



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2023
ROARING FORK TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

Background

The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) outlines the importance of, and establishes specific guidelines for, involving community members, organizations, governments, transportation professionals and other entities in RFTA route and fare changes, and other programs. Included is information about the value of public participation, how it will be accomplished under various circumstances, and what will be done with the results. Also included are specific commitments by RFTA to support an effective public process. RFTA seeks to interact with the public as much as possible and practical. RFTA also works with several federal and state agencies which have specific public involvement requirements that must be followed. In addition to seeking public input during the planning and programming of transportation improvements, RFTA is required to address the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), both during public involvement activities related to the planning and programming of transportation improvement projects. Involving the potentially affected interests, including the traditionally underserved populations, significantly increases a plan or project's efficiency and effectiveness. The process outlined in the PIP will ensure inclusive and meaningful public involvement.

RFTA's commitment to public involvement includes the following:

- 1) Fostering inclusive and meaningful public involvement;
- 2) Holding open and honest communications with all individuals and entities;
- 3) Providing timely public notice;
- 4) Allowing full public access to information and key decisions;
- 5) Establishing policies and prioritizing needs based on valid data and using objective, fair, and consistent processes;
- 6) Providing information and gathering input so that decision makers will be able to make informed decisions;
- 7) Utilizing/Recommending multiple languages in public involvement;
- 8) Employing diverse types of media for public involvement.

Purpose of Public Involvement

Involving potentially affected interests at RFTA is a highly important step when it comes to the implementation of a new route, fare change, or program. Communicating with potentially affected interests allows for important feedback which enhances project and program outcomes.

Goals of Public Involvement

Ensure that community members are given the opportunity to participate in the

transit planning process.

Ensure that the issues and concerns of potentially affected interests are given consideration.

Value of Public Involvement

- 1) Project leaders may gain new information.
- 2) Public participation can be a forum for dispute resolution.
- 3) Progress can be made and implementation occurs because:
 - a. The project can be better-designed with public input.
 - b. The community better understands what the project plans to achieve.
- 4) Participants can champion projects.
- 5) Input can be a warning mechanism for potential problems.
- 6) Participant comments help transit planners understand areas where additional people may have concerns or misunderstandings. This can be used to provide better information to others who are not participating.
- 7) RFTA can build an ongoing relationship with the public based on mutual trust.
- 8) Participants may bring new participants into the process.
- 9) Participants may partake in future public involvement efforts.

Potentially Affected Interests and the Underserved

Public participation implies that an open process will be used to allow anyone to participate who is a potentially affected interest or interested in the process. Some of the reasons for encouraging this openness are stated above.

"Public" can be defined as individual, community organizations, governmental entities, and transportation professionals. Individuals and groups that make up the public are referred to as "stakeholders" and are welcome to participate and be involved with RFTA.

It is not enough to simply open the process to the public. There are numerous populations that are not likely to get involved unless a special effort is made to reach out to them. In the PIP, groups that need a more focused effort for involvement are referred to as "underserved populations."

For the purposes of the PIP, the underserved groups that RFTA will make an extra effort to reach include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Minority (predominantly Hispanic/Latino and/or non-white) community members;
- 2) Low-income community members;

- 3) Community members who may rely on public transit and other forms of alternative transportation (e.g. students, seniors, etc.);
- 4) Community members who do not speak English.

RFTA will work in alliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide programs and services to all individuals with disabilities to afford them the same opportunities as everyone. This includes someone who has a physical or intellectual and developmental disability that substantially limits one or more major life activities, a history or record of such an impairment or is perceived by others as having an impairment.

According to the US President's Executive Order 12898, (which gives clarification to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964) minority populations may include anyone who is American Indian, Alaskan native, Asian or Pacific Islander (including Native Hawaiian) Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino.

By making a reasonable extra effort to include these populations, RFTA hopes to ensure that all residents are given equal consideration.

Continual Evaluation of Public Involvement

Continuing to evaluate and enhance the public involvement process will help to improve the outcome of each new route change, fare change, or other program. Evaluating public participation involves multiple steps, which will be conducted at a specific program level.

First, the quantitative measurement should be addressed, such as: the number of activities held, the number of notices sent, and the number of people who participated. While valid and important, quantitative measurements do not show the complete picture.

Second, it is important to evaluate the qualitative aspects relating to perceptions, attitudes, and effectiveness. Did the people who participated feel they were heard? Were all the potentially affected interests (including the underserved) represented? Were the materials provided easy to understand? Were announcements received in a timely manner?

Third, the question of how the public input is utilized should be addressed. Once this information is recorded and made available, it also needs to be considered in the decision-making process.

Fourth, it is necessary to interpret and evaluate the reason why a certain outcome occurred. Understanding why there was good or poor participation is important to

assessing effectiveness.

The ultimate point to consider in the evaluation process is the level of respect and trust. Final decisions cannot always please everyone, but it should be possible to plan with an atmosphere of respect and trust. RFTA intends to earn this by being fair and open with the public at all times.

Public Involvement Guidelines

RFTA works to employ effective public involvement strategies. RFTA's Toolbox contains guidance and resources for developing effective public involvement plans. Section I shows several supplemental resources available in defining the appropriate level of public involvement. The following supplemental guidelines define the public involvement philosophies, methods, and techniques that will be used by RFTA as the organization works on route or fare changes, and programs that require public involvement.

Techniques for Public Involvement

Numerous and varied techniques exist to provide public involvement opportunities through various activities. Any combination and number of these may be used depending on the specific plan, program, or project. These activities are defined in detail below. RFTA will select from the various activities to provide the most effective public participation in each situation.

Welcoming Attitude

RFTA welcomes and encourages public participation. Questions and statements are valuable and will be treated as such. Participants will be treated with respect. Meetings will abide by basic ground rules that encourage and enforce civil discussion.

Meeting Schedules and Locations

Public meetings and hearings will be scheduled to allow the best opportunity for attendance by the general public and other entities. Meetings on major route or fare policy changes are to be scheduled at least thirty days prior to the proposed implementation date of the change.

Every effort will be made to make the meeting locations convenient and ADA accessible. In addition to general meetings, events, and activities, special efforts will be made to reach those who may be unable to attend due to specific circumstances and may request that RFTA come to them. These options are open to any group or individual

and it is the policy of RFTA to "go where people are" whenever possible. Both the location and the meeting time are taken into consideration when it comes to those with special needs.

Notification

Notices will follow federal requirements and the general Open Meeting Law of the State of Colorado, C.R.S 24-6-401 et seq. Information about meetings, events, and other opportunities for participation will be made in a timely manner. This is especially important for the community experiencing physical, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities as extra time may be needed to arrange for accommodations to their needs.

At least seven (7) days' notice is provided for major route changes, or 14 days for fare policy changes, of a public meeting by publication in the newspapers of record. The notice includes the time and location of the meeting; a summary of proposed changes; specifies the address where written comments can be mailed; and informs the public of alternative formats available to assist in this public process. This notification will be easy to understand and provide adequate information or explain where the information can be obtained.

RFTA will also strive to involve low-income and minority populations in the public input process. These efforts will include translating public meeting notices (online and where English signs are posted) and advertising the public meeting in all vehicles. Also, RFTA will use "I Speak" cards at all public meetings to ensure the needs of limited English proficiency persons can be taken into consideration during the decision-making process.

Written and Personal Communications

Technical and policy information from RFTA will be written so that it is clear and understandable to the public. All relevant information will be open for public consideration. Informed staff will be available to answer questions at meetings and respond to phone questions in a timely manner.

Ongoing Communications

RFTA will utilize mailings, news releases, social media, email, rider tools, and relevant websites to have ongoing communication with the public and other entities. Members of the staff are also available via phone for questions, concerns, and suggestions.

Other Entities

The needs and interests of other public and governmental entities will be solicited as appropriate.

The Underserved

The needs of the underserved population will be considered, and a specific process will be developed to gather input relative to their issues. For the purpose of the PIP, the underserved groups will include, but are not limited to, minority and low-income community members, as well as community members experiencing physical, intellectual and/or developmental disabilities. This group may also include people who do not speak English or people who are unable to operate a private automobile, such as youth and the elderly.

These populations are established by a certain set of criteria. Low-income households are identified by the Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) as households at 50% or less of the county's median income. Each county can have a different income threshold. The latest US Census data can be used to help define this population. Additional underserved populations may be found and contacted through the following ways:

- 1) Programs and services provided in the community through committees, organizations, healthcare facilities, public health experts, representatives of low-income, minority, and/or individual input from within the community.
- 2) Youth: schools, clubs, and activities;
- 3) Seniors: local senior centers or other organizations;
- 4) Non-English speaking residents: churches, organizations, foreign language TV stations, and radio stations;
- 5) Social service agencies and entities.

The overall intent is to "create an environment that encourages the participation of diverse people in the selection and design of transportation facilities that will positively impact the mobility and quality of life of Colorado citizens" (CDOT Environmental Justice Training Manual). To effectively meet the needs of these populations, additional efforts should be taken. Some of these might include:

Translating information into other languages (making sure the translation is accurate and easy to understand);

Communicating information through non-English local radio stations, television, newspapers, and other community-based publications;

Revising some published material to remove jargon and acronyms that are not generally known outside of the transportation arena;

Contacting and communicating with representative individuals;

Going to community events, churches, apartment buildings, local elementary schools, and other gathering places rather than asking the people to go a less central location;

Offering meetings at different times to allow for a variety of work schedules;

Gathering additional input from entities and/or organizations that may be aware of particular needs such as school administrators, police, or firefighters;

Offering healthy food and small "thank you" items as an incentive for participation;

Providing interpretation services for persons with disabilities and interpreters and for Limited English Proficiency (LEP) individuals (if applicable and appropriate) during meetings and open houses without fees to the individuals with these needs;

Providing alternative formats for materials (e.g. large prints, Braille, digital media, etc.) upon request.

Opportunities for Input

Opportunities for input will vary depending on the extent of the service changes and type of planning effort. For more extensive changes or larger projects there could be as many as three rounds of public participation.

Round One: the collection of initial comments on desired transit services;

Round Two: the collection of comments on the first draft;

Round Three: participation to review the revised draft (may be necessary if significant changes to the plan occurred to reflect round two comments).

In each of these stages, a variety of techniques can be used to involve all of the stakeholders. This will be determined by the extent and nature of the project.

Use of Public Comments

Comments are recorded as much as possible and included in RFTA's customer database. Comments are given due consideration and individual questions will receive a response in a timely manner if the individual has left contact information.

Decision Making

Decisions about route changes are approved by the RFTA CEO. Decisions on fare changes and planning projects, such as enhanced travel corridor plans and the Transit Master Plan, are made by the Board of Directors. Decision makers are provided with a recommendation and community feedback received during the public involvement

process.

Toolkit of Public Involvement Techniques

RFTA uses a variety of activities and techniques to involve the public in planning activities and programs. Objectives for public involvement range from meeting basic legal requirements to generating enthusiasm and awareness about programs. The level of effort depends on the public involvement objectives for the planning activity or program, typically as determined by the Board, as follows:

- 1) Meet legal requirements;
- 2) Allow for diverse involvement of stakeholders in the service area and the public;
- 3) Provide information and foster awareness about service changes, plans and programs.

RFTA aims to make public events and activities as informative, accurate, and interesting as possible—with meaningful and interactive ways for a diverse group of people from the region to provide direct input to plans and programs. Different techniques can be used for events and topics.

Technology changes rapidly, so RFTA will monitor and use current tools as available if the tools help with efficiency and achieve objectives. For instance, Internet-tools such as websites can be useful for plans, programs, or projects. Textizen and IdeaLab are tools that have been used to gain feedback.

RFTA also may facilitate, from time to time, group discussions or conduct one-on-one interviews with stakeholders, depending on the plan or program and their objectives. Figure 2: Public Involvement Activities, below, outlines the various possible activities as part of a public involvement process along with a description of what they are as well as when, how, and why they may be applied.

Typically, RFTA notifies the public about events through the local media, contact lists, fliers, in bus ads, email, the website, and other methods. Spanish translation and written materials may be on-hand at a meeting if the local audience will include Spanish speaking community members.

Figure 2 - PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

Activity	Description	Application
Meetings/ In Person		
Charrette or Workshop	An intensive brainstorming or design session using visual or other interactive methods to allow participants to give direct feedback to help select options and shape the outcome of the charrette. A charrette could last for several hours or could be a multi-day event.	This activity may be used during a visioning or planning process, often mid-effort (when exploring options and alternatives). A charrette also could be a pinnacle public event during a planning process, designed to generate excitement as well as convey technical information. It is also designed to capture an array of views and ideas from members of the public to lead toward selection of a preferred alternative.
Meeting or Conference	A planning meeting or conference can allow groups of people to assemble for a multitude of purposes, including at times viewing a formal presentation. The general intent of a planning meeting is to allow RFTA to interact with people, share information, discuss a plan or program, and receive feedback.	Meetings can be held any time during a planning effort-to solicit input and to share technical information and updates. To be most effective, RFTA should inform participants prior to the meeting about the agenda, format, participants' roles, and the expected outcome. A meeting can be organized as part of a series or a conference that is focused on a unifying subject, such as regional transportation planning or mobility.
Open House	An informal meeting setting for display of information and materials. Rather than having a set agenda, as with a meeting, participants are free to move about and consider what is of interest to them and ask questions. Staff or other experts are available for questions and to hear comments.	Open houses are commonly used during planning efforts. They are flexible and can be organized as a stand-alone event, or they can be set up in places where people already gather, such as a mall or town hall. Open houses are not typically designed for selection of preferred options or decision-making.

Activity	Description	Application
Forum or Panel Discussion	A forum or panel is an event designed with multiple experts who present information to help attendants better understand a subject. Usually, several people with differing viewpoints each make a short presentation to an audience and then answer questions.	A forum can be used for any subject with varying policy perspectives for the public to better understand viewpoints. It works best when a neutral party moderates the discussion. It can be helpful if some "experts" are local, known, and trusted within the region. Such an event is designed primarily to share information rather than to receive public input or for decision-making.
Contacts at retail stores (or other busy places)	Contacting people at retail stores can take place through different methods - by printing information on bags, dropping fliers or information into bags, hosting information tables, talking with people as they exit, or by displaying fliers or posters in the store.	Contacting people at busy places is a way to reach a broad and possibly diverse group of people who might not otherwise attend an event or activity. In this kind of setting, people likely will spend only a few minutes on a topic.
Information Booth	An information exhibit placed at a fair or other similar event (e.g., Colorado State University Housing Fair, a farmers' market, etc.).	A booth can provide information to people who might not ordinarily pay attention to planning, but it may not hold peoples' attention for as long as a public meeting or open house. Ideally, a booth is designed as a "U-shape" to welcome visitors, rather than with a table between staff and visitors.
Meetings with Community Organizations	RFTA regularly attends meetings hosted by community organizations, including local town and city chambers, the local mobility committees, and public information committees.	Community groups provide a forum for interested community members to interact with RFTA staff and each other on service changes and provide a key source of information for service changes and other projects.

Activity	Description	Application
Leadership Sessions		
Community Boards and Commission Presentations	A briefing or work session at a Community Board or Commission meeting can be designed for policy discussion and updates about the planning process for a plan or program and to allow policy recommendations prior to adoption.	Doing regular updates and discussion items with Community Boards ensures that Board members have adequate background, stay informed about public input, and have opportunities to help shape policy prior to adopting a plan or program.
City Council and Commission Work Session	A briefing at a local community council or commission meeting can keep regional leadership informed about plans and programs and give opportunities for local leaders to give input.	Regular updates with local leaders allow them to help shape plans and programs and keep local leaders informed. These events can be the groundwork for later decision-making or implementation of projects.
Committees and Focus Groups		
Technical Committee	Technical committees (general and project-specific) can help the staff understand technical information and provide different perspectives.	
Focus Group	A small, deliberately selected group of individuals who meet with RFTA to give feedback to the organizer on a specific topic.	Focus groups can be used at different stages of a plan or effort. RFTA should identify individuals or professionals who can help recruit representatives or participants for the group. Because a focus group is selected, not open to the public, others (not selected) may be suspicious of the information gathered.

Activity	Description	Application
Key Person Interview	A question and answer session set up with a specific person who may be pivotal to decision- making for a plan, project, or program, who may have an interest in it, or who may be affected by it.	Interviews are often useful as a first step or in the early stages of a planning effort to flesh out issues and ideas and can be used to reach minority or other interest groups.
Organization Outreach	Contact with another organization (e.g., a not-for-profit or business association) to share information on and get input for a plan, program, or project.	Contact with another organization may occur either by request or through proactive outreach on the part of RFTA. The outreach event may be in the form of a presentation, question and answer session, or brainstorming - depending on the time and interests of the organization.
School Presentation / School TV	To reach youth in the region, RFTA can make presentations at schools, including presentations to clubs, student council, and specific classes. Some schools have a local school TV station for sharing information with the students.	School presentations are designed to reach youth and solicit specific input from youth. Suggested classes to attend would be: civics, economics (or other senior level classes) and transportation classes. The material presented needs to be short and to the point with a source for additional information such as a website. Interactive exercises can also capture input from youth. The TV station approach could be used to reach a broader spectrum of youth in the school.

Activity	Description	Application
Internet/ Social Media/Other Electronic		
Rider Alerts	Rider alerts are brief messages to the public conveyed through RFTA's Advanced Traveler Information System (BusTime at myrfta.com).	Rider Alerts are the primary way RFTA communicates with the public on an ongoing basis. While most messages concern immediate service bulletins, like route detours, Rider Alerts can also be used to announce other events and activities.
Dedicated Website or Webpage	RFTA has its own website (www.RFTA.com) containing various rider information pages.	A website is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to inform people about schedules, events, plans, and projects and provide access to recently updated information. It can be effective for communication and interaction (such as for hosting survey links) for people with Internet connections.
Social Media	Social media is an easily accessible and constantly updated source of news and announcements for public information. It can allow for a constant and consistent dialogue between RFTA and others.	Social media outlets include Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. Twitter will primarily be used by RFTA to reach a larger audience with current staffing levels. It is important not only to post information, but to respond to others on Twitter.
Dedicated Telephone Line/Email	RFTA has a dedicated phone number (970-38404974) and email (feedback@rfta.com) to collect public comments.	This tool can be helpful throughout a plan or project to collect comments.
E-Mail	Electronic mail addresses as a means to contact people about events, plans, or projects.	Email is a very inexpensive and a quick way to contact people during any step of an effort. It is, however, important to note that not everyone has email and access to computers and to supplement email with other communication methods, such as direct mail.

Activity	Description	Application
Promotional/ Media		
Brochure or Flier	Written material for distribution. A brochure generally contains more information than a flier, as it is succinct and folded to create a small piece for distribution.	Brochures should incorporate a mailing panel to eliminate the need for an envelope when possible. Multiple brochures or fliers can be produced for one event, plan, or project with each piece designed to communicate with different groups. These outreach items can be produced in various languages. RFTA posts flyers of service changes at various community locations.
Poster	A large written and graphic piece for posting in a public place, often designed to announce a service, event or project.	Posters are typically placed inside buses. They can also be placed at numerous locations and should be designed to be eye-catching and appeal to different groups, including underserved or minority populations.
Display	Information and materials for display in an informal setting where people are free to move about and consider whatever is of interest to them.	RFTA maintains permanent and movable displays at transit centers, BRT stations, and various community locations containing route and other service information. They can also be used for open houses and other public events, such as information booths.
Newspaper Advertisement	Information that a newspaper prints which is regular news but is instead paid for by a sponsor. RFTA has control of the content and appearance of its paid advertisements.	Advertisements are generally purchased and are typically used to announce meetings, events, etc., where robust participation is desirable.
TV Advertisement	TV ads are usually 30 or 60 second spots during breaks in a regular show. As with newspaper ads, the sponsor generally has control of the content but also has to cover costs of producing and airing the ad.	With cable television, it is not too expensive to run TV ads; however, producing the ad can be more time-consuming and expensive than newspaper or radio ads.

Activity	Description	Application
Postcard and "Tear- Off" Notices	A note designed for mailing or a "Tear-Off" used by bus operators to hand to bus passengers, to provide specific information or notice about an event.	Postcards are an inexpensive but semi-direct way of announcing events and sharing information (such as a link to a website for a draft plan or project).
Radio Talk Show	A discussion on the radio about a particular subject. The talk show usually involves a host and one or more guests. It may provide opportunities for people to call in with questions.	Talk shows are an opportunity for discussion about more in-depth information on a certain topic and can be used during many stages of a planning project or program to increase awareness.
Press Release	A press release officially notifies the press about news it might be interested in reporting. A press release generally follows a specific format and includes basic but pertinent information (who, what, when, where, and a contact for more information).	Press releases can generate information that is reported as official "news," which may receive more attention and have greater credibility than paid advertising.
Newsletter	A regular communication for a specific plan, program, or project for individuals who elect to receive it. Newsletters can be mailed or sent electronically (e-newsletter).	A newsletter is a standard way to keep interested individuals and entities informed on a regular basis about a plan, program, or project.

Activity	Description	Application
Surveys		
Survey - General	A general survey is open to anyone who chooses to participate. The survey can be formatted traditionally (e.g., via paper copies or phone) or electronically (e.g., On-line link).	Informal general surveys can be easy to administer and inexpensive. They are used to generally poll people about preferences and ideas. Statistical software, such as SPSS, can be used to easily analyze the data. While the information is useful and important, it cannot be stated as representing a larger group, because participants are self-selecting and may not represent a larger group. To be representative the survey must be statistically valid. (Surveys should be offered in Spanish as well as English.)
On-Board Survey	On-Board Surveys are administered on board buses and are used to collect demographic and ridership data on specific routes.	On-board surveys should be administered regularly (every 1 - 3 years) to provide detailed information about the types and ways riders are using the service and how users perceive the service.
Survey - Statistically Valid	A statistically valid survey is designed to collect information from people chosen on a random basis according to a specific formula to be representative. The results can be stated as representing a larger group from which the random sample was drawn.	Statistically valid surveys are expensive but can be useful in certain circumstances, such as in policy-making. (Any survey should be offered in Spanish as well as English.)

Activity	Description	Application
Contact Lists and Notification		
Contact List	A list of contacts created for general or specific notification (i.e., for a particular plan or project) and interested parties.	RFTA maintains and updates its contact lists regularly and categorizes contacts by groups. A distribution list should be created for each plan, program, event, or project.
Public Service Announcement	A short announcement, usually on radio or television, and where the purpose is to announce public information.	Public service announcements can be done at any stage of a plan or program.
Public Hearings		
Public Hearing	A public hearing is typically required at the time of plan or program adoption. The public hearing also provides opportunity for public comment, and must be preceded with notification time (usually a minimum of 30 days, depending on the plan or program). The hearing format is typically done with elected officials sitting at the front and allowing community members to speak under very specific conditions.	Public hearings often are done at the end of a process and are often a poor setting for gathering pivotal input, as they are generally too late in the process.
Public Notice	These are official notices posted prior to meetings.	These are required for all RFTA meetings.

Maintaining public interest is critical to gathering effective public input as decisions are made. Therefore:

- 1) With each contact, efforts will be made to present information that is relevant and show how this information relates to the public in both the near future as well as long-term.
- 2) As any of the above tools are used, RFTA will keep in mind the importance of making whatever it is as current, accurate, and interesting as possible. Understanding that cost is a consideration, if it is reasonable, color, animation, physical props, pictures, 3-D models, etc. will be incorporated to enhance the experience for the public.
- 3) Public notices must include reasonable accommodations for individuals with disabilities in need of special need (e.g. interpreters or signers). Include point of contact person, telephone number, email address and timeframe for response from individuals needing special needs accommodations.
- 4) Pertinent materials are available in alternative formats (e.g. large print, Braille, audio/video).