



# Public Participation Guidelines



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# Purpose of the Plan ●●●●●

This report aims to document the actions that the South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) will take to facilitate public participation in transportation planning, in accordance with Title 23 CFR 450.316. It outlines the policies and methodologies used to engage the public in the transportation planning process. Additionally, the report provides a brief overview of how transportation planning is conducted in the region.



# Section 1: Introduction

## Who We Are

The South Central Regional Council of Governments (SCRCOG) was established in 1985 under Sections 4-124i through 4-124p of the Connecticut General Statutes (CGS), with the approval of legislative bodies from fifteen municipalities: Bethany, Branford, East Haven, Guilford, Hamden, Madison, Meriden, Milford, New Haven, North Branford, North Haven, Orange, Wallingford, West Haven, and Woodbridge.

As one of nine Councils of Governments (COGs) in Connecticut, SCRCOG serves as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for federally mandated transportation planning, responsible for allocating federal transportation funds within the region.

SCRCOG facilitates inter-municipal coordination, cooperation, and decision-making. It addresses various issues, including transportation, land use, and environmental planning. The Council is also responsible for maintaining and updating the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (POCD), which provides recommendations on land use, housing, transportation infrastructure, parks, and other community needs (CGS Chapter 127 § 8-35a). This plan is utilized in reviewing land use changes that may impact member municipalities (CGS Chapter 124 § 8-3b).

Additionally, SCRCOG oversees other regional programs, including the Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, a Regional Affordable Housing Plan, and a Regional Geographic Information System (GIS) Program.

## Planning Process

### The SCRCOG Policy Board

The SCRCOG Policy Board serves as the decision-making body for the organization, consisting of the Chief Elected Officials of the 15 member municipalities. In the event a CEO cannot attend a meeting of the Council, the CEO may designate an alternate. The Board meets monthly to discuss and make decisions on various regional issues. These meetings are open to the public, promoting transparency and community engagement in the decision-making process.

### The Transportation Committee

The Transportation Committee, consisting of seven chief elected officials, plays a crucial role in shaping transportation planning and programming proposals for the Council. By providing a forum for in-depth review, the committee ensures that proposals receive careful consideration before being presented to the Council. Meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month at noon and are open

to the public, fostering an informal environment that encourages community participation and feedback. This approach helps to create a more inclusive decision-making process regarding transportation initiatives.

### The Transportation Technical Committee

The Transportation Technical Committee consists of municipal staff, state personnel, transit operators, and other stakeholders. This committee meets jointly with the Transportation Committee on the second Wednesday of each month at noon. The purpose of these dual meetings is to facilitate interaction between elected officials—who may not have professional engineering or planning backgrounds—and technical staff. This collaboration helps ensure that the elected officials can make more informed recommendations to the Council regarding transportation initiatives.

## Core Planning Documents

As the region's designated MPO, SCRCOG maintains the following documents which help to guide the transportation planning process

### The Regional Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is a long-range planning document that lays out Transportation goals over a 20-year period and provides a framework to help guide the use of federal funding in the Region. The MTP provides direction for the Region on major policy issues on all modes of transportation. It includes regionally significant projects and investment programs planned out over the 20-year timeline. Projects included in the MTP may ultimately be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

### The Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a medium-range planning document that identifies transportation improvement projects to be funded through federal programs over a 4-year fiscal timeframe. Any regional project utilizing federal funds must be in the TIP. Project information is constantly being updated and new projects are added. Changes to the TIP are made through an amendment process that starts with the Transportation Committee's recommendation for approval to the policy board. Projects in the TIP are derived from and consistent with the region's MTP.

### The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes all SCRCOG planning and administrative activities and transportation planning studies that will be conducted over a 2-year timeframe. In order to be eligible for reimbursement, all planning studies and activities must identify costs and funding sources and must be included in the UPWP. Any changes to the UPWP are made through the amendment process that starts with the Transportation Committee's recommendation for approval to the policy board.

### Annual Listing of Obligated Projects

The Annual Listing of Obligated Projects (ALOP) is an MPO required report which discloses all federal funds that have been obligated in the preceding year for public information. This report includes investments in roadways, transit, maintenance, pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities. The development and distribution of this document ensures that the public will have an accurate understanding of how federal funds are being spent on transportation projects.

## PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND MEETING TYPE BY PRODUCT

COUNCIL ACTION	COMMENT PERIOD	AGENDA ITEM	LEGAL NOTICE	PUBLIC MEETING
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES	45	✓	✓	
UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM	30	✓		
TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PLAN	30	✓	✓	✓
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN	30	✓	✓	✓
AMENDMENTS TO TIP	14	✓		
AMENDMENTS TO UPWP	14	✓		
UPWP STUDIES	30		✓	
OTHER TRANSPORTATION STUDIES	30		✓	

**\*Agenda items are recommended for approval by the transportation committee and voted on at the Policy Board Meeting**  
**\*All council action items are addressed during transportation committee and council meetings**

# Section 2 - Federal and State Requirements

## The IJA

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) took effect in November 2021. The BIL continues the previous transportation act's commitment to public participation directing Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to have a public participation plan that provides people, "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 be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process."

The BIL directs MPO public participation plans to "be developed in consultation with all interested parties," and "provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan." It further directs MPOs "to the maximum extent practicable" to "hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times," to "employ visualization techniques to describe plans," and to "make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information."

## Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Guidelines

Metropolitan planning organizations are required, under the Joint Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration Joint Planning Rule (23 CFR 450.316), to conduct a locally developed public participation process.

To supplement this requirement, SCRCOG provides explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes (23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)) in the public participation policies.

## Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 requires that transportation planning and programming be nondiscriminatory on the basis of race, color, national origin, or disability. The federal statute was further clarified and supplemented by the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 and a series of federal statutes enacted in the 1990s.

# Section 3 - SCRCOG's Policies of Public Participation

## Conduct Proactive Outreach

SCRCOG strives for the continuous engagement of groups and individuals who may have a vested interest in transportation planning efforts. This includes non-profit and special interest groups that tackle topics such as equal opportunity, poverty, transportation, housing, and environmental issues. SCRCOG actively collaborates with these groups to expand opportunities for public engagement. In summary, SCRCOG's aim is to inform and educate the public on transportation planning processes and products.

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.

## Conduct Outreach to Underserved Populations

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.

## Conduct Public Input in Decision Making

SCRCOG is dedicated to ensuring ample time for public comment and notification as part of its outreach efforts. Meeting notices are sent out at least seven days in advance, and public comment periods are provided for transportation planning products, as outlined in the Public Notification and Meeting Type by Product table. This approach promotes inclusivity and transparency in our outreach programs.

Public input plays a crucial role in the decision-making process. The Board values community feedback and considers public opinions when making decisions. Staff also utilize this input to create and enhance documents, plans, and programs. Ultimately, proposals and viewpoints from the public are prioritized and considered before final decisions are made.

## Review and Document Public Participation Guidelines

The Public Participation Guidelines will be updated, periodically, to ensure SCRCOG's public outreach remains effective, which staff can monitor in several ways. Staff can monitor website traffic and track the number of views on public notices. Additionally, public comments, whether submitted electronically or given at in-person meetings, can provide valuable insights that help inform the planning process and help staff analyze the effectiveness of the public engagement initiatives.



# Section 4 - How Does SCRCOG Conduct Public Participation

SCRCOG has developed these public participation policies in accordance with the federal and state requirements previously discussed. SCRCOG's proactive approach to public involvement emphasizes inclusivity and transparency in transportation planning. By actively engaging the public, especially traditionally underserved communities, stakeholders, and other interested parties—it seeks to ensure that all voices are heard in the decision-making process. This engagement allows community members to contribute to shaping transportation policies, projects, and initiatives, ensuring that the needs and concerns of the region's diverse population are addressed. It also provides opportunities for individuals to become informed about transportation plans and share their feedback, which helps create more equitable and effective transportation solutions.

## Modes of Public Engagement

### SCRCOG Committee Meetings

All meetings held by SCRCOG are ADA accessible and open to the public. To promote greater participation, remote access is provided whenever possible, which also allows for captioning to enhance accessibility. A meeting calendar is posted each November, outlining the schedule for all regular MPO meetings. Agendas are posted on the agency's website and distributed at least seven days before each meeting. Upon request, all meeting materials can be made available in accessible formats.

Each agenda includes the following statement in both English and Spanish to ensure clarity and inclusivity.

*Agenda and attachments for this meeting are available on our website at [www.scrkog.org](http://www.scrkog.org). Language assistance and/or ADA accommodation are provided at no cost to the public and efforts will be made to respond to timely requests for assistance. Please contact SCRCOG with five days' notice, for a copy of agenda in a language other than English. Auxiliary aids/services and limited English proficiency translators will be provided*

Other technology, such as polling apps, may be utilized as public engagement tools.

### Public Meetings

SCRCOG holds public meetings to gather comments and input during plan updates and Transportation studies. These meetings are conducted at convenient, ADA-accessible locations and scheduled at times that encourage participation. Whenever possible, a remote option is offered for those unable to attend in person. Public meeting notices are posted in advance on the SCRCOG website and may also be distributed via direct mail, legal ads, or local networks. SCRCOG actively encourages all populations and interested parties to attend and participate.

### Visualization and Technology

SCRCOG incorporates graphics and visualization techniques to illustrate and promote public understanding of plans, technical concepts, alternatives, and potential impacts. These techniques may include renderings, maps, photos, diagrams, infographics, models, or simulations. Visualization techniques may be included to enhance presentations, displays, handouts, or website content.

### Advertising

SCRCOG uses display advertisements in the New Haven Register, La Voz Hispana, and Inner-City News for TIP and Transportation Plan notifications. SCRCOG takes out legal advertisements when updating Public Participation Guidelines, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Unified Planning Work Program, and the Transportation Improvement Plan.

### Stakeholders and Public Communications

In the interest of gathering public feedback, SCRCOG welcomes and responds to comments throughout the public participation process. Various avenues are available to elicit stakeholders and public communications, some of which are highlighted below. It is paramount to acknowledge that fair inclusion of all parties and evaluating public engagement methods are crucial for successful communication.

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

The website serves as a vital platform for outreach, allowing SCRCOG to effectively share information and engage with various stakeholders. By maintaining up-to-date reports, agendas, and regional data on the website, SCRCOG can enhance transparency and foster collaboration among members, municipal staff, and the public. As technology continues to evolve, so too will the website's capabilities, making it an increasingly important resource for communication and information dissemination in the region. Emphasizing user-friendly design and accessibility will also help ensure that all stakeholders can easily access the information they need. Reports, meeting notices, and links provide information and facilitate communication.

### Mailing List

SCRCOG maintains a distribution list for elected officials, municipal staff, partner agencies, transportation service providers, and regional stakeholders. This list is used to share meeting notices, project updates, and newsletters.

Individuals wishing to sign on to this list may contact SCRCOG directly or sign up on the SCRCOG website. SCRCOG maintains this list through Mailchimp.

### Monthly Newsletter

The newsletter is published monthly, providing updates on transportation planning, land use, environmental issues, and municipal services programs. It is distributed through the mailing list and posted on the region's website. Additionally, memos and reports, as well as materials from the monthly Policy Board and Transportation Committee meetings, are available on the agency's website for easy access.

### Social Media

SCRCOG utilizes social media to update the public on programming, job postings, and other current events. Interested parties and individuals can follow the organization at South Central

# Appendix

# Appendices

## Appendix A: Stakeholders in South Central Connecticut

Audubon Connecticut

Beth El Center

Connecticut Foodshare

CT Forest and Park Association

Connecticut Environmental Conditions Online (CTECO)

Center for Land Use and Education Resource (CLEAR)

Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Com-  
missions

Connecticut Environmental Review Team (CT ERT)

Connecticut Land Conservation Council

Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials

Sierra Club CT Chapter

Greater New Haven Transit District

Guilford Salt Meadows Audubon Sanctuary

Bethany Conservation Commission

Bethany Community Gardens

Bethany Land Trust

Bethany Clean Energy Task Force

Branford Sustainability and Compliance Office

Sustainable Guilford

Guilford Water Pollution Control Authority

Hamden Clean Green Commission

Hamden Energy Use and Climate Change Commission

Madison Coastal Resiliency Commission

Madison Conservation Commission

Orange Conservation Commission

Woodbridge Conservation Commission

## Appendix B: New Haven Stakeholders

- New Haven Food System Policy Division
- City of New Haven Office of Climate and Sustainability
- City of New Haven Environmental Advisory Council
- City of New Haven City Plan Commission
- City of New Haven Engineering Department
- Yale Center for Environmental Justice
- Yale Hixon Center
- Yale Center for Business and the Environment
- New Haven Climate Movement
- New Haven Rising
- New Haven Bioregional Group/Greater New Haven Green Fund
- The Nature Conservancy
- New Haven Citizens Climate Lobby
- New Haven Land Trust
- New Haven Urban Design League
- Community Placemaking and Engagement Network (CPEN)
- Greater New Haven Transit District
- Neighborhood Housing Services of New Haven
- Urban Resources Initiative
- Save the Sound
- Solar Youth
- Peels on Wheels
- The Workplace
- City of New Haven Food Policy Division
- City of New Haven Climate Emergency Taskforce
- New Haven Coalition for Active Transportation
- Gather New Haven
- Citywide Youth Coalition
- Junta for Progressive Action
- Unidad Latina en Accion CT
- Christian Community Action
- Community Foundation of Greater New Haven
- Community Action Agency of Greater New Haven



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