

## **FHWA/FTA Interim Policy on Public Involvement**

*"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of society but the people themselves"--Thomas Jefferson*

Secretary of Transportation Federico Peña's Strategic Plan establishes the objective of putting people first in all of the Department's endeavors. Consistent with this objective, it is the policy of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to aggressively support proactive public involvement at all stages of planning and project development. State departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and transportation providers are required to develop, with the public, effective involvement processes which are custom-tailored to local conditions. The performance standards for these proactive public involvement processes include early and continuous involvement; reasonable public availability of technical and other information; collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria and mitigation needs; open public meetings where matters related to Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered; and open access to the decisionmaking process prior to closure.

To achieve these objectives, the FHWA and FTA commit to:

- Promoting an active role for the public in the development of transportation plans, programs and projects from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
- Promoting the shared obligation of the public and decision makers to define goals and objectives for the State and/or metropolitan transportation system, to identify transportation and related problems, to develop alternatives to address the problems, and to evaluate the alternatives on the basis of collaboratively identified criteria.
- Ensuring that the public is actively involved in the development of public involvement procedures themselves in ways that go beyond commenting on drafts.
- Strongly encouraging the State departments of transportation, metropolitan planning organizations, and transportation providers to aggressively seek to identify and involve the affected and interested public, including those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems and facilities.
- Strongly encouraging planning and implementing agencies to use combinations of different public involvement techniques designed to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
- Sponsoring outreach, training, and technical assistance and providing information for Federal, State, regional, and local transportation agencies on effective public involvement procedures.

· Ensuring that statewide and metropolitan planning work programs provide for effective public involvement.

Carefully evaluating public involvement processes and procedures to assess their success at meeting the performance requirements specified in the appropriate regulations during our joint certification reviews, metropolitan planning and conformity findings, State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) approvals and project oversight.

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Rodney E. Slater, Administrator  
Federal Highway Administration

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Gordon J. Linton, Administrator  
Federal Transit Administration