Channel Radio
The HOT FM's Radio
Kicker 108 –WZKX
Rock 104 -- WXRR
American Family Radio – WAll 89.3
Supertalk MS – WFMM
WHSY 950
Zoo 107 – WKNZ
SL 100 – WNSL
WORV 1580 AM
WJMG 92.1

Appendix C

LIMITED ENGLISH PLAN (LEP)

This LEP Plan exists as a component of the City of Hattiesburg's Title VI Plan as it existed as of the year 2020 copied herein with minor corrections for Scribner's errors.

Hub City Transit

Title VI & LEP Plan

2023

Prepared for:



By



**Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar
Metropolitan Planning Organization**
** P.O. Box 1898 * 200 Forrest Street *
Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1898*

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PLAN

This document complies with the requirements of Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)”. It incorporates implementation guidance published through the Federal Transit Administration and the U.S. Department of Transportation. The goal of this plan is to identify actions which will be taken to reduce language barriers for LEP individuals in Hattiesburg, MS who seek to utilize services provided by HCT. To achieve this goal, HCT will undertake reasonable steps required to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons interested in participating in the agency’s programs, services and activities. HCT will ensure that language will not prevent staff from effectively providing information and responding to inquiries made by LEP individuals. In turn, LEP individuals will not be prohibited from accessing program information, understanding rules and operational changes, participating in proceedings and any other agency activity.

Legal basis for language assistance requirements

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 states that “no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives Federal financial assistance.” The Supreme Court, in *Lau v. Nichols*, 414 U.S. 563 (1974), held that this requirement prohibits conduct that has a disproportionate effect on LEP persons because such conduct constitutes national origin discrimination.

Executive Order 13166 states that recipients must take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons. USDOT published guidance for its recipients on December 14, 2005, which clarified that their recipients are required to take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for individuals who are LEP.

Who are the Limited English Proficient (LEP)?

LEP individuals do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English. Many LEP persons are in the process of learning English and may read, write, speak, and/or understand some English, but not proficiently. LEP status may be context specific – an individual may have sufficient English language skills to communicate basic information (name, address etc.) but may not have sufficient skills to communicate detailed information (e.g., medical information, eyewitness accounts, information elicited in an interrogation, etc.) in English.

Four Factor Analysis

In order to ensure meaningful access to programs and activities, HCT uses the information obtained in the Four Factor Analysis to determine the specific language services that are appropriate to provide. A careful analysis can help a recipient determine if it communicates effectively with LEP persons and will inform language access planning. The Four Factor Analysis is an individualized assessment that balances the following four factors:

Factor #1 Assessing the number and proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population

US Census Bureau data for HCT service area has been obtained for the year 2020 to complete this analysis.

County	Spanish speakers with low or no English Proficiency
City of Hattiesburg	1-855-275-0788

This data suggests that there is likely population of LEP individuals that may benefit from HCT services and languages-specific outreach.

Factor #2: Assessing the frequency with which LEP individuals come into contact with the program, activity, or service

HCT drivers noticed an increase in individuals using transit who appeared not to speak or understand English. Some of this increase is attributed to a rise in migrant labor that came to work on recovery and reconstruction projects following Hurricane Katrina and elected to stay in the region permanently.

In 2006, HCT implemented a program of providing Spanish-language materials (schedules, flyers, fare information and public announcements) to address the growing number of Spanish-speaking riders in the system.

As part of the ongoing Title VI Demographic review of the system, on-board passenger surveys are conducted to monitor passenger characteristics and demographics. The results of these surveys include information on the number of riders who speak or understand English “not well” or “not at all”. Survey results consistently indicate that 97% of respondents identify English as their primary language. Of those indicating another language, the majority identified Spanish as their primary language.

Factor #3: Assessing the nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program

HCT provides general public transportation to individuals who have no or very limited English skills on a daily basis. Some of these individuals, based upon HCT staff comments and observations, have a limited knowledge of English or travel with individuals who possess the necessary skills to communicate with the bus driver.

Recognizing an increase in the Spanish speaking, HCT has taken steps to accommodate LEP individuals in the HCT service area. These steps are outlined in the following Section.

Factor #4: Assessing the resources available to the recipient and costs

Without a dedicated local source of match for FTA funds, local funding comes from a combination of local government appropriations and fare revenues.

As such, the amount of local funding for operations will vary from year-to-year based upon passenger volume and competing local demands of other community service providers.

HCT has taken several steps to enhance its ability to communicate effectively with LEP individuals and provide the necessary language and translation services to those who require assistance. This includes the provision of schedules, notices and forms in Spanish and English. Translation services are made available, upon request, prior to all public hearings.

Language Assistance Plan

HCT uses results of the four factor analyses to determine which language assistance services are appropriate.

Language Assistance Measures

HCT uses a variety of methods to provide support for those who may require language assistance in order to fully participate in offered services, programs and activities including:

- Provision of Spanish-language materials for all HCT route schedule announcements posted on vehicles and in transit facilities.
-

- Update to the HCT Riders Guide continue to include English and Spanish-language schedules for the general public.
- Title VI Complaint forms and notices included in this plan are translated to Spanish.
- Publishing public notices and engagement materials in both Spanish and English.
- LEP targeted outreach is conducted as needed
- Coordination of interpreters for meetings and other events.

HCT also makes available its management and operations staff to meet with groups to discuss options available within its service area and individual communities. These sessions include orientation to routes and help understanding schedules and existing services. Requests to have such meetings or events can be made by the community to the Executive Director's office.

Training Staff

HCT staff is instructed to direct LEP persons to the designated Spanish language specialists on HCT's permanent staff. Phone calls which come into the HCT offices from LEP persons are connected to these individuals. If HCT personnel (drivers or staff) encounter an individual on route that is LEP, they place this individual in radio contact with the appropriate HCT staff for translation.

Providing Notice to LEP Persons

HCT makes available all public notices regarding changes and updates in services provided in English and Spanish language through the following outlets:

- HCT Administrative Offices, 1001 S Tipton Street, Hattiesburg, MS.
- Posting on all HCT fixed route and demand-response buses for a period of at-least 30 days concurrently with all advertised changes.

The following service-related items are made available at no cost to the LEP population:

- Provision of Spanish-language materials for all HCT route schedule announcements posted on vehicles and in transit facilities.
 - Update to the general schedule books continue to include English and Spanish-language schedules for the general public.
 - All announced changes in HCT services in response to natural disaster or general public emergency, are made in English and Spanish. (Translation/production of notices in response to emergencies will be produced as timely as possible.)
-

Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan

This plan will be reviewed and re-evaluated every three years as part of the Title VI Plan update process required by FTA. The review will determine if changes in the LEP population within the HCT service area require an update to currently used measures to provide information and communication. At a minimum, this review will follow the identified Title VI program schedule for service expansion/retraction. Consideration will be given to the following:

- Level of current LEP populations in the HCT service area;
 - Frequency of LEP population encounters, based upon HCT surveys and staff reports;
 - Requests for translation and second language information to HCT staff;
 - Review of contact with community agencies and others representing LEP persons and requests made for transit information and services;
 - Participation of LEP groups (or their representatives) at public meetings or hearings regarding changes in service;
 - Whether the materials provided and methods used are meeting the needs of the LEP population.
-

The following items, at a minimum, will be assessed using the checklist provided below

Monitoring Checklist, LEP Populations in HCT Service Area	
<u>Transit Centers</u> – locations on the HCT system where transfers would occur between 2 or more HCT Fixed-routes or from HCT Demand-Response services to Fixed-Route	Have translated instructions on how to make fare payments been made available?
	Have translated schedules, route maps, or information on how to use the system been made available?
	Has the information been placed in a visible location?
	Can a person who speaks limited English or another language receive assistance from HCT staff when asking for directions? How is this assistance provided?
<u>HCT Revenue Vehicles</u> – All buses which are used in revenue service on the fixed-route and demand-response systems	Have translated instructions on how to make fare payments been made available?
	Is the same information included in existing schedules and route books?
	Has the information been placed in a visible location on all vehicles?
<u>Customer Service</u> – All interactions with the public by HCT transit service personnel (Administrative staff, Drivers) regarding services provided	How many customer service calls come in from an individual who speaking languages other than English?
	Can customer service representatives describe to a caller what language assistance the agency provides and how to obtain translated information or oral interpretation?
	Can a person speaking limited English or a language other than English request information from a customer service representative?
<u>Community Outreach</u> – All interactions with the public by HCT transit service personnel (Administrative staff, Drivers) regarding updates/changes in services and programs	Have translators been requested or made present at community meetings?
	Are translated versions of any written materials that are handed out at a meeting provided?
	Can members of the public provide oral as well as written comments in languages other than English?
	Are meeting notices, press releases, and public service announcements requested to be translated into languages other than English?

Dissemination of the LEP Plan

The LEP plan has been incorporated into the HCT Title VI Plan to provide a single source for non-discrimination compliance. Electronic copies of the complete plan can be downloaded from the HCT website or requested via email to mpo@hattiesburgms.com. Printed copies are available for review at the HCT administrative office on 1001 S Tipton Street and at Intermodal Facility on 308 Newman Street. People requesting a copy in an alternative format should mail their request to MPO Division, 200 Forrest Street, Hattiesburg, MS 39401, can email their request to mpo@hattiesburgms.com or call in their request to 601-554-1008.

APPENDIX D

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY



SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

1. Vision & Purpose for Using Social Media

In support of the Hattiesburg-Petal-Forrest-Lamar Metropolitan Planning Organization's Public Participation Plan's guidelines and goals, the HPFL-MPO is seeking to further engage the public in the transportation planning process by developing outreach strategies through the use of various social media tools.

The HPFL-MPOs social media outlets serve as discussion and information sharing opportunities between the HPFL-MPO and the public about the HPFL-MPO, and/or other transportation-related programs, projects, activities, and events. The comments and opinions of others on official HPFL-MPO social media sites do not represent the opinions or views of the HPFL-MPO or its staff. The HPFL-MPO encourages the public to submit any comments, questions, or concerns as related to the discussion topics presented on any social media sites, however the HPFL-MPO will moderate all comments and reserves the right to remove comments which violate the social media policy guidelines provided below.

Social Media should be used as a means of additional public notification and to seek public input, but neither staff nor the public should expect the use of social media by MPO staff to replace more traditional methods of conducting business.

2. Definition of Social Media

As defined by the Federal Highways Association (FHWA), "Social Media and Web 2.0 are umbrella terms used to define the various activities integrating Web technology, social interaction, and user generated content. Examples of Social Media/Web 2.0 technologies include, but are not limited to, blogs, wikis, podcasts, social network sites, and internet-based services that emphasize collaboration and sharing (such as Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, and YouTube).

3. Employee Access

Access to social media sites will be reserved to HPFL-MPO Staff authorized by the HPFL-MPO Executive Director based on their role within the agency. Authorized staff will be restricted to professional use of the HPFL-MPO's official social media sites. While approved staff is expected to check on social media daily (see *Account Management*), staff time must be properly allocated to higher priority tasks, unless otherwise directed by a supervisor or Executive Director.

Personal use of social media is limited to access through personal devices. (Employees may consult the City of Hattiesburg Employee Handbook on "breaks".) Employees shall be advised to maintain proper privacy settings on personal accounts to prevent misrepresentation of the HPFL-MPO as an organization. While personal accounts are not linked to official HPFL-MPO social media sites, it is recommended for staff to refrain from publicly posting information that would reflect negatively on staff and the organization.

4. Account Management

Technology is ever-changing, as are the social media outlets used by the public to communicate and gather new information. The HPFL-MPO currently utilizes Facebook and YouTube as a means of communicating with the public and sharing information about local transportation issues, however the need may arise in the future for the creation of other social media tools. The following are guidelines for managing social media accounts:

1. The creation and closing of social media accounts must have final approval from the Executive Director of the HPFL-MPO.
2. The Executive Director and assigned staff will retain a record of all passwords and login
3. A log of social media statistics shall be kept by assigned staff members and shall be updated periodically as deemed reasonable.
4. Social media sites should be checked on a periodic basis in order to respond to public comments. Efforts will be made to respond in a timely fashion. Sites may be checked more or less frequently as deemed reasonable given recent relevant posts or topics.
5. Staff will be responsible for moderating social media sites on a periodic basis as may be reasonable given relevant posts or recent topics that may have been presented.
6. The MPO makes no claims as to whether or not communication existing on social media may constitute a public record. The MPO cannot control edit or deletions of content by persons or entities other than MPO staff.

5. Employee Conduct

All staff approved to use or maintain social media shall abide by the following guidelines:

1. Staff shall not post personal opinions on any official HPFL-MPO social media sites.
2. All information must be presented in a politically neutral, informative, and respectful manner. No vulgar language will be tolerated.
3. Staff shall respond to comments relevant to the discussion topics. Responses should be positive, polite, and neutral.
4. Staff shall present accurate information. Information that is later found to be incorrect shall be publicly corrected.
5. Staff shall respect the privacy of the public interacting on social media sites.
6. Employees should refrain from posting information that would bring embarrassment to themselves or the HPFL-MPO or the member entities.
7. Staff shall abide by all federal regulations, including Title VI/LEP policies.

6. Content

Information placed on all official HPFL-MPO social media sites shall relate to the HPFL-MPO transportation planning process, MPO-related projects, events, activities, and/or news, research, discussion topics related to transportation planning. The HPFL-MPO staff will not promote information not related to topics previously discussed, unless otherwise approved by the Executive Director. All content shall remain politically neutral and shall not endorse or promote specific political parties or organizations. All content is the sole responsibility of the HPFL-MPO unless cited as otherwise.

Information presented on HPFL-MPO social media will be used for discussion and does not represent the views or opinions of the HPFL-MPO.

7. Security

As a security measure, the use of instant messaging (IM) through approved social media sites will not be allowed, unless deemed appropriate by the Executive Director. Additionally, the exchanging of files will be limited and will only be allowed through trusted sites. While most information is considered public record, staff is advised to never send confidential information via social media. When in doubt as to whether to send certain information via social media, staff shall consult with the Executive Director.

8. Legal Issues

The use of social media by HPFL-MPO staff is limited as a business communication tool for reaching the public about MPO and other transportation-related topics. Although informal, staff is

required to adhere to all federal, state and local regulations. Additionally, all information posted to social media sites is considered public record. Any violations by staff will be handled on a case by case basis at the discretion of an immediate supervisor and the Executive Director.

9. External User Guidelines (Citizen Conduct)

The HPFL-MPO encourages the public to submit any comments, questions, or concerns on any of our official social media sites, however please note that all sites will be moderated and the following guidelines will apply:

1. We review all comments and reserve the right to delete any comments containing inappropriate and/or offensive content.
2. We do not allow obscene, graphic or discriminatory content that may infringe upon a person's Title VI rights under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 that prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.
3. We do not allow comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity.
4. All comments shall remain constructive and relevant to the posted discussion topics.

10. Public Records Comment

The HPFL-MPO accepts input and comments from the public through a variety of means. Members of the public may make comments by calling the HPFL-MPO at (601) 554-1008.

Written comments may be:

1. E-mailed to mpo@hattiesburgms.com; or
2. Mailed to the HPFL-MPO, P.O. Box 1898, Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1898.

The public may also submit comments to their respective HPFL-MPO representatives for transmittal to the respective full committees. Comments on HPFL-MPO plans, reports, and programs may be made at public input meetings. Time scheduled on a HPFL-MPO Policy and/or Technical Committee meeting agenda also may be requested by members of the public or a representative of a group, to offer input to the full committees. All questions or concerns regarding the HPFL-MPO social media sites can be forwarded through the following outlets:

Mail To:

HPFL-MPO, P.O. Box 1898, Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1898.

Phone: 601-554-1008

Website: www.cityofhattiesburgms.com

Appendix E

PPP EVALUATION GUIDE

PPP EVALUATION GUIDE

Technical to Inform	Public Involvement Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goal(s)	Method to Meet Goal(s)
Interactive Strategies	MPO Website	ADA Compliance Adequate User Experience	# of ADA Compliant elements achieved 80% of survey responses indicate acceptable Web Page	Annual Web Page Evaluation Survey at the beginning of the Fiscal Year
	Social Media			
	Comment Forms	#of responses by phone calls, letters, emails, etc.	Measure meeting attendees who fill out comment forms: and/or # of website visitors submitted forms.	Identify methods for submitting public comment on all notices and through other PPP tools.
	Surveys	# of responses	# of email/mail recipients respond to survey and/or reach a goal over 150 respondents.	Make surveys available on all other PPP tools, including social media and website.
Media Outreach	Legal Advertisements	n/a required	n/a	Advertise all public engagements opportunities on newspapers with large reach
	Press Releases	# of printed or broadcasted press releases per year.	Measure # of press releases sent to media that are published.	Update contacts periodically Provide information in a "ready to print" or broadcast format.
	Other Media	N/A	N/A	Provide basic information in "print ready" format.
Technical to Inform	Public Involvement Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goal(s)	Method to Meet Goal(s)
Data Distribution	MPO Master Database	# of returned items	Maximum of 10% return per mailing	Make immediate corrections when items are returned

	Display Ads	# of meetings attendees who were notified via mentioned PPP tool.		Work with City Administration to produce eye catching ads with basic information on each flyer; ads should have contact information and link to website.
	Direct Mailings	# of meeting attendees who were notified via mentioned PPP tool	# of meeting attendees/survey respondents were reached via mentioned PPP tool	Update mailing list regularly distribute to areas affected
	Email Announcements/ Calendars	# of meeting attendees who were notified via mentioned PPP tool		Update regularly; increased distribution to online websites with high traffic
	MPO Logo	None	Recognition of logo	Placement of logo on all published media, including materials for MPO sponsored activities
Technical to Inform	Public Involvement Tool	Evaluation Criteria	Performance Goal(s)	Method to Meet Goal(s)
Data Distribution	Grouping of Projects	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Annual Project Listings	N/A	N/A	Promote individually on website annually
Public Speaking	Project Workshops/Open Houses	# of meeting attendees		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote public meetings via all other PPP tools Schedule meetings at convenient locations and times
	Public Meetings/Hearings	# of meeting attendees		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote public meetings via all other PPP tools Schedule meetings at convenient locations and times.

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Appendix F

HPFL PUBLIC COMMENT FORM



