

Public Participation Plan and Policy

The Del Norte Local Transportation Commission (DNLTC) has developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP) for regional transportation planning and policy documents. This PPP supports DNLTC's obligation to involve the public in transportation decision-making and responds to state and federal laws and policies that emphasize public engagement. Developed through input gathered by policy research, stakeholder outreach, Social Services Transportation Advisory Council member comment and Technical Advisory Committee member comment, the PPP will guide public engagement to ensure that transportation planning and programming reflects public needs.

Transportation Planning:

The process of identifying transportation problems and looking for solutions to those problems.

Transportation Programming:

The commitment of transportation funds that are available over a period of several years to particular projects.

Educating the public on how transportation decisions are made at the regional level is at the forefront as many people find the transportation planning and programming process difficult to understand.

To help the public understand these issues, DNLTC will present materials in clear, understandable, and accessible formats. We will also strive to reach a broad spectrum of the public by using diverse outreach tools and techniques that target traditionally underserved populations and specific stakeholder categories as defined in federal regulations. To assure the public that their input counts, we will review and provide appropriate follow-up responses to all public comments. Finally, this PPP will undergo regular review and evaluation to measure its continued effectiveness. DNLTC, the City of Crescent City, County of Del Norte, and local Native American Tribes generally conduct extensive public engagement throughout the transportation planning and programming process that helps form transportation planning documents. Agency planning guides the region's transportation future by defining the goals, policies, and strategies to achieve our collective transportation vision. Public input influences transportation planning and, ultimately, the investments made in the region's transportation system.

The scope of this PPP is limited to outlining a process of public engagement for transportation planning in general and the DNLTC or other government or agencies may provide many other public input opportunities during project implementation.

DNLTC emphasizes the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of people of all races, cultures, and income levels, including minority and low income populations, from the early stages of transportation planning and investment decision making through construction, operation, and maintenance.

It is DNLTC's policy and obligation to encourage the public to express their needs and concerns so that transportation decisions better reflect community values and interests. DNLTC also encourages the public to get engaged early in the planning process, particularly at the local level, and to stay involved throughout the many stages of the transportation project development.

Federal and State laws and regulations require public involvement during the transportation planning and decision making process. These laws and regulations flow from legislation typically passed every six years that accompanies reauthorization of new federal transportation funding. The most recent reauthorization in 2012, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), affirms the emphasis on providing early and continuous opportunities for public comment. Along with MAP-21, DNLTC follows other Federal and State laws and policies that support public involvement.

To form an effective and comprehensive public participation process, DNLTC considers the State Public Participation Plan. The State asked the public how they would like to be involved during transportation planning and programming processes. Because of its small size and limited budget, DNLTC has adopted the State's conclusions as a starting point rather than proceeding with extensive research that is likely to result in similar conclusions. DNLTC will continually evaluate the effectiveness of the public participation process.

The following general strategies will build on these principles to ensure a comprehensive, meaningful, and responsive public participation process.

Simplify Educational Materials and Utilize Visualization Techniques

We can increase public interest in regional transportation planning if we clarify the transportation planning and programming processes. To make these complicated procedures more accessible, we will utilize educational materials that simplify transportation planning and programming. Those wanting more in-depth explanations of these activities will be directed to more detailed reference documents. Another way to help the public understand transportation planning and programming is to incorporate visualization techniques whenever possible, both on the web and in printed materials.

Visuals such as charts, graphs, drawings, photos, and process graphics often convey technical information, complex ideas or concepts more effectively than a narrative format.

Be Transparent

The public should be able to access transportation planning and programming documents easily, find out about public involvement opportunities, and know that their comments are acknowledged. The public told the State that they prefer web communication to all other methods. To facilitate this, DNLTC has updated its website to be more user-friendly and to be easier to update.

Use Diverse Outreach Tools

While a comprehensive and dynamic online presence will be the focal point of our public participation efforts, DNLTC will strive to reach a broad spectrum of the public by employing other techniques. DNLTC strives to make workshops and focus groups as open to as many people as possible by choosing easily accessible locations and accommodating nontraditional work schedules.

Engage the Traditionally Underserved

Limited transportation access, childcare necessities, work schedules, and language barriers are just some of the hurdles that keep traditionally underserved populations from attending workshops and focus groups. DNLTC endeavors to provide meaningful public involvement opportunities to people who are of a minority and low income populations. Effective strategies include actively engaging members at community gathering places, providing outreach materials at transit facilities, and communicating through trusted community leaders.

Evaluate and Update the Public Participation Plan on a Regular Basis

Del Norte Local Transportation Commission is committed to a continuous review of the Public Participation Plan and the public involvement process. We anticipate updating the process every three to five years or as appropriate.

The following techniques are potential outreach methods that may be used. Actual outreach methods for a particular transportation planning or programming public involvement activity will be determined based on available resources, time constraints, and applicability.

Public Participation Website: www.DNLTC.org

Because the public has indicated at a statewide level that the web was the preferred communication method, a comprehensive website is available. This website will be a primary focus of our public participation efforts. The DNLTC website will strive to have the following features:

- User-friendly and attractive
- Information on statewide, regional, and local transportation planning projects
- Public comment forms, with responses delivered in a timely manner
- The offer of an alternative format, for instance, a printed and mailed version of the website material
- Continual updating
- Surveys when appropriate

Focus Groups

Stakeholder and general public focus groups are an effective method for gathering attitudes, opinions, and ideas to help formulate transportation policies and plans.

Printed Materials and other Media

While web-based communication has become commonplace, other media still holds a valuable role in public engagement. Newspaper releases, flyers, and postcards can be used to publicize the public participation website, important planning milestones, and workshops. News releases can be widely distributed through newspaper ads, public notices and radio.

Regional Workshops

Face-to-face meetings with the public provide the best forum for public interaction and comment. Meetings will be held at convenient times for the public and stakeholders, in Americans with Disabilities Act accessible locations and close to public transit. If needed, translation and sign-language service will be provided. These meetings will be tailored to the type of document that is being reviewed.

Surveys

Because the State reports that the public cites surveys as their least preferred method of communication, surveys will be used on a limited basis. Email questionnaires may be used to focus on very specific issues or as an additional means to collect comments on draft documents.

Public Participation Policy

Policy 1: Del Norte Local Transportation Commission (DNLTC) will actively engage the public and appropriate agencies and organizations in the transportation planning process according to the principles contained in this Public Participation Plan, and in accordance with state procedures and federal law.

Policy 2: DNLTC will keep the public informed of on-going transportation related activities.

Policy 3: DNLTC will utilize visualization techniques to effectively communicate the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

Policy 4: DNLTC will encourage the involvement of all citizens within its jurisdiction, especially including those identified by Federal Highway Administration as traditionally underserved, in the transportation process. Furthermore, DNLTC will work towards ensuring the full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process by all potentially affected communities.

Policy 5: DNLTC staff will provide feedback on public comments.

Policy 6: DNLTC will work towards continually improving its public involvement practices.