

**Public Involvement Procedures
for the
South Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO)**

Adopted: September 23, 2021

These procedures have been developed to seek out a combination of outreach, inclusion, and engagement of the public in the transportation planning process. Opportunities for public involvement are not limited to those contained herein; in addition to the following, the RPO will continue to pursue innovative and effective public involvement procedures.

1. Meetings

All RPO meetings are open to the public, and all material to be brought before the RPO is available for public inspection and review on request. Fees will be charged for photocopies.

2. Staff Availability

RPO staff is provided by South Alabama Regional Planning Commission, located at 110 Beauregard Street, Mobile, (251) 433-6541, FAX 433-6009. Personnel are available during the office hours of 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. Monday through Friday to respond to questions regarding the South Alabama Rural Transportation Planning Process, either by telephone or in person. The staff is available to make presentations to the public upon request.

3. Public Notice

Prior to RPO consideration for approval, any document to be adopted will be advertised for public review, comment, and/or input as a display ad in a general circulation newspaper. The notice will briefly describe the proposed action, when public hearings/meetings will be held, when the RPO will meet to consider the action, and where more detailed information can be reviewed or obtained (see paragraph 4 following). The intent of this procedure is to provide a means for involvement and input from all interested parties at the earliest possible time prior to RPO decisions or action. Therefore, public notice of the proposed meeting or action will be made as soon as possible, but in no event less than ten working days prior to the date the RPO is scheduled to act on the proposal.

In the event of circumstances (such as major storm events or quarantine) that hinder in-person meetings, a virtual meeting may be deemed necessary. Information on how to participate in the virtual meeting will be posted online and through news media.

4. Availability of Documents for Public Review

The public notices described above will specify that a more detailed explanation of the proposed action can be obtained from the SARPC Transportation Planning staff and will include the office mailing address and phone number. When entire

documents are involved, the notice will also state that the document can be reviewed at the SARPC office. The project documentation will include comment forms with instructions on how to contact SARPC for additional information and where to submit written comments. Any documents to be reviewed and adopted will be made available no later than five working days in advance of the meeting.

In the event of circumstances (such as major storm events or quarantine) that hinder the dissemination of hard copy of documents a notice of where the documents may be found will be posted online and through news media.

5. Other Means for Information Dissemination

RPO staff will utilize other available media to encourage early and continuous involvement of citizens in the planning process and in the promotion of ongoing programs. SARPC also maintains a home page for the RPO on the World Wide Web at <http://www.mopbilempo.org> under the RPO Tab. Information on the RPO program will be posted there as it becomes available. Upon request, notification of document availability, public hearings or meetings, or pending RPO actions will be mailed to individuals who have indicated interest in related matters and have provided a current mailing address. Community involvement efforts will be used to help establish new contacts to add to the mailing list. RPO Staff will encourage the publication of news articles on the South Alabama Rural Transportation Planning Process.

6. Resolution of Public Input

All comments received on draft plans or proposals, whether submitted in writing or orally to RPO staff independently or at public meetings or hearings, will be documented and made available to the RPO prior to any action being taken on the proposal. All relevant comments and their responses will be included in the final plan/proposal adopted by the RPO. All responses to public comments will be made in a timely manner.

7. Accommodation of Physically Challenged

Access to meetings or information will be available to physically challenged persons by notifying the RPO staff at least seven days prior to the meeting date or date the information is desired so that adequate time is available to complete any special arrangements necessary to accommodate the individual's physical challenge.

8. Revised Proposals

Should any draft plans or proposals be substantially modified after being advertised for public comment, either due to such comment or otherwise, the public notice cycle will be repeated and the new proposal will be made available for public comment.

9. Public Involvement through Other Community Development Programs

SARPC and the RPO staff will continue to increase communication and expand public awareness through their involvement in community improvement initiatives and organizations. One such organization is Envision Coastal Alabama. This

organization is made up of concerned citizens targeting all types of social awareness and community development, including infrastructure in general and transportation in particular. RPO staff has both policy and implementation involvement in Envision Coastal Alabama. Inherent in the Envision process is the concept that public involvement should drive plan development, and the program therefore provides an excellent opportunity for broad community representation in the transportation planning process. RPO staff will continue to assist in the establishment and implementation of the organization's goals and methodologies for transportation strategies in the region. The products and goals of all of these community-based efforts will continue to be integrated into all RPO plans and decisions.

10. Review and Revision of Procedures

The RPO staff will review the public involvement procedures with respect to changes in local, state and federal legislation and in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to the public. This review will be completed annually for the prior fiscal year. The review will include the number of comments/responses received, citizen attendance at meetings, the number of citizens who actually review the documents distributed throughout the region, and the amount spent on public notices and advertisements. If the RPO determines that the public involvement program is inadequate, additional involvement techniques will be developed and utilized; this might include alternate or new media resources. Should the RPO determine that it is necessary to revise these procedures; a 45-day notification/comment period will be given prior to RPO adoption of the proposed modifications.

Resolution

South Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) amending the Public Involvement Procedures as prepared by the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC)

WHEREAS, the South Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) was established to serve as the decision-making body and to provide guidance in conducting the non-metropolitan cooperative planning process, in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation, for portions or all of Baldwin, Escambia, and Mobile Counties in Alabama, as established in 23 USC 134 and 135 (as amended by the FAST Act, Sections 1201 and 1202, December 4, 2015); and

WHEREAS, the RPO is interested in the continued development of the non-metropolitan cooperative transportation planning process as described in 23 CFR 450.210(b) through on-going public involvement and data collection of the rural transportation needs and issues of the citizens in the aforementioned counties; and

WHEREAS, the South Alabama Regional Planning Commission (SARPC), serving as staff to the RPO is required to provide guidance to local governments in conducting the non-metropolitan planning process as a cooperative effort with the Alabama Department of Transportation as established in the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking June 13, 2014; and

WHEREAS, The South Alabama Rural Planning Organization has developed Public Involvement Procedures which outline the rules governing how the public will be kept informed of the actions of the organization; and

WHEREAS, the RPO work Program has been duly reviewed, discussed, and approved by the RPO; now

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 23rd day of September, 2021 that the South Alabama Rural Planning Organization does hereby adopt and endorse the amended Public Involvement Procedures.


Chairman


Attest: