



# PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

TRANSPORTATION 2035

2010

## **TRANSPORTATION 2035 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN**

### ***Forward***

As the governmental body most directly responsible for the guidance of the transportation planning process, the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) strives to ensure that its recommendations are in keeping with the goals and standards of the Federal Government, the State, Lake County, Sumter County, and the 15 incorporated jurisdictions. The MPO functions include, but are not limited to, the preparation of the tasks required by state rule or by federal policy.

As part of the MPO planning process, public involvement is given a major priority. Transportation projects funded through public dollars are to be planned in a manner that encourages public participation and incorporates public comments into planning efforts. As a result, a responsibility is placed on MPOs to develop a plan where the opportunity for public involvement is assured. As part of that plan, a required element is the outlining of the means by which to measure the success of the public involvement activities. By strategizing public involvement techniques and then monitoring and

measuring the effectiveness, better planning products emerge that genuinely capture the needs of the public.

### ***Purpose***

The Lake~Sumter MPO supports the public's right to have a strong voice in the transportation planning process. Public involvement informs and educates the public about transportation planning and creates a knowledgeable community, which in turn leads to better planning. Public involvement also engages the public and encourages meaningful feedback to be incorporated into planning products. The goals of the



public involvement plan are:

- ▶ Share information with the public about proposed improvement, its conceptual design, potential benefits and adverse social, economic and environmental impacts
- ▶ Provide an official forum for the public to express their opinions and concerns
- ▶ Maintain an official record of all proceedings, comments and materials submitted

Public involvement is a critical element of TRANSPORTATION 2035. Because transportation has a significant impact on the lives of all Lake County and Sumter County residents and the prosperity of business in the region, citizen participation in the development of the plan is imperative.

- ▶ Public Participation is encouraged and solicited without regard to race, color, creed, religion, sex, age, national origin, disability or family status.

Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations, Section 450.316(a) (1) and (2), the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process, and the FDOT MPO Handbook set forth the requirements for the public involvement process in conjunction with all aspects of transportation planning. The regulation states that the public involvement process shall provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and the major planning documents” produced by the LSMPO.

### ***Background***

TRANSPORTATION 2035 will provide the policy framework to meet the transportation needs of residents, tourists and business people between now and 2035. TRANSPORTATION 2035 is a long-

range strategy and capital improvement program developed to guide the effective investment of public funds in multimodal transportation facilities addressing highway, transit, freight, pedestrian and bikeway projects. As required by federal law, we update the plan every five years to ensure the plan continues to reflect the changing transportation challenges and conditions of our region as well as changes in projected Federal, State and local funding.



The MPO has taken a leadership role in local efforts to develop a preferred growth strategy for our two county area. We will utilize this opportunity to create bold new transportation policies that address long term mobility needs.

TRANSPORTATION 2035 can be viewed as a “means to the “end”. The “end” being the desired outcome of how the Lake~Sumter region wants to look and function in the future. We have a defined vision that was created through our participation in the “How Shall We Grow” process and “Our Community, Our Future”

The vision’s core goals and principles provide the guidance for the direction of Transportation 2035. Without the vision, TRANSPORTATION 2035 would become another programming document rather than a valuable planning tool.

The plan will tackle more than roadway capacity and mobility problems. It will explore critical issues that will shape our region in the coming years. Some of those issues include impact on transportation needs and investments of factors beyond the control of the state or region, such as global warming, rising energy prices, changes in the global economy, broad demographic shifts, and sweeping changes in technology.

We have laid the ground work for this plan over the last year. In January 2009, the MPO hosted a Transportation Plan and Land Use Workshop. It was attended by county and city elected officials, staff, and interested members of the public. At the meeting, two concepts were introduced to start the process of selecting the preferred land use data set. This was followed by small group discussions covering the topics of land use, funding, roadways, and transit.

A Regional Transportation Summit was held in April 2009 for the purpose of providing information on building a cost feasible plan. Over 100 elected officials and citizens were present to hear the keynote speaker, Doug Callaway with Floridians for Better Transportation, and other local experts discuss options to help make the plan cost feasible. Photographs and presentation summaries have been placed on our website.

The next steps will include: (1) evaluation and determination of an MPO approved land use data set, (2) goals, objectives and policies, (3) updating the 2035 Central Florida Regional Planning Model (the regional traffic modeling software developed by the Florida Department of Transportation to forecast future traffic patterns), (4) development of a financial resource plan, (5) selection criteria for candidate projects, (6) development of an MPO needs plan and (7) development of a cost-feasible plan, and (8) final adoption of TRANSPORTATION 2035 in early 2010.

As the success of this transportation plan is based on public involvement, we value input. Public participation is welcomed throughout the development of the plan. Public meetings and other events will be promoted through the local media, email, newsletters and posted on our website, [www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com). We encourage everyone to visit this site as often as you like to get current information on the plan.

It is our goal to work with the community to craft a plan will be our first truly integrated two county multimodal transportation plan.

A very important component of this process will be the collection and evaluation of public input from concerned and interested citizens and groups throughout the MPO area. The public will be provided several means to offer feedback on TRANSPORTATION 2035, as described below.

### ***Access to Information***

#### ***ETDM Planning Screen***

The MPO will include notifications of TRANSPORTATION 2035 public meetings as part of the ETDM planning screen project information, along with the Environmental Screening Tool (EST) for planning level distribution of plan documentation and notice of public meetings to other local, county, and municipal groups for coordination and comment purposes. A link to the ETDM public access site at <http://etdmpub.florida-eta.org> for access to maps and other plan information will be posted on the MPO website.

The Lake~Sumter MPO will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to technical and policy information relating to the data or content in the development of this planning project. Documents will be available for public inspection at the Lake~Sumter MPO Offices, located at 1616 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Leesburg, Florida, 34748, during normal business hours, as well as on the Lake~Sumter MPO web site [www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com), the State's ETDM Public Access website <http://etdmpub.florida-eta.org> the ETDM Project Diary website <http://cfqis.org/diary/>.

#### ***Printed Plan Maps and Meeting Documents***

TRANSPORTATION 2035 project information and maps, as well as public information meeting details shall be made available to the public at the following locations:

- ▶ Lake~Sumter MPO, 1616 South 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Leesburg
- ▶ Lake County Administration Building, 315 West Main Street, Tavares

- ▶ Sumter County Administrative Offices, 910 East Main St., Bushnell, Florida

**Public Involvement Mailing List**

The MPO staff maintains and updates a mailing list for the purpose of informing the community about various transportation planning activities undertaken by the MPO. The mailing list includes civic associations, clubs, municipal governments, newspapers, concerned citizens and all attendees to any of the transportation related public meetings held in the Lake~Sumter MPO area. The mailing list will be used to inform the community about: scheduled TRANSPORTATION 2035 meetings; future project workshops and hearings; and to provide brief updates concerning the status and progress of the planning project. Incorporating mailing lists from MPO county and municipal governments will also be used to expand outreach efforts.

An effort will be made to identify active community/citizens groups in the affected areas. A continued effort will be made to identify additional groups, should they exist. These groups will be placed on a contact list to receive project information and meeting notifications.

**Lake~Sumter MPO Website**

The MPO maintains an internet site providing a forum for the most current information on activities and transportation projects, downloadable plans for each citizen to review interactive maps of transportation projects; links to related sites; and several opportunities to provide commentary to the MPO regarding their plans and programs. The MPO will utilize its online survey tool to gather public opinion on specific



details of the planning efforts. The website can be accessed at [www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com).



All comments are collected and documented through the **Voice your Ideas!** area of the website. Access to all Transportation 2035 presentations,

maps, meeting materials and supporting documentation is available on the MPO website at [www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com).

### **Public Meetings**

Public information meetings will be held at various locations in the MPO area to inform the public of the TRANSPORTATION 2035 planning process and to solicit ideas, input and feedback. The intent of holding public informational meetings at diversified locations is to solicit broad public comments.

In addition to the numerous public meetings, three (3) public workshops will be held in MPO area to inform the public of the Transportation 2035 and to solicit ideas, input and feedback on the merits of the planning project, as well as on any issues or obstacles. The workshops will be held in the following locations: (details on dates, times and venues will be made available in the locations listed above in a timely fashion):

- ▶ Lake~Sumter Community College, Leesburg Florida
- ▶ Leesburg Opera House, Downtown Leesburg
- ▶ Lake~Sumter Community College, Clermont Campus

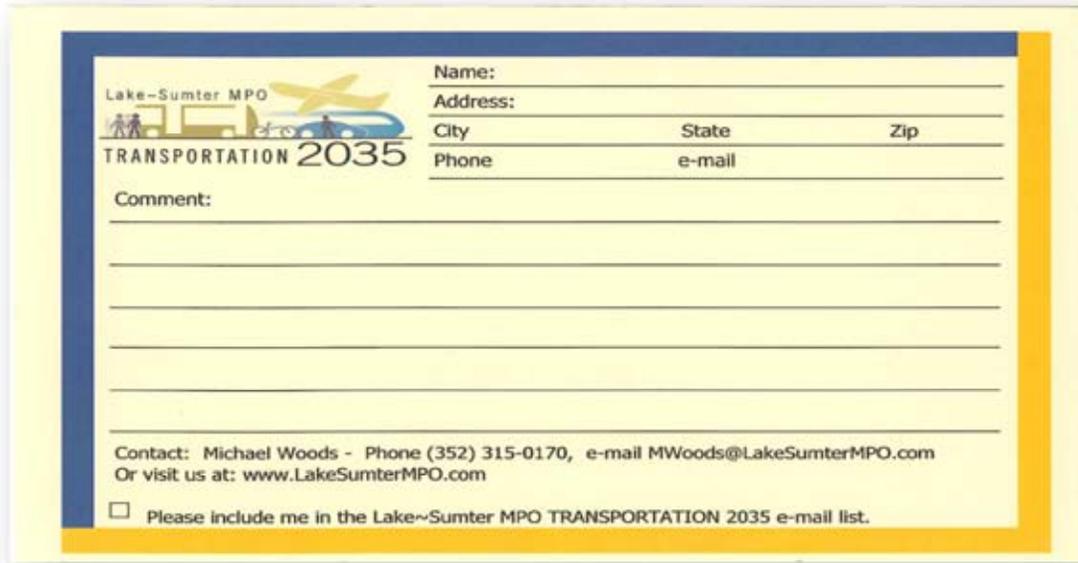
Notice of the public information meeting will be provided in accordance with Section II (Public Notification) of the Lake~Sumter MPO Public Involvement Plan. A reasonable attempt will be made to notify community groups and organizations representing underserved, underrepresented, minority and disabled groups and individuals. The public information meetings will be held at locations accessible to and at a convenient time for area residents.

If requested, special arrangements will be made to accommodate and transport persons with disabilities, low income, and or transportation disadvantaged. For individuals without transportation the MPO will schedule the public information meetings during the time when transit services are available or will make special arrangements to ensure that individuals have an opportunity to access transportation to the meetings. Interpreters will be provided, when advanced notice is given of the need, and an interpreter can be located to accommodate non-English speaking individuals.

**Public Workshop Procedures:** *Beginning approximately four weeks prior to a public workshop, the location and date for the workshop will be set. The agenda, invitation flyers and announcements will be prepared. Media will be informed, and public service announcements will be made. Speaker cards, comments cards, and sign-in sheets will be produced to record public input and concerns. At the workshops, participants will be encouraged to write down their comments and concerns. Speaker comments will also be recorded at the workshop, for the MPO to use in updating TRANSPORTATION 2035. A follow-up summary of the workshop will be prepared and posted to the MPO website. A sample*

comment card is shown below.

**Sample TRANSPORTATION 2035 Public Comment Card**



The image shows a sample public comment card for the Lake-Sumter MPO Transportation 2035 project. The card is yellow with a blue border and features the project logo in the top left corner. It includes fields for Name, Address, City, State, Zip, Phone, and e-mail. A large section is provided for a comment, and a checkbox at the bottom allows respondents to be included in the project's e-mail list. Contact information for Michael Woods is also provided.

**TRANSPORTATION 2035 Schedule**

- *Vision, Goals & Policies* Summer 2009
  - ▶ Preferred Growth Strategy
  - ▶ Draft Goals & Policy Development
  - ▶ Demonstration of Growth Goals - 3D before/after
- *Financial Resources* December 2009
  - ▶ Develop 2035 Revenue Estimates
- *Transportation Needs & Options* April 2010
  - ▶ Travel Demand Modeling
  - ▶ Corridor/Strategy Development
  - ▶ Draft Mobility Projects/Options and Funding Constraints
  - ▶ March 24, 2010 - Public Involvement Workshop #1 - 2 to 4:30 p.m.  
 Lake-Sumter Community College  
 Everett A. Kelly Convocation Center, Magnolia Room  
 9501 U.S. Highway 441, Leesburg, Florida
  - ▶ Cost Feasible Funding Scenarios Development
  - ▶ Complimentary Policy Development

- *Transportation Priorities* August 2010
  - ▶ *2035 Cost Feasible Plan Options*
  - ▶ *Plan Options and Performance Against Vision/Goals*
  - ▶ *June 10, 2010 - Public Involvement Workshop #2 - 2 to 4:30 p.m. Leesburg Opera House, 108 S. Fifth St, Leesburg*
- *2035 Transportation Plan* September 2010
  - ▶ *2035 Cost Feasible Plan*
  - ▶ *SR 50 Corridor Charrette- Lake~Sumter Community College, Clermont Campus September 1, 2010, 9:00AM- 4:00PM*
  - ▶ *Public Workshop #3 - TBD*
- *TRANSPORTATION 2035 Plan Adoption* December 2010

### ***Opportunities for Participation***

The MPO will take a proactive approach to providing the opportunity for the public to be involved early in the process, and with continuing involvement through all phases of TRANSPORTATION 2035. Public notice of meetings and hearings will be undertaken and access to information, as listed above. Prior to the beginning of the public participation process, a list of names, addresses, and email addresses of citizens and organizations will be developed that will be contacted on a continual basis to serve as a base of interested citizens for input and comment. This list will be expanded as additional citizens attend the informational public meetings and make comment. Additionally, meeting agendas for all Lake~Sumter MPO Board and Committee meetings include a public input period.

### **Using Social Media to Engage the Community**

The MPO encourages the use of appropriate Social Media/Web 2.0 (SM/W2.0) technologies to enhance communication, collaboration, and information exchange in support Transportation 2035. These tools are evolving rapidly and are shaping how we work with our, partners, other government agencies, and the public.

For the final phase of TRANSPORTATION 2035, the MPO will create a “Facebook Group” as an interactive outreach vehicle for engaging citizens interested in the Plan. The Facebook group page will provide a link to the MPO web page, feature project photos and renderings, will help publicize events, and will be a place where citizens can easily participate in the process. The fact that the MPO is as innovative as to employ social media in its planning process will help generate positive coverage for this project. All news releases and media notices will list the Facebook Page. The public will be invited to post comments on the MPO website via the “Voice your Ideas” section. The results from Facebook

will be evaluated before the use of other social media such as Twitter is considered.

### ***Regional Coordination***

To coordinate TRANSPORTATION 2035 update activities with adjacent jurisdictions, the MPO will send the intermediate TRANSPORTATION 2035 plans to the MetroPlan, Volusia TPO, Polk TPO, Ocala-Marion TPO, and East Central Florida Regional Planning Council (ECFRPC) and the Withlacoochee Regional Planning Council (WRPC) in order to obtain their input and feedback. In addition, the TAC/CAC meetings for reviewing the interim plans will be open to members from these adjacent MPO's. The final end products will also be distributed to the adjacent MPO's for their subsequent review and comments. It is anticipated that these interim and final plans will be routed to the MPO directors, and subsequently distributed to MPO members for their individual review prior to their own MPO meetings.

### ***Response to Public Input***

Responses to questions and comments from the public concerning TRANSPORTATION 2035 will be made directly to the individual by letter, telephone call or email. A summary analysis and report on disposition of comments will be made as part of the final TRANSPORTATION 2035 Public Involvement Report

### ***Title VI Requirements***

The MPO will reach out to members of the low income, minority, and disabled communities as part of TRANSPORTATION 2035 to meet the requirements of Title VI and to better serve the community. In accordance with FDOT's Community Impact Assessment (CIA) methodology, TRANSPORTATION 2035 will incorporate a review of community profiles early in the planning process to ensure plan alternatives address community concerns. The FDOT Sociocultural Effects Evaluation Handbook will be used as a reference when obtaining feedback from and disseminating information to the community.

### ***Follow-up and Continuing Efforts***

This document establishes the basic techniques for disseminating the information to the public and engaging the citizens in interactive discussions about TRANSPORTATION 2035. MPO staff will work to quantify the results of the public involvement efforts and include this in the final planning report.

### ***Controversial Issues***

In the event that issues arise that generate public concern or controversy, the MPO will proactively engage the public with targeted outreach efforts designed to provide the public with the best information possible. Many controversial issues are fueled by misinformation and the approach of the MPO will be to proactively publicize the facts. Every effort will be made to allow the public to address their concerns and provide feedback. Tools used to engage the public regarding controversial issues include but are not limited to:

- ▶ One-on-one meetings with community leaders, elected officials, and/or civic leaders.
- ▶ Outreach meetings with homeowners associations, business groups, and/or civic groups.
- ▶ Appropriate targeted outreach efforts which might include creation/distribution of fact sheets, Frequently Asked Questions, and/or letter from the MPO addressing the controversial issue.

If a controversial issue or major project arises that requires a higher degree of public involvement technique, the MPO may choose to expand the scope of this Public Involvement Plan and direct the project team to provide case-specific techniques that may include, but are not limited to:

- ▶ Interactive project web site
- ▶ Use of new interactive social media including YouTube, Facebook, Twitter
- ▶ Additional meetings, visualization workshops, etc.

### **Summary**

The MPO recognizes the importance of the public involvement process as a means to inform, educate, and involve citizens in the transportation decisions that impact our daily lives. By involving the public in the planning process early and often, transportation planners are able to ensure that plans and programs are developed in a way that reflects our community values and benefits all segments of the population equally.

Maps and bulleted text to describe the final TRANSPORTATION 2035 update will be prepared and posted to the website. Additional hard-copies of the final report, maps, and summary text will be printed and distributed to various public locations where this information will be readily available to the public. A key component of this written material will be the inclusion of contact information for inquiries, comments, and additional feedback from the public.

Additionally, a post-project public participation analysis will be completed by the consultants after the 2035 TRANSPORTATION update process is finished. This analysis will be done utilizing the MPO's standard public participation evaluation techniques and in accordance with the current MPO Public Involvement Plan.

The project website will be updated to ensure that the public is informed of all project milestones. The final summary report will serve as the public record of the MPO's TRANSPORTATION 2035 outreach activities, and will document how information gained during the public participation process influenced the outcome of TRANSPORTATION 2035. An appendix to the summary report will include copies of all relevant materials used in the public outreach process.

Informative brochures, *html* Internet files, maps, an executive summary, and other materials may be produced after the completion.

### ***Legal Information***

The preparation of this report has been financed in part through grants from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, US Department of Transportation, under the State Planning and Research Program, Section 505, Metropolitan Planning Program Section 104(f) of Title 23, US code. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

This document was developed for use by the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization for planning purposes.

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### ***Contact Information***

For more information about the Lake~Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization and TRANSPORTATION 2035, visit [www.LakeSumterMPO.com](http://www.LakeSumterMPO.com)

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