

## **Public Outreach and Involvement Activities (Public Participation Plan)**

### **Overview**

As a federal grant recipient, GoDurham is committed to complying with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments and to protecting the rights and opportunities of all people associated with GoDurham or affected by its programs.

Title VI requires that no person in the United States, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, including the denial of meaningful access for Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons, be excluded from participating in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination, under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

GoDurham takes steps to ensure that all people and firms wishing to participate in its programs receive equal and equitable opportunities to do so. GoDurham's sub-recipients and contractors are required to prevent discrimination and to ensure nondiscrimination in all of their programs, activities, and services.

To ensure that GoDurham's public engagement is consistent with those requirements, staff use the metrics, methods and approach outlined below.

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this plan is to promote public involvement in transit planning decision making activities. This plan will establish formal procedures that allow for, encourage, and monitor public participation within GoDurham's service areas including, but not limited to, minority and disabled individuals, persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP), and low-income populations. This document describes proactive public outreach strategies and procedures.

The plan ensures that GoDurham utilizes effective means of providing information and receiving public input on transportation decisions from low-income, minority and LEP persons as required by Title VI of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and its implementing regulations.

GoDurham's Public Participation Plan explicitly describes the proactive strategies, procedures, and desired outcomes that underpin our agency's public participation activities. GoDurham's updated plan is to provide options and strategies from which to guide a customized, systematic and strategic public involvement approach that seeks out and considers the viewpoints of the public and other stakeholders in the course of conducting public outreach and involvement activities. Of particular importance are those methodologies that specifically address linguistic, institutional, cultural, economic, historical or other barriers that may be preventing minority, low-income and limited English proficient (LEP) populations from participating effectively in GoDurham's decision-making process.

The plan also reflects and reinforces the primary goal of GoDurham's public involvement activities: to offer early and continuous opportunities for the public to learn about a particular project or initiative while meeting the particular needs of the groups being presented to, such as language, schedule or location accommodations,

in order to maximize their involvement in the identification of social economic and environmental impacts of proposed transportation decisions.

## **Public Participation Guidelines and Prior Outreach**

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) guidelines for general Title VI program involvement are fairly broad and allow the transit providers to choose specific strategies that will best meet the needs of their rider demographics. However, it is required that every Title VI program include a public participation plan that outlines the strategies for engaging minority, low income, and limited English proficient populations.

## **Goals and Objectives**

The goal of the plan is to offer a variety of opportunities for the general public to engage in transit planning and decision-making activities at GoDurham in accordance with FTA Circular 4702.1B Chapter III-5 Promoting Inclusive Public Involvement.

The overall goal of this plan is to outline the strategies that will be implemented to raise awareness and provide valuable input to be used in the decision-making process. The objectives of the Public Participation Plan, in support of this goal, include:

- Solicit participation and feedback from target populations;
- Hold meetings early in the process;
- Provide frequent notification of opportunities to be involved;
- Provide equitable access to relevant project information;
- Monitor and evaluate outreach activities to determine effectiveness;
- Strategies to conduct ongoing public engagement;
- Determine what non-English languages and other barriers may exist to public participation within GoDurham's service areas;
- To provide a general notification of meetings, particularly forums for public input, in a manner that is understandable to all populations in the area;
- Scheduling meetings at times and locations which are convenient and; accessible to all area residents, including, but not limited to, minority, LEP, and low income members of the public;
- Coordinating with community-and-faith-based organizations, educational institutions, and other organizations to implement public engagement strategies that reach out specifically to members of affected minority and/or LEP communities; and
- To utilize a variety of communication methods to capture public input from populations which are typically not likely to attend or engage in public meetings.

## **Identification of Stakeholders**

Stakeholders are those who are either directly or indirectly affected by a plan, project, or program based on decisions related to recommendations or implementation actions.

General stakeholders within GoDurham's service area includes, but are not limited to:

- Durham County residents;
- Public (including minority, LEP, and low income populations);
- Major employers;
- Major colleges, universities, and school districts;

- Non-profit and private business community;
- Local Chambers of Commerce;
- Regional transit partners.

### **Meetings and Outreach**

A variety of public participation methods will be used to facilitate public involvement throughout this project. The following section lists the methods for engaging the target audience and stakeholders:

- Presentations to non-profit and civic groups serving seniors, youth, persons with disabilities, low-income, LEP and other populations;
- Presentations to schools, churches, and interest groups;
- Open houses;
- Informational handouts;
- Translated written materials;
- Informational websites;
- Social media sites (Twitter, Facebook, etc.) announcements;
- Press releases;
- Public service announcements;
- Surveys;
- Questionnaires;
- Comment forms;
- Hotline/Toll free #;
- Online surveys and comment forms;
- Interagency coordination;
- Community interviews;
- Community recreational events/festivals;
- Staffed booths at events;
- Targeted outreach to organizations serving Title VI (and LEP) populations;
- Pass programs targeted to Title VI populations.

### **Agency Coordination**

GoDurham works closely with regional transit agencies, local and state agencies, government agencies, etc., as they play a vital role in project planning and development.

GoDurham's Transportation Director will review and approve policies, service and fare changes, and review or identify mitigation for Title VI impacts.

### **Public Meetings**

Public meetings- Any meeting held by GoDurham staff or our consultants that is intended to communicate information to our customers and the public or to receive input from those groups. Typically, these events are advertised in advance and held in a location that is accessible for the target population. We make translation and/or interpretive accessibility services available at these meetings. And meetings are held in ADA accessible

locations with access to transit services. Meetings are scheduled at convenient times to allow people the opportunity to attend the meeting that best fits their schedules. GoDurham typically advertises in media that target underrepresented and LEP populations.

Public outreach activities: We also go out to customers or the public on-board buses, at bus stops, or in other public places to share or solicit information. These activities are not typically communicated in advance, but are an excellent way to reach individuals who are unlikely to participate in a public meeting. These activities are sometimes also conducted online. Meeting notifications and advertisements include information in Spanish and instructions on how to request accessibility services if needed for the meeting.

### Public Hearings

Public Hearing- This is a formal opportunity for the public to comment on a staff proposal. It must be advertised in a newspaper of general circulation at least 10 days before the scheduled hearing. GoDurham has typically held public hearings on the 1<sup>st</sup> Wednesday of every other month.

### Other meetings or Events

GoDurham staff also attend community events and/or meetings across the service area in an effort to engage a broader audience and specifically target Title VI populations and those interested in transit issues. If LEP populations are present in the area, translation/interpretive services are available at the meetings. Community Group Briefings are attended by staff and project team members. These events and meetings are held by community organizations to further educate Title VI populations and other community members about the project and solicit public comment.

## **Communication Tools and Techniques**

### Notifications

GoDurham employs several notification strategies to ensure the public is aware of upcoming meetings and activities. Notifications are translated based on the LEP population that is identified in the area. Strategies include:

- Flyers placed in strategic locations (ex: transit centers, buses, etc.) to reach the target audience that convey key project information and to advertise public forums;
- Comment forms (English & Spanish) distributed at community events and public workshops with staff assisting in completion of forms at canvassing opportunities;
- Staff presentations;
- Advertisements;
- Media: Email, Twitter, and Facebook;
- Organizational list services;
- Posting to community websites;
- GoDurham website

### Web-Based Communications and Social Media

Web-based communication and social media outreach is another portion of public outreach strategies that is a highly effective tool in providing information quickly to a wide and diverse audience, all for little cost. GoDurham staff and our consultants develop content and strategies on how it will be submitted, and where it will be uploaded, as well as when/how updates will be provided.

Community organizations are identified to whom web page, social media and electronic notification are to be distributed. A description of the types of planned electronic notification are to be distributed to community organizations and stakeholders is included, and an overview of to whom and how they will be distributed.

Press releases are developed and circulated to media outlets across the region and provided updates on projects and important meeting notifications. News releases are distributed to minority and Spanish language media outlets to support outreach to Title VI minority population groups and LEP populations.

### Media Releases

News releases are used to provide information about public workshops. Newspapers, radio and television broadcast stations and online forums are the media routinely used.

### Measuring Success

Quantifiable performance measures are essential for determining the success of public participation strategies. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach for the study. The following list measures of effectiveness:

#### Accessibility

- Meeting and community event locations represent the target demographics;
- All meetings are accessible by transit (meetings are within xx of a mile from transit stop);
- All meetings are ADA accessible;
- All meetings have language accessibility;

### Decision Integration

- All comments are analyzed and summarized to the project team in a timely manner for decision-making (goal of meeting summaries prepared within 10 business days);
- All comments requiring response are responded to within 15 business days;
- Comments requiring response and actions taken in response to comments are tracked.

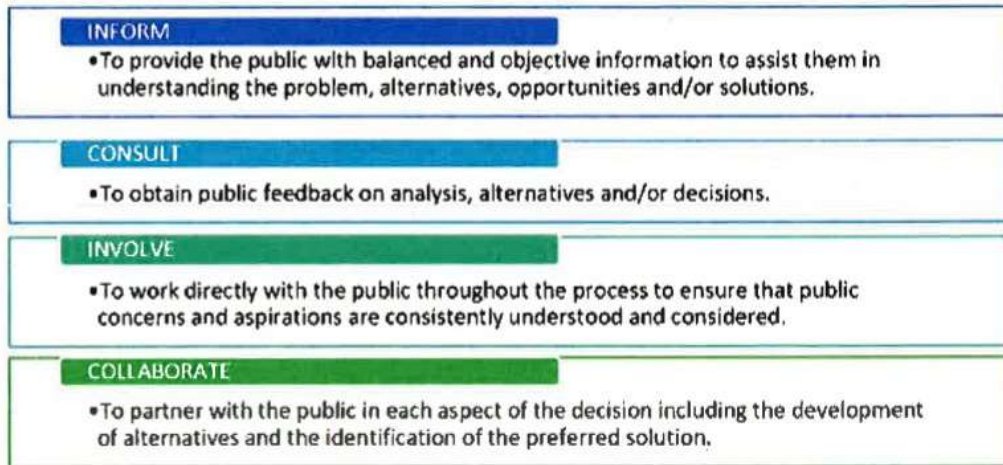
### Public Participation Schedule

A project schedule should be included noting key and public participation milestones. If, appropriate, note that activities and dates are subject to change throughout the study process and will be updated as needed.

### Public Engagement Approach

Outreach conducted by the Public Engagement team involves four levels of engagement, outlined in the chart below and drawn from best practices in the field of community involvement. Each level serves a unique purpose and some efforts accomplish more than one type of involvement. The Public Engagement team works with project leaders to determine strategically the appropriate level of engagement for a specific effort as well

as the activities involved, known as an Outreach Plan. The Public Engagement teams coordinates with all areas of the Community & Public Affairs department including marketing, communications, public relations, social media and design when developing outreach plans and materials.



Source: [International Association of Public Participation \(IAP2\) Public Participation Spectrum.](#)

**Public Engagement Methods**

The Public Engagement team uses a variety of tools to involve the community at the four levels of engagement. Engaging various stakeholders requires using methods that address their specific needs and goals. Methods utilized by the public engagement team can be found in the chart below:

Method	Description (What is it?)	Strategy (When to use it?)	Target Audience	Level of Engagement
<b>Public Meeting</b>	Public meetings engage a wide audience in information sharing and discussion.	Public meetings are useful for introducing new information, services, or plans to the public, and creating opportunities for discussion and the collection of feedback.	General public (likely those more in tune with the planning process)	<b>Inform + Consult</b>

<b>Pop-Ups</b>	Pop-ups consist of setting up tables at major festivals, local fairs and other community events to distribute information. Pop-ups can also be in neighborhoods or as part of door-to-door canvassing.	These events allow for deeper conversations with people in less formal settings. Pop-ups are useful when trying to reach people who may not have the opportunity to attend formal meetings.	General public (in their daily life)	<b>Inform + Consult</b>
<b>Community Meetings</b>	The community related to issues pertinent to that community organizes these meetings, which take many forms. Staff attend to present information or establish a relationship.	Community meetings are a great opportunity to present new information and answer community specific questions in an informal setting.	Targeted audience based on a geographic area or community issue	<b>Inform + Consult</b>
<b>Presentations</b>	A presentation is the act of presenting a topic or idea to an audience.	Presentations are useful in communicating new information to the public and creating a space to answer questions, promote conversation, and gain feedback.	Particular audience at a meeting or event	<b>Inform + Consult</b>



<b>Surveys</b>	A survey is a research method used to collect information from a variety of individuals. Surveys deployed online and on paper at events.	Surveys are useful for gathering specific information or feedback regarding a project, plan, or engagement effort. Surveys are also useful in engaging a diverse group of people and doing targeted outreach due to the various distribution platforms including: printed questionnaires, telephone, by mail, in person, or on the web.	General public or targeted audience, depending on distribution	<b>Consult</b>
<b>Advisory Committee</b>	An advisory committee is a group of individuals, typically volunteers or community members that work to identify issues and propose solutions and recommendations to a business or organization.	Advisory committees are a great way to involve the community and bring a diverse set of opinions and experiences to the table, which can facilitate both innovation and improvement within the organization and project.	Members of the advisory committee, which may represent larger populations	<b>Collaborate</b>
<b>Email Blast</b>	An email blast is an informational email sent to a listserv or large group of individuals or organization contacts.	Email blasts are useful in creating a consistent flow of communication with stakeholders and updating them on various project developments.	Individuals and organizations	<b>Inform</b>

<b>Online / Website</b>	Project documents posted to the project website in a timely, organized, and accessible fashion.	Utilizing a website is helpful when you want to create longevity for documents and store them in a place that allows easy access to all information at any time.	General public (computer literate)	<b>Inform</b>
<b>Online Comment Box</b>	A comment box is similar to a comment card, but is accessible online.	An online comment box is useful for engaging a larger variety of stakeholders, as online forums allow stakeholders to submit comments at a time and place most convenient for them.	General public (computer literate)	<b>Consult</b>
<b>Paper Comment Cards</b>	A comment card is a tool that allows various stakeholders to give their opinion or provide feedback on a topic.	Paper comment cards are useful for engaging stakeholders with limited access to technology, or for providing quick opportunities for stakeholders to submit feedback at meetings or community events.	General public (non-computer literate)	<b>Consult</b>
<b>Social Media Posts</b>	A social media post can consist of a Twitter, Facebook, or Instagram post containing information pertinent to the project.	Social media is useful for engaging stakeholders across various backgrounds and demographics. Social media is also effective in building community and presenting complex information in a more visual and digestible way.	General Public (computer literate), especially existing followers	<b>Inform</b>

<b>Multilingual Material</b>	Both print materials and a variety of online content will be available in multiple languages.	Offering content in multiple languages is useful in further engaging underserved populations.	General public, non-English speakers	<b>Inform + Consult</b>
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