

# **Public Participation Guidelines**

for Transportation Planning

Updated  
January 2021



## What is this report?

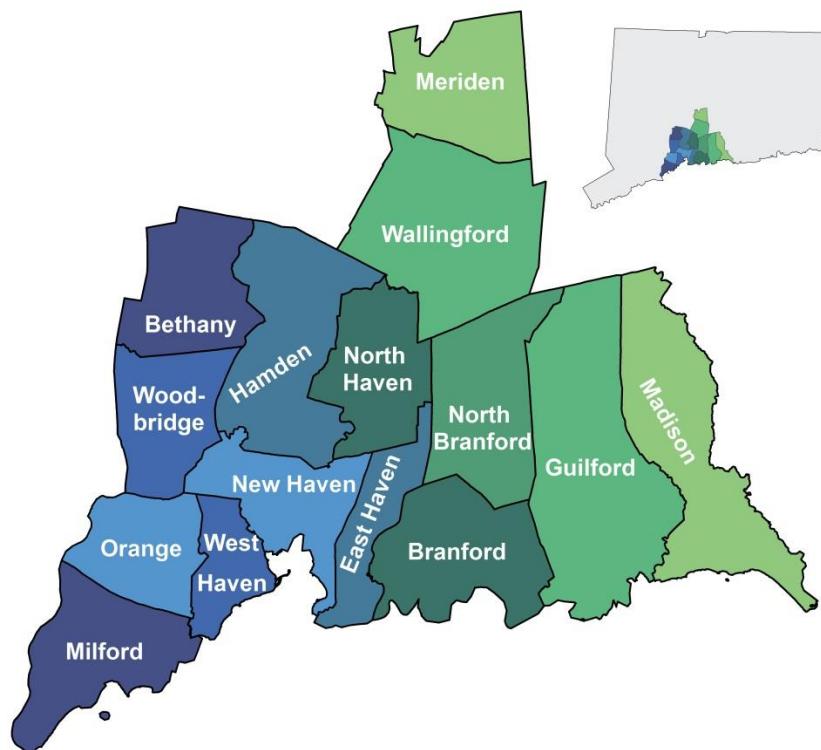
The purpose of this report is to document the actions carried out by the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) for public participation in transportation planning, pursuant to Title 23 CFR 450.316. It contains policies and methodologies for involving the public in the transportation planning process. This report also provides a brief explanation of how the transportation planning process is conducted in the region.

## What is the SCRCOG Region?

The SCRCOG region is comprised of the following fifteen cities and towns in South Central Connecticut:

Bethany	Madison	North Haven
Branford	Meriden	Orange
East Haven	Milford	Wallingford
Guilford	New Haven	West Haven
Hamden	North Branford	Woodbridge

As of the 2010 U.S. Census, there are 570,001 residents living in the region, with New Haven having the largest population, 129,779. The following map illustrates the South Central Connecticut Planning Area.



## What does SCRCOG do?

SCRCOG brings together local governments to cooperate on a variety of topics including land use planning, housing, and transportation planning. The Council provides a forum to foster communication, coordination, and collaboration in identifying and addressing regional issues.

SCRCOG is dedicated to:

- Enabling cities and towns, through regional cooperation, to work together to accomplish projects they cannot do as efficiently or cost effectively by themselves;
- Creating a sense of pride in the region by aspiring to the highest quality of life and economic well-being that can be achieved; and
- Increasing voluntary cooperation in the region to achieve productive results that benefit the region.

SCRCOG maintains a regional plan of development and reviews land use changes that affect member municipalities. The regional plan has goals and objectives related to density, jobs, housing, transportation, and regional educational, employment, and open space facilities.

SCRCOG is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO), which is responsible for allocating federal transportation funds in the region. As the MPO, SCRCOG is required to develop a number of documents related to transportation. They are the long-range transportation plan, the short-range Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

## How is SCRCOG organized?

SCRCOG is organized according to Sections 4-124i through 4-124p of the General Statutes of the State of Connecticut and as further provided by a set of By-Laws.

The Council, or decision-making body of the organization, makes a large number of area-wide transportation planning decisions. It is comprised of 15 members, one mayor or first selectmen from each municipality. The Council meets the fourth Wednesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. These meetings are open to the public.

On the following page is a list of the members of the Council (as of January 2021).

## Council Members

Municipality	Member	Title
Bethany	Paula Cofrancesco	First Selectman
Branford	James Cosgrove	First Selectman
East Haven	Joseph Carfora	Mayor
Guilford	Matthew Hoey	First Selectman
Hamden	Curt Leng	Mayor
Madison	Peggy Lyons	First Selectman
Meriden	Kevin Scarpati	Mayor
Milford	Benjamin Blake	Mayor
New Haven	Justin Elicker	Mayor
North Branford	Bob Viglione	Mayor
North Haven	Michael Freda	First Selectman
Orange	James Zeoli	First Selectman
Wallingford	William Dickinson, Jr.	Mayor
West Haven	Nancy Rossi	Mayor
Woodbridge	Beth Heller	First Selectman

## The Transportation Committee

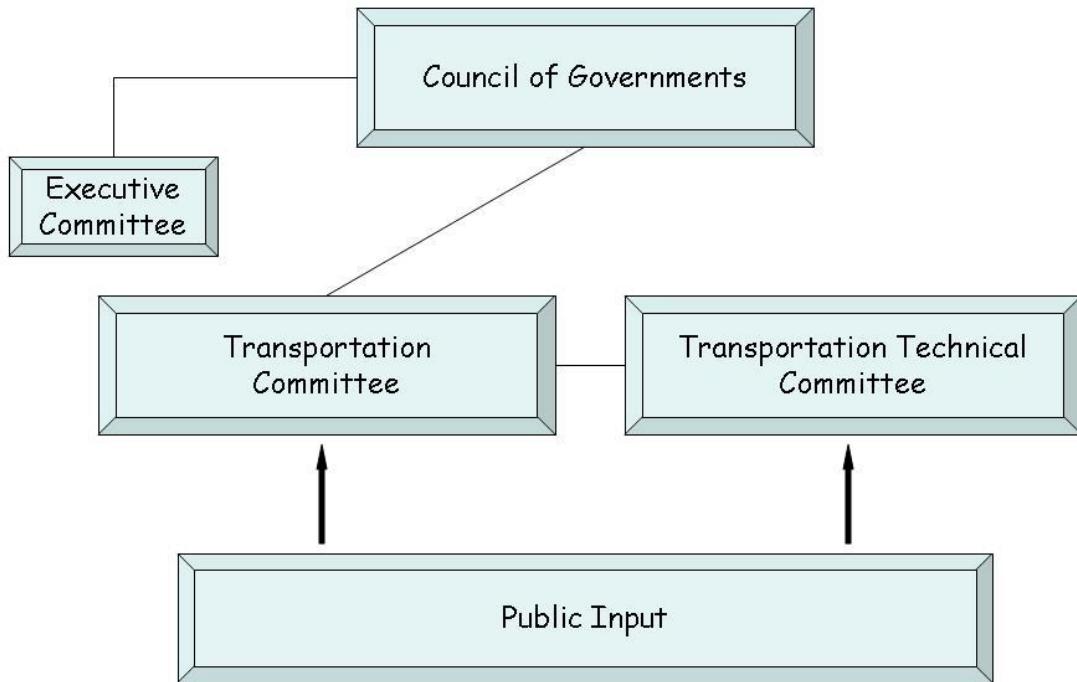
The Transportation Committee is comprised of six chief elected officials. This committee recommends key transportation planning and programming proposals for adoption by the Council. The committee meetings allow a more intensive review of proposals than possible at the monthly Council meetings. The committee meets on the second Wednesday of each month at noon. These meetings are open to the public and informal to encourage public participation.

The Transportation Committee is chaired by Mayor Dickinson of Wallingford. The other five members of the committee are selected annually in January.

The Transportation Technical Committee includes municipal staff, state personnel, transit operators, and other interested persons. The Transportation Technical Committee meets jointly with the Transportation Committee on the second Wednesday of each month at noon. The purpose of this dual meeting is to allow the elected officials on the Transportation Committee, who typically are not professional engineers or planners, to interact with such staff and make more informed recommendations to the Council.

The following figure illustrates the transportation committee structure of SCRCOG.

## South Central Connecticut Transportation Committee Structure



## How does the Planning Process Work?

The South Central Connecticut transportation planning process involves the preparation of regional long-range plans, transportation improvement programs, citizen brochures, and administrative documents. Public interest varies depending on the product and the intensity of the issues that may be involved with each document. The purpose of the South Central Connecticut public participation process is to recognize differences in public interests and provide opportunities for involvement to meet the needs of the various interests. These public participation guidelines constitute a general framework rather than a specific program.

The transportation planning process begins with the regional long-range transportation plan, [\*South Central Regional Transportation Plan: 2019-2045\*](#), which was adopted in April 2019. *Mobility* includes the region's transportation needs, traveler responses, and public sector cost constraints. The *Plan* includes fiscally constrained highway and transit projects that are expected to be funded in the next 25 years. The *Plan* also includes additional needs for the region that are beyond the financial constraints. Projects which increase capacity must be in the fiscally constrained portion of the long-range transportation plan. The long-range plan is updated at least once every three years. Public participation activities are conducted during this update process and are discussed in the public participation section of this document.

The next phase of the transportation planning process includes the preparation of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP is a program that illustrates how federal transportation funds will be allocated in the region over the next five years. The current program is the *South Central Regional Council of Governments FFY2021-FFY2024 Transportation Improvement Program*, which was adopted in October 2020. All projects which receive any federal funds must be in the TIP. The TIP is updated at least once every two years, and is amended on a regular (monthly) basis. Public participation activities conducted during the TIP process are discussed in the next section of this document.

#### Who exactly is the public?

- Residents
- Property Owners
- Business Owners
- Interest Groups
- Freight Shippers and Carriers
- Elected and appointed officials
- News and other media
- Drivers in the region
- Transit users in the region
- Others

#### What types of organizations need outreach?

- Human service
- Community development
- Economic development
- Health
- Business
- Employer
- Disability rights
- Minority
- Environmental
- Neighborhood groups
- Others

### What are the federal requirements for Public Participation?

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, signed into law in December 2015, requires that transportation planning be "continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive to the degree appropriate" [23 USC Sec.134(e)(3)]. The public participation process should include those key stakeholders who have not traditionally been involved. In other words, transportation planning must be conducted in conjunction with state and local officials, transit operators, and the public.

The joint Federal Highway Administration / Federal Transit Administration Joint Planning Rule (23 CFR part 450, 49 CFR part 613) requires metropolitan planning organizations to conduct a locally-developed public participation process. The public involvement process must "provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs" [23 CFR part 450.316(b)(1)].

### What are SCRCOG's policies for Public Participation?

#### Policy 1: Conduct Proactive Outreach.

Council staff, per Transportation Committee guidance, is responsible for continuously seeking to involve organizations and individuals with potential interests in transportation planning

efforts. In short, SCRCOG's goal is to inform and present information on transportation planning products and processes to the public.

Proactive outreach must also include timely insight on processes, analyses, and decision points. SCRCOG will provide timely information on its role, technical capacity, relationship to the Connecticut Department of Transportation, annual transportation planning work program development process, triennial transportation plan review process, and TIP development / amendment process.

**Policy 2: Conduct outreach to traditionally under-served individuals and communities, which includes but is not limited to low income, minority, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons.**

**What is Executive Order 12898?**

Executive Order (EO) 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low Income Populations*, was signed by President Clinton on February 11, 1994. The EO reinforced the requirements of Title XI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focused federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low income communities. It promotes non-discrimination in federally funded programs as well as access to public information and equal opportunities for public participation for minority and low-income communities.

The EO is directed at project level decision making in the engineering and designing phases of projects and at long-range and programming activities.

SCRCOG will identify potential communities and engage them in transportation programs and projects. Methods of engagement include adding them to the transportation mailing list and translating vital documents as needed. Staff will largely identify potentially underserved communities through maps that depict large proportions of these populations. These efforts will be in accordance with Executive Order 12898, "Federal Actions to Address Minority Populations and Low Income Populations" dated February 11, 1994, and Executive Order 13166, "Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency" dated August 11, 2000.

**What is Executive Order 13166?**

Executive Order (EO) 13166, *Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)*, was signed by President Clinton on August 11, 2000. EO 13166 requires federal agencies and any other entities that receive federal funds via grants, contracts, or sub-contracts to make their activities accessible to non-English speaking persons.

Persons with Limited English Proficiency are those with a primary or home language other than English who must, due to limited fluency in English, communicate in that primary or home language if they are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service, or benefit in federally funded programs and activities.

### **Policy 3: Permit Substantive Interchange.**

SCRCOG will encourage substantive interchange between:

- Members of the public and staff;
- Members of the public with one another at public meetings, open houses, and other events where any public is present; and staff share officially adopted regional policies and programs and emerging Council work to foster input from these groups; and
- Members of the public and members of the Transportation Committee, Transportation Technical Committee, and Council. In addition, SCRCOG will encourage broad public participation in all of these meetings.

### **Policy 4: Consider Public Input in Decision Making.**

The Council will consider public input in its decision making. SCRCOG staff will consider public input as it is drafting and refining documents, plans, and programs. Most importantly, proposals and viewpoints of the public will be considered in *advance* of decisions being made.

## **How does SCRCOG carry out its public participation policies?**

SCRCOG *provides information to the public* by the following methods:

### **Advertising**

SCRCOG uses display advertisements in the New Haven Register, La Voz Hispana, and Northeast News Today for *TIP* and *Transportation Plan* notifications. SCRCOG takes out legal advertisements when updating *Public Participation Guidelines*.

### **SCRCOG Web Site ([www.scrcog.org](http://www.scrcog.org))**

Reports, meeting notices, and links provide information and facilitate communications.

### **Memos and Reports**

Memos and reports share Council proposals, analyses, plans, and programs. Monthly Transportation Committee and Transportation Technical Committee agendas and news releases announce publications.

### **Media Releases**

Before major Transportation Committee and Council actions, media releases are e-mailed or faxed to:

- Regional newspapers (New Haven Register, Connecticut Post),
- Local newspapers (Meriden, Milford and community-scale),
- Public service cable television channels,
- Connecticut commercial television channels and Connecticut radio stations.

The e-mails/faxes note SCRCOG's planning and programming role and provides a focus for broader inquiries. The complete media distribution list follows.

<b>Media Distribution List</b>	
Amity Observer	North Haven Citizen
CPBN	Post Chronicle
Connecticut Post	Shoreline Times
CT Latino News	The Advisor
East Haven Courier	The Sound
FOX Connecticut (Channel 61)	The Source
Guilford Courier	Totokett Times
Hamden Community News	West Haven Voice
Hamden Journal	WFSB (Channel 3)
Hartford Courant	WNHU 88.7 FM
Inner City News	WQUN 1220 AM
La Voz Hispana	WRYM 840 AM La Gigante
Milford Mirror	WTIC 1080 News
Milford-Orange Bulletin	WTNH (Channel 8)
Meriden Record Journal	WVIT (Channel 30)
New Haven Advocate	WYBC 94.3 FM
New Haven Independent	Yale Daily News
New Haven Register	Yale Herald
Northeast News Today	

### **Meeting Notices**

Direct mailings for the Transportation Committee, Transportation Technical Committee, and Council provide interested persons with meeting agendas and relevant background materials. Non-governmental parties are added to the mailing lists upon request.

### **Mailing List**

Any member of the public requesting to be placed on the mailing list will receive a basic agenda for each of the above meetings. Upon request, they will receive detailed agendas and all related materials.

### **Accommodations**

All meeting announcements contain a notice that auxiliary aids/services and Limited English Proficiency interpreters will be provided with two weeks' notice.

Although foreign language interpretation is not currently provided at meetings, SCRCOG will make efforts to translate transportation planning-related information into other relevant languages.

Council staff also seeks opportunities to meet with persons, groups, and / or organizations relative to transportation planning and programming efforts. Any meeting that is scheduled with Council staff must:

- occur at the Council's office, in a place of business, or in a public place;
- be open to any member of the public; and
- occur in an environment accessible to people with disabilities.

There are a number of types of meetings that SCRCOG will conduct to foster public participation, including:

#### **Periodic Council-Convened Work Sessions**

Late afternoon or early evening work sessions permit interested people and organizations to address current Council planning and programming efforts. They can offer an alternative if one cannot attend midday Transportation Committee or Transportation Technical Committee meetings. Work sessions are intended as an informal interchange between staff and interested parties. Newspaper display advertising and committee agendas announce work sessions. Any public insight, interests, and/or concerns are shared with the committees and Council via attendee-provided material or staff written notes.

#### **Transportation Plan and/or Transportation Improvement Program Meetings**

Public work sessions conducted for the development of these plans assist in developing goals, estimates, alternatives, and proposals. These work session also help staff shape options for committee and Council review. Public comments, offered in writing or summarized by staff, accompany relevant agendas and are shared with committees and elected officials.

#### **Municipally Sponsored Meetings**

Council staff, upon request, participate in meetings initiated by chief elected officials, municipal staff, municipal planning and zoning commissions, and transit districts.

#### **Non-Profit and Special Interest Organizations**

SCRCOG staff seeks opportunities to meet with organizations addressing equal opportunity, poverty, transportation, and/or environmental issues. Staff share officially adopted regional policies and programs and emerging Council work to foster input from these groups.

#### **What is Scoping?**

Scoping is the process by which the range of the issues and alternatives to be examined in a study is determined. Scoping is often the first contact between proponents of a proposal and the public and provides an opportunity for the public, other agencies, and tribes to comment on the proposed action, alternatives, and impacts to be discussed in a proposal.

#### **Major Council Corridor Studies, Special Studies and Joint CTDOT Corridor Studies**

Maximum public participation and feedback is pursued throughout the process of the above significant studies. For these significant studies, staff will conduct/participate in a detailed

scoping process, timely work sessions addressing incremental products, and public meetings. Public comments offered in writing or summarized by staff accompany relevant agendas and are shared with committees and elected officials.

### **Monitoring and Updating of this Plan**

The Public Participation Guidelines will be updated, at a minimum of, every two years. SCRCOG continues to monitor the effectiveness of our public outreach in several ways. SCRCOG is able to monitor website traffic and track the number of hits on public notices. Public comments, whether given at in-person meetings or submitted electronically, can help inform the planning process and help SCRCOG analyze the reach of public notices.

The following table displays different public notifications and meeting types that are employed for the different transportation products and processes in the regions.

### **Public Notifications and Meeting Types by Product**

Council Action	Type	Minimum Notice (days)*	News Release	Direct Mail	SCRCOG Agenda	Public Meeting	Work Session	Trans Tech Comm Meeting	Trans Comm Meeting	Council Meeting
Public Participation Guidelines	Major	45	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Unified Planning Work Program	Major	30	X	X	X		X	X	X	X
Regional Transportation Plan - Draft	Major	45	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Regional Transportaiton Plan - Final	Major	45	X	X	X	X	maybe	X	X	X
TIP	Major	30	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TIP Ammendments	Major	15	X	X	X		maybe	X	X	X
SCRCOG/ConnDOT Corridor Study	Major	30	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Related Priorities	Major	15	X	X	X		maybe	X	X	X
Technical Memo	Major	30		X			maybe	X		
Special Study-Minor	Minor	15	maybe				X	X	X	X
Special Study	Minor	30	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Consultant Selection	Minor	15	X		X		X	X	X	X

\* prior to Council meeting where formal action occurs

## How can you get information?

- Log on to the SCRCOG website at [www.ssrcog.org](http://www.ssrcog.org) and view the meeting agendas, publications, and announcements.
- Contact the SCRCOG offices by phone at (203) 234-7555
- Sign up to be on the mailing list.

## How can you participate?

- Send your comments in writing to:

SCRCOG  
127 Washington Avenue  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor West,  
North Haven, CT 06473

- Send your comments by email to: [camento@srcog.org](mailto:camento@srcog.org)
- Comment by telephone (203) 234-7555 or fax (203) 234-9850
- Offer input/discussion at SCRCOG Committee Meetings
- Share your views with your Mayor/First Selectperson