



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN 2022



PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN

This document is posted at:
www.rpcgb.org/public-involvement

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This plan was prepared as a cooperative effort of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT), and local governments in partial fulfillment of the Unified Planning Work Program, 23 USC 134 and 135, and 23 CFR 450. The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the USDOT.

The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and/or national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

This Public Involvement Plan sets forth actions for community engagement in an open transportation planning process.

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RESOLUTION 2022-2
PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN UPDATE

WHEREAS, pursuant to 23 USC 135 and 135, 23 CFR 450 and 500; and 40 CFR 51 and 93, all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) must prepare a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) that describes the process by which all citizens have reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process. The PIP further describes the means, methods, and formats used in providing those opportunities; and

WHEREAS, an approved PIP is a requirement for receiving federal and state planning financial assistance; and

WHEREAS, the Birmingham MPO is responsible for developing and implementing a local Public Involvement Plan and is also responsible for periodically reviewing the effectiveness of procedures and strategies intended to provide full and open access to all citizens; and

WHEREAS, the MPO has prepared a PIP update, widely distributed the draft plan, held a public meeting, and provided a 45-day public comment period for review of the draft plan prior to final approval.

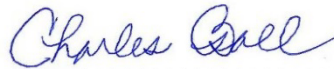
NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Birmingham MPO hereby adopts the 2022 Public Involvement Plan.

Adopted this 11th day of May 2022.

Fred Hawkins

Digitally signed by Fred Hawkins
Date: 2022.05.11 15:02:18
-05'00'

Chair, Vice Chair, or Secretary
Birmingham MPO Policy Committee



Charles Ball, Executive Director
Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham

The Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Whether you are driving on I-65, navigating a transfer at the Intermodal Facility, biking along the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System, walking Downtown, or awaiting a shipment, the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is working behind the scenes to help improve mobility. The MPO exists to develop, plan, and facilitate regionally significant, locally relevant, and future-focused transportation.

The MPO consists of 2,262 square miles that include 55 municipalities and 4 counties – all of Jefferson and Shelby counties, and a portion of St. Clair and Blount counties. (See map on the following page.) The Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham (RPCGB) serves as the lead agency for the Birmingham MPO. The MPO coordinates with local, state, and federal officials to develop transportation plans that harmonize the needs of member jurisdictions and distribute federal transportation funding for projects that improve mobility.

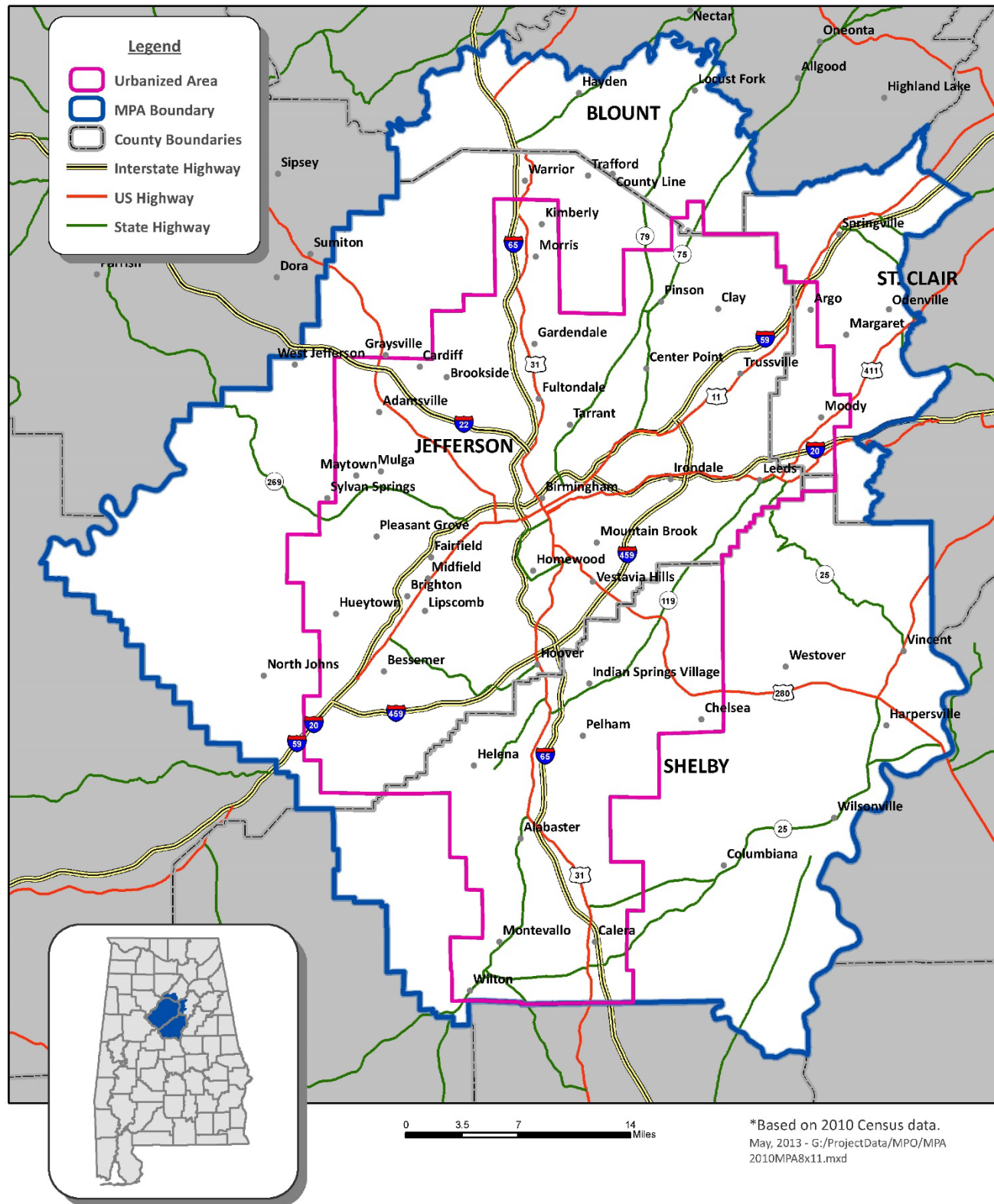
Meaningful and effective public involvement is essential to the successful implementation of any transportation project or program. The incorporation of local and regional concerns, needs, values, and ideas leads to decision-making with more public support.



Whether you are driving on I-65, navigating a transfer at the Intermodal Facility, biking along the Red Rock Ridge and Valley Trail System, walking Downtown, or awaiting a shipment, the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is working behind the scenes to help improve mobility.

BIRMINGHAM MPO AREA

METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA & URBANIZED AREA BOUNDARY



What is Public Involvement?

Public involvement is a process for soliciting input from members of the community on transportation projects and policies. It is a process, not a single event. It consists of a series of activities and actions to inform the public and obtain input from them. Public involvement affords stakeholders (those that have an interest or stake in an issue, such as individuals, interest groups, and/or communities) the opportunity to influence decisions that affect their lives. The MPO gathers input from a wide spectrum of stakeholders, resulting in a wide range of views and concerns. It must balance the input received and then convey how it was considered in making final decisions.

Conducting meaningful public involvement requires seeking public input at specific points in the decision process and on specific issues where input has potential to shape the decision or action. Public involvement is not simply a necessary thing to do; it results in better outcomes and better governance. It contributes to better decisions because there is more complete information to consider, incorporating the best information and expertise of all stakeholders. Decisions are more implementable and sustainable because needs and interests of all stakeholders, including vulnerable/marginalized populations, are considered and stakeholders better understand and are more invested in the outcomes.

As a result, decisions that are informed by the public are viewed as more legitimate and less subject to challenge. Decision-makers who fully understand stakeholder interests also become better communicators and can explain decision rationale in understandable terms and in ways that relate to stakeholders' values and concerns.

ONGOING INVOLVEMENT

- Attend committee meetings
- Join a committee
- Attend public meetings
- Provide input to staff or committee members
- Take a survey
- Connect via social media
- Subscribe to newsletters

TARGETED INVOLVEMENT

- Development of planning documents:
 - Unified Planning Work Program
 - Air Quality Conformity Determination
 - Regional Transportation Plan
 - Transportation Improvement Program
 - Public Involvement Plan
- Attend public meetings
- Submit comments/input
- Take a survey
- Connect via social media

Opportunities for Involvement

The MPO values the ideas and opinions of members of the community and seeks their collaboration for effective decision-making in the development and implementation of its plans and programs. Involvement can be ongoing, as the MPO seeks to carry out day-to-day tasks, or for specific plan/project development, both offering a variety of ways in which to participate.

Ongoing Involvement

All major actions are subject to review and comment by the following standing committees (see diagram on the following page):

- Transportation Citizens Committee
- Transportation Technical Committee
- MPO Advisory Committee
- MPO Policy Committee

While only the Transportation Citizens Committee is open to the public for membership, attendance at all committee meetings is open to the public and, upon permission from the chair, may allow public comment. MPO staff is always available to receive comments. Committee membership is shown on the following page.

People can also stay abreast of activity through the website (www.rpcgb.org), social media, and newsletters.

Targeted Involvement

The MPO is required to develop and adopt documents to direct local transportation planning. As each document is developed, the public is involved in the process.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The UPWP is developed annually in cooperation with state and local governments. It establishes work tasks to be conducted in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and assigns costs for performing those tasks based on allocated federal planning funds.

MPO COMMITTEES

Transportation Citizens Committee (TCC)	Transportation Technical Committee (TTC)	Advisory Committee	Policy Committee
<p>Consists of a maximum of 50 voting members representing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · City of Birmingham (12) · S/SE Jefferson County (8) · W/SW Jefferson County (7) · E/NE Jefferson County (5) · N/NW Jefferson County (4) · Shelby County (11) · S Blount County (1) · W St. Clair County (2) 	<p>Consists of a maximum of 43 voting members that represent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Planners, engineers, public transportation providers, railroad, bike/ped, at-large, economic development, health, local governments, trucking, and safety <p>And 6 nonvoting members from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Birmingham Business Alliance · ALDOT East Central Region · ALDOT Local Transportation · FHWA · FTA · ADEM Air Division 	<p>Is a subset of and sets the agenda for the Policy Committee; consists of 18 voting members that represent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · City of Birmingham (3) · Jefferson County (6) · City of Hoover (1) · Shelby County (3) · St. Clair County (1) · Blount County (1) · ALDOT, East Central Region (1) · Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (1) · Blount County Public Transportation (1) · St. Clair County Public Transportation (1) <p>And 2 nonvoting members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · ALDOT East Central Region · FHWA 	<p>Consists of 44 voting members that represent:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · City of Birmingham (9) · Jefferson County (18) · City of Hoover (2) · Shelby County (8) · St. Clair County (2) · Blount County (1) · ALDOT, East Central Region (1) · Birmingham-Jefferson County Transit Authority (1) · Blount County Public Transportation (1) · St. Clair County Public Transportation (1) <p>And 3 nonvoting members:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Joint Legislative Committee · ALDOT Local Transportation · FHWA

Air Quality Conformity Determination Report

The Air Quality Conformity Determination report demonstrates that emissions from travel on the MPA transportation system are within acceptable standards for air quality. This report supports the 25-year Regional Transportation Plan and the 4-year Transportation Improvement Program, a list of projects approved for funding based on fiscal constraints.

Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)

The RTP is a long-range plan that forecasts transportation conditions and provides guidance for making improvements to maintain adequate mobility and accommodate growth. The plan is developed through a comprehensive analysis of highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight movement needs. It is financially constrained (based on revenue forecasts) and serves as the foundation for establishing the Transportation Improvement Program.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

This four-year plan is a subset of the RTP that assigns available funding to multimodal transportation projects in the MPA for which federal funds are anticipated. Only projects included in the approved TIP can receive federal funding.

The Air Quality Determination Report, RTP, and TIP are developed by gathering comments and opinions regarding need and future development.

Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

The PIP outlines a proactive public involvement process that supports and encourages early and continuous opportunities for the public to express its views on transportation issues and to become active participants in the transportation decision-making process.

Methods for Involvement

There are significant benefits to looking at multiple methods to share and distribute information and obtain feedback. No single method is a solution by itself. This multichannel approach helps to reach members of the public that may and may not usually participate.

Face-to-Face

Face-to-face involvement offers the highest level of dialogue, using various methods used to engage participants.

Community Meetings

A community meeting can be formatted in many ways and may or may not include a formal presentation, breakout groups, and interactive exercises.

Open House

An open house is like a community meeting but has a drop-in format, so people can attend according to what is convenient for their schedule. These meetings can be held as a formal, standalone event, or more casually as a pop-up event in a public location or as part of another event.

Presentations

One benefit of public involvement is educating the community, so they are better equipped to get involved in the process. Creating standard presentations allows staff to easily plug into existing social networks, such as civic groups, religious organizations, advocacy groups, etc.

Stakeholder Groups

Stakeholder groups can be established around a variety of variables such as business, key issue interests, demographics, etc. Stakeholder groups are especially useful in ensuring that feedback is gathered from people who may be most affected and/or less likely to participate in traditional public involvement methods. These smaller groups are typically informal and provide a higher comfort level for those who dislike large group settings. It also allows staff to ask specific questions and get specific opinions.

Technology

Technology is a powerful tool for public engagement. It can help change the participation mix for local decision-making. It provides a platform for large-scale citizen review, feedback, and dialogue, and can be conducted through up-to-the-minute news, posts, data, images, etc.

Social Media

Community members of all ages and backgrounds use social media tools to connect regarding issues they care about. Engagement across various social media platforms increases the diversity of the audience reached.

Website

The MPO website (www.rpcgb.org) is “home base” for organizing information and involving residents. It allows people to access information at their convenience and includes opportunities for feedback through links for surveys, email, etc. Special projects have their own website for more specific information and comments.

Newsletters

The RPCGB publishes *Roundabouts*, an electronic newsletter that is widely distributed and contains general news, information about projects, upcoming projects, grants, changes in local, state, and federal regulations, and opportunities for involvement. It includes contact information for questions or comments.

Video Conference

Meetings may include video conferencing when practicable.

Surveys

Surveys are another way to receive feedback and opinions. They are typically offered online, but paper surveys are also offered at public meetings.



Procedures for Involvement

Public involvement is a critical portion of the planning process. Procedures used for each subject area are identified below.

MPO Committees

As mentioned previously, there are four standing committees of the MPO.

Transportation Citizens Committee

Meets the 3rd Wednesday of the month at noon

Transportation Technical Committee

Meets the 4th Wednesday of the month at 10:00 am

MPO Advisory Committee

Meets the 4th Thursday of the month at 1:30 pm

MPO Policy Committee

Meets the 2nd Wednesday of the month after the Advisory Committee meeting at 1:30 pm

The Citizens, Technical, and Advisory committees inform the Policy Committee, which is responsible for final decision-making and approval of transportation plans and programs.

MPO Committees	
ACTION	TIMEFRAME
Meeting Notice, Agenda, and Minutes of previous meeting distributed to committee members	At least 10 days prior to meeting
Meeting Notice and Agenda published on RPCGB website and distributed to local media, interested individuals, and representatives of low-income, minority, disabled, and elderly population groups	At least 10 days prior to meeting
Individuals needing special accommodations to notify the RPCGB for special arrangements	At least 3 days prior to meeting
Meeting minutes posted on RPCGB website after committee approval	Within one week after approval

Public Involvement Meetings

For long-range planning documents that direct project development, public meetings are held to engage a wide audience in information sharing and discussion.

Public Involvement Meetings	
ACTION	TIMEFRAME
Meeting Notice published on RPCGB website and posted at RPCGB offices	At least 10 days prior to meeting
Meeting Notice distributed to committee members, local media, libraries, interested individuals, representatives of low-income, minority, disabled, and elderly population groups, and all parties in MPO database	At least 10 days prior to meeting
Individuals needing special accommodations must notify the RPCGB for arrangements	At least 3 days prior to meeting
Documentation available for review on RPCGB website	At least 1 day prior to meeting
Make presentation with visualizations of important details and draft documentation available for review. MPO staff is available to answer questions.	Day of Meeting
Written comments are encouraged at in-person public meetings and electronically via link on RPCGB website	21 days after meeting date
	Exceptions: 45 days for PIP 60 days for TMA certification
Draft report of public involvement activities, including outreach, record of attendance, copies of materials displayed/distributed, record of comments and responses.	10 days prior to first committee meeting
Policy Committee vote on document(s)	First meeting after public meeting and end of comment period
Approved documents published on RPCGB website	Within one week after approval

Measures of Involvement

Pursuant to 23 CFR §450.316(1), the chart on the following page lists the goals of public involvement, the strategies used to achieve those goals, and the desired outcome.

All meetings will be held in locations that are ADA accessible. Anyone needing an interpreter should notify the MPO at least three days in advance of a meeting so accommodations can be arranged. The Limited English Proficiency Plan is included in the Appendix hereto.

GOALS, STRATEGIES, AND OUTCOMES OF PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Goals	GOAL 1: Have an open planning process that encourages early and continued public participation	GOAL 2: Provide complete and timely notice of meetings using a variety of methods	GOAL 3: Present complete and timely information and documentation	GOAL 4: Encourage public comment and provide appropriate responses	GOAL 5: Make efforts to reach individuals of low-income, minority, disabled, and elderly populations	DESIRED OUTCOMES
Strategies	Strategy 1: Maintain MPO Committees					Quorum to conduct business
	✓					
	Strategy 2: Meetings open to the public and provide the public opportunity to participate in the process					Non-member attendees
	✓			✓	✓	
	Strategy 3: Provide meeting notice and agenda at least 10 days prior to meeting date					Adequate advance notice of meetings
	✓	✓	✓		✓	
	Strategy 4: Send meeting notices to representatives of underserved and sensitive population groups ¹					Regular update of mailing list
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Strategy 5: Consider inquiries and comments; provide written response when necessary					Publish comments and responses
	✓			✓	✓	
	Strategy 6: Make documentation available for public review and comment					Post documents on website
	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
	Strategy 7: Provide clear, easy to understand, and accessible presentations, plans, and documents					Logical documents
	✓		✓		✓	

¹ Includes, but is not limited to, minority, low-income, limited English proficiency, disabled, and elderly persons

Updates and Amendments

Plan updates and TIP amendments are subject to the following schedule and public involvement process.

DOCUMENT	SCHEDULE	PROCESS
Unified Planning Work Program	Annually	MPO Committees
Air Quality Conformity Determination Report	Every 4 years	Public Involvement
Regional Transportation Plan	Every 4 years	Public Involvement
Transportation Improvement Program	Every 4 years	Public Involvement
Amendments to Transportation Improvement Program	Ongoing; as needed	MPO Committees
Public Involvement Plan	Every 5 years	Public Involvement

TIP Amendments

The TIP maintains year-to-year fiscal constraints for each of the four plan years. As such, revisions must account for the year funds are expended and must be consistent with the RTP. Changes to the TIP may take one of two forms:

Administrative Modification

An administrative modification is a minor revision to the TIP requiring minimal changes to a project, less than a 20% increase in project costs, negligible changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and inconsequential changes to initiation dates. Administrative modifications are conducted through coordination between the MPO and ALDOT and require no official action by the MPO committees. These modifications do not require re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, a conformity determination, or public review and comment.

Amendment

An amendment is a substantive change to the TIP. ALDOT has documented the differences between a formal amendment and an administrative modification. A formal amendment is a change that meets one of the following conditions:

- Affects air quality conformity regardless of the cost of the project or the funding source
- Adds a new project or deletes a project or project phase that utilizes federal funds, exceeds the thresholds listed below, and excludes federally-funded statewide program projects

- Adds a new project phase, increases a current project phase, deletes a project phase, moves a project or project phase outside the window of the TIP, or decreases a current project phase that utilizes federal funds when the revision exceeds:
 - \$5 million for ALDOT federally-funded projects
 - \$750,000 for the county highway and bridge program
- Involves a change in the scope of work to a project or project phase that:
 - Results in an air quality conformity reevaluation
 - Results in a change in the scope of work on any federally-funded project that is significant enough to essentially constitute a new project

These thresholds pertain to projects funded with ALDOT-controlled federal funding. The MPO has established a different threshold for the MPO's attributable funding. The threshold for an increase from attributable funds that would require a formal amendment is 20% of the previously approved project phase cost.

APPENDIX A

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Public involvement is determined, in part, by federal rules and regulations. All MPOs must develop a plan for providing reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The following is a summary of federal legislation that directs public involvement matters.

Title 23 United States Code (USC) 134 and 135 establishes planning policy, defines MPO organizational structure, and delineates MPO and state responsibilities in the transportation planning process.

23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450 provides specific requirements and actions for MPOs and state Departments of Transportation to develop public involvement procedures.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (Pub. L. 117-58), signed into law on November 15, 2021, is the most recent transportation bill.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits exclusion from participation in any federal program on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

23 USC 324 prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, adding to the landmark significance of 2000d.

Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 prohibits discrimination on the basis of a disability, specifically in terms of access to the transportation planning process.

Clean Air Act is aimed at reducing smog and air pollution. The 1990 amendment established the State Implementation Plan (SIP), under which states are obligated to notify the public of plans for pollutant control and allow opportunities for input into the process.

Executive Order 12898, often called “Environmental Justice,” requires federal agencies to identify “disproportionately high and adverse human and health environmental effects of its programs

on minority populations and low-income populations” and prohibits actions that would adversely affect a disproportionately high number of people among these populations.

Executive Order 13166 was issued to improve access to federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency.

APPENDIX B

FY 2022 LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY PLAN

The purpose of this plan is to document how the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Organization integrates people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) into the transportation planning process. LEP is defined as a person who does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.

This Plan is required by Executive Order 13166, *Improving Access to Service for Persons with Limited English Proficiency*, signed on August 11, 2000. The Order requires recipients of federal aid to ensure accessibility to programs and services for eligible persons who have limited proficiency in the English language. In addition, LEP services are a vital component of compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

FOUR-FACTOR ANALYSIS

Recipients of federal transportation funding are required to take reasonable steps to ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons, using the following four factors:

Factor 1: The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to be encountered by MPO

LEP population is defined as the sum of all individuals who speak a language other than English and speak English less than very well (www.lep.gov/source-and-methodology). Data was acquired from the 2019 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates for the Birmingham Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

LEP POPULATION IN BIRMINGHAM MPA

Description	Total	Percent
Population age 5 and over	861,828	
LEP Persons	21,126	2.45%
LEP Persons Speaking:		
Spanish	14,449	1.68%
Indo-European	2,144	0.25%
Asian and Pacific Island	3,868	0.45%
Other	665	0.08%

Although the percentage of LEP persons in the MPA is not significant enough to trigger a responsibility to provide services in languages other than English, the MPO is committed to the principles of nondiscrimination and inclusion and will provide an interpreter when notice is given at least three days in advance of a meeting.

Factor 2: The frequency with which LEP persons come into contact with the programs

The size of the LEP population is small and Spanish is the most common language spoken. Staff is most likely to encounter LEP individuals through office visits, phone calls, public meetings, and committee meetings. The MPO has had no requests for interpreters or translated program documents. Future interaction is unpredictable. All meeting notices include information about how to request special accommodations.

Factor 3: The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided

The MPO is responsible for the coordination of the transportation planning process and determines in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) what projects are funded with available resources. It does not provide direct services. It does not provide direct services. The Birmingham MPO is committed to ensuring all segments of the population have the opportunity to be involved in the transportation planning process. Special efforts are made to involve traditionally underrepresented populations in the planning process. There is no large geographic concentration of LEP individuals in the MPA; 98% speak English fluently.

Factor 4: The resources available to the MPO and the costs of LEP services

The Birmingham MPA has local resources that can be used for providing translation assistance, in oral and written form, should the need arise. The MPO also has adequate funding to provide for these services.

LANGUAGE ASSISTANCE MEASURES

A person who does not speak English as their primary language and has a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English may be entitled to language assistance to participate in the transportation planning process. Language assistance can include oral or written interpretation. The MPO will arrange and pay for these services when interpretation or translation is requested.

MONITORING

MPO will update the LEP Plan as required. At a minimum, the plan will be reviewed when the following has occurred:

- Staff has encountered an increased number of LEP person contacts
- Decennial census
- The need for translation services has changed
- New laws or rules
- LEP-related complaints have been received

ACCESSIBILITY

This plan will be posted and available for viewing and download on the recipient website at:

www.rpcgb.org/nondiscrimination-and-accessibility