

DRAFT

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Evaluation of Public Participation Activities In the Washington Region

Scope of Work

Background

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), which is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington region, adopted its Public Involvement Process on September 21, 1994 to fulfill the requirements of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991.

In 1998, the TPB contracted for an evaluation of its public involvement activities. Partly in response to the findings and recommendations of that evaluation, the TPB amended the Public Involvement Process on October 20, 1999.

The TPB's existing mechanisms for public education and involvement include the following activities:

- The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) includes 15 citizens from across the region. The CAC provides region-oriented citizen advice to the TPB and conducts public forums across the region.
- The Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) advises the TPB on transportation issues, programs, policies and services that are important to low-income communities, minority communities and people with disabilities.
- Publications include a monthly newsletter and annual report and other special reports and comments, including a Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Region.
- An extensive website provides comprehensive information on TPB activities and online opportunities for public input.
- A public comment period is held at the beginning of every TPB monthly meeting.
- The TPB follows federal requirements for public involvement, including a public comment period of at least 30 days prior to the approval of major documents, and the development and consideration of written responses to comments received.
- The TPB launched its Community Leadership Institute as a pilot in April 2006. The institute seeks to engage community leaders who have not been typically involved in the regional transportation planning process.
- A wide variety of public outreach forums have been conducted over the years, often in conjunction with the CAC. In the past two years, these forums have focused on the TPB's scenario study, the Regional Mobility and Accessibility Study. Numerous other outreach activities, including presentations by staff and board members, are made on a regular basis.

The TPB is currently expanding its public involvement efforts. In 2005, two consultant organizations were contracted to provide assistance with public involvement activities, including the Community Leadership Institute and website improvements. In the past year, staff has been added to provide more support for public outreach.

To assist with the development of these new activities, the TPB is seeking a consultant to conduct an evaluation of public involvement activities for transportation planning carried out in the Washington region. This evaluation will identify strengths and weaknesses, and suggest potential improvements for the future. In particular, the evaluation will provide recommendations regarding the development of a public participation plan and other public involvement requirements of the 2005 federal surface transportation reauthorization act (SAFETEA-LU).

Consultant Support Required

Consultant support will be required for the following:

Task 1: Document Public Involvement Activities in the Washington Region and Compare Them to Experience Across the Country

Using published information and other sources, the consultant will identify and summarize relevant information on all of the public involvement or participation activities carried out by the TPB and its member organizations in the Washington region. The consultant also will identify and describe the current ongoing major projects throughout the region, and document public involvement activities associated with each.

Using published information and other sources, the consultant will review and summarize relevant experience from other metropolitan areas in the U.S. for comparison with the Washington region's experience. A memorandum documenting the results of this task will be delivered to COG.

Task 2: Interview Representatives of Stakeholders and Decision-Makers on Public Participation Techniques Used in the Washington Region

The consultant will interview representatives of local, state and regional stakeholders and decision-makers to identify perceived strengths and weaknesses of public participation techniques used to date in the region, and to elicit suggestions for improvements to those techniques or for other techniques. Persons interviewed should include representatives of the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee, others actively involved in the TPB planning process, and those who are not actively involved. A memorandum documenting the results of this task will be delivered to COG.

Task 3: Provide a Comprehensive Assessment of Public Participation Techniques Used in the Washington Region, and Recommend Improved Techniques Where Appropriate

Based upon the results of tasks 1 and 2, the consultant will provide a comprehensive assessment of experience to date with public participation activities and techniques in the Washington region, and recommend improved activities and techniques where appropriate. The final report will incorporate the results of tasks 1 and 2, and the assessment and recommendations will be written for elected officials and the public.

The final report will include comments and recommendations regarding 1) public education, 2) public input, and 3) public information. In particular, the report will include recommendations regarding the development of a public participation plan and other public involvement requirements of the 2005 federal surface transportation reauthorization act (SAFETEA-LU).

Meetings

In support of this work, the consultant will be required to attend meetings of and make presentations and/or progress reports to the Program Committee of the TPB, the TPB Technical Committee, the TPB Citizens Advisory Committee, and the TPB, as necessary during the course of the work.

Work Schedule

Assuming the work on this contract begins in September 2006, the consultant is to complete the tasks and a draft report by December 8, 2006. The final version will be ready for presentation to the TPB on January 17, 2007.

Project Cost and Consultant Selection

The total funding budgeted for this project is \$75,000.

Key factors in the selection will be consultant experience in the field of public participation in transportation planning, knowledge of public involvement techniques in the Washington region and throughout the US, and experience in assessing public involvement activities.