

Public Participation Process

The MACOG staff began its 2035 Transportation Plan Update process by meeting with the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee members. The staff reviewed the need for the TP update and identified that the goals and objectives of the region remained substantially the same those identified in the 2007 update and 2009 amendments to the 2035 Transportation Plan. The MACOG staff working with the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG) has identified that the current planning assumptions remain the most accurate and updated data available and will be used during the plan update.

The development of the socio-economic data used for this update was developed in 2007. In addition, separate meetings were held in the various jurisdictions, which included business professionals, chamber representatives, elected officials, interested citizens, and members of the press to obtain additional data outlining regional growth using the Delphi method.

The schedule for the 2035 Transportation Plan Update was agreed to by the IGC and is as follows:

September 17, 2010 – First IGC conference call
September 21, 2010 – Minutes sent out
September 22, 2010 – Updated project list
September 28, 2010 – Minutes sent out
September 29, 2010 – Air Quality Analysis sent
October 7, 2010 – Public comment starts
October 21, 2010 – Open House at MACOG
October 29, 2010 – Public comment ends
November 3/10, 2010 – TTAC and Policy Board
December 13, 2010 – FHWA Determination

A notice was sent out to the local media on October 1st announcing the public comment period from October 7th through October 29th. The comment period was held to allow the public's review of the 2035 Transportation Plan Update and the Air Quality Conformity Analysis. An Open House was held on October 21st. The 2035 Transportation Plan Update and the corresponding Conformity Analysis were available for public review and comment. MACOG's responses to comments are listed in Appendix F.

As indicated in MACOG's Public Involvement Plan, the TTAC and Policy Board act as additional public opportunities for comment on the Plan. The 2035 Transportation Plan Update was placed on the MACOG website and copies were distributed to area libraries.

More than 2,600 persons and organizations that receive the MACOGazette also received individual notices of the meetings.

The final Air Quality Conformity Analysis through 2035 was available for public review during the public comment period as well.

As part of SAFETEA-LU requirements, MACOG also updated its Public Involvement Policy shortly before the public comment period for this Plan. Outlined in CFR 450.322g are more detailed requirements to whom MACOG shall consult with: State and local agencies regarding land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. MACOG developed a secure GIS website giving access to these agencies to review the transportation projects listed in the plan and how they might impact surrounding environmentally sensitive sites. On this website agencies are able to overlay the transportation projects with identified historic sites to assess any potential impacts that might occur from the implementation of a project and provide comment.

The 2035 Transportation Plan Update and its corresponding Conformity Analysis and public comments will be provided to the MACOG TTAC and Policy Board on November 3rd and 10th respectively. Each body will have the opportunity to review public comment, review and discuss the plan update, and make their determination regarding approval.

Environmental Justice

Through the MACOG Public Participation Process efforts were made to reach out to potentially underserved communities, through the MACOG public meetings, open houses, various mailings and website postings. MACOG analyzed the projects in the 2035 TP against census income and race data. These maps are included later in this section for review. In an

effort to reach out to all interested parties in the region, MACOG maintains a database of neighborhood organizations, churches, interested citizens, and highway and transit officials. MACOG has provided on its website electronic versions of the 2035 Transportation Plan Update and other documents for public access.

Transit services in Elkhart and St. Joseph Counties have been evaluated in terms of environmental justice, in accordance with FTA guidelines. This means that areas served by transit routes are reviewed by census tract to observe the service extended to minority and low income areas. Ideally, levels of service in these areas should be comparable to that extended to non-minority and higher income areas.

TRANSPO operates public mass transportation in the cities of South Bend and Mishawaka in St. Joseph County. The majority of the minority low-income census tracts and block groups respectively, are concentrated in the traditional urban centers of South Bend, Elkhart, Mishawaka, and Goshen. The transit companies in both of the urbanized areas provide transit services to nearly all of the identified census tracts and block groups.

Through MACOG's planning process we have also identified the proposed highway projects of this plan and how they relate to the minority concentrations and low-income areas.