

Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

2023 Public Involvement Plan (PIP)



Developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)
in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation

Adopted August 28, 2023

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2023 *Public Involvement Plan (PIP)*

This document is posted at
<https://www.warc.info/mpo-documents/>

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Date adopted: August 28, 2023

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This PIP 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 requirements in Title 23 USC 134 and 135 (amended by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Sections 11201, November 2021.) The contents of this document do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

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Policy Committee

Voting

John Hinton- City of Northport Mayor
Wallace McAdory - ALDOT West Central Region Engineer
Walt Maddox - City of Tuscaloosa Mayor
Rob Robertson - Tuscaloosa County Commission Chairman
Dennis Stripling - WARC Executive Director

Non-Voting

Rod Northam, West Alabama Rural Planning Organization, Policy Committee Chair
Mark D. Bartlett, Federal Highway Administration
Robert Green, Citizens Advisory Committee Chairman
Katherine Parris, Technical Coordinating Committee Chairman
Bradley B. Lindsey., Alabama Department of Transportation
Yvette G. Taylor, PhD, Federal Transit Administration Region 4
Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee Chairman

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Jeff Powell, Airport Manager
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Bryan Gurney, Director, Tuscaloosa City Engineer
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Rhonda King, Federal Transit Administration
Tera Tubbs, Northport City Engineer
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U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Representative

Non-Voting

Chairman, Tuscaloosa City Planning Commission
Chairman, Northport Planning Commission
Representative, Town of Brookwood
Representative, Town of Coaling
Representative, Town of Coker
Representative, Town of Lake View
Representative, Town of Moundville
Representative, Town of Vance
Representative, Alabama Department of Public Safety (Local Office)
Representative, Northport City Police Department
Representative, Tuscaloosa City Police Department
Representative, Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office

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Brock Reynolds
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Prepared by the
West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)
Staff to the MPO

**Resolution
Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPO 2023-13**

**Adopting the 2023 Public Involvement Plan (PIP)
As prepared by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)**

WHEREAS, the Tuscaloosa Area MPO is the organization designated by the Governor of the State of Alabama as being responsible, together with the State of Alabama, for implementing the applicable provisions of 23 USC 134 and 135 (amended by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, Sections 11201, November 2021.) 42 USC 2000d-1, 7401; 23 CFR 450 and 500; 40 CFR 51 and 93; and

WHEREAS, Title 23 CFR 450.316(a) et al, provides that MPOs must prepare a participation plan to describe the process to ensure all citizens have reasonable opportunities to be involved in transportation planning, defines the segments of population to be included in that process, and further describes the means, methods, and formats used in providing those opportunities; and

WHEREAS, in meeting requirements of 450.316(a), the MPO agrees to periodically review the effectiveness of procedures and strategies intended to provide full and open access to all citizens; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to 450.316(a), the MPO has provided a public comment period of forty-five (45) days for review of the draft plan prior to final MPO approval; and

WHEREAS, consistent with the declaration of the above provisions, the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, in consultation with the Alabama Department of Transportation, has prepared the *2023 Public Involvement Plan*; now

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, this 28th day of August 2023, that the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization has reviewed its public participation procedures, hereafter referred to as the *2023 Public Involvement Plan (PIP)*, to assure that full and open access to the transportation planning process is provided to all citizens, to maintain consistency with federal and state requirements, and to improve and streamline the public involvement process.



MPO Chair

ATTEST



MPO Process Coordinator

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to ensure that the transportation planning process encourages active public participation. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is the authorized entity that was established to conduct the federally-required transportation planning process in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. The PIP describes how the MPO incorporates the public into the process.

1.2 Federal Requirements

The following is a brief summary of the relevant federal laws, regulations, and executive orders that direct state departments of transportation regarding public participation matters. This text was prepared by the Bureau of Transportation Planning at the Alabama Department of Transportation and modified by the MPO staff to address MPO functions.

Title 23 United States Code (USC) 134 and 135 – 23 USC 134 is codification of the law establishing planning policy, defining MPO organizational structure, and delineating MPO and State responsibilities in the transportation planning process.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, (IIJA Act) - This is the most recent transportation legislation. This law amended, modified, and added to the existing 23 USC 134 and 135. The language specific to the metropolitan transportation planning participation process is found in Section 1201.

23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450 – 23 CFR 450 is FHWA/FTA interpretation of 23 USC 134 and 135, providing specific requirements and actions for states and MPOs. The applicable language for both is found, respectively, in 450.210(a) and 450.316(a).

Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 USC 2000d, et seq. 42 USC 2000d prohibits exclusion from participation in any federal program on the basis of race, color, or national origin. This is the seminal or shaping expression of the law.

23 USC 324 – This is the law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This requirement is found in 23 CFR 450.334(1).

29 USC 794 (Rehabilitation Act of 1973) - This is the law prohibiting discrimination on the basis of a disability, and in terms of access to the transportation planning process.

Clean Air Act- A series of acts aimed at reducing smog and air pollution, the most recent of which is the Clean Air Act Extension of 1970, with amendments in 1977 and 1990. The 1990 amendment established the State Implementation Plan (SIP), under which the states are obligated to notify the public of plans for pollutant control and allow opportunities for input into the process.

Executive Order 12898 – Executive Orders by the President as the head of the Executive Branch typically carry the weight of law. This is not actually true unless the order has been given discretionary power through an Act of Congress, or a later act gives congressional weight to the order. Significant orders by Presidents in the past affect the ability segments of the population to gain access, and in this case, access to the planning process. Order 12898, often simply 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 among these populations. Section 5-5 addresses the public involvement part of the order.

Scope of the Planning Process (FAST Act Planning Factors)

Under the FAST Act, MPOs must consider projects and strategies that will:

- a) support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, 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 of people and for freight;
- e) protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- f) enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- g) promote efficient system management and operation;
- h) emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
- i) improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate storm-water impacts of surface transportation; and
- j) enhance travel and tourism.

Livability Principles and Indicators

Increasingly, federal and state agencies are using Performance Measures as a way of ensuring greater accountability for the expenditure of public funds in an ever-growing number of programs and activities across a variety of disciplines. Within the transportation sector and the planning processes associated with transportation infrastructure development, ALDOT has adopted the Livability Principles and Indicators as a sustainability measurement against future actions (ALDOT).

All planning tasks must be measured against these Livability Principles:

- 1) Provide more transportation choices
- 2) Promote equitable, affordable housing
- 3) Enhance economic competitiveness

- 4) Support existing communities
- 5) Coordinate policies and leverage investment
- 6) Value communities and neighborhoods

As a measure of sustainability of these principles, the MPO will provide the following Livability Indicators:

- 1) Percentage of LRTP projects that contain bicycle and pedestrian elements, excluding transit projects
- 2) Percentage of transit funding in LRTP
- 3) Percentage of household income spent on housing and transportation
- 4) Unemployment rate
- 5) Percentage of LRTP funding that will be used to improve existing facilities
- 6) Number of local or MPO policies that prevented federal, state, or local funding from being leveraged or prevented collaboration between public and/or private groups in the LRTP
- 7) Percentage of housing units within a half mile of employment centers
- 8) Percentage of housing units within a half mile of a park, including school play grounds
- 9) Percentage of bicycle/automobile crashes
- 10) Percentage of pedestrian/automobile crashes

A description of the principles and the indicators can be found in Appendix D.

1.3 MPO Organizational Structure

The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is composed of four committees. The Policy Committee is the official decision-making body of the process. The Policy Committee is served by three advisory committees: Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC). A more detailed description of the MPO can be found in Appendix A.

1.4 Metropolitan Planning Area (Study Area)

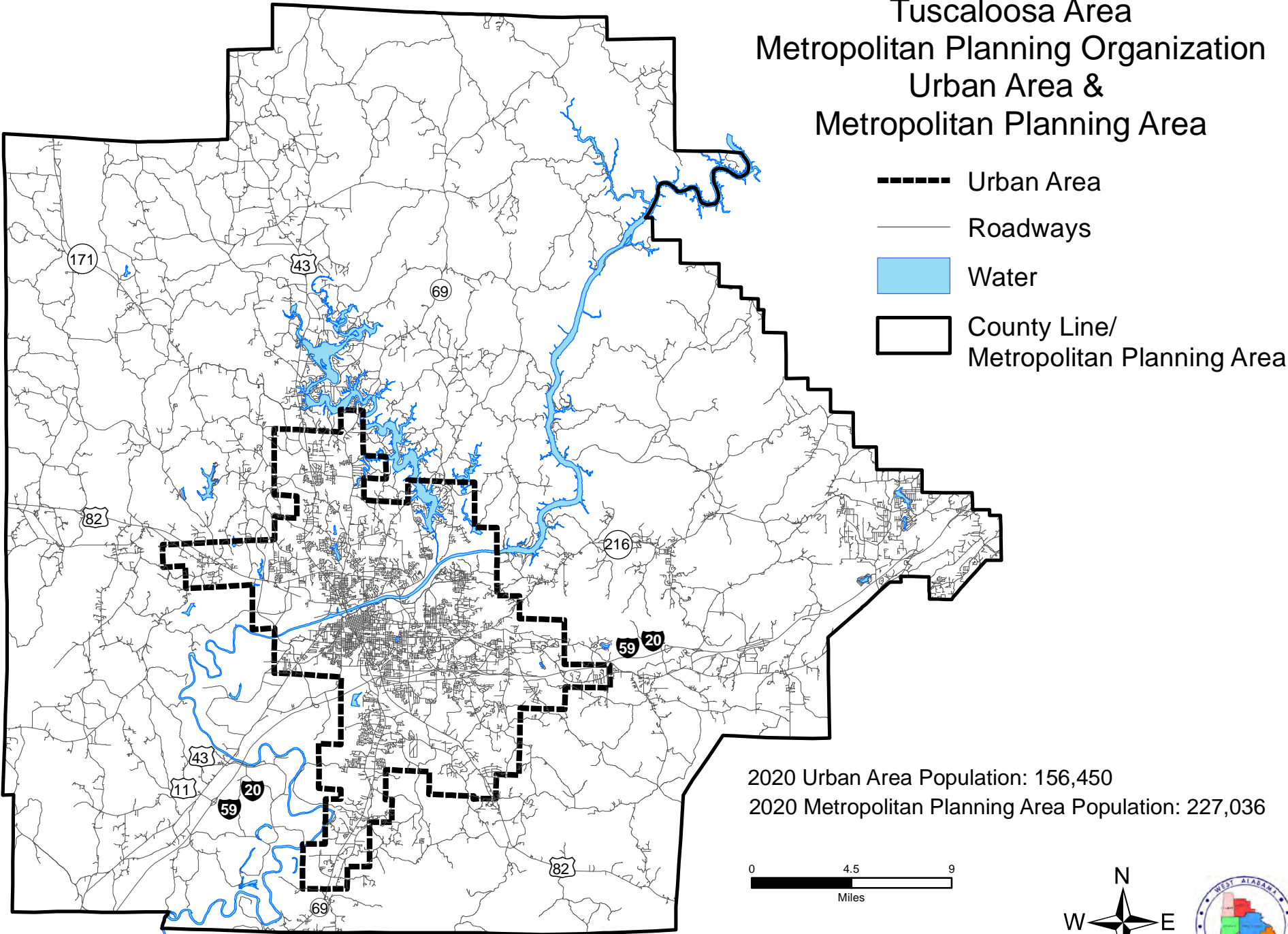
Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to include the current Census Bureau-defined urbanized area and the area expected to be urbanized by the forecast year of the long-range transportation plan in their planning area. The planning area can also be expanded to include "... regional economic development and growth forecasting areas." The Tuscaloosa Area MPO used this option when they established Tuscaloosa County as the planning area. All MPO plans and programs are limited to the planning area. Figure 1 depicts the planning area and the urbanized area.

1.5 Public Involvement during the Development of the PIP

The public participated in the development of the PIP. The MPO Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) reviewed and commented on the plan at two meetings. The PIP was placed on the WARC website on June 2, 2023. The draft PIP was distributed at the MPO committee meetings during this time. The MPO committees are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend and participate in any discussion. The meetings are also advertised by news releases,

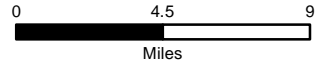
which are often published in the local news papers. In addition to these participation opportunities, a public meeting was held on July 12, 2023. The public had over 60 days to comment on the draft PIP. Items from the public involvement activities are included in Appendix C.

Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Urban Area & Metropolitan Planning Area



- Urban Area
- Roadways
- Water
- County Line/
Metropolitan Planning Area

2020 Urban Area Population: 156,450
2020 Metropolitan Planning Area Population: 227,036



Source:
Basemap: Tuscaloosa Co e-911
Urban Area Boundary: Tuscaloosa Area MPO, Based on the 2020 US Census

2.0 Public Participation Process

2.1 Vision Statement

It is the vision of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization to have a community that understands the transportation planning process and actively participates in the process.

2.2 Goals

- I. Open Process: To have an open planning process that encourages early and continued public participation

- II. Information Access: To provide complete and timely information regarding the plans, programs, procedures, policies, and technical data produced or used during the planning process to interested parties and the general public

- III. Notice of Activities: To provide timely and adequate public notice of meetings, reviews, and major document availability

- IV. Public Input and Organization Response: To demonstrate consideration and recognition of public input and to provide appropriate responses to public input

- V. Inclusive Process: To encourage participation in the planning process by low-income groups, minorities, persons with disabilities, and the elderly; and to consider the needs of these groups when developing programs and plans

2.3 Strategies

- A. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will maintain a citizens advisory committee. The committee will serve as one of the standing committees of the transportation planning process. (The standing committees are the Metropolitan Planning Organization - Policy Committee, the Technical Coordinating Committee, the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee, and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee.)

- B. All meetings of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will be open to the public in accordance with the Alabama Open Meetings Act (2005-40) and will provide non-committee members an opportunity to participate in the planning process. The meetings will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. Generally, the Policy Committee meets on the last Monday of even-numbered months at 2:00 p.m., the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) meets on the third Thursday of even-numbered months at 1:30 p.m., the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) meets on the third Tuesday of even-numbered months at 5:00 p.m., and the BPC meets on the third Monday of even-numbered months at 10:00 a.m. An exception to this schedule occurs in December due to holidays. The meetings are almost always held at the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) office, 4200 Highway 69 North, Northport. The meeting are also held online. Goals Addressed: I, IV, V

C. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will provide a notice for all meetings of the standing committees of the transportation planning process. The notice will include the agenda, date, time, and location of the meeting. The notice will be provided at least two weeks prior to the meetings. The notice will be provided to local media representatives and groups that address the needs of low-income groups, minorities, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. The notice will request that interested individuals, who need special accommodations, notify the West Alabama Regional Commission at least two days prior to the date of the meeting so necessary arrangements can be made. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will follow all of the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The notice will also be posted on the Internet. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, V

D. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will do the following as a means of seeking out and considering the needs of the traditionally underserved (low-income individuals, minorities, persons with disabilities, the elderly, and limited English proficient persons):

- 1) provide MPO standing committee meeting notices to groups that address the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- 2) provide Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) public meeting notices to groups that address the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- 3) upon request, provide transportation planning process meeting notices to any individual or group;
- 4) allow anyone to participate in all transportation planning process meetings;
- 5) follow all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act while conducting the transportation planning process;
- 6) if feasible and appropriate, modify the transportation planning process and any plan, program, or document developed as part of the process to meet the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- 7) if warranted, provide an interpreter for those with limited English proficiency;
- 8) offer translation of our website and documents on our website to other languages;
- 9) if requested, make presentations to groups representing traditionally underserved populations;
- 10) provide transportation planning process information at community events;
- 11) hold extended public review periods for the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that allow anyone to review the documents in public places, including the WARC office, and on the internet and allow comments to be submitted in person, by e-mail, by postal mail, and by FAX;
- 12) make the MPO staff available to discuss any transportation planning document or the planning process with any group or individual;

Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

E. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will do the following as a means of consulting and coordinating with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area that are affected by transportation:

- 1) provide MPO standing committee meeting notices to agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities;
- 2) provide Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) public meeting notices to agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities;
- 3) once a year, send a letter to agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities that describes the planning process, lists up-coming MPO meetings, and requests copies of plans, maps, and inventories;
- 4) prior to adoption of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), provide a link to the draft documents to agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities and request that the agencies and officials provide information regarding any conflicts with relevant plans, maps, and inventories;
- 5) prior to adoption of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), compare any provided plans, maps, and inventories with the MPO plans and programs; and note all conflicts;

Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

F. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will hold an annual training session. The training session will review the transportation planning process and the functions of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. The training session will be open to the general public. Goals Addressed: I, II, V

G. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will consider all legitimate inquiries and comments regarding transportation planning activities. When warranted a written response will be provided. All public inquiries and comments received regarding the development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will be included in the final document with the corresponding responses provided by the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization. Goals Addressed: I, IV, V

H. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will maintain a record of public involvement. The record will document the public involvement activities of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization for a one-year period. Goals Addressed: I, II, IV

I. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will make available to the general public and government agencies all documents and appropriate technical data produced for the transportation planning process. The documents and technical data, as appropriate and feasible, will be available in paper copy, digital copy, and on the Internet. Goals Addressed: I, II, IV, V

J. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will provide public notification of the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development. The notification will be provided at least two weeks prior to any scheduled meetings. The draft document will be available for public review and comment for at least 30 days prior to final adoption. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

K. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will hold a public meeting for the Draft Long-Range Transportation Plan and Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) prior to the final adoption of the document. Notification will be provided at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The meetings will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

L. If a Long-Range Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) varies significantly from the version that was initially made available for public comment, the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will hold an additional public meeting prior to the final adoption of the document. The draft document will be available for public review and comment for at least 30 days prior to final adoption. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

M. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will use visualization techniques, as appropriate and feasible, to describe the Long-Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

N. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization, when appropriate and feasible, will coordinate public involvement activities with statewide transportation planning public involvement and cooperation processes conducted by the Alabama Department of Transportation. Goals Addressed: I, II, III

O. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will encourage the publication of news articles on the transportation planning process. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, V

P. The staff of the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will be available for speaking engagements concerning the transportation planning process. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

Q. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will publish the Public Involvement Plan and any amendments to the Plan. The public will be given a 45-day period to provide written comments prior to final document approval. Goals Addressed: I, II, III, IV, V

R. The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization will review the Public Involvement Plan at least every five years. Goals Addressed: I, II, IV

3.0 MPO Products and Corresponding Public Participation Techniques

3.1 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The purpose of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is to describe the transportation planning work that will be performed by the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and other government agencies for a given fiscal year. The UPWP represents the budget and work tasks necessary to accomplish and maintain the transportation planning process within the study area. The UPWP is developed to coordinate transportation and related planning activities for a cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive planning process. The primary objective of the UPWP is the development of an integrated planning program that considers the planning activities of each modal group and coordinates these activities to produce a total transportation plan serving all segments of the population.

The public has an opportunity to provide input in the development of the UPWP during two sets of MPO committee meetings. The public is allowed to participate in discussions held at the committee meetings. News releases that provide the meeting details and agenda are distributed at least two weeks prior to the committee meetings. The news releases are sent to the local media, special interest groups, and interested individuals. The draft UPWP, the meeting schedule, and meeting agenda are also posted on the WARC website.

3.2 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The purpose of the long-range transportation plan is to (1) identify current transportation needs, (2) forecast future transportation needs, and (3) establish strategies and projects that address the needs. The federal regulations (23 CFR Part 450.324) related to this topic state that the strategies and actions of a plan should "... provide for the development of an integrated multimodal transportation system ... to facilitate the safe and efficient movement of people and goods."

The LRTP is developed over the course of two years. During those two years the MPO holds 12 sets of committee meetings. All meetings of the MPO committees are preceded by news releases indicating the time, date, place of the meeting, and agenda. The news releases are sent to local media contacts, organizations that assist elderly and handicapped individuals, community organizations, transit providers, and groups that have contact with minority and low-income people. Over 200 news releases are sent for each series of MPO committee meetings.

Any person who attends the MPO committee meetings is given an opportunity to participate. A non-committee member may participate during any discussion. In addition, the committees recognize non-members during every meeting and afford them the opportunity to speak on items not addressed on the agenda.

The news releases that are sent indicate that if a person needs special assistance to attend the meeting they may contact the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) 48 hours prior to the meeting.

The MPO provides an additional opportunity for public participation by holding a public meeting regarding the LRTP. Information on the public meeting is included in legal ads placed in the *Tuscaloosa News*. A news release is also provided prior to the meeting.

Copies of the draft LRTP are made available at the WARC office and the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority. The draft LRTP is also placed on the West Alabama Regional Commission website. In addition, digital and paper copies of the plan are available by request.

If changes need to be made to the LRTP prior to the next scheduled update period, the MPO can amend the document. Possible reasons for a plan amendment include, but are not limited to, funding changes (increase or decrease), a shift in priorities, and a natural or manmade disaster. Amendments can be proposed by the Alabama Department of Transportation or one of the local governments represented on the MPO Policy Committee. Draft amendments will be advertised as part of the MPO meeting process in news releases and meeting notices (posted and e-mailed). Draft amendments will be reviewed by the MPO advisory committees prior to being adopted at an MPO Policy Committee. The public will be given a minimum of 14 days to comment on the proposed amendment.

Tuscaloosa County is currently in attainment of all criteria pollutants monitored by EPA for National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) compliance. If Tuscaloosa County is designated as non-attainment for any of the criteria pollutants, the MPO will amend the LRTP to include a revised project listing and air quality conformity report to reflect the new air quality conformity determination. The amendment will require additional public involvement and a revision of the PIP.

3.3 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a prioritized list of transportation projects. The projects on the TIP are taken from the Tuscaloosa Area Long-Range Transportation Plan (Plan) with the exception of certain level-of-efforts projects. The Plan covers a 20 to 25-year time frame, while the TIP extends over four years. The TIP is often considered the short-range plan of the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The TIP breaks down the Plan projects into phases (e.g., preliminary engineering, right-of-way acquisition, utility relocation, and construction) and assigns a start date to each phase. The purpose of the TIP is to schedule the various phases of transportation projects for implementation.

The public is given several opportunities to review and comment on the draft TIP prior to its adoption. Draft TIPs are discussed during two sets of MPO committee meetings. Copies of the draft TIP are available at these meetings, on the West Alabama Regional Commission website, at the WARC office, and at the Transit Authority office. The MPO committee meetings are open to the public and the public is allowed to participate. News releases for the meetings are sent to local media contacts, special interest groups, and to anyone who requests to be on the mailing list. The special interest groups include agencies or organizations that have contact with persons with disabilities, low-income individuals, minorities, and senior citizens.

The MPO also holds a public review and a public meeting regarding the TIP. The review extends for a month and a half. Anyone interested in the TIP has the opportunity to visit the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) office during these periods and review the document. A public meeting is held a few weeks after the draft document is approved for public review. Legal ads are placed in the local paper and news releases are distributed detailing the public review and public meeting.

The TIP will be amended periodically to adjust funding, time-frames, or other factors relevant to the projects. New projects may be added, if appropriate and if funding is available. Other projects may be deleted if funding is not available. The public will be given a minimum of 14 days to comment on the proposed amendment. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Alabama Division, and the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT) have agreed that a formal TIP amendment, requiring MPO approval and vote, is necessary when one or more of the following criteria are met:

- the change adds a new project
- the change adversely impacts fiscal constraint
- the change results in major scope changes
- the change deletes a project from the TIP
- the change results in a cost increase of 20 percent or \$1,000,000, whichever is less

A change that does not meet any of these criteria may be processed as an Administrative Modification, requiring only concurrence from ALDOT (confirmed by email), approving the action. Public involvement is not required for an Administrative Modification. The amendment process applies to federally funded projects, including highway and transit projects.

4.0 Roles and Relationships

4.1 MPO Staff

The MPO staff consists of a Transportation Planning Director, a Senior Transportation Planner, and a GIS Specialist at the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC). As of March 2023, the time these three spend conducting MPO work roughly equates to 2 full time employees. The MPO staff handles all of the daily MPO work, organizes and conducts all of the MPO meetings, and prepares all of the MPO documents. The MPO does not have a designated public information officer but instead divides the public involvement work between the three staff members. The following work tasks are the public participation activities conducted by the MPO staff.

1. Prepare the Public Involvement Plan
2. Track public participation in the MPO process
3. Maintain MPO public participation records
4. Maintain MPO mail/email databases for committee members; media contacts; organizations that work with low-income, minorities, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens; and the general public (by request)
5. Conduct MPO committee meetings, including the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)
6. Conduct MPO public meetings related to documents and programs
7. Ensure MPO meetings follow the bylaws, Public Involvement Plan strategies, and ADA requirements
8. Prepare responses to public input
9. Publish MPO documents (paper and Internet)
10. Maintain the MPO sections of the WARC website
11. Make public presentations regarding the MPO process
12. Prepare news releases
13. Prepare legal ads
14. Coordinate MPO public participation activities with the Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT)
15. Encourage the publication of MPO newspaper articles

4.2 MPO Committees

The Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is composed of four committees. The Policy Committee is the official decision-making body of the process. The Policy Committee is served by three advisory committees: Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC). A more detailed description of the MPO can be found in Appendix A.

The MPO committee meetings are an important part of the public participation process. The meetings are held on even-numbered months and are scheduled several months in advance. The meetings are advertised through bulletin board postings, news releases, mailed and e-mailed notices, and internet postings. In addition, groups that work with low-income, minorities, persons with disabilities, and low-income citizens receive meeting notices. All MPO committee meetings are open to the public and anyone who attends an MPO meeting is allowed to participate in committee discussions.

The Policy Committee consists of five members with three of these being elected officials. The elected officials appoint the members to the CTAC. They also monitor the attendance of CTAC members and make changes when necessary. Another important public participation function of the Policy Committee is responding to CTAC recommendations and questions.

The engineers, planners, and alternative transportation providers make up the bulk of the TCC membership. The primary public participation function of the TCC is responding to CTAC recommendations and questions. The responses provided by the ALDOT members of the TCC have proven to be very popular and have improved image of ALDOT among CTAC members and the general public.

The CTAC is composed of 24 local citizens, eight members from each of the three local governments represented on the MPO Policy Committee. The CTAC was established as a formal, institutionalized means to include public participation in the MPO process. Six CTAC meetings are held in each year.

Having the CTAC ensures that all actions of the MPO are reviewed by the public. The CTAC reviews all documents, programs, and actions before the TCC and Policy Committee make a decision. The CTAC may offer recommendations for change that the other committees must consider. The CTAC has the option to suggest adjustments to any aspect of the process at anytime.

4.3 West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO)

The RPO serves as the official cooperative effort by the Alabama Department of Transportation in the rural counties of west Alabama (Bibb, Fayette, Greene, Hale, Lamar, and Pickens). The staff of the RPO, just like the MPO, is housed at the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC). The MPO and RPO have members on the other's TCC and Policy Committee. The staff also provides a report on MPO and RPO activities at each committee meeting. These three connections ensure that the organizations are coordinated and it provides additional public participation opportunities for the MPO since the RPO committee meetings are also open to the public.

4.4 Alabama Department of Transportation (ALDOT)

Two different sections of ALDOT work with the MPO. The ALDOT Local Transportation Bureau located at the ALDOT central office in Montgomery, provides general oversight of the MPO program. The Planning Bureau prepares the MPO agreements, reviews MPO documents, processes the MPO invoices, and ensures that the MPO addresses all of the federal transportation planning requirements. The Planning Bureau also is responsible for developing the State TIP (STIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan. The process to develop these documents involves coordinating the required public involvement activities with the MPOs in the state. The Planning Bureau has a voting member on the MPO Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC).

The second section of ALDOT involved with the MPO is the ALDOT West Central Region. ALDOT has divided the 67 Alabama counties into five regions. The West Central Region is responsible for 13 counties in west Alabama, including Tuscaloosa County. The West Central Region has a voting member on the TCC and the Policy

Committee. Regarding public participation, the West Central Region often responds to CTAC requests for information and CTAC safety observations. They also hold public hearings/meetings for individual federal-funded highway projects.

4.5 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

The FHWA and FTA are not directly involved with MPO public participation activities. Each of these agencies has a voting member on the TCC. The agencies review draft versions of the MPO Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). FHWA has a division office in Montgomery. The FTA division office is located in Atlanta.

5.0 Record of Public Involvement (RPI)

The Tuscaloosa Area MPO produces the Record of Public Involvement (RPI) annually. The RPI documents the public involvement activities from the previous fiscal year. The RPI is available in a bound paper version, a CD copy, and on the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) website. The RPI contains 11 sections: Review of the Public Involvement Plan; MPO News Releases; MPO Legal Ads; MPO Newspaper Articles and Notices; MPO News Release Mailing List; Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee Schedule and Minutes; MPO Training Session Items; Items from MPO Public Meetings and Reviews; MPO Website Items; MPO Staff Public Speaking Items; and Public Comments, Correspondence, and MPO Responses. Each section is described below.

5.1 Review of the Public Involvement Plan

At the end of each fiscal year the MPO staff collects the data used as performance measures in the PIP. Within the RPI, this information is listed with each performance measure. The review highlights the strengths and weaknesses of the public participation process, allowing the MPO committees and staff to adjust the strategies as needed.

5.2 MPO News Releases

Before each set of MPO committee meetings and before each MPO public meeting, the MPO staff mails and e-mails news releases to local media contacts, special interest groups, committee members, and anyone who has requested a meeting notice. The news releases provide the meeting dates, times, locations, and agendas. The news releases also contain information related to special meeting accommodations requests. The releases are sent between two and three weeks before the first meeting date. The RPI includes all of the news releases that were sent during the previous fiscal year.

5.3 MPO Legal Ads

When the MPO holds public meetings regarding draft transportation plan documents, legal ads are placed in the *Tuscaloosa News*. The ads provide a brief description of the document, the times and dates of the public meeting, and the locations. The ads also list contact information and a deadline to comment on the document. If any legal ads are published in a given fiscal year, the proof-of-publication will be included in the RPI.

5.4 MPO Newspaper Articles and Notices

The local newspapers often publish the MPO committee and public meeting notices. Occasionally the news papers publish an original story on the MPO process. This section of the RPI will include a scanned copy of these articles with the newspaper name, the publication date, and page number.

5.5 MPO News Release Mailing List

The MPO staff maintains a news release mailing list database. The staff updates the database as needed throughout the year. Anyone who requests to be notified of MPO committee or public meetings is added to the list. The list includes all local media contacts, MPO committee members, and special interest groups. At the end of the fiscal year the MPO staff prints the list for inclusion in the RPI.

5.6 Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) Minutes

The RPI includes the MPO CTAC meeting schedule and minutes from the meetings held during the previous fiscal year. The CTAC holds six meetings every year. The minutes are sorted by date.

5.7 MPO Training Session Items

The MPO holds a training session every March. The session is open to the public. This section of the RPI includes the sign-in sheet, returned participant questionnaires, and slide presentations.

5.8 Items from MPO Public Meetings and Reviews

If the MPO holds a public meeting and/or review for a transportation planning document, the items distributed and collected at the meetings are included in this section of the RPI. This information is also included as an appendix in the planning document. Sign-in sheets, handouts, and slide presentations are typical items.

5.9 MPO Website Items

The WARC website has dedicated space for the MPO program. The MPO staff tracks website activity on a monthly basis and summarizes the results in a spreadsheet. The website includes basic information about the MPO and all of the MPO documents. The summary spreadsheet is included in the RPI.

5.10 MPO Staff Public Speaking Items

If the MPO staff makes a public speech, not associated with an MPO committee or public meeting, the basic descriptive information is listed in this section of the RPI. The MPO staff is sometimes asked to speak at government and civic meetings.

5.11 Public Comments, Correspondence, and MPO Responses

Any written or transcribed public comments received during an MPO document review and any public comment regarding the MPO process are included in this section of the RPI. This section also includes the official response from the MPO Policy Committee. Every comment has a corresponding MPO response. Informational requests (either in person, by telephone, by FAX, and by e-mail) regarding the MPO is tracked in a spreadsheet and reported in the annual Public Involvement Plan Review (5.1).

6.0 Effectiveness of the Public Participation Process

6.1 Performance Objectives

The MPO chose to set realistic objectives to monitor the public involvement plan. The MPO understands that they have limited control over the number of people who participate in the planning process. No matter what the MPO staff and committees do, they cannot realistically expect to see an increase in public involvement, (e.g., more public attendance, more comments received, etc.) The MPO cannot control these numbers. The MPO staff and committees can only control their own actions. Therefore, the MPO performance objectives are to maximize the participation opportunities, to make the process as accessible and friendly as possible, and to minimize complaints regarding the process. The performance measures in the next section were chosen with these ideas and objectives in mind.

6.2 Performance Measures

1. What was the attendance percentage of the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee? Strategy Measured: A
2. How many citizens who were not committee members or transportation agency employees attended standing committee meetings? What was the ratio of citizens to members and employees? Strategy Measured: B
3. What was the ratio of standing committee meetings to meeting notices provided? Strategy Measured: C
4. How many standing committee meeting notices were posted in the local newspapers? Strategy Measured: C
5. Was the mailing list updated annually or more frequently? Strategy Measured: C, D
6. What was the ratio of requests for special meeting accommodations to special arrangements made, including interpretation service? Strategy Measured: D
7. How many persons with disabilities attended standing committee meetings and the annual training session? What percentage of meeting attendees were persons with disabilities? Strategy Measured: D
8. Were traditionally underserved groups notified of MPO meetings and events? Strategy Measured: D
9. Were traditionally underserved groups notified of long-range transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meetings and events? Strategy Measured: D
10. What was the ratio of individuals or groups requesting to be added to the MPO notification list to those added? Strategy Measured: D

11. Was anyone denied the ability to participate in an MPO meeting or event? Were any complaints received regarding the denial of participation? Strategy Measured: D
12. Were there any complaints regarding ADA violations? Strategy Measured: D
13. What was the ratio of requests to change the MPO process or documents to address traditionally underserved populations to actual change? Strategy Measured: D
14. What was the ratio of requests for interpretation service to service provided? Strategy Measured: D
15. What was the ratio of requests to translate the MPO website or MPO documents to actual translations? Strategy Measured: D
16. What was the ratio of requests to make MPO presentations to actual presentations made? How many of the requests were from traditionally underserved people or groups? Strategy Measured: D
17. At how many community events did the MPO staff distribute MPO materials? Strategy Measured: D
18. Were the draft long-range transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program available at public places and on the internet? Strategy Measured: D
19. Were comments accepted in person, by mail, by fax, and by electronic means? Strategy Measured: D
20. What was the ratio of MPO staff requests to discuss the transportation planning process or documents to actual discussions? Strategy Measured: D
21. Were planning agencies and officials notified of MPO meetings and events? Strategy Measured: E
22. Were planning agencies and officials notified of long-range transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) meetings and events? Strategy Measured: E
23. Was a letter sent once a year to planning agencies and officials that described the planning process, listed up-coming MPO meetings, and requested copies of plans, maps, and inventories? Strategy Measured: E
24. Was a link to draft Long-Range Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs provided to planning agencies and officials prior to final adoption of plans and programs? Strategy Measured: E

25. Were planning agencies' plans, maps, and inventories compared against the draft Long-Range Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs prior to final adoption? Strategy Measured: E
26. How many people attended the annual training session? Standing committee members? Transportation agency employees? General public? How do these numbers compare with previous years? Strategy Measured: F
27. How many complaints regarding the transportation planning process were received? Strategy Measured: G
28. What was the ratio of inquiries or comments to responses? Strategy Measured: G
29. Was the record of public involvement produced? Strategy Measured: H
30. How many documents were produced? Strategy Measured: I
31. How many documents were available on the web site? Strategy Measured: I
32. How many requests for information were received (in-person, by telephone, by e-mail, and by mail)? Strategy Measured: G
33. How many documents were distributed? Strategy Measured: I
34. How many hits did the web-site of the Tuscaloosa Area MPO receive? Strategy Measured: I
35. Was public notice regarding Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and long-range transportation plan development provided? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the public notice efforts? Strategy Measured: J
36. Were Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and long-range plan draft documents available? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the availability of these documents? Strategy Measured: I, J
37. Were public meetings held for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan prior to adoption? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the public meetings? Strategy Measured: K
38. Was notification of the public meetings for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan provided at least two weeks prior to the meetings? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the public meetings notification? Strategy Measured: J
39. Were the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan public meetings held at convenient times and accessible

locations? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the time or location of the public meetings? Strategy Measured: K

40. If the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan varied significantly from the version that was initially available for public comment, was an additional public meeting held? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the public meetings? Strategy Measured: L
41. Were visualization techniques used to describe the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the visualization techniques? Strategy Measured: M
42. Were Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization public involvement activities coordinated with Alabama Department of Transportation planning and cooperation processes? Were there any complaints or requests for change related to the coordination efforts? Strategy Measured: N
43. How many newspaper articles were published on the transportation planning process in the local newspapers? Strategy Measured: O
44. How many speeches or presentations did the staff provide? Strategy Measured: P
45. Was the Public Involvement Plan produced / updated? Strategy Measured: Q
46. Did the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization provide 45 days for public comment prior to adopting the Public Involvement Plan or any amendments? Strategy Measured: Q
47. How frequently was the Public Involvement Plan reviewed? Strategy Measured: R

6.3 Data Collection for the Performance Measures

The MPO staff tracks the various inputs used by the performance measures throughout the year. The MPO staff adds items to several sections of the Record of Public Involvement (RPI) as the items become available; e.g., news releases, legal ads, and newspaper articles. In September and October of each year, the staff compiles the data and answers each performance measure question. The responses to the performance measure questions become the first section of the RPI. If any problems are noted, the staff takes the necessary actions to correct the issue.

6.4 Continuing Assessment

The MPO staff checks the results of the performance review annually. In addition, if complaints regarding the process are submitted, the MPO takes the necessary action to correct the problem before the end of the year. The MPO is scheduled to update the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) at least every five years. This provides another opportunity to review past participation efforts and to make adjustments, if needed.

2023 Public Involvement Plan (PIP)

Appendices

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Developed by the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)
in cooperation with the Alabama Department of Transportation

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Appendix A

MPO Description

Tuscaloosa Area MPO Description

Section 1

Introduction

To be eligible for Federal funds, the *Federal Aid Highway Act of 1962* required Urban Areas with populations of at least 50,000 to have a transportation planning process. The Act stated that the planning process was to be continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive. In addition, the Act required plans and programs produced from the process to be consistent with the comprehensive planned development of the area. Subsequent acts retained this language.

Organization

The Tuscaloosa Area transportation planning process is conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is composed of four committees. The Policy Committee is the official decision-making body of the process. The Policy Committee is served by three advisory committees: Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC). More information on the committees can be found in Section 3 of this appendix.

Metropolitan Planning Area (Study Area)

Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required to include the current Census Bureau-defined urbanized area and the area expected to be urbanized by the forecast year of the long-range transportation plan in the planning area. The planning area can also be expanded to include "... regional economic development and growth forecasting areas." The Tuscaloosa Area MPO used this option when Tuscaloosa County was adopted as the planning area. All MPO plans and programs are limited to the planning area.

Agreement

The agreement legally delineates the concerned governmental entities, defines the duties of each entity, and outlines the organizational structure. The first agreement was executed in 1963, and the most recent agreement was signed in 2021. The agreement is between the West Alabama Regional Commission, Tuscaloosa County, City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport, Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, and the State of Alabama.

Legal Reference

The laws regarding Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) are found in Section 134 of Title 23 of the United States Code and Section 5303 of Title 49 of the United States Code. The Code was superseded or amended by the *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act*, Sections 11201, November 2021. The rules that govern metropolitan planning organizations are published in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) as Title 23, Chapter 1, Part 450, Subpart C.

Transportation Planning Process Coordinator

The Executive Director of the West Alabama Regional Commission is the designated Coordinator of the transportation planning process. The Coordinator is responsible for the overall guidance of the process, as well as the coordination of all data collected from the local area. The Coordinator provides staff and clerical assistance for the planning process from the West Alabama Regional Commission.

West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC) Staff

There are over 70 employees at the WARC; however, only three employees work directly with the MPO. These three include the Transportation Planning Director, a Senior Transportation Planner, and a GIS Specialist. Five other WARC Employees serve the MPO and the other programs housed at the WARC in an indirect capacity. These include the Executive Director, two Accountants, a Human Resources manager, and an Office Manager.

Section 2

Products of the Transportation Planning Process

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) represents the budget and work tasks necessary to accomplish and maintain the transportation planning process within the Tuscaloosa study area. The UPWP is developed to coordinate transportation and related planning activities for a cooperative, continuing, and comprehensive planning process.

The primary objective of the UPWP is the development of an integrated planning program that considers the planning activities of all transportation groups and coordinates these activities to produce a total transportation plan serving all segments of the population. The MPO updates the UPWP annually.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a short-range, financially constrained subset of the long-range transportation plan. However, many projects that are included in the TIP will not be specifically listed in the long-range transportation plan; including some operational, maintenance, enhancement, and transit projects. The projects on the TIP are prioritized over the four years covered by the document.

The TIP is redeveloped every four years and financially balanced against expected revenues. ALDOT uses the TIP as a guide in selecting projects for funding in the Tuscaloosa area and in the development of the State Transportation Improvement Program.

Long-Range Transportation Plan

The Tuscaloosa Area MPO is required to produce a long-range plan every five years. The long-range plan outlines the transportation projects within the Tuscaloosa study area that need to be completed to fulfill the projected transportation demands by the 20-year forecast date.

The MPO adopted the *2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan* in 2019. The MPO vision statement, goals, and objectives are part of the plan. The projects on the plan are balanced against forecasted revenue and include only those with identified funding. The MPO is scheduled to update the plan in 2024.

Public Involvement Plan

The purpose of the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is to ensure that the transportation planning process encourages active public participation. It is the vision of the MPO to have a community that understands the transportation planning process and actively participates in the process. The MPO goals outlined in the PIP are to (1) have an open planning process that encourages early and continuous public participation; (2) provide complete and timely information regarding the plans, programs, procedures, policies, and technical data produced or used during the planning process to interested parties and the general public; (3) provide timely and adequate public notice of hearings, meetings, reviews, and major document availability; (4) demonstrate consideration and recognition of public input and provide appropriate responses to public input; and (5) encourage participation in the planning process by low-income groups, minorities, persons with disabilities, and the elderly; and to consider the needs of these groups when developing programs and plans. The PIP describes how the MPO incorporates the public into the process, how public involvement is tracked, and performance is measured.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan serves as a guide for improving bicycle and pedestrian activity in Tuscaloosa County. The plan includes construction, education, promotion, and policy projects intended to integrate bicycle and pedestrian travel into the existing transportation environment.

The plan was initiated by the MPO to facilitate the development of their transportation plans and programs. However, due to many of the proposed projects falling outside of the authority of the MPO, the MPO intended other agencies and governments to use the plan. The current Tuscaloosa Area Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan was adopted in 2020 and is scheduled to be revised in 2025.

Section 3

Committees

The Tuscaloosa Area transportation planning process is conducted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The MPO is composed of four committees. The Policy Committee is the official decision-making body of the process. The Policy Committee is served by three advisory committees: the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC). The Policy Committee has the ultimate decision on transportation planning matters. However, the work and recommendations of the advisory committees shape all of the outputs of the transportation planning process.

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee serves as the official decision-making body for the Tuscaloosa Area transportation planning process. In this capacity, the Committee determines how federal transportation funds are spent in the study area. The responsibilities of the committee include providing overall guidance to the planning process, review and approval of all process plans and programs, as well as appointing TCC and CTAC members. The Policy Committee usually meets on the last Monday of even-numbered months. The Policy Committee is composed of 12 members, five voting and seven non-voting.

Technical Coordinating Committee

The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) provides technical support to the MPO Policy Committee. The TCC reviews MPO documents, studies, reports, plans, and programs; and provides the MPO with recommendations concerning these items. The TCC members review the planning process products from a technical perspective ensuring that appropriate concerns are addressed, including local planning issues, engineering details, environmental questions, and future growth, among many others. The TCC has the authority to make alternative recommendations for any of the products.

The TCC coordinates the work of the various departments and agencies involved in the transportation planning process. The local governments, the State DOT, and selected other transportation interests are represented on the TCC. The TCC members share information and data that builds and improves the planning processes and products. The TCC members work together to ensure that the transportation projects are coordinated. The TCC usually meets on the third Thursday of even-numbered months.

Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee

The Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) consists of twenty-four citizens from the Tuscaloosa area. The Mayors of Tuscaloosa and Northport and the County Commission Chair each appoint eight members to the committee. The CTAC was established to provide active public participation in the transportation planning process. Prior to the formation of the CTAC, the MPO relied primarily on public meetings for citizen input on transportation planning issues. There are a number of problems with public meetings of this nature, with the most significant obstacle being a lack of participation.

Another shortcoming of the public meeting is the background knowledge that is required to understand the planning process. While the MPO staff tries to make the process easy to understand, transportation planning is not widely understood. People who are not familiar with the topic are generally not willing to participate. The CTAC provides the MPO with a standing committee of citizens who have a good knowledge of the planning process and can effectively convey public concerns related to transportation in a structured fashion.

The CTAC reviews MPO documents, studies, reports, plans, and programs and provides the MPO with recommendations concerning these topics. The CTAC also informs the MPO of public concerns related to transportation projects and issues. A CTAC member once suggested that the committee members act as antennas in the community gathering opinions and ideas in the course everyday life and passing the information on to the MPO. The CTAC usually meets on the third Tuesday of even-numbered months.

In addition to the CTAC, the MPO adopted a public involvement plan. The plan describes the MPO public participation goals and lists strategies to encourage public participation in the transportation planning process. The CTAC is included as one of several methods to garner public involvement.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

The MPO (Policy Committee) authorized the formation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC) in 1997. The committee assists the MPO in developing plans, programs, and projects related to bicycle and pedestrian activities. The BPC consists of individuals from many areas of the community who share a common interest in improving bicycling and walking in Tuscaloosa County. Membership on the committee ranges from professional planners to avid bicyclists. There is no set membership list. Anyone who attends the BPC meetings is considered a member and has voting privileges. The BPC usually meets on the third Monday of even-numbered months.

Appendix B

Transportation Planning Terms and Acronyms

Transportation Planning Acronyms and Terms

5th Division - Alabama Department of Transportation 5th Division, office located in Tuscaloosa, includes nine counties in West Alabama, Replaced with West Central Region in 2014

AAA - Area Agency on Aging, West Alabama AAA

AADT - Average Annual Daily Traffic count

ACS - American Community Survey; U.S. Census Bureau product; replacement for the decennial long-form data

ADA - Americans with Disabilities Act

ADAP - Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program

ADT - Average Daily Traffic count

ALDOT - Alabama Department of Transportation

ARC - Appalachian Regional Commission

ARC - Formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens, now known as The Arc

Bicycle / Pedestrian Scale Development - Development that consists of a mix of land uses (residential, commercial, public) in close proximity, where one could comfortably walk or ride a bicycle from their origin (e.g., residence, place of employment) to a destination (e.g., place of employment, store, government facility, park)

BPC - Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

BR - Bridge funding program; also BRON

CA - Capital funds (transit)

CAC - Citizens Advisory Committee; now known as CTAC

Capacity Project - (Road) a project that adds through lanes to an existing road or builds a new road; (Transit) a project that adds new routes or expands demand response/para-transit fleet

CFR - Code of Federal Regulations

CN - Construction - the final phase of a transportation project, the actual building of the project

CTAC - Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee

DOT - Department of Transportation

DPI or DPIIP - Innovative/Special funding program, applies to projects specifically named in federal legislation

EPA - Environmental Protection Agency

ESWA - Easter Seals West Alabama

FAST Act - Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (PL 114-94)

FHWA - Federal Highway Administration

FOCUS - Focus on Senior Citizens

FTA - Federal Transit Administration

Functional Classification System - a system to distinguish roads according to the type of service provided

GHG - Greenhouse Gas

GIS - Geographic Information System - a computer system that links cartographic images with databases and allows the user to create new maps and databases through various means, including overlay and query operations

IIJA - Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act

ISTEA - Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991

ITS - Intelligent Transportation System

JARC - Job Access and Reverse Commute - Federal Transit Administration Section 5316 funding program

LAP - Language Access Plan, sometimes referred to as a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

LEP - Limited English Proficiency

LEP Plan - Limited English Proficiency Plan - outlines how the MPO and RPO integrates people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) into the transportation planning process - sometimes referred to as a Language Access Plan (LAP)

LOC - Local funding

Long-Range Transportation Plan - outlines projects that will be required to meet the needs of an area over an extended period of time usually 20 years, revised every four to five years

LRTP - Long-Range Transportation Plan

LVOE - Level of Effort

MAP-21 - Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (Public Law 112-141)

MPO - Metropolitan Planning Organization, Tuscaloosa Area MPO

MPO-Portal - web-based software used to manage and integrate the TIP and STIP processes and databases; replaced TELUS

MO - Maintenance and Operation, same as federal O&M and TSMO, ALDOT preference

MO Project - Maintenance and Operation project, same as federal O&M project and TSMO project, ALDOT preference

NAAQS - National Ambient Air Quality Standards

New Freedom - Federal Transit Administration Section 5317 funding program

NHS - National Highway System, a transportation funding category, only projects on designated NHS routes can use these funds; also NHSP

O&M - operations and management, same as MO and TSMO

O&M Project - a project that improves the operation and/or management of a transportation system; examples include turn lanes, traffic signal optimization, ITS center, same as MO Project and TSMO Project

OP - Operating funds (transit)

PARA - Parks and Recreation Authority

PE - Preliminary Engineering - the first phase of most transportation projects, the study and design of the project

PL - Metropolitan Planning Funds

Public Forum - designated time during RPO and MPO meetings in which the public or interested parties may address the Policy Committee or Advisory Committees

Public Hearing - hearings to formally present information and gather public input for projects and plans - The Tuscaloosa Area MPO and West Alabama RPO do not hold public hearings. The Alabama Department of Transportation and local governments conduct public hearings for specific projects.

Public Meeting - meetings held by the Tuscaloosa Area MPO and West Alabama RPO to review draft transportation planning documents - The Tuscaloosa Area MPO holds public meetings for the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the Public Involvement Plan (PIP).

Public Review - public reviews allow anyone to examine and comment on draft documents during a specified period of time - The Tuscaloosa Area MPO and West Alabama RPO holds public reviews for the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), Public Involvement Plan (PIP), and Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan. During the review period, draft documents are available on the internet, the West Alabama Regional Commission, and the Transit Authority. The review period extends from the date the MPO or RPO adopts the draft document for public review until the MPO or RPO adopts the final document, generally two months.

ROW - Right of Way - a phase of transportation projects, the purchase of right of way

RPO - Rural Planning Organization, West Alabama RPO

RW - Right of Way - a phase of transportation projects, the purchase of right of way

SAFETEA-LU - Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users - (Pub. L. 109-59, August 10, 2005)

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on the disability

Section 5303 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for technical studies

Section 5307 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for urban area transit capital and operating expenses, see Section 5339

Section 5309 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for capital transit improvements

Section 5310 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for elderly and disabled transit capital assistance

Section 5311 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for rural area transit capital and operating expenses

Section 5316 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for job access and reverse commute transit, also known as JARC

Section 5317 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for new Americans with Disabilities Act transit assistance, also known as New Freedoms

Section 5339 - Federal Transit Administration funding program for bus and bus facilities; replaced Section 5309 in MAP-21, eligible to 5307 recipients

SHSP - Strategic Highway Safety Plan

SPR - State Planning and Research funds

ST - State funding

STP - Surface Transportation Program

STAA - Surface Transportation Any Area funding category, represents funds that may be used anywhere in the state, ALDOT has the authority to allocate these funds

STIP - State Transportation Improvement Program

STOA - Surface Transportation Other Area funding category, represents funds that are used in Urban Areas with populations less than 200,000

STP - Surface Transportation Program, a transportation funding category, Urban Areas are allocated an amount of funds annually based on a specific per capita dollar amount

TAP - Transportation Alternatives Program

TARC - Tuscaloosa Association of Retarded Citizens, also known as The ARC

TAZ - Transportation Analysis Zone - districts used for computer traffic modeling

TCC - Technical Coordinating Committee

TCPTA - Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority, also known as Tuscaloosa Metro Transit, Tuscaloosa Trolley, the Authority

TDOT - Tuscaloosa Department of Transportation

TEA-21 - Transportation Equity Act of the 21st Century

TIP - Transportation Improvement Program - a list of funded MPO projects slated to begin over a four-year period, revised every four years

Title VI - Title VI of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, 42 USC 2000d (Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs)

TMA - Transportation Management Area, area designated by the Secretary of Transportation, having an urbanized area population of over 200,000

TR - Transit project

Transportation Enhancement (TE) Funds - Under pre-MAP-21 legislation, ten percent of all Surface Transportation Program funds allocated to a state are required to be spent on enhancement projects. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to, acquisition of historic sites and construction of pedestrian or bicycle facilities

TSMO - Transportation System Management and Operations, same as MO and O&M

TSMO Project - a project that improves the operation and/or management of a transportation system; examples include turn lanes, traffic signal optimization, ITS center, same as MO Project and O&M Project

UCP - United Cerebral Palsy

UMTA - Urban Mass Transit Administration; now known as FTA

UPWP - Unified Planning Work Program - a set of tasks that the WARC staff is committed to perform over a fiscal year, revised annually

Urban Area Boundary - boundary surrounding a Census Bureau-defined urbanized area, established by the MPO with ALDOT and FHWA approval

UT - Utility Construction - a phase of transportation projects, the relocation of utilities

WAPDC - West Alabama Planning and Development Council; now known as West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC)

WARC - West Alabama Regional Commission

WARPO - West Alabama Rural Planning Organization

West Central Region - Alabama Department of Transportation Region, office located in Tuscaloosa County, includes 14 counties in West Alabama, Replaced the 5th Division in 2014

Appendix C

Public Participation Information

TBD

Appendix D

Livability Principles and Indicators

Livability Principles and Indicators

1) Provide more transportation choices

Develop safe, reliable and economical transportation choices to decrease household transportation costs, reduce our nation's dependence on foreign oil, improve air quality, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and promote public health.

Indicators

- Percentage of 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) projects that contain bicycle and pedestrian elements, excluding transit projects: 78% (West Alabama Regional Commission [WARC] calculation)
- Percentage of transit funding in the 2045 LRTP: 5% (WARC calculation)

2) Promote equitable, affordable housing

Expand location and energy-efficient housing choices for people of all ages, incomes, races, and ethnicities to increase mobility and lower the combined cost of housing and transportation.

Indicator

- 62 percent (2012-2016)
- 59 percent (2017-2019)
- 55 percent (2022)
Housing and Transportation Affordability Index - Center for Neighborhood Technology

3) Enhance economic competitiveness

Improve economic competitiveness through reliable and timely access to employment centers, educational opportunities, services and other basic needs by workers as well as expanded business access to markets.

Indicator

- Unemployment rate:
 - 8.2 percent (2011)
 - 7.2 percent (2012)
 - 5.8 percent (2013)
 - 5.8 percent (2014)
 - 5.4 percent (2015)
 - 5.6 percent (2016)
 - 4.3 percent (2017)
 - 3.7 percent (2018)
 - 2.7 percent (2019)
 - 6.6 percent (2020)
 - 3.2 percent (2021)
 - 2.6 percent (2022)
 - Annual Average - Alabama Department of Industrial Relations

4) Support existing communities

Target federal funding toward existing communities – through such strategies as transit-oriented, mixed-use development and land recycling – to increase community revitalization, improve the efficiency of public works investments, and safeguard rural landscapes.

Indicators

- Percentage of 2045 LRTP funding that will be used to improve existing facilities: 94% (WARC calculation)
- Percentage of transit funding in the 2045 LRTP: 5% (WARC calculation)

5) Coordinate policies and leverage investment

Align federal policies and funding to remove barriers to collaboration, leverage funding and increase the accountability and effectiveness of all levels of government to plan for future growth, including making smart energy choices such as locally generated renewable energy.

Indicator

- Number of local or MPO policies that prevented federal, state, or local funding from being leveraged or prevented collaboration between public and/or private groups: 0 (WARC research)

6) Value communities and neighborhoods

Enhance the unique characteristics of all communities by investing in healthy, safe and walkable neighborhoods – rural, urban or suburban.

Indicator

- Percentage of housing units within a half mile of an employment center: 75% occupied housing units (2010 Census and WARC calculations)
- Percentage of housing units within a half mile of a park, including school playgrounds: 58% occupied housing units (2010 Census and WARC calculations)

Appendix E

Title VI Program

**Tuscaloosa Area
Metropolitan Planning
Organization**

Prepared by the West Alabama Regional Commission under the guidance of the Tuscaloosa
Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

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1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this program is to describe how the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) ensures compliance with Title VI (Nondiscrimination in Federally Assisted Programs) of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*. The Act states the following:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance (Section 601).

The Act applies to all recipients and sub-recipients of federal funds. The MPO is a sub-recipient under the Alabama Department of Transportation. The MPO Title VI Program is divided into nine sections and includes six supplemental items.

2.0 Title VI Notice

The MPO is required to maintain a Title VI notice. The notice explains Title VI and informs the public that the MPO complies with the requirements of Title VI. The MPO Title VI Notice is included as Supplemental Item 1. The Notice is posted in the lobby of the West Alabama Regional Commission (WARC), next to the reception desk. The MPO staff is housed at WARC. The notice is also posted in the lobby of the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority office, where the MPO holds public meetings. In addition, the notice can be found in the MPO area of the WARC website (<https://www.warc.info/mpo-title-vi/>).

3.0 Title VI Complaint Procedure and Form

The MPO developed a Title VI Complaint Procedure that explains how to file a complaint against the MPO. The procedure includes a Complaint Form, that when completed, will provide the information necessary to conduct an initial investigation into the complaint. The procedure and form are included as Supplemental Item 2.

4.0 Title VI Investigations, Complaints, or Lawsuits Filed

The MPO is required to keep a record of Title VI investigations, complaints, and lawsuits filed against the MPO. As of August 28, 2023, the MPO has never had a Title VI investigation, complaint, or lawsuit. The MPO developed a spreadsheet to track these items if ever needed. The spreadsheet is included as Supplemental Items 3.

5.0 Public Participation Plan

The MPO is required to maintain a public participation plan. The plan includes strategies that are intended to engage minority and limited English proficient populations as well as low-income individuals, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. The strategies include the following:

- a. provide MPO standing committee meeting notices to groups that address the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- b. provide Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) public meeting notices to groups that address the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- c. upon request, provide transportation planning process meeting notices to any individual or group;
- d. allow anyone to participate in all transportation planning process meetings;

- e. follow all requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act while conducting the transportation planning process;
- f. if feasible and appropriate, modify the transportation planning process and any plan, program, or document developed as part of the process to meet the needs of the traditionally underserved;
- g. if warranted, provide an interpreter for those with limited English proficiency;
- h. offer translation of our website and documents on our website to other languages;
- i. upon request, make presentations to groups representing traditionally underserved populations;
- j. provide transportation planning process information at community events;
- k. hold extended public review periods for the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that allow anyone to review the documents in public places, including the WARC office, and on the internet and allow comments to be submitted in person, by e-mail, by postal mail, and by FAX;
- l. make the MPO staff available to discuss any transportation planning document or the planning process with any group or individual;

The MPO has conducted or offered most of these activities over the past several years. In some cases, the activity has never been requested. The MPO public participation plan is posted at (<https://www.warc.info/mpo-documents/>). Past public involvement work is documented annually in the MPO Record of Public Involvement, also posted on the WARC website.

6.0 Limited English Proficiency Plan

The MPO developed a Limited English Proficiency LEP Plan based on Title VI requirements. The LEP Plan details how the MPO will work with limited English proficiency people who want to be involved in the transportation planning process. The MPO LEP Plan is included as Supplemental Item 4.

7.0 MPO Committee Membership

The MPO is composed of five committees; a Policy Committee and four advisory committees. The membership of the Policy Committee is determined by a signed agreement between the Alabama Department of Transportation, the three largest governments in the urbanized area, the West Alabama Regional Commission, and the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority.

The four advisory committees include the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), the Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee (BPC), and the Transit Coordination Committee. The TCC membership is determined by the Policy Committee and is based on position held. The members on this committee are generally engineers, planners, and transportation representatives. The CTAC members are selected by the three elected officials on the Policy Committee.

The BPC does not have a set membership list. Anyone can join the committee and have voting privileges. The transit committee also has an open membership policy. Anyone can join the committee and have voting privileges. The majority of the members on this committee belong to agencies that provide transit service or purchase transit service for their clients. This committee also serves the West Alabama Rural Planning Organization (RPO) and represents seven counties. The transit committee is not one of the MPO standing committees and only meets as needed. A table that depicts the racial composition of these committees is included as Supplemental Item 5.

The MPO encourages participation from all groups of the community, including minorities. The committee meetings are open to the public and anyone who attends is offered a chance to address the committees. The meetings are advertised through news releases that are sent to all local media sources; and agencies that work with minorities, low-income individuals, persons with disabilities, and the elderly. The news releases are also sent to anyone who requests to be added to the distribution list. The committee meetings are held on different days, at different times, and at a handicap accessible building. The public also has the opportunity to submit comments about agenda items prior to committee meetings.

8.0 Demographic Profile

Tuscaloosa County is the study area of the Tuscaloosa Area MPO. Based on the *2017-2021 American Community Survey*, Tuscaloosa County had a population of 223,945. Of this number, 83,979 (37.5 percent) were minorities. African Americans represented 32.2 percent of the minority population. Asian Americans represented 1.7 percent of the minority total. Hispanic or Latino Americans, from any race, made up 3.9 percent of the population.

The *2020 Census* identified 59 tracts in Tuscaloosa County. There were 33 tracts that had a concentration of minority population that was 35 percent or greater. These tracts were generally located in the following areas: southern Tuscaloosa County, Holt, Alberta (Tuscaloosa City), Southside (Tuscaloosa City), West End (Tuscaloosa City), Deerfield/Green Village (Northport City), and southern Northport (Northport City).

The *2017-2021 American Community Survey* estimated that there were 11,869 people in Tuscaloosa County that did not speak English at home. Of this group, 6,374 spoke Spanish at home. The other most common non-English languages spoken at home were Other Indo-European (1,287), German (926), Chinese (918), French (481), and Vietnamese (473). Of those that spoke Spanish at home, 2,573 were estimated to speak English less than very well.

9.0 Identification and Consideration of Mobility Needs of Minority Populations

The Tuscaloosa Area MPO depends on all of the transportation planning process participants to identify transportation needs. The local governments that are represented on the MPO committees identify the needs within their community. The local governments (Tuscaloosa County, Tuscaloosa City, and Northport City) are divided into districts. The County has one minority commissioner, Tuscaloosa City has three minority council members, and Northport City has one minority council member.

The Alabama Department of Transportation identifies needs based on their management programs, including bridge, pavement, and safety. The various transit agencies in the area use their fleet management programs to determine their needs. The MPO staff provides the MPO committees with information prior to final plan and program approval, including social factors, environmental concerns, socioeconomic projections, and traffic projections. The MPO staff also prepares an environmental justice report as part of the long-range transportation plan. The report quantifies the distribution of benefits and burdens associated with transportation projects.

All of the MPO meetings are open to the public and the public is encouraged to attend and participate in the meetings. News releases advertising the meetings are widely distributed, including to minority groups and individuals. The MPO provides a written response to all public comments submitted during document reviews. All comments and responses are added to final documents as appendices. In the

past, the MPO has revised documents based on public comments. The MPO considers all identified needs, numerous social factors, and public input before funding decisions are made.

10.0 Demographic Maps, Charts, and Analysis as Related to Public Transportation

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) requires MPOs to provide a map that displays the percent of minority and non-minority population by Census tracts or block groups. FTA also requires the MPOs to provide a chart that analyzes the impacts of the distribution of federal and state funds for public transportation. The maps and chart are included as Supplemental Item 6.

The maps and chart demonstrate that most (42 percent) of the minority population live within a quarter mile of the Transit Authority fixed route bus system and 43 percent of minority population live in the Tuscaloosa City. The minority areas that are not served by the Transit Authority are in Northport City and Tuscaloosa County. The service area for the Transit Authority is limited to Tuscaloosa City because Tuscaloosa County and Northport City do not support the Transit Authority financially. The Transit Authority demand response system offers door to door service but is also limited to the municipal limits of Tuscaloosa City. The other transit providers in the area utilize FTA Section 5310 funds to serve their clients throughout Tuscaloosa County.

Supplemental Item 1

Title VI Notice

Notifying the Public of Rights Under Title VI Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

- The MPO operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes she or he has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with the MPO.
- For more information on the MPO civil rights program, and the procedures to file a complaint, contact 205-333-2990, extension 227; email zane.davis@westal.org; or visit the MPO office at 4200 Highway 69 North, Suite 1, Northport, AL. For more information, visit <https://www.warc.info/mpo-title-vi/>.
- A complaint may be directly filed with the Federal Transit Administration at the Office of Civil Rights, Attention: Title VI Program Coordinator, East Building, 5th Floor-TCR, 1200 New Jersey Ave., SE, Washington, DC 20590
- If information is needed in another language, please write to Title VI Request, Tuscaloosa Area MPO, P.O. Box 509, Northport, AL 35473 or e-mail zane.davis@westal.org with the subject line "Interpreter".
 - Si se necesita información en otro idioma, por favor escriba a "Title VI Request", Tuscaloosa Area MPO, P.O. Box 509, Northport, AL 35473 o por e-mail zane.davis@westal.org con el asunto "Interpreter".
 - 如果需要在另一种语言的信息，请写信给 "Title VI Request", Tuscaloosa Area MPO, P.O. Box 509, Northport, AL 35473 或电子邮件 zane.davis@westal.org 主题行 "Interpreter".
 - Wenn Informationen in einer anderen Sprache benötigt wird, schreiben Sie bitte an "Title VI Request", Tuscaloosa Area MPO, P.O. Box 509, Northport, AL 35473 oder E-Mail zane.davis@westal.org mit dem Betreff "Interpreter".

The MPO Title VI notice is posted on the West Alabama Regional Commission website at <https://www.warc.info/mpo-title-vi/>, a bulletin board in the lobby of the West Alabama Regional Commission (4200 Highway 69 North, Suite 1, Northport, AL), and on a bulletin board in the lobby of the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority (601 23rd Avenue, Tuscaloosa, AL).

Supplemental Item 2

Title VI Complaint Procedure
Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Any person who believes they have been discriminated against on the basis of race, color, or national origin by the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (hereinafter referred to as “the MPO”) may file a Title VI complaint by completing and submitting the MPO Title VI Complaint Form.

- The MPO investigates complaints received no more than 180 days after the alleged incident.
- The MPO will process complaints that are complete.
- Once the complaint is received, the MPO will review it to determine if they have jurisdiction.
- The complainant will receive an acknowledgement letter informing the complainant whether the complaint will be investigated by the MPO.
- The MPO has 30 days to investigate the complaint.
- If more information is needed to resolve the case, the MPO may contact the complainant.
 - The complainant has 15 business days from the date of the letter to send requested information to the investigator assigned to the case.
 - If the investigator is not contacted by the complainant or does not receive the additional information within 15 business days, the MPO can administratively close the case.
- A case can be administratively closed also if the complainant no longer wishes to pursue their case.
- After the investigator reviews the complaint, the investigator will issue one of two letters to the complainant: a closure letter or a letter of finding (LOF). A closure letter summarizes the allegations and states that there was not a Title VI violation and that the case will be closed. A letter of finding summarizes the allegations and the interviews regarding the alleged incident, and explains whether any disciplinary action, additional training of the staff member, or other action will occur.
- If the complainant wishes to appeal the decision, the complainant has 15 days after the date of the letter or the letter of finding to do so.
- A person may also file a complaint directly with the Federal Transit Administration, at FTA Office of Civil Rights, 1200 New Jersey Avenue SE, Washington, DC 20590.

Title VI Complaint Form
Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Part 1

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone (Home): _____ Telephone (Work): _____

E-mail Address: _____

Circle accessible format requirements: Large Print Audio Tape TDD Other _____

Part 2

Are you filing this complaint on your own behalf? Yes No (Circle One)

If you answered "Yes" to this question, go to Part 3.

If not, please supply the name and relationship of the person for whom you are complaining:

Please explain why you have filed for a third party: _____

Have you obtained permission of the third party to file this complaint? Yes No (Circle One)

Part 3

I believe that the discrimination I experienced was based on (Circle all that apply):

Race Color National Origin

Date(s) of alleged discrimination (Month, day, year): _____

Explain as clearly as possible what happened and why you believe you were discriminated against. Describe all persons who were involved. Include the name and contact information of the person(s) who discriminated against you (if known) as well as names and contact information of any witnesses. If more space is needed, please attach addition pages. _____

Part 4

Have you previously filed a Title VI complaint with the MPO? Yes No (Circle One)

Part 5

Have you filed this complaint with any other Federal, State, or local agency, or with any Federal or State court? Yes No (Circle One)

If yes, list all agencies and courts; include the contact person, agency name, address, and telephone number.

Part 6

Name of agency complaint is against: _____

Contact person: _____

Title: _____

Telephone number: _____

Please attach any written materials or other information that you think is relevant to your complaint.

Signature

Date

Please submit this form to:
Title VI Complaint
Tuscaloosa Area MPO
P.O. Box 509
Northport, AL 35476-0509

Supplemental Item 3

	Date (Month, Day, Year)	Summary (Include basis of complaint: race, color, or national origin)	Status	Action(s) Taken
Investigations				
1.				
2.				
3.				
Lawsuits				
1.				
2.				
3.				
Complaints				
1.				
2.				
3.				

Supplemental Item 4

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Prepared by the West Alabama Regional Commission under the guidance of the Tuscaloosa
Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to document how the Tuscaloosa Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) integrates people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) into the transportation planning process. The MPO, as the official decision-making body of the transportation planning process, determines how federal highway and transit funds are spent in Tuscaloosa County. This plan includes an assessment of the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population and how the MPO will address the potential needs of this population.

1.2 Laws and Regulations

Entities that receive federal funding must follow Section 601 of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 2000d. The Act states that no person shall "... on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance." To strengthen Title VI, Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, was issued on August 11, 2000. The order requires federal agencies that distribute financial assistance to non-federal entities to publish guidance detailing how the non-federal entities can provide meaningful access to LEP persons. The U.S. Department of Transportation released their LEP guidance on December 14, 2005.

1.3 Public Involvement

The Tuscaloosa Area MPO Policy Committee adopted the LEP Plan at their August 28, 2023 meeting. Prior to this, the availability of the draft plan was advertised through news releases to the local media; and agencies and groups that work with minorities, low income people, persons with disabilities, and elderly individuals. The draft plan was published on the West Alabama Regional Commission website in June 2023 and was also available at the MPO office and the Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority. The draft plan was discussed at the MPO committee meetings held in June and August 2023. The MPO accepted comments on the plan from June 26, 2023 through August 28, 2023. Comments could have been submitted in person at the MPO or Transit Authority offices and by postal mail, e-mail, fax, and telephone. No public comments were received.

2.0 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Assessment

The U.S. Department of Justice, in their *Guidance to Federal Financial Assistance Recipients Regarding Title VI Prohibition Against National Origin Discrimination Affecting Limited English Proficient Persons*, published a four-factor assessment to determine a federal funding recipient's obligation to provide LEP services. The four factors are:

- (1) The number or proportion of LEP persons served or encountered in the eligible service population
- (2) The frequency with which LEP individuals come in contact with the program
- (3) The nature and importance of the program, activity, or service provided by the program
- (4) The resources available to the recipient and costs

The Department of Justice indicated that the analysis is intended to balance meaningful access for LEP people against imposing undue burdens on small local governments.

2.1 The Number or Proportion of LEP Persons Served or Encountered in the Eligible Service Population

Since the MPO planning area is Tuscaloosa County, the eligible service population figures were taken from U.S. Census Bureau estimates for Tuscaloosa County. Based on the *2017-2021 American Community Survey*, there are 210,777 people in Tuscaloosa County who are five years and older. Of this group 198,908 (94 percent) speak only English. The six most common other languages spoken at home are Spanish (3 percent), Other Indo-European (0.61 percent), German (0.44 percent), Chinese (0.44 percent), French (0.23 percent), and Vietnamese (0.22 percent). The following table provides the estimates for each of these languages and the estimates of people who speak English less than very well.

Language Spoken at Home	Estimated Number	Estimated Number Who Speak English Less Than Very Well
Spanish	6,374	2,573
Other Indo-European	1,287	297
German	926	120
Chinese	918	415
French	481	66
Vietnamese	473	309

2017-2021 American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates , C16001

2.2 The Frequency of Contact with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) People

Over the past 25 years the MPO staff has not had any contact with anyone who did not speak English very well. Over that same period, no individual or group has requested the MPO to provide an interpreter or to translate a document. Future interaction with LEP people is expected to be infrequent and unpredictable.

2.3 The Importance of the Program to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) People

The MPO plans how federal transportation funds are used in Tuscaloosa County. Therefore, the MPO work affects every resident. However, the MPO does not provide direct, immediate, vital, or emergency service; such as medical treatment, meals, or shelter. Involvement in the MPO transportation planning process is voluntary.

2.4 Resources Available to the MPO Recipient and the Costs of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Services

The Tuscaloosa Area MPO is considered a small MPO by state and national standards. Currently, the MPO has about 2.25 full-time equivalent employees. Less than four percent of the MPO annual work program budget is available for non-staff related charges. The cost to provide interpretation and translation service vary greatly depending on the frequency and volume of work as well as the methods used.

Despite its financial limitations, the MPO is committed to maintaining an open and inclusive planning process that allows LEP people to participate. The MPO, working within its budget, will implement the most cost-effective methods for interpretation and translation work based on requests and expected demand.

3.0 Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Program

3.1 Identification of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) People

In Tuscaloosa County, approximately five percent of the population do not speak English at home. Spanish is by far the largest language group, representing three percent of the population. The other language groups in the top six (Chinese, Other Indo-European, German, Korean, and French) make up less than two percent of the population. The MPO will use the U.S. Census Bureau "Language Identification Flashcard" document at MPO committee and public meetings, and with walk-in requests. The document will be used to identify LEP individuals. Identified LEP people will be given the option to be added to the MPO news release mailing list. Encounters with LEP people will be tracked in a spreadsheet that will be updated after each event. The spreadsheet will list the type of service provided and any other relevant information. This spreadsheet is available upon request.

3.2 Language Assistance Measures

3.2.1 Types of Language Services Available

The MPO will provide interpreters and translation service as their budget allows. The MPO will use free websites and programs whenever possible to translate correspondence and documents. In-person or telephone interpreters will be utilized as needed. If volunteer interpreters are not available, the MPO will pay interpreters as their budget permits.

3.2.2 Sources of Interpretation and Translation Services

The MPO staff will maintain a list of local interpreters (volunteer and for-pay) and a list of acceptable telephone interpretation companies. The staff will also maintain a list of websites and programs that translate text and documents. The MPO staff will refer to the lists as needed. The lists are available upon request.

3.2.3 Responses to LEP Callers

The MPO staff will refer LEP callers to the MPO website where instructions will be available to translate the website to their language. On the website will also be directions to request free language support from the MPO.

3.2.4 Responses to Written Communication from LEP People

The MPO staff will use free translation websites and programs to respond to written communication from LEP people. If the translation websites and programs fail to translate correctly, the MPO staff will consult with local or telephone interpreters to ensure proper communication.

3.2.5 Responses to In-Person contact with LEP People

The MPO will use the U.S. Census Bureau "Language Identification Flashcard" document at MPO committee and public meetings, and with walk-in requests. The MPO staff will use interpretation services (telephone or local) or a free online written translation website to determine the needs of the LEP individual and to explain the transportation planning process or to respond to any questions. Any comments provided by the LEP individual will be documented and provided to the MPO committees for their review and action.

3.2.6 Determining Competency of Interpreters and Translation Services

After an interpretation or translation service is provided, the MPO staff will ask the LEP individual if they understood the interchange and if they require additional or a different language service. If additional service is required, the MPO will change interpretation or translation providers. When feasible, the MPO will use certified interpreters and translation services.

3.3 Staff Training

The MPO staff will review the LEP Plan every year to ensure that they understand their responsibilities. During the annual review, the staff will verify the contact lists (interpretation and translation services).

3.4 Notices to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) People

The MPO will do the following to notify LEP people of the availability of language services:

- Post a sign at the reception desk in the three most common languages
- Add a statement to the MPO website in the three most common languages
- Add a statement to the title page of all major MPO documents in the three most common languages
- Provide handouts at all MPO meetings in the three most common languages
- Add the information to all MPO presentations

3.5 Monitoring and Updating the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

The MPO staff will monitor the MPOs interaction with LEP people. If problems with the LEP Plan are discovered, the MPO staff will recommend that the document be amended. The MPO Policy Committee can amend the plan after the public is given an opportunity to review and comment on the proposed amendment. The MPO will update the LEP Plan every five years.

The update will involve the following elements:

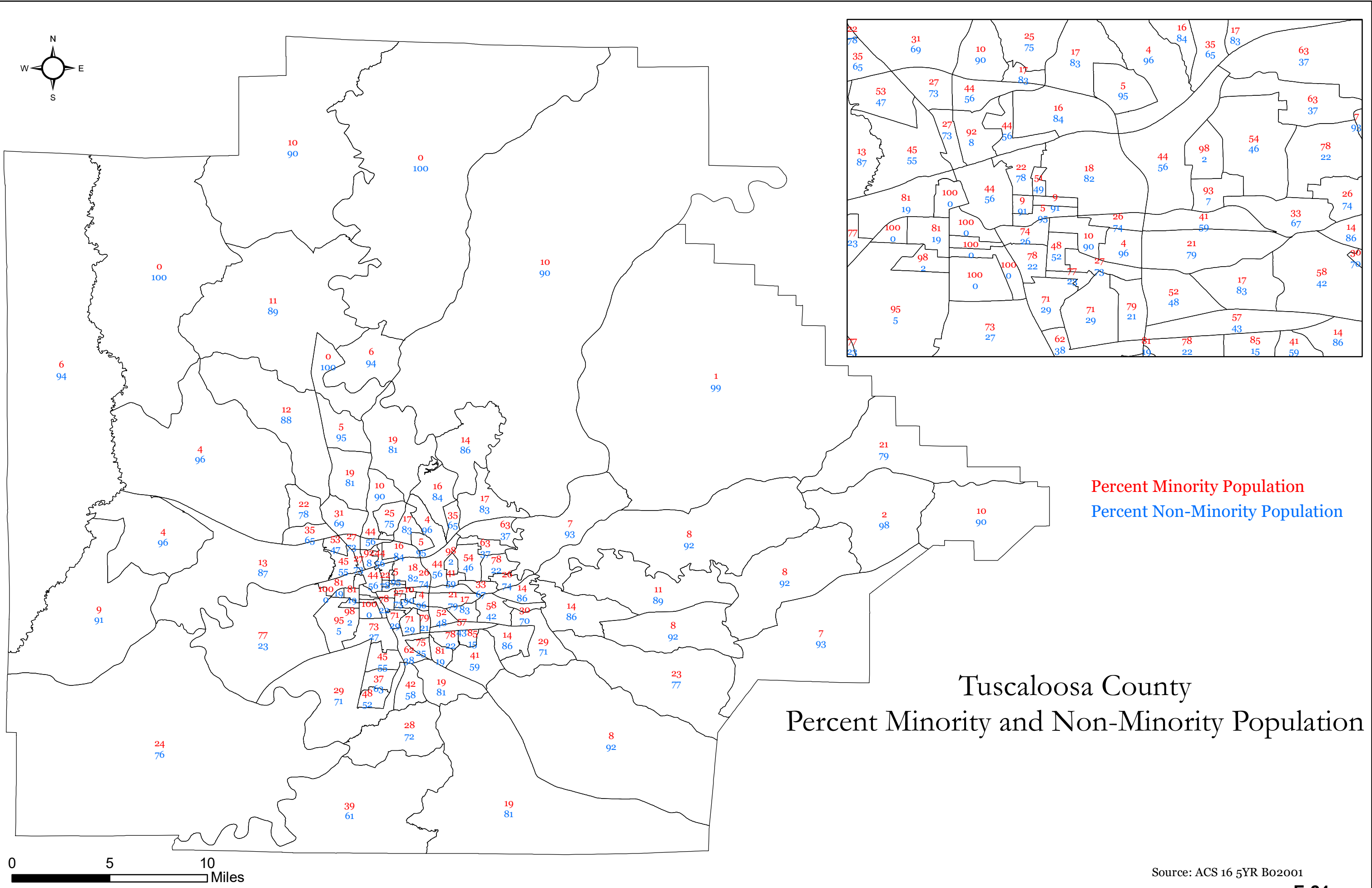
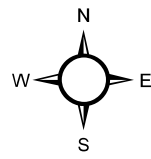
- Verification of the LEP population in the MPO study area
- Count of past encounters with LEP people
- Determination of any changes to MPO activities that might affect LEP people
- Research of new sources and methods of interpretation and translation services
- Verification of current sources and methods of interpretation and translation services
- Reviewing past interaction with LEP people to determine if changes are warranted
- Staff review of LEP plan responsibilities

Supplemental Item 5

Tuscaloosa Area MPO Committee Membership as of 6/2/2023

Body	Population	Caucasian American	African American	Asian American	Native American	Latino American (Of Any Race)	Notes
Policy Committee	5	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	Membership is set by agreement between local governments and ALDOT; Three of the five positions are elected officials.
Technical Coordinating Committee	17	82%	12%	0%	0%	6%	Membership is based on position held
Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee	24	92%	8%	0%	0%	0%	Members appointed by the elected officials on the Policy Committee
Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee	Not Available (NA)	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	There is no set membership for this committee. Anyone can join the committee and have voting privileges.
Transit Coordination Committee	35	60%	40%	0%	0%	0%	There is no set membership for this committee. Anyone can join the committee and have voting privileges. Most members are agencies that provide transit service or purchase service for their clients. This committee also serves the West Alabama RPO and covers seven counties.

Supplemental Item 6



Percent Minority Population
Percent Non-Minority Population

Tuscaloosa County Percent Minority and Non-Minority Population

0 5 10 Miles

Source: ACS 16 5YR B02001

Tuscaloosa County Parking and Transit Authority Fixed Routes

	Total Population within a Quarter Mile	Minority Population within a Quarter Mile	Minority Percentage
All Fixed Routes	74,402	39,243	53%
Greensboro Route	17,930	12,119	68%
Holt Route	21,082	9,918	47%
Shelton State Route	15,306	9,569	63%
Stillman Route	13,654	11,254	82%
University Route	13,274	3,012	23%
V.A. Route	21,953	5,638	26%
Study Area	194,656	68,045	35%
Urbanized Area	139,114	60,160	43%
Tuscaloosa City	90,468	42,894	47%

Source: 2010 Census - Population selected using 2010 Census Blocks

