

# HOUMA-THIBODAUX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Serving urbanized areas of CITY OF THIBODAUX, LAFOURCHE PARISH, and TERREBONNE PARISH

## Public Involvement Program

*Adopted by the Policy Committee of the HOUMA-THIBODAUX METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION.  
Prepared in cooperation with the Technical Advisory Committee, Louisiana Department of Transportation  
and Development, Federal Highways Administration, and the Federal Transit Administration.*

*June 19, 2001*

# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM

for the

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization

Legislation such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA), the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and the more recent Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA 21) has not only placed new demands on local governments, but has also given them new vehicles for development. One vehicle is the enhanced role of the community in the transportation planning process. The nation's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) have been charged with enriching the transportation planning process with greater public awareness and involvement. The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization is the designated MPO for the Houma Urbanized Area.

The *Public Involvement Program* of the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization will be used for the transportation planning activities for the Houma Urbanized Area. The program will provide opportunities for citizens to contribute ideas and voice opinion, early and often, during preparation of draft plans and programs. Of utmost importance to the *Public Involvement Program* is that information, education and participation is insured to the citizens affected by the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization's planning efforts.

Because regional transportation planning is enhanced by increased public involvement, a strong communication channel is necessary between the public and the decision-makers. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 emphasized the need to increase in the public's ability to affect what decisions are being made in their community. The U.S. Congress reaffirmed that assertion in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century legislation, adopted in 1998. By increasing the dialogue between decision-makers and the public as stakeholders, better plans will be produced.

The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization wishes to enhance the public's role as partners in transportation planning by providing information and opportunity for public comment early and throughout the transportation planning process.

The three major components of the *Public Involvement Program* for the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization are

- Community Dialogue
- Public Meetings
- Review and Comment

- Community Dialog

Every opportunity will be taken to distribute information to the public. Information will be distributed to the media and local interest groups via fact sheets, brochures, reports, etc.

Notices for upcoming meetings and public involvement activities will be published in the official journals of the governmental bodies that are represented by the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization: *The Courier* and *The Daily Comet*.

The Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization staff (South Central Planning & Development Commission) will maintain a list of interested parties who wish to be notified of any upcoming events or actions regarding the transportation planning process.

Presentations to neighborhood groups, civic organizations, governmental meetings, and other special interest groups will be made on an as requested basis to discuss transportation activities within the expanded Houma Urbanized Area. Interested organizations should contact the South Central Planning & Development Commission offices and allow ample time for the staff to make arrangements to attend at:

Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization  
South Central Planning & Development Commission  
Post Office Box 1870  
Gray, Louisiana 70359  
504-851-2900

Information will be provided to the public through technical assistance and access to publications. Official copies of the *Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan* and the *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) will be reserved in the South Central Planning & Development Commission offices and the main branches of the Terrebonne Parish and Lafourche Parish public libraries for easy public access and information.

- Public Meetings

At least one public meeting will be held during development of the “Draft” *Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan* and/or the “Draft” *Transportation Improvement Program*.

Major amendments or changes to the *Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan* and the “*Transportation Improvement Program*” documents will result in a second public meeting. Major amendments shall include any addition or deletion of projects deemed regionally significant. Exceptions:

1. Those projects or project groupings that are specifically exempted from the public involvement process. Exempt projects are listed in Appendix A.
2. Minor revisions to document text or project descriptions.
3. Revisions to project timings within the TIP time frame.

Every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate traditionally under-served audiences including low income and minority households and persons with disabilities. All public meetings, public hearings and open houses will be held at wheelchair accessible locations. Persons with disabilities who have special communication or accommodation needs and who plan to attend the meetings may contact the South Central Planning & Development Commission offices for assistance.

All public meetings will be announced by publication in the official journals of the governmental bodies that are represented by the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization: *The Courier* and *The Daily Comet*.

All persons or organizations maintained on the interested parties list will be notified of public meetings. Also, every reasonable effort will be made to ensure that stakeholders in the transportation planning process are invited to participate. These stakeholders will include, but are not limited to; persons or organizations involved in traffic operation, transportation safety and enforcement, airports and port authorities, and appropriate private transportation providers.

- Review and Comment

Prior to adoption of the *Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan* and/or the *Transportation Improvement Program*, or major amendments to either document, the public will be given adequate review time. A notice will be published in the official journals: *The Courier* and *The Daily Comet*, at least two weeks prior to any public meeting and notices will be sent to all interested parties. Copies of the draft documents or proposed amendments will be available for public review at the South Central Planning & Development Commission office as well as the main branches of the Terrebonne Parish and Lafourche Parish public libraries.

A comment and response summary will be included within the completed *Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Area Transportation Plan* and the *Transportation Improvement Program*.

The *Public Involvement Program* will be open for review by the Houma-Thibodaux Metropolitan Planning Organization for effectiveness. Any changes to this document will require a 45-day public comment period.

## APPENDIX A. - EXEMPT PROJECTS

### Safety

- Railroad/ highway crossing.
- Hazard elimination program.
- Safer non-Federal-Aid system roads.
- Shoulder Improvements.
- Increasing sight distances.
- Safety improvement program.
- Traffic control devices and operating assistance other than signalization projects.
- Railroad/highway crossing warning devices.
- Guardrails, median barriers, crash cushions.
- Pavement marking demonstration.
- Emergency relief.
- Fencing.
- Skid Treatments.
- Safety roadside rest areas.
- Adding medians.
- Lighting improvements.
- Widening narrow pavements / reconstructing bridges (no additional travel lanes).
- Emergency truck pullovers.

### Mass Transit

- Operating assistance to transit agencies.
- Purchase of support vehicles.
- Rehabilitation of transit vehicles.
- Purchase of office, shop, and operating equipment for existing facilities.
- Purchase of operating equipment for vehicles (e.g., radios, fareboxes, lifts, etc.).
- Construction or renovation of power, signal, and communication systems.
- Purchase of new buses to replace existing vehicles or for minor expansions of the fleet.
- Construction of new bus storage/maintenance facilities categorically excluded in 23 CFR 771.

### Other

Specific activities that do not involve or lead directly to construction, such as:

- Planning and technical studies.
- Grants for training and research programs.
- Planning activities conducted pursuant to titles 23 and 49 U.S.C.
- Federal-Aid systems revisions
- Engineering to assess social, economic, and environmental effects of the proposed action or alternatives to action.
- Noise attenuation.
- Emergency or hardship advance land acquisition (23 CFR 712 or 23 CFR 771).
- Acquisition of scenic easements.
- Plantings, landscaping, etc.
- Sign removal.
- Directional and information signs.
- Transportation enhancement activities (except rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities).
- Repair of damage caused by natural disasters, civil unrest, or terrorist acts, except projects involving substantial functional, location or capacity changes.