



## Watertown Jefferson County Area Transportation Council

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## Public Participation Plan

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The Watertown Jefferson County area Transportation Council (WJCTC) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the urbanized area in Jefferson County, see map on page 4. WJCTC is responsible for facilitating a regional transportation planning and programming process that is continuing, cooperative and comprehensive for all area projects and activities eligible for funding through the Federal Highway and Federal Transit Administrations. Active participation of the public and community, area elected officials and municipal professionals is required in order for the transportation planning process to be effective. Participation in this plan by the City of Watertown Transit satisfies the Federal Transit Administration's requirement of the "grantee's" public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).

WJCTC is committed to facilitating meaningful public participation. This document will outline a standard policy for encouraging public input and ensuring access to major WJCTC activities and products.

### A. Meetings, Appearances and Access to Staff

WJCTC holds biannual Policy Committee meetings that allow access to the planning process. All meetings are announced one week prior to the event and are open to the public in accessible locations. Assistance for hearing- or sight-impaired or individuals with limited English proficiency will be provided with advanced notification. Time is allotted on all Policy Committee meeting agendas for public comment. Although rare, any special meetings of these committees outside of those that are regularly scheduled will be advertised and conducted under the same set of procedures.

The WJCTC office is located in the NYSDOT Planning Office, 7<sup>th</sup> floor of the Dulles State Office Building.

### B. Access to Planning Documents

The core documents produced by WJCTC that serve to govern the Council's programs and policies in accordance with the Final Metropolitan Planning Rule are the *Long Range Plan*, the *Transportation Improvement Program*, and the *Unified Planning Work Program*.

- The *Long Range Plan* (LRP) establishes a program of both short and long-term goals and recommendations for a planning horizon of 20-25 years. It is designed to facilitate the development of an integrated and efficient intermodal transportation system. The LRP is updated once every five years.
- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a five year listing of capital surface transportation projects that are selected and programmed to receive federal funding. The TIP is updated every two to three years and represents a prioritized listing of projects intended to address the challenges and opportunities listed in the LRP. Public notice of public participation activities and times established for public review of and comments on the TIP will satisfy the Federal Transit Administration's requirement for the City of Watertown Transit public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP).
- The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the annual work program that identifies the transportation planning and programming activities that are to be undertaken by the staff in support

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of the Council during the current State Fiscal Year(s). The UPWP coordinates annual tasks that the MPO hopes to accomplish in support of the LRP through the use of FHWA and FTA funding in addition to local and state contributions.

In addition to the core documents, WJCTC will typically engage in 1-3 individual projects per year that are listed in that year's UPWP as distinct tasks. The reports that result from the execution of these tasks are considered to be major planning studies.

The following requirements have been established by WJCTC and will be followed during the production of the Long Range Plan, TIP, UPWP, and major planning studies:

1. Core documents and major planning studies are developed in consultation with the public and affected local, state, and municipal planning, economic development, and environmental organizations.
2. Draft versions of all MPO core documents and major planning studies will be made available to the public for review and comment for a minimum period of thirty days.
3. A Public information contact list will be maintained for mailings of notices and other public outreach efforts.
4. Legal notices will accompany public comment periods for draft core documents. Copies of those draft core documents are to be made available at local municipal offices and public libraries. These locations will be listed on the WJCTC website when the documents are distributed.
5. Copies of documents will be made available to individuals with disabilities and limited English proficiency upon request by mail or direct consultation by appointment as is reasonable and warranted.
6. All draft documents are available on the WJCTC website. The site link to a comment module for each document.
7. All public comments received will be documented and considered by WJCTC staff for incorporation into each final document as is warranted and appropriate prior to the adoption of final documents by the Policy Committee.
8. Major comments that generate significant revisions between publicly-distributed draft documents and final documents will be summarized and included as appendices to those documents.

Throughout any given program year, WJCTC staff utilizes consultant contracts to facilitate smaller-scale planning/engineering assistance to participating member municipalities. These efforts are typically less time intensive than conventional planning studies and are targeted towards addressing a local, rather than a regional transportation issue. The resulting reports are generally not adopted by the Policy Committee. A process similar to the one noted above for core documents and major planning studies will be followed for these technical assistance contracts and other WJCTC activities that result in a written report, hereby referenced collectively as technical reports.

1. Technical reports are developed in consultation with the public and affected local, state, and municipal planning, economic development, and environmental organizations.
2. Prior to finalizing the documents, draft versions of the technical reports will be posted online at the WJCTC website for public review for a period of thirty days.
3. Copies of draft documents will be made available to individuals with disabilities and limited English proficiency upon request by mail or direct consultation by appointment as is reasonable and warranted.
4. All public comments received will be documented and considered by WJCTC staff for incorporation into each final document as is warranted and appropriate.
5. Major comments that generate significant revisions between publically-distributed draft documents and final documents will be summarized and included as appendices to those documents.

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## **C. Communications**

### **WJCTC Website**

The WJCTC website address is: [www.wjctc.org](http://www.wjctc.org)

### **Social Media**

WJCTC will obtain a Twitter account; Twitter handle is: @WatertownMPO.

## **D. Summary of Action Items**

Public involvement is critical to the transportation planning process for several reasons, including broadening the array of issues that can be identified to maximize responsiveness for public issues and concerns, increasing the sense of ownership and influence on a project or initiative, facilitating public consensus, and enhancing public awareness. Providing avenues for public access to the planning process at every practical opportunity is essential. WJCTC will continue to implement the following procedures to maximize meaningful and ongoing public participation:

### **Meetings, Appearances and Access to Staff**

- A. All WJCTC Policy Committee Meetings are open to the public and held in accessible locations.
- B. Advance notification will be given for planned public appearances.
- C. WJCTC will continue to staff a professional office in an accessible location.
- D. Staff is available to the public during office hours or by appointment if necessary.
- E. Responsiveness to public inquiries will be given top priority.
- F. WJCTC will make every effort to reach out to environmental justice population groups (minority, low income) in the FHWA urban area boundary.

### **Access to Planning Documents**

- A. Core documents and major planning studies will be:
  1. Produced in consultation with the public, as well as, affected public and regional agencies.
  2. Made available in draft form online and individually upon request for a public comment period of no less than 30 days, with public comment periods advertised in local media. Copies of draft core documents will also be made available at local municipal offices and libraries during the public comment periods.
  3. Adopted by the Policy Committee after consideration and documentation of the public comments submitted and received during the public comment periods.
- B. Technical reports will be:
  1. Produced in consultation with the public, as well as, affected public and regional agencies.
  2. Made available in draft form online for a period of 30 days.
  3. Finalized by the Technical Advisory Committee after consideration and documentation of any substantive public comments submitted and received during the public comment periods.
- C. Announcement of the availability of draft core documents and public comment periods will be made via Legal Notice.
- D. Press releases will be used to announce:
  1. Public meetings associated with major planning studies.
  2. Public comment periods and the availability of draft core documents.

E. Targeted surveys, mailings, and public postings will be used to publicize and generate public comment on ongoing major planning studies and technical reports as is warranted.

WJCTC will monitor meeting attendance, public comments, web inquiries, and general feedback as a means of improving the Council's outreach efforts.

