

Region XII RPA Public Participation Plan

I. Introduction

The Congress of the United States called for increased public involvement in the planning and decision-making concerning transportation issues in the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The State of Iowa, in its implementation of this plan, has called for regions to be set up by the various counties, one goal of which was to increase the amount of involvement at the local level in decisions concerning Federal funding. The Region XII RPA was established by six counties in west central Iowa: Audubon, Carroll, Crawford, Greene, Guthrie, and Sac.

This plan was developed by the staff of Region XII Council of Governments (COG), the designated planning agency for the Region XII RPA. The components of the plan are the result of input received to date from local officials, the regional Transportation Advisory Committee, interested citizens, and others.

II. Goals and Objectives

Goal 1 To receive input from various sectors of the public throughout the Region XII planning area.

Objectives

1. Involve groups that would have an interest in the expenditure and use of regional ISTEA funds for Surface Transportation Projects and Enhancements Projects.
2. Proactively seek input from the public.
3. Form advisory committees in each county to review planning documents, provide input on projects, and serve as local contacts for citizens and groups in the various counties.
4. Publicize public meetings, and opportunities for input as widely as is possible and feasible through the methods spelled out in this plan.

Goal 2 To ensure that concerns and needs of the public are reflected in the planning document produced for the Region XII RPA.

Objectives

1. Ensure that at least one Transportation Advisory Committee member and one Region XII staff member are present at each county committee meeting to listen to input and concerns from the public.
2. Provide all written and oral comments from the public on proposed projects for the Transportation Improvement Program to the Transportation Advisory Committee.
3. Publicize the completion of work products as widely as is feasible and possible, allowing for comments on the drafts. Any needed or necessary changes shall be made and all comments shall be provided to the authorized board (e.g., the Policy Council) prior to the final approval of the work product.

III. Individuals and Organizations

The following is a non-exhaustive list of individuals and organizations within the Region XII RPA boundaries that are to be notified about ISTEPA and its implementation in the Region XII RPA. These will be contacted for involvement on the county committee and will be notified about work products. They include, but are not limited to:

Boards of Supervisors, city governments, county conservation boards, chambers of commerce (for retail businesses and industry), county development corporations (for economic development interests and industry), the Western Iowa Transit System (for public transit and its constituents), railroad companies, airports, the Iowa Department of Transportation, county historical societies and certified local governments, known trail and environmental organizations, county engineers, over-the-road shippers and haulers (possibly through their state organizations), and significant agribusinesses and agricultural interests.

IV. Participation Techniques.

The Region XII RPA will pro-actively seek input for the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and other written documents and processes concerning ISTEPA and its implementation in the region. Several methods for input have been practiced in the past by the Council of Government (COG) and other agencies to receive input. These methods were revisited to ascertain their applicability to ISTEPA, and were grouped with new ideas from RPA staff, the TAC committee, and those received from the public. This list, like those found elsewhere in this document, is not completely exhaustive. Methods to inform the public and receive their opinions and concerns about ISTEPA and its work products will be added and tried when necessary and warranted. Conversely, methods which prove unreliable or unfeasible will be jettisoned when possible (required public hearings will be maintained regardless of the performance).

These methods will be used to varying degrees depending on the purpose for their use. All methods will be studied for use at any particular time and the greatest number of methods, which prove practical and useful, will be utilized. Public participation methods include:

1. **Newsletter Dissemination.** Region XII RPA COG distributes approximately 700 quarterly newsletters to local and statewide officials. ISTEAs will be included in this newsletter, which is sent to every city council member, mayor, and city clerk in the region. Also included are economic development officials, transit interests, and legislators.
2. **News Releases.** These will be distributed to all newspapers and radio stations that either originate in the region or have significant circulation or coverage in the region. No television stations will be included, as these are not feasible considering the location of the region; but local cable access stations will be studied to ascertain the feasibility of their addition to the news release list. These news releases will announce any news or changes concerning ISTEAs in the region, informational meetings in the county seat or in Carroll, the headquarters of the RPA, or to announce the availability of plans and work products. Plans and work products will always be made available for public review in at least one location in each county.
3. **Presentations to Organizations.** These will occur when requested and may be done at the request of the RPA should the need warrant.
4. **Meeting with Cities:** The RPA will sponsor meetings in each county seat to meet with city clerks and/or mayors to inform them of ISTEAs. RPA staff will then be made available to speak to at any city council meeting or other local public meeting should these officials deem it necessary or useful.
5. **Public Meetings.** These will be held once a year in each county seat in the region. News releases will announce their occurrence. The meetings will be informational in nature and will occur at least before the planning for the following year's TIP has begun. Public questions and input will be allowed. Follow-up meetings will occur to receive input on the TIP and provide applications for projects to be included in the TIP. County committees will be developed, in part, from these committees.
6. **Public Hearings.** Public hearings will primarily be held in Carroll to approve such documents as the Public Participation Plan, the Transportation Planning Work Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Plan and the amendments. The official notice for the public hearing will be placed in the county seat newspaper for each county in the RPA.

7. **County ISTEAs Committees.** The committees shall be present in each county and shall be composed of individuals representing different interest groups, community organizations, and public bodies. The committee will serve as a source of contact for the public and will provide input to the RPA and its boards on ISTEAs documents and processes. One of the most important duties of the county committee will be to review all requests for funding for the TIP and provide input as to the various projects' importance to the county.
8. **Open Meetings.** All meetings of the RPA shall be open to the public. This includes the regional TAC and Policy Council meetings. Notice of these meetings shall be sent to the county seat newspapers in each of the counties in the RPA.

V. Plan Review, Approval, and Amendment

This plan for public participating in the ISTEAs process of the Region XII RPA shall be subject to public review for no less than forty-five (45) days, announced in the county seat newspapers via public notice, and available in the courthouse of each county in the RPA. This plan shall be approved by both the regional TAC and the Executive Board of the Policy Council. Amendments to this plan shall be made in similar fashion.