

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Public Participation Plan



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Glossary of Terms

Amendment	A change to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program such as the addition of a project not previously programmed or significant schedule or project cost changes. Amendments require formal action by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. (See also Correction)
COG	Council of Governments. Comprised of rural areas not within a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).
Consultation Parties	Local, state, regional, and federal agencies, transportation advocacy groups, environmental interest groups, and other entities that provide guidance and input into the planning process, identify critical transportation issues, and determine the goals and principles for implementation
Correction	A minor change to the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. (See also Amendment) Minor changes include minor schedule changes or slight changes in project description, costs, and funding sources. These actions can be accomplished through an agreed upon administrative action and do not require official action by the Metropolitan Planning Organization.
Environmental Justice	A federal policy that protects minority and low income populations from experiencing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of federal-funded programs, policies, and activities.
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	The United States Government agency that oversees the distribution of federal funds for and the activities pertaining to road systems in each state.
Geographical Information System (GIS)	An electronic system for capturing, storing, analyzing, and managing data and associated attributes which are spatially referenced to the Earth.
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization. Comprised of county road commissions, cities, villages, townships, and transit agencies in an area having a population in excess of 50,000.
Multimodal	Trips involving multiple modes of transportation examples include automobile, bus, train, boat, bicycle, pedestrian, and airplane
National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)	
Resource Committee	A group of stakeholders formed by the South Carolina Department of Transportation to aid in identifying the various needs and interests of people while developing the

	Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
RTMA	Regional Transportation Management Agencies. Local associations formed to bring together the various transit operators within a region to maximize service.
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users. The most recent federal legislation authorizing the distribution of federal Highway Trust Funds to the states.
SCDOT	South Carolina Department of Transportation
Stakeholders	A person or group of people who affects or can be affected by transportation decisions or actions
Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan	A document that identifies statewide transportation needs, sets investment priorities for a period of at least twenty years, and establishes goals and objectives for addressing transportation needs throughout the state.
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program. A document that lists specific transportation projects scheduled during a six-year period for the entire state.
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program. A document that lists specific transportation projects scheduled during a six-year period within a metropolitan area planning boundary.
Title 23	The United States Code is the codification by subject matter of the general and permanent laws of the United States. It is divided by broad subjects into 50 titles and published by the Office of the Law Revision Council of the U.S. House of Representatives. Title 23 covers highways.
Transit	A public mode of transportation such as bus or train service.
Visualization Techniques	The use of diagrams, pictures, maps, 3-D models, animation, or the like to supplement and enhance oral and written descriptions.

South Carolina Department of Transportation Mission and Structure

The South Carolina Department of Transportation's (SCDOT) mission is to provide a safe and efficient transportation system for the state of South Carolina. This is accomplished through building and maintaining roads and bridges as well as providing mass transit services to the citizens of the state.

SCDOT is a cabinet agency under the Governor. The Governor appoints the Secretary of Transportation who serves as the Chief Administrative Officer. The Secretary of Transportation is assisted by three directors who manage the three divisions of the agency – Engineering, Finance and Administration, and Mass Transit.

In addition to the Secretary, there is also a Commission consisting of seven members. One commissioner is an at-large member appointed by the Governor and six other members are elected by the legislative delegations from the six congressional districts across the state. The Commission body elects the Chairman. The Commission adopts its own rules and procedures, and serves as a general policy-making body for the various functions and purposes of the SCDOT as prescribed by law.

The SCDOT is a centralized government agency. Planning, design, procurement, finance and human resource functions all operate from the central office in Columbia. The SCDOT field offices are divided into seven districts (see Figure 1, below and Table 1 on page 5) each headed by a District Engineering Administrator. Each District has responsibility for the maintenance, construction, traffic, and equipment (mechanical) operations within its boundaries.

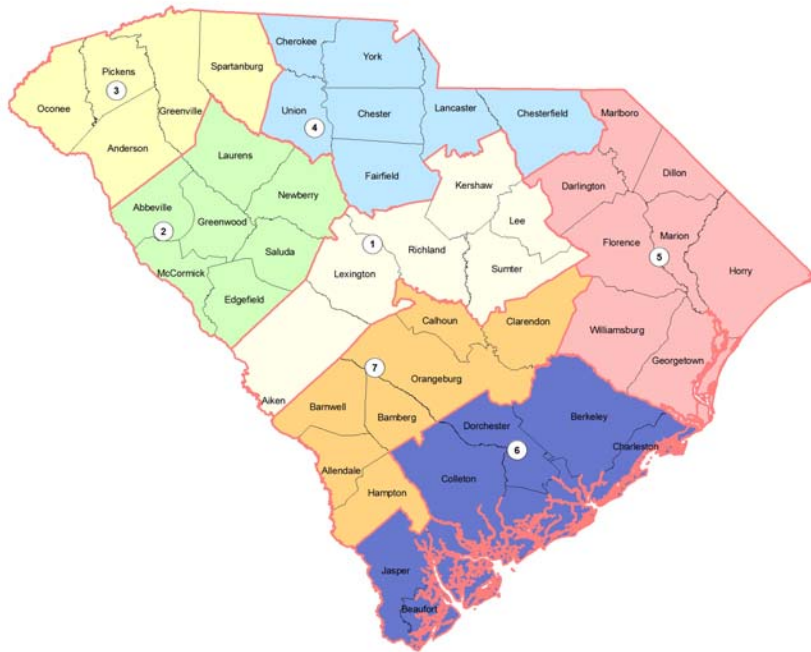


Figure 1. SCDOT Engineering District Map

SCDOT Headquarters	SCDOT District Four
955 Park Street	1232 J.A. Cochran Bypass
Columbia, SC 29201	PO Box 130
Phone: (803) 737-2314	Chester, SC 29706
	Phone: (803) 377-4155
	Fax: (803) 581-2088
SCDOT District One	SCDOT District Five
1400 Shop Road	3018 East Palmetto Street
Columbia, SC 29201	Florence, SC 29506
Phone: (803) 737-6660	Phone: (843) 661-4710
Fax: (803) 253-6401	Fax: (843) 661-4704
SCDOT District Two	SCDOT District Six
510 W. Alexander Street	6355 Fain Boulevard – Bldg. “C”
Greenwood, SC 29646	North Charleston, SC 29406
Phone: (864) 227-6971	Phone: (843) 740-1667
Fax: (864) 227-6567	Fax: 843-740-1657
SCDOT District Three	SCDOT District Seven
252 South Pleasantburg Drive	1724 Charleston Hwy
Greenville, SC 29607	Orangeburg, SC 29116
Phone: (864) 241-1010	Phone: (803) 531-6850
Fax: (864) 241-1115	Fax: (803) 531-6854

Table 1. SCDOT Office Directory

INTRODUCTION

The Public Participation Plan provides direction for effective participation in the development of the South Carolina Department of Transportation’s (SCDOT) transportation plans and programs. For SCDOT’s stakeholders, the participation plan describes opportunities to participate in identifying the statewide priorities for transportation investments in South Carolina. While many of the same communication techniques described in this plan are used during the study and design of specific transportation improvements, project development differs significantly from the statewide planning process. For this reason, project-level participation is not included within the scope of this plan.

Two major components of the statewide planning process are the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan provides long-term guidance for the development of transportation programs and establishes strategies to achieve transportation goals for a 20-year period. The STIP is a short-term program that lists all roads, bridge, and transit projects scheduled for improvement based on available funding over a six-year period.

Following a description of the federal requirements for public participation, the Public Participation Plan provides an overview of goals and objectives for public involvement and a detailed description of the methodology used to solicit and incorporate public input in the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the STIP development processes.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Along with the desire to include a diversified public in its planning processes, SCDOT relies on various federal statutes to help guide its participation activities.

The Federal regulations related to participation in transportation decision making can be found in the **Code of Federal Regulations: Title 23; Chapter 1; Subchapter E; Part 450; Subpart B – Statewide Transportation Planning**. These regulations leave the methods for carrying out participation to the discretion of each state; however, participation processes must provide:

- Early and continuous opportunities for participation
- Public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Timely information on transportation issues, processes, and procedures
- Reasonable access to technical and policy information
- Electronically accessible and available public information via the World Wide Web
- Adequate notice for participation opportunities at key decision points
- Methods for considering and responding to public input
- A course of action for seeking out and considering the needs of traditionally underserved groups
- Periodic review and evaluation of the participation process

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, by reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity.” Sites for participation activities, as well as the information presented, must be accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA requires specific participation – particularly for developing para-transit plans – such as:

- Outreach by developing contacts, mailing lists, and other means of notification
- Consultation with disabled individuals
- The opportunity for public comment
- Accessible formats
- Public Hearings
- Summaries of significant issues raised during the public comment period
- Ongoing efforts to involve persons with disabilities in planning

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, together with related statutes and regulations, provide that “no person shall on the ground of race, color, and national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal funds. The entire institution, whether educational, private, or governmental must comply with Title VI and related Federal civil rights laws, not just the program or activity receiving federal funds.”

Executive orders regarding environmental justice and outreach to persons with limited English proficiency are also regulated under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, 1994, states that “each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.” Traditionally underserved groups such as low-income and minority populations must be identified and given increased opportunity for involvement in order to ensure effective participation.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, 2000, requires that recipients of federal financial aid must ensure that the programs and activities normally provided in English are accessible to persons with limited English proficiency.

GOALS and STRATEGIES

The South Carolina Department of Transportation’s goal, through this plan, is to provide the highest quality participation possible for transportation decision-making related to all actions involving the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan and the STIP. This can only be achieved when stakeholders are identified and incorporated into the planning process. To achieve this goal, major planning and program development objectives include:

- 1. Solicit public participation in each phase of the statewide planning process.**
Participation starts with early and continuous involvement in important policy or project decisions before they are finalized. In South Carolina, the comprehensive plan starts with early coordination and input from stakeholder groups. SCDOT coordinates with MPOs and COGs to develop local and regional plans and programs that solicit public participation at the local level. As drafts and revisions are developed for plans and programs, the public is encouraged to provide comments and suggestions prior to any final approval by the SCDOT Commission.
- 2. Seek broad identification and representative involvement of stakeholders and users of all transportation modes.**
SCDOT’s customer base includes not only the general public and federal, state, local, and tribal units of government, but businesses, industries, and transportation service providers as well as organizations that represent people with specific transportation needs. SCDOT has developed strategic partnerships with consultation parties to maximize the distribution of information and solicitation of comments.
- 3. Utilize effective and equitable avenues for distributing information and receiving comments.**
In addition to standard notifications and solicitations for comments, SCDOT uses minority media outlets in an effort to reach traditionally underserved stakeholders.

Comments are received through standard mail as well as electronic mail and SCDOT's internet site.

4. Provide educational materials and design participation initiatives that will support and encourage effective participation.

Effective participation in the transportation decision-making process requires an understanding of transportation issues and the framework for making transportation investment decisions. Visualization techniques such as videos, posters, maps, and pictures can be especially helpful for describing the plan and program development.

5. Support and encourage continuous improvement in the methods used to meet the public need for information and involvement.

Public information and involvement methods are continually evolving. SCDOT is committed to periodic review and evaluation of its public participation process. This ranges from soliciting comments on the process to analyzing the data from comments received to consulting with other Departments of Transportation on the effectiveness of their public participation plans.

CONSULTATION PARTIES

Federal transportation laws require the establishment of a **Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)** in every urbanized area of the United States with a population over 50,000. In South Carolina, there are ten Metropolitan Planning Organizations that were created in order to ensure that existing and future expenditures for transportation projects and programs were based on a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing (3-C) planning process. The role of the MPO includes: establishing a local forum for transportation decision making; evaluating transportation alternatives; developing and updating a long-range transportation plan; developing a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and getting the public involved as early as possible.

There are also ten **Councils of Governments** in South Carolina to assist SCDOT in transportation planning for areas outside of designated MPOs. COGs serve county and municipal governments from a regional perspective and offer a wide variety of planning, economic development and social service coordination. Each COG produces a regional long-range transportation plan and a rural Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The SCDOT coordinates with all ten MPOs and COGs to ensure local process is consistent with state and federal policies. SCDOT staff is also available to relate local and regional needs and concerns to statewide interests.

The planning process for rural areas of the State is outlined in Appendix A. In addition, the MPO and COG areas are depicted on the map in Figure 2, on page 9, as well as listed in Appendix B, Consultation Parties.

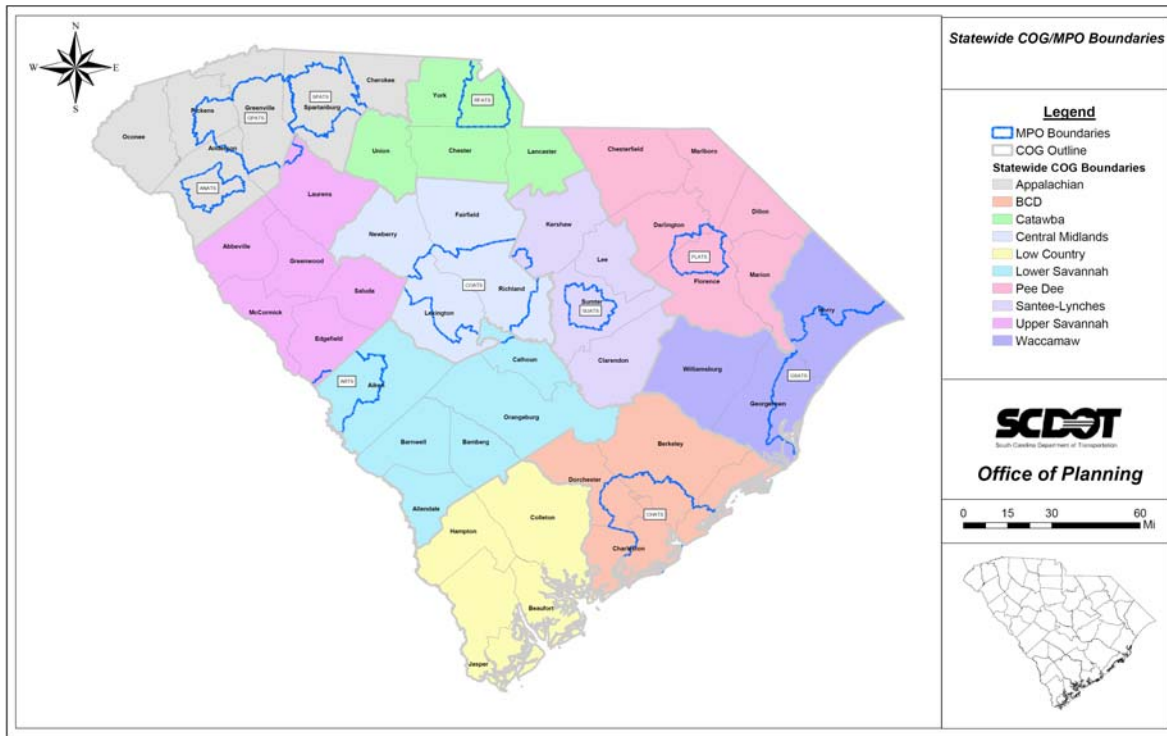


Figure 2. Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Councils of Government (COG) in South Carolina

A federal emphasis to link the planning process and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) has resulted in early coordination with **federal and state resource agencies** in the development of long-range plans. Prior to capacity-related projects being included in the STIP, SCDOT works with the project sponsor(s) to develop an Advanced Project Planning Reports (APPR). The APPR utilizes Geographical Information System (GIS) to screen/identify potential project-related environmental, social, and cultural impacts and is distributed to the federal and state resource agencies for review and comment. These agencies may include, but are not limited to: Federal Highway Administration, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, rail and utility companies, local and municipal government bodies, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and Councils of Governments.

In addition to the resource agency coordination through the APPR process, SCDOT also provides notification of Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan and STIP development to federal land management agencies, such as US Fish and Wildlife Service, US Forest Service, Native American Tribes, Department of the Interior - National Parks Service, and U.S. Military Installations.

The **Catawba Indian Nation** is the only federally recognized form of Indian Tribal government in the state of South Carolina. The Catawba Indian Nation has representation on the Rock Hill/Fort Mill Area Transportation Study Metropolitan Planning Organization and Catawba Council of Governments Boards to participate in discussion and decision making opportunities on those bodies. In addition, they are identified as primary stakeholders and are afforded continuous participation opportunities during the Statewide

Comprehensive Transportation Plan and STIP development. Although the Catawba Indian Nation is the only in-state tribe, a copy of the STIP will also be provided to out-of-state consulting tribes such as the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians, the United Keetoowah Band of Cherokees, and the Muskogee Creek Indians. The SCDOT has developed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Federal Highway Administration and individual Tribes. This document formally establishes government to government relationships and outlines the procedures for consultation and communication, protection of information, and duties as stewards of federal lands.

A full list of consultation parties is listed in Appendix B.

THE STATEWIDE COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

When the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was signed into law in 1991, there were provisions in the law that required each state to prepare a long range statewide transportation plan, with a minimum 20-year forecast period, that provides for the development and implementation of the multimodal transportation system for the State. The long range plan was required to consider and include, as applicable, elements and connections between public transportation, non-motorized modes, rail, commercial motor vehicle, waterway, and aviation facilities with an emphasis on early and continuous public involvement. These provisions were reemphasized and in some cases strengthened by successor legislation, Transportation Equity Act for the Twenty First Century (TEA-21), and the current legislation Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU).

The Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan is a comprehensive evaluation of South Carolina’s transportation system and consists of seven major elements – Statewide Significant Corridors, Mass Transit, Rail Preservation Inventory, Interstate Plan, Federal Bridge Replacement List, the ten MPO and COG transportation plans, and a Financial Plan. The Plan is updated on a five-year schedule, at a minimum, while elements may be updated more frequently as needed. A Resource Committee provides technical input, guidance, and feedback for specific elements of the plan (See Figure 3, below).

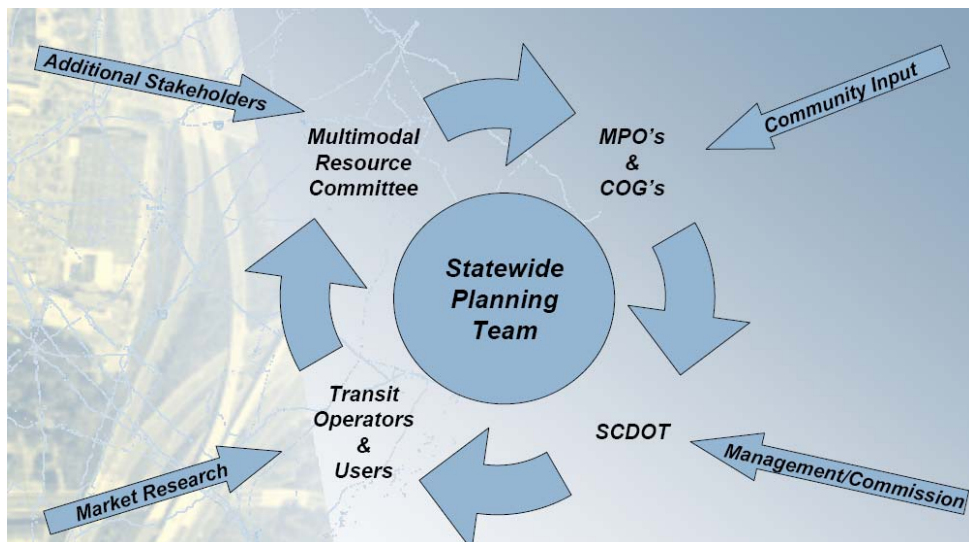


Figure 3. Stakeholder Participation Model

The following guidelines will be followed throughout the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan development:

- The Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan will be developed in consultation with the established Resource Committee comprised of identified stakeholders.
- The SCDOT Commission will approve the draft Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan prior to soliciting general public comment.
- The draft plan will be made available to the public on the SCDOT website as well as at seven regional meetings. All MPOs and COGs will be encouraged to include a link on their website to direct the public to the draft plan on SCDOT website.
- A 30-day comment period will be provided to receive formal written comments. The comment period will begin the first full day following the announcement and expire after 30 calendar days.
- Announcements to solicit comments on the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan, as well as scheduled regional meetings, will be distributed through the SCDOT Communications Office to media outlets throughout the state.
- Announcements will also be mailed directly to stakeholders and outlets for underserved groups identified in Appendix C.
- Announcements will be provided in Spanish.
- Per request, bi-lingual SCDOT staff will be present at the regional meetings.
- All regional meetings will be announced at least two weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting date.
- Regional meetings will be held at the SCDOT Engineering District Offices, unless an alternative site is determined necessary in order to provide a more convenient and accessible location.
- Formal comments will be accepted in writing and can be mailed, e-mailed, or documented through the SCDOT website.
- Staff will provide written responses to all formal comments. Staff responses will include an acknowledgement of the comment, a statement indicating that the comment will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration, and as appropriate, information addressing the concern(s)/question(s).
- All comments will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration prior to approving the Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan.
- Visualization will be used at each regional meeting and on the SCDOT website to display potential project needs and recommendations contained in the draft Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan.

THE STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) is a six-year list of specific investments in the surface transportation system and is updated every three years. Only certain modes of transportation are included in the STIP. The STIP includes all federal-aid eligible projects from the categories of interstate, bridge replacement, resurfacing, safety, air quality, system upgrade, transit, planning, enhancements, and federal lands. The STIP is a financially constrained program, meaning that the total cost of the projects cannot exceed available funds. The STIP is developed concurrently with the MPO TIPs.

In June 2007, state legislation was passed in South Carolina to restructure and reform SCDOT. Among the numerous provisions, Section 57-1-370 addresses the STIP development in an effort to establish a consistent process for identifying highway improvement projects. Subsection (B) (8) of this section states, “the commission shall establish a priority list of projects to the extent permitted by federal laws or regulations, taking into consideration at least the following criteria: (1) financial viability including a life cycle analysis of estimated maintenance and repair costs over the expected life of the project; (2) public safety; (3) potential for economic development; (4) traffic volume and congestion; (5) truck traffic; (6) the pavement quality index; (7) environmental impact; (8) alternative transportation solutions; and (9) consistency with local land use plans.” The SCDOT Commission ensures that priorities from each plan address the nine criteria prior to solicitation for public comment.

The STIP is a living document and requires modifications as project information changes. Modifications are defined as corrections and amendments. STIP corrections are *minor* updates that do not require public participation or SCDOT Commission approval. An example of a correction would include typographical or punctuation errors and programming updates that do not affect project scheduling or financial imbalances. STIP amendments are *major* updates that require both public participation and SCDOT Commission approval. Examples of STIP amendments may include updating funding categories, adding new projects, or changes in project budget and scope. The STIP update and amendment process is shown in Figure 4, below.

Updates & Amendments

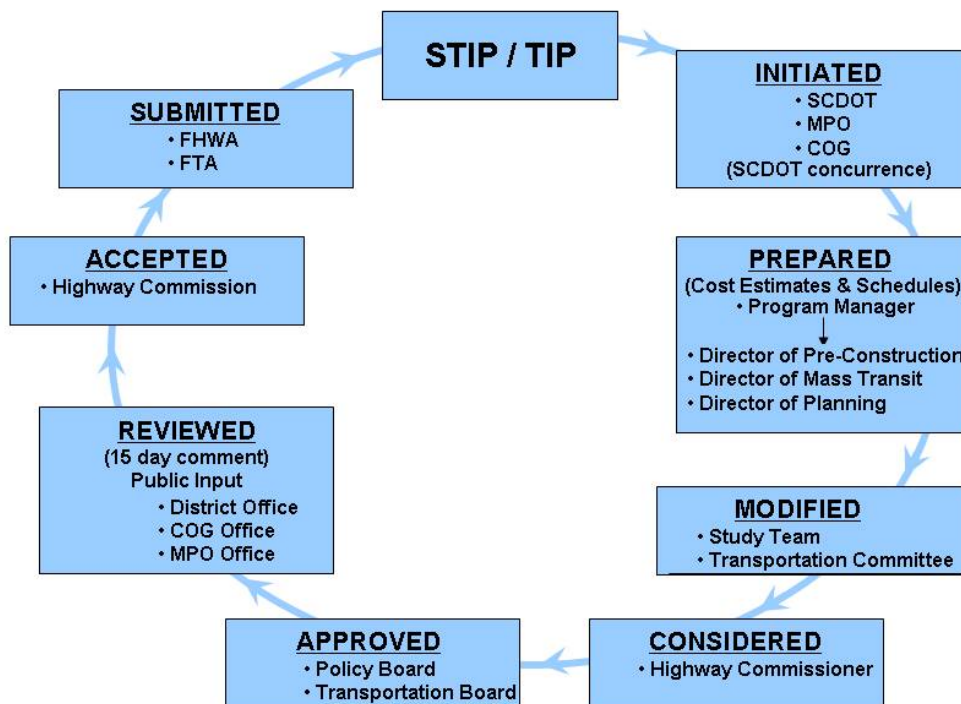


Figure 4. STIP Update and Amendment Process

The following guidelines will be followed during the triennial STIP update process:

- The STIP will be updated on a three-year cycle.
- The STIP will include all MPO TIPs as approved and all COG programs that have been developed consistent with the local public involvement process.
- A draft STIP containing all federal-aid programs will be approved by the SCDOT Commission prior to soliciting public comment.
- A 15-day comment period will be provided to receive formal written comments. The comment period will begin following the first full day after the announcement and expire after 15 calendar days.
- Copies of the draft STIP will be made available to the public at each COG office and the seven SCDOT Engineering District Offices. A copy of the draft will also be made available on the SCDOT website. All MPOs and COGs will be encouraged to include a link on their website to direct the public to the draft STIP on the SCDOT website.
- Announcements to solicit comments on the STIP will be distributed through the SCDOT Communications Office to media outlets throughout the state.
- Announcements will also be mailed directly to stakeholders and outlets for underserved groups identified in Appendix C.
- Announcements will be provided in Spanish.
- Formal comments will be accepted in writing and can be mailed, e-mailed, or documented through the SCDOT website.
- Staff will provide written responses to all formal comments. Staff responses will include an acknowledgement of the comment, a statement indicating that the comment will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration, and as appropriate, information addressing the concern(s)/question(s).
- All comments will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration prior to approving the STIP.

The following guidelines will be followed during STIP amendments:

- The STIP will be revised as program and project information changes.
- For the System Upgrade Program, revisions to the STIP will occur following the completion of a local public involvement process and approval by the MPO policy committee or COG board.
- For statewide programs or projects administered by SCDOT, the proposed change will be approved by the SCDOT Commission for public comment.
- A 15-day comment period will be provided to receive formal written comments. The comment period will begin following the first full day after the announcement and expire after 15 calendar days.
- Announcements to solicit comments on the proposed change will be distributed through the SCDOT Communications Office to media outlets throughout the state.
- Announcements will also be mailed directly to stakeholders and outlets for underserved groups identified in Appendix C.
- Announcements will be provided in Spanish.
- Copies of the proposal will be made available to the public at each COG office and the seven SCDOT Engineering District Offices. A copy of the draft revision will

also be made available on the SCDOT website. All MPOs and COGs will be encouraged to include a link on their website to direct the public to the draft STIP revision on the SCDOT website.

- Formal comments will be accepted in writing and can be mailed, e-mailed, or documented through the SCDOT website.
- Staff will provide written responses to all formal comments. Staff responses will include an acknowledgement of the comment, a statement indicating that the comment will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration, and as appropriate, information addressing the concern(s)/question(s).
- All comments will be provided to the SCDOT Commission for consideration prior to approving the proposed change as a revision to the STIP.

EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation evaluation is not a single event but a continual review and analysis of the public participation processes, strategies, and techniques. SCDOT is committed to constantly improve its process to achieve its goal of ensuring that anyone wishing to do so has sufficient knowledge and participation opportunities in the transportation decision-making process. To ensure that public participation process remains current and effective, SCDOT will:

- Periodically request comments on the process from MPOs, COGs, consultation parties, and state and federal agencies.
- Periodically request comments on the process from local citizens through the use of brief questionnaires via the internet or included in public hearing handouts for project specific public hearings.
- Internally assess the success of various tools and techniques used to acquire input. Assessments may address the level of input, the type of input received, and/or the role the input had in the process.

Program Updates	Public Meetings	Comment Period	Notes
Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)	N/A	15 days	
Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan	A regional meeting will be conducted at each of the seven SCDOT District Offices. (see Figure 1, page 4)	30 days	Comments received at the meetings will be included with all written comments.
Public Participation Plan	N/A	45 days	
Amendments			
Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)	N/A	15 days	
Statewide Comprehensive Transportation Plan	N/A	30 days	
Public Participation Plan	N/A	45 days	

Table 2. Summary of Public Participation Policy

APPENDIX A
PLANNING PROCESS FOR RURAL
AREAS OF THE STATE

**South Carolina Department of Transportation
Statewide Transportation Planning Process
Consultation and Cooperation with Local Officials in Non-Metropolitan (Rural) Areas**

Background

SCDOT first began enhancing the statewide planning process and local consultation procedures in response to the directives of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA). At that time, rural project identification, evaluation, and prioritization was the responsibility of SCDOT. Consultation with local officials took place as a function of public involvement activities associated with the statewide long-range transportation plan and State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

A revised process was ultimately implemented following the directives of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) and the adoption of the STIP in 2006. A working committee including representatives from South Carolina's ten Council of Governments (COGs) and the FHWA Division Office assisted SCDOT in developing the revised process.

The fundamental change in the process began with a partnership between SCDOT and the ten regional COGs, which have representation from all 46 counties in the state. SCDOT created a Rural System Upgrade Program referred to as Guideshares, which includes the federal-aid construction program for the areas outside of the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs). Rural Guideshares were allocated by COG regions based on rural population. SCDOT initially prepared a list of potential transportation needs based on travel, congestion, and safety data for each region in the state. The COGs used the listing as the basis for discussion with local officials, economic development groups, and members of the legislative delegation. Through these meetings, additional projects were also identified. The COGs developed steering committees made up of local government staff to evaluate and rank potential projects. Rural project priorities were endorsed by the COG boards and forwarded to the SCDOT Commission for final approval. The COGs facilitated all public involvement activities for projects programmed in the STIP.

In 2003, the SCDOT Commission adopted the Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan. The planning process utilized the COGs to develop regional transportation plans that collectively provided the basis for establishing statewide priorities.

Today each COG has transportation functions similar to that of MPOs. A portion of SCDOT's State, Planning, and Research (SPR) funding is allocated to the COGs to facilitate an ongoing rural transportation planning process. Each COG is required to submit a Rural Planning Work Program (RPWP) outlining the planning emphasis areas and planning projects for the year.

To help ensure ongoing communications between SCDOT and the ten COGs, Partnering Sessions are held on a quarterly basis, or as needed, to discuss relevant transportation

issues. In addition, SCDOT hosts an annual COG/MPO Workshop, which offers a technical agenda for staff responsible for the day-to-day planning functions.

Planning Process

In accordance with U.S.C. Title 23, Section 135, Statewide Planning, federal law specifies that each State shall carry out a transportation planning process that provides for consideration of projects and strategies that will—

- (A) support the economic vitality of the United States, the States, and metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- (B) increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- (C) increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- (D) increase the accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight;
- (E) protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life;
- (F) enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the State, for people and freight;
- (G) promote efficient system management and operation; and
- (H) emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.

Each COG, in partnership with SCDOT, is responsible for implementing a transportation planning process that fully complies with the federal planning requirements established by SAFETEA-LU. Through this process, each COG establishes regional goals and objectives, identifies the current condition of the transportation system, provides research and data analysis, identifies and prioritizes transportation needs for input to the Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan and STIP.

Transportation Subcommittees

Each COG maintains a regional transportation advisory committee with representatives from local government, transportation providers, and special interest groups. The COGs are encouraged to include representatives from the SCDOT, MPO staff if appropriate, representative from the Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) if appropriate, transportation providers, County Transportation Committee (CTC), planning, zoning, and public works officials, community leaders, school district representatives, as well as underserved populations. These committees play an important role in identifying, analyzing and prioritizing transportation needs and goals for their respective regions. As a result of the transportation advisory committees and COG boards, local governments are directly consulted and given an opportunity to identify transportation needs on the state system. Transportation advisory committees are encouraged to meet at least bi-annually or as needed to review project status, evaluate

proposed modifications to the STIP, update long-range plan and funding priorities, comment on rural functional classification changes, receive input on the rural work programs, and coordinate special studies.

Long-Range Transportation Plans

The rural planning process is based on the development and maintenance of regional transportation plans. Each plan provides a description of the transportation priorities for a 20-year period. At a minimum, regional long-range plans include an inventory of existing highway conditions, projection of future needs (trend or model based), evaluation of potential environmental, social, and cultural impacts, a ranking and prioritization of projects, and documentation of public input. The COGs are encouraged to consider nine elements in their long-range plans, including system upgrade, intersections, freight, bridges, safety, maintenance/resurfacing, signalization, mass transit, and bike and pedestrian facilities. Potential projects are ranked and recommended by the advisory committees to the COG boards based on funding availability. The long-range plans include both constrained and unconstrained needs. Each long-range plan is updated every 5 years from the date of adoption. Each COG maintains a copy of their respective long-range plan for public distribution.

Project Recommendations

Each COG, in cooperation with SCDOT and the Steering Committee prioritize transportation needs identified in the long-range plan and STIP. Potential projects and regional priorities reflected in the STIP are endorsed by the COG Board and provided to the SCDOT Commission for their consideration.

Advanced Project Planning Reports

Advanced Project Planning Reports are conducted in close coordination between SCDOT, MPO's, and COG's for projects identified in the STIP and constrained projects included in long range plans. Planning reports typically involve transportation improvement projects, such as a widening and new location alignment(s).

Elements of an Advanced Project Planning Report include existing and proposed typical cross section information that can be represented using "before" and "after" computer-generated visualizations for select locations throughout the length of the project. Projected traffic volumes are generated using the travel demand model and provide projected average daily traffic volumes for the proposed facility and the no-build scenario. Social, cultural, natural resources, and environmental concerns are identified using GIS database information for the environmental screening process. The total number of crashes at particular locations is summarized by providing statistics on accidents involving fatalities, injuries, and property damage. Cost estimates are also provided for one or more typical cross sections and may prove to be a key variable in the decision making process.

State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)

SCDOT publishes and maintains a 6-year STIP detailing program funding levels, projects, and funding schedules. The STIP is updated every three-years. Through the rural planning process, the COGs provide SCDOT with updated project priorities for inclusion in the STIP. Projects must be included in the regional long-range plans prior to being eligible for the STIP. Each COG endorses its regional priorities for consideration by the SCDOT Commission.

Each COG is responsible for advertising and documenting public comment for any amendment to the STIP within their region (see STIP process for definition of amendment/adjustment). The COG has discretion of advertising by legal ad or press release and chooses the appropriate media distribution based on the program change. STIP amendments require a 15-day comment period and all comments are forwarded to the SCDOT Secretary of Transportation prior to SCDOT Commission action. Copies of the STIP are made available for public review at the COG office and appropriate SCDOT Engineering District Office(s).

SCDOT is responsible for advertising and distributing copies of the draft STIP to each COG and District Office when an amendment involves a change of statewide significance and for the 3-year update of the STIP.

Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan

SCDOT maintains a multi-modal transportation plan that provides a comprehensive evaluation of the state's transportation system. The plan provides recommendations for investment in transportation facilities for a 20-year period. The plan is a product of a partnership with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the state's COGs and transportation providers. The collection of regional transportation plans, including the long-range plans for the state's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) provides the underlining framework for the statewide planning plan. The COGs participate in the maintenance and update of the Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan every five-years.

Rural Work Plans and State Planning Funds

The COGs work under contract with SCDOT to receive SPR funding to support transportation planning activities. Each COG receives an equal share of funding.

A Rural Planning Work Program (RPWP) is developed by each COG to define the work elements and specific tasks to be performed within year. The RPWPs follow the state fiscal year from July 1st to June 30th. The COGs are reimbursed on a quarterly basis for satisfactorily work completed as required in their RPWP. Quarterly reports documenting work progress are included with each invoice. SCDOT and FHWA provide planning emphasis areas to encourage specific planning activities, such as freight analysis, safety considerations, and bicycle and pedestrian needs, as well as tradition highway planning.

The development and maintenance of the regional long-range transportation plans is an ongoing priority for each COG. Each COG Board endorses the work tasks outlined in the RPWP.

Local Consultation

SAFETEA-LU legislation provides for states to consult with and consider the concerns of non-metropolitan officials when making transportation decisions in their Statewide Transportation Planning and Programming processes. The Final Rule, published in the Federal Register on January 23, 2003, took effect on February 24, 2004.

The Final Rule requires the states to document their non-metropolitan local officials consultation process. These processes provide for the participation of non-metropolitan local officials in a statewide transportation planning and programming process, which is separate and discrete from the public involvement process. The States are required to review and solicit comments regarding this process in order to ensure that the process is continually effective.

The current rural planning process in South Carolina meets the intent of the local consultation rule by involving non-metropolitan local officials, through the COGs, to directly participate in the development of transportation plans and priorities for their region. This consultation process also applies to the Statewide Multi-modal Transportation Plan by including the COGs and other transportation providers as partners in the planning process.

To help monitor the effectiveness of the consultation process, a survey will be provided to each COG Board to evaluate their satisfaction with the opportunities for participation in the statewide planning process. The most recent survey was conducted mid-2005 and subsequent surveys will be conducted every five years or as needed.

APPENDIX B

CONSULTATION PARTIES

Federal Highway Administration Division Office
FTA – Region IV
American Bus Association
Surface Transportation Board
Coast Guard Base Charleston
Norfolk Southern Corporation
CSX Transportation
United States Army Corps of Engineers
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
United States Forest Service
Department of the Interior – National Parks Service
Bureau of Land Management
South Carolina Public Railways
South Carolina Trucking Association
South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
South Carolina Department of Archives and History
South Carolina Ports Authority
South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control
South Carolina Department of Commerce
South Carolina Department of Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
Department of Homeland Security – State Law Enforcement Division – Counter
Terrorism
South Carolina Transportation Policy and Research
Municipal Association
South Carolina Association of Counties
The Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs – Clemson University
University of South Carolina
James Clyburn Transportation Center – South Carolina State University
The Citadel
Metro Chamber of Commerce
Rural Economic Development Commission
South Carolina Manufacturer’s Alliance
Palmetto Cycling
Greenville-Spartanburg Airport
Owens Field Airport
Orangeburg County Development Commission
Charleston Area Regional Transportation
Santee Wateree RTA
Lower Savannah RTA
Catawba Indian Tribe
Heritage Corridor
Lancaster and Chester Railway Company
Nesa Economic Development Alliance
Thomas and Hutton
Gullah Geechee Sea Island Coalition
SC Appalachian Council of Governments

Waccamaw Regional Planning and Development Council
Upper Savannah Council of Governments
Catawba Regional Council of Governments
Berkeley-Charleston-Dorchester Council of Governments
Lowcountry Council of Governments
Central Midlands Regional Planning Council
Lower Savannah Council of Governments
Santee Lynches Council of Governments
Pee Dee Regional Council of Governments
Anderson Community Planning and Developments
Augusta-Richmond County Planning Commission
Greenville County Planning Commission
City of Rock Hill
Spartanburg County Planning and Development
Aiken County Planning Commission
Florence County Planning
Sumter City-County Planning Commission
Anderson Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Augusta Regional Transportation Study (MPO)
Charleston Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Columbia Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Florence Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Greenville-Pickens Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Grand Strand Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Rock Hill-Fort Mill Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Spartanburg Area Transportation Study (MPO)
Sumter Area Transportation Study (MPO)

APPENDIX C
MINORITY MEDIA OUTLETS

Minority Media Outlets

The following list consists of minority media outlets as a strategy to reach the traditionally underserved traveling public.

Radio

	Area	Region	Demographic	Language
WSSB 90.3 FM	Orangeburg	Midlands	African American	English
WWWZ 93.3 FM	Charleston	Low Country	African American	English
WPAL 100.9 FM	Charleston	Low Country	African American	English
WDAI 98.5 FM	Myrtle Beach	Pee Dee	African American	English
WXBT 100.1 FM	West Columbia	Midlands	African American	English
WLVH 101.1 FM	Hardeeville	Low Country	African American	English
WWDM 101.3 FM	Sumter/Columbia	Midlands	African American	English
WMGL 101.7 FM	North Charleston	Low Country	African American	English
WQKI 102.9 FM	Orangeburg	Midlands	African American	English
WHXT 103.9 FM	Columbia	Midlands	African American	English
WYNN 106.3 FM	Florence	Pee Dee	African American	English
WASC 1530 AM	Spartanburg	Upstate	African American	English
WGVL 1440 AM	Greenville	Upstate	Hispanic	Spanish
WBLR 1430 AM	Batesburg	Midlands	Hispanic	Spanish
WAZC 98.9 FM	McClellanville	Low Country	Hispanic	Spanish

Newspaper

	Area	Region	Demographic	Language
The Gullah Sentinel	Beaufort	Low Country	African American	English
South Carolina Black Media Group	Columbia	Midlands/Statewide	African American	English
The Charleston Chronicle	Charleston	Low Country	African American	English
Community Times Dispatch	Walterboro	Low Country	African American	English
Latino	Greenville	Upstate	Hispanic	Spanish
Vida Latina	Mt. Pleasant	Low Country	Hispanic	Spanish