



**Lake ~ Sumter
Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN
SR 19 & ALTERNATIVES
EFFICIENT TRANSPORTATION
DECISION MAKING
PLANNING SCREEN**

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AUGUST 2008

Forward

As the governmental body most directly responsible for the guidance of the transportation planning process, the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) strives to ensure that its recommendations are in keeping with the goals and standards of the Federal Government, the State, Lake County, Sumter County, and the 15 incorporated jurisdictions. The MPO functions include, but are not limited to, the preparation of the tasks required by state rule or by federal policy.

As part of the MPO planning process, public involvement is given a major priority. Transportation projects funded through public dollars are to be planned in a manner that encourages public participation and incorporates public comments into planning efforts. As a result, a responsibility is placed on MPOs to develop a plan where the opportunity for public involvement is assured. As part of that plan, a required element is the outlining of the means by which to measure the success of the public involvement activities. By strategizing public involvement techniques and then monitoring and measuring the effectiveness, better planning products emerge that genuinely capture the needs of the public.

Purpose

The Lake~Sumter MPO supports the public's right to have a strong voice in the transportation planning process. Public involvement informs and educates the public about transportation planning and creates a knowledgeable community, which in turn leads to better planning. Public involvement also engages the public and encourages meaningful feedback to be incorporated into planning products.

Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 450.316(b)(1), the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process, sets forth the requirements for the public involvement process in conjunction with all aspects of transportation planning. The regulation states that the public involvement process shall provide "complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and the major planning documents" produced by the LSMPO.

Background

The Lake~Sumter MPO, as part of its 2025 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update in 2005, identified the need for additional capacity (widening to 4 or 6 lanes) on each of the following corridors:

- SR 19, CR 561 to CR 48
- SR 19, CR 455 to US 27
- CR 48, US 27 to SR 19
- CR 561, SR 19 to US 27

The MPO, intending to seek State and/or Federal funding to improve SR 19, from CR 561 to CR 48, including the Little Lake Harris Bridge, coordinated with the Florida Department of Transportation to conduct an Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) Planning Screen. It was decided that all three of these Central Lake County corridors should be screened simultaneously to determine which were feasible based on financial and community impacts.

FDOT implemented the ETDM process in response to the “Streamlining” provisions contained within the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), which was passed by Congress in July 1999. The State of Florida completely revamped its procedures for planning transportation projects, conducting environmental reviews, and developing and permitting projects. Some of the key objectives contained within TEA-21 included:

- Effective/timely decision making without compromising environmental quality
- Integrating review and permitting processes
- Early NEPA reviews and approvals
- Full and early participation
- Meaningful dispute resolution

A very important component of this process will be the collection and evaluation of public input from concerned and interested citizens and groups throughout the Central Lake County area. The public will be provided several means to offer feedback on the ETDM project, as described below.

Access to Information

The Lake~Sumter MPO will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to technical and policy information relating to the data or content in the development of this ETDM project. Documents will be available for public inspection at the Lake~Sumter MPO Offices, located at 1616 South 14th Street, Leesburg, Florida, 34748, during normal business hours, as well as on the Lake~Sumter MPO web site (www.LakeSumterMPO.com), the State's ETDM Public Access website (<http://etdmpub.florat.org>) and the ETDM Project Diary website (<http://cfqis.org/diary/>).

ETDM project information and maps, as well as public information meeting details shall be made available to the public at the following locations:

- Lake~Sumter MPO, 1616 South 14th Street, Leesburg
- Lake County Administration Building, 315 West Main Street, Tavares
- Tavares City Hall, 201 East Main Street, Tavares
- Howey-in-the-Hills Town Hall, 101 North Palm Lane, Howey-In-The-Hills
- Leesburg City Hall, 501 Meadow Street, Leesburg
- Astatula Town Hall, 25019 County Road 561, Astatula
- Groveland City Hall, 156 South Lake Avenue, Groveland
- Minneola City Hall, 800 North US Highway 27, Minneola

Should any member of the public be interested in viewing any such ETDM project information, it is recommended they contact the MPO at (352)315-0170 prior to traveling to these locations to determine whether any project materials have been made available as of yet.

Public Involvement Mailing List

The MPO staff maintains and updates a mailing list for the purpose of informing the community about various transportation planning activities undertaken by the MPO. The mailing list includes civic associations, clubs, municipal governments, newspapers, concerned citizens and all attendees to any of the transportation related public meetings held in the Lake~Sumter MPO area. The mailing list will be used to inform the community about: scheduled ETDM project meetings; future ETDM project workshops and hearings; and to provide brief updates concerning the status and progress of the ETDM project.

An effort will be made to identify active community/citizens groups in the affected areas, including Astatula, Howey-in-the-Hills, Sugarloaf Mountain and Yalaha. A preliminary list of groups is provided below. A continued effort will be made to identify additional groups, should they exist. These groups will be placed on a contact list to receive project information and meeting notifications.

- Friends of Ferndale
- Green Mountain Scenic Byway Committee
- Sugarloaf Mountain Citizens Group
- Yalaha Community Club

Lake~Sumter MPO Website

The MPO maintains an internet site providing a forum for the most current information on activities and transportation projects, downloadable plans for each citizen to review interactive maps of transportation projects; links to related sites; and several opportunities to provide commentary to the MPO regarding their plans and programs. The MPO will utilize its online survey tool to gather public opinion on specific details of the planning efforts. The website can be accessed at www.LakeSumterMPO.com.

Public Meetings

Three (3) public information meetings will be held in Central Lake County to inform the public of the ETDM project and to solicit ideas, input and feedback on the merits of the ETDM project, as well as on any issues or obstacles.

The meetings will be held in the following locations (details on dates, times and venues will be made available in the locations listed above in a timely fashion):

- Howey-in-the Hills Town Hall 101 Palm Ave., Howey-in-the-Hills
- Olive Ingram Community Building, 25029 CR 561, Astatula
- City of Minneola City Hall, 800 North US Hwy 27, Minneola

Notice of the public information meeting will be provided in accordance with Section II (Public Notification) of the Lake~Sumter MPO Public Involvement Plan (Dec 2006). A reasonable attempt will be made to notify community groups and organizations representing minority and disabled people. The public information meeting will be held at a location accessible to, and at a convenient time for, minority and disabled residents.

If requested, special arrangements will be made to accommodate and transport persons with disabilities, low income, and people who do not speak English. For individuals without transportation, and the disabled, the Lake~Sumter MPO will schedule the public information meeting during the time when para-transit services are available or will make special arrangements to ensure that individuals have an opportunity to access transportation to the meetings. Interpreters will be provided, when advanced notice is given of the need, and an interpreter can be located to accommodate non-English speaking individuals.

Opportunities for Participation

The Lake~Sumter MPO will take a proactive approach to providing the opportunity for the public to be involved early in the process, and with continuing involvement through all phases of the ETDM project. Public notice of meetings and hearings will be undertaken and access to information, as listed above. Prior to the beginning of the public participation process, a list of names, addresses, and email addresses of citizens and organizations will be developed that will be contacted on a continual basis to serve as a base of interested citizens for input and comment. This list will be expanded as additional citizens attend the informational public meetings and make comment. Additionally, meeting agendas for all Lake~Sumter MPO Board and Committee meetings include a public input period.

Response to Public Input

Responses to questions and comments from the public concerning this ETDM project will be made directly to the individual by letter, telephone call or email. A summary analysis and report on disposition of comments will be made as part of the final ETDM project report

Title VI Requirements

The Lake~Sumter MPO will reach out to members of the low income, minority, and disabled communities as part of this ETDM project to meet the requirements of Title VI and to better serve the community.

Follow-up and Continuing Efforts

This document establishes the basic techniques for disseminating the information to the public and engaging the citizens in interactive discussions about this ETDM project. Lake~Sumter MPO staff will work to quantify the results of the public involvement efforts and include this in the final planning report.

Summary

The Lake~Sumter MPO recognizes the importance of the public involvement process as a means to inform, educate, and involve citizens in the transportation decisions that impact our daily lives. By involving the public in the planning process early and often, transportation planners are able to ensure that plans and programs are developed in a way that reflects our community values and benefits all segments of the population equally.