



Martin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

Background

The Federal Highway Act mandates that all urbanized areas with a population greater than 50,000 establish a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive planning process to be eligible for U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) funding. This is accomplished through the establishment of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) with the purpose of involving local governments in the transportation project development and funding process.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin, must be adhered to by any government entity that receives federal funding. Title VI also references the term “Environmental Justice” as it relates to the impact of transportation plans or projects on a particular community or population that may have traditionally been underserved or left out of the transportation planning process. The intent of the Environmental Justice policy is to ensure public involvement of low income and minority groups and prevent disproportionately high or adverse impacts on those populations. This helps to ensure everyone receives equal participation and benefit from transportation improvements.

The Martin Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was established in 1993 and is governed by a Policy Board with the power to develop and adopt plans, and to program transportation improvements for facilities receiving state or federal funds. The MPO is the primary forum where local governments and citizens voice concerns, identify priorities, and plan for improvements to all modes of transportation – roadway, public transportation, and bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The MPO Policy Board is comprised of elected officials representing Martin County (4), the City of Stuart (2), and the Town of Sewall’s Point (1).

The MPO has a small staff of transportation planning professionals who support, coordinate and complete the transportation planning activities undertaken by the MPO Board and committees. The MPO currently operates under signed joint participation and inter-local agreements with all member governments.

The MPO Board is supported by several advisory committees that include technical staff as well as citizen representatives who review information and make recommendations to the Board. One of those committees is the **Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)** which represents the citizens of Martin County on all bicycle and pedestrian-related issues.

The Committee is responsible for providing input into the MPO decision-making process, which includes reviewing and commenting on planning documents and identifying relevant issues to be brought before the MPO Board. The BPAC consists of 15 voting members and three (3) non-voting members including law enforcement representatives and other stakeholders.



The Martin MPO maintains a Public Involvement Plan (PIP) to meet the requirements of state and federal laws by providing opportunities for public involvement and input in the multimodal transportation planning process. Adopted in December of 2009, the plan was updated in 2011, 2013, 2014 and 2015.

This PIP is not intended to duplicate strategies outlined in the existing PIP but to define specific strategies to engage the public in the **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan** process and ensure participation from the most diverse audiences possible. These audiences include, but are not limited to: users of all transportation modes (bicyclists, pedestrians, and automobiles) and the general citizenry; affected public agencies; representatives of public and private transportation providers; and representatives from disabled populations. This PIP ensures there will be reasonable notice and access to the planning process in drafting the update to the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan.

The Public Involvement Process

As outlined in the current MPO PIP, involving the general public as well as the appropriate agencies, governments, and other stakeholder groups is key to a successful public outreach effort and most importantly, identifying transportation improvements that are accepted by the community intended to be served. The public involvement process will raise community-wide awareness of current and relevant issues and concerns through a proactive approach. These concerns will be addressed through the **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan** and builds from the foundation of the **MPOs 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)**.

Groups and individuals will be targeted using a variety of methods and strategies to distribute information and encourage participation in the planning process managed by the MPO. By developing a process that allows the public to ask questions and provide input prior to any Board action, the MPO will be able to create a Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan that is economically feasible, addresses needs and demands, and has community support.

Background on Communities of Concern

Several planning areas identified in the 2012 Community Characteristics report stand out as potential communities of concern. The 11 planning areas in Martin County include: Hobe Sound, Hutchinson Island, Indiantown, Mid County, North County, North River Shores, Palm City, Port Salerno/76, South County, Stuart Urban and West County. The Stuart Urban area exceeded the overall MPO percentages in all five categories. The Indiantown and West County areas exceeded the MPO percentages with regard to Minorities, Households below Poverty, and Persons with LEP. The Hobe Sound and Port Salerno/ 76 areas exceeded the MPO percentages in two categories. Five of the remaining areas exceeded the MPO in one category, while Palm City fell below the overall MPO percentages in each category. The categories are, minority, senior citizen, poverty, no vehicle and limited English proficiency.



The MPO's target audiences are wide-ranging and consist of: its boards and committees; the general public; younger generations; the elderly; populations that are traditionally underserved such as Limited English Proficiency (LEP), Americans with Disabilities, and minority and low-income populations.

In reviewing the *Martin MPOs 2012 Community Characteristics Report*, four (4) MPO planning areas were identified that include **minority** percentages larger than the overall County percentage. These areas are: Indiantown (77.6%); West County (58.6%); Stuart Urban (27.3%); and Port Salerno/76 (24.8%).

There are also four (4) areas with **senior citizen** percentages larger than the County percentage. These are Hutchinson Island (66.6%); South County (41.3%); Stuart Urban (31.1%); and Hobe Sound (29.3%).

In addition, about 9% of Martin County households fall below the poverty threshold, 4.6% do not own a vehicle and about 4% have Limited English Proficiency.

There are also five (5) planning areas with Households below Poverty percentages larger than the County percentage. These are Indiantown (30.1%); Stuart Urban (14.3%); West County (12.6%); Mid County (11.7%); and Hobe Sound (9.3%).

There are two (2) areas with Households without a Vehicle percentages larger than County percentage. These are Stuart Urban (10.7%) and North County (6.7%).

Lastly, there are five (5) planning areas with LEP percentages larger than the County. These are Indiantown (23.5%); West County (10.1%); Stuart Urban (6.7%); Port Salerno/76 (6.6%); North River Shores (4.7%).

Target Audiences

a. Boards and Committees. The MPO already has an established protocol for communicating with and providing relevant information to its **board and committee members**. There is also a set meeting schedule for the boards and committees to follow. The Policy Board bases its decisions on the input of the established committees. All committees will be informed of the Master Planning process, however, the committee with the highest level of communication and outreach will be the **Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC)** which, as mentioned earlier in this PIP document, represents the citizens of Martin County on all bicycle and pedestrian-related issues.

b. General Public. The best planning decisions and processes are made within the context of citizen participation. With that in mind, the MPO will make every effort to include the general public in the planning process - creating an open, two-way flow of communication where information is consistently shared, easily accessible and in plain language. It is important that the MPO strives to include more residents in the planning process beyond the members of its boards and committees.



c. Younger Generations (Millennials). The MPO also desires to connect **younger generations** to the transportation planning process. This will not only provide a unique perspective in the form of feedback from these groups, but help to develop the next generation of active, engaged and well-informed citizens. This demographic includes everyone from school age children to college students to young professionals. This will allow for the transfer of information to more households through their children, encourage stewardship and develop community pride, and help identify emerging needs and issues of younger generations.

d. Traditionally Underserved. The MPO will continue to expand its efforts to determine and meet the needs of traditionally underserved populations. To accomplish this, barriers to participation by these groups must be overcome. Migrant workers are a group that is historically difficult to identify and engage. A substantial percentage of this group may also be challenged with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). Written information will be translated as needed as well as on-site interpretation provided. The MPO will also seek input from low income and zero-vehicle households in an effort to address their specific needs and concerns regarding mobility.

f. The elderly. Specific efforts will be made to reach retirement communities as many of these residents no longer drive and are reliant on other transportation modes. To accomplish this, staff will offer to bring information to these communities to ensure they have access to the planning process.

d. Other Special Interest Groups. There are numerous civic and trade groups, non-profit organization and other associations that will play a key role in assisting the MPO with the dissemination of information as well as collecting feedback from the public. Because these groups are generally well organized and have established credibility and trust with their membership and/or supporters, the potential exists for them to be strong advocates in the planning process.

- Targeted groups include but are not limited to:
- Martin County's seven (7) Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Neighborhood Advisory Committees (NACs)
- City of Stuart CRA
- Neighborhood groups and Homeowners Associations
- Council on Aging of Martin County
- Martin County Interagency Coalition
- United Way of Martin County
- Chambers of Commerce
- Martin County School District
- Realtors Association of Martin County
- Marine Industries of the Treasure Coast
- Economic Council of Martin County
- Young Professionals of Martin County



Outreach Tools and Tactics

A variety of tools and tactics will be used to communicate and engage the various stakeholders and target audiences that have been identified for inclusion in the LRTP planning process.

Steering Committee The Project Steering committee is comprised of community members from the following organizations. The steering committee will review all information and provide input to the MPO.

- Martin Health System
- City of Stuart Rep.
- City of Stuart CRA
- CRA via County
- State Park System
- TCRPC
- Martin County Transit
- County Engineering Rep.
- FDOT District 4 Rep.
- Martin County's Parks and Recreation Dept.
- Ecosystem Restoration Division
- FDEP – Office of Greenways and Trails/East Coast Greenway Rep.
- Martin County Growth Management
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) Rep.

Stakeholders. A stakeholder is a person who has a particular interest in something - in this case, the development of the updates to the Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan. Stakeholders are an integral part of the planning process and have the ability to influence the planning process and ultimately stand to benefit from the recommended transportation investments. Stakeholders include people who are affected by how, when and where transportation investment occurs.

Stakeholders may include people who have some direct involvement in the transportation system (e.g., Public Works staff) or they may simply be a user or beneficiary of transportation services (e.g., a commuter). In order to participate in the planning process, stakeholders must be aware that the planning process is taking place. Much of this effort will occur at the beginning of the planning process, though it may also occur periodically as needed throughout the process.

As part of the Master Plan process, key stakeholders will be asked to participate in focus groups, online surveys and visual preference surveys tailored to gain insight into the respective stakeholder's needs, desires, priorities, and concerns. The project team will work with MPO staff to identify a formal and expanded list of stakeholders, including, but not limited to, individuals representing the following entities:



- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities. Such as cycling clubs & running groups.
- Representatives of the disabled
- Affected public agencies
- Emergency Services providers
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Providers of non-emergency transportation services
- agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, land use management, natural resources, conservation, and historic preservation

Meetings/Outreach

a. Board and Advisory Committee Meetings: As previously mentioned, the MPO has an established process and schedule for board and committee meetings. Material is provided to the members in advance of the meetings and available to the public. Meetings are noticed and the public is encouraged to participate. The MPO will continue efforts to connect the public to these meetings and encourage two-way dialogue between the members and the general public. This will be accomplished by using tools such as the MPO website, email communications, social media such as Facebook and conventional print and other digital media.

b. Public Meetings: The MPO will host two (2) public workshop meetings. The public workshops will be held in a central location that is accessible via public transit. One workshop will occur towards the beginning of the project to gather input on project-related ideas and needs from the general public. The second workshop will occur towards the end of the project to present draft recommendations and network plan maps and gather public input before the plan is finalized for presentation to the MPO committees and board. In addition, the facilities selected for these meetings will be ADA compliant and accessible to those with disabilities. Formal public notice will be handled by MPO staff in advance of each scheduled meeting. Informative presentations and supporting collateral materials will be prepared in advance of the meetings and readily available to the public at the meetings as well as online. Public participation in the meetings will be encouraged. Comment cards will be provided to attendees to gather feedback, questions and concerns relevant to the planning process. Email addresses and other contact information will be collected so the MPO can build a larger distribution list and staff will be able to provide follow up information and keep attendees informed and connected throughout the planning process.

c. Focus Groups: Focus group meetings will be particularly helpful when reaching out to the traditionally underserved populations and special interest groups who may be more comfortable meeting in their own communities, neighborhoods and gathering places. The MPO will utilize and attend already scheduled inter-agency meetings.



These small group meetings would focus on collecting information on transportation conditions; the experiences, needs, and desires of transportation users; and the expectations, concerns and wishes they have about the future.

Communications and Collateral Materials Development

- a. Logo:** Clarifying and maintaining a strong identity for a project or initiative is critical when trying to engage the public. A new logo design that builds off of the existing branding effort that was completed for the 2040 LRTP Moving Martin Forward will be helpful in building public awareness for the **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan** update process.
- b. Website:** Additional content and updates will be posted to the Moving Martin Forward website. The website will house documents, technical information, meeting notices, general planning process information, event and meeting calendars, contact information for key MPO staff, opportunities for public input and more. The website has already been designed with a user-friendly, easy to navigate site plan and layout using plain language content and has a content management format to allow for easy and convenient updates by MPO staff.
- c. Web Based Survey:** The MPO staff and project team will develop a survey to educate the public and solicit their input and questions. This survey will be conducted and tallied through an electronic resource (such as Constant Contact or Survey Monkey) and sent to the full email list available to the MPO. The survey will also be available online for residents to complete. A link to the online survey will be provided on the Martin MPO Moving Martin Forward website and shared on the MPOs Facebook page. The information gathered will be used in the planning process. The survey will allow for tracking responses in various demographic categories such as geographic location and age of responders.
- d. Communications.** The MPO is hosted by Martin County and has access to a substantial resident address list for both conventional mail and email contacts. In addition, new addresses and emails will be collected by MPO staff at all public meetings, small group meetings, stakeholder presentations, and through digital and online sources such as the website, email communications and social media, and added to the master contact list. These lists will be used as needed to notify the public about upcoming meetings, milestones achieved and other opportunities to connect to the planning process and provide input to the MPO staff. Email communications will be used to keep stakeholders engaged and informed in a convenient and cost effective fashion that also provides the recipient with the opportunity to respond to MPO staff with feedback or questions. Direct mail will be used as a more targeted way to ensure traditionally underserved populations are reached.



e. Collateral Materials: Well branded, plain-language, professionally designed communications and collateral material will be created to support the public outreach and education efforts as part of the process. These materials will be available in English and any other language as needed through the MPO staff and at all meetings, outreach presentations and online. Collateral materials may include, but are not limited to display boards, posters, brochures, facts sheets, PowerPoint presentations, postcard mailers, electronic newsletters, artist renderings and videos. The materials will explain and support the **Bicycle, Pedestrian and Trails Master Plan** process, as well as provide the public with a means to contact MPO staff and provide their input and feedback and ask questions.

f. MCTV: In addition to the board meetings being aired on MCTV (Martin County public access television channel), opportunities to promote, educate, and solicit input from county residents through MCTV will also be explored. These efforts may include airing meeting announcements, MPO contact information and educational video production.

g. Social Media: The Martin MPOs Facebook page (Moving Martin Forward) will be used as a vehicle to reach the general public, especially the younger generations targeted by MPO staff. The Facebook page will provide planning and project updates, meeting information and more as well as encourage dialogue between the community and the MPO staff. The Facebook page will continue to adhere to all Martin County protocols and will be monitored to ensure those engaging with the page are commenting in keeping with County criteria.

h. Media Relations: The MPO will engage the media through the Martin County Public Information Officer as well as through their own staff contacts. Public meetings will also be properly noticed through the media. In addition, the MPO will seek opportunities for guest columns as appropriate as well as generate press releases as part of connecting information to the community in the planning process.

i. Post-Project Public Participation: The MPO will continue to solicit feedback from stakeholders and groups as part of the post-project process. Using many of the previously discussed tools and tactics, such as the website, Facebook page, emails and surveys, the public will be asked for feedback on the projects completed and to assist in identifying any gaps that may exist.