

Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization

Public Engagement Plan 2024



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What is Public Engagement?

Overview

The Public Engagement Plan for the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) aims to outline how, at a broad level, the RRTPO will plan to engage the community to

- 1) better understand the RRTPO's role in the region.
- 2) see themselves reflected in the plans and participate in public engagement for transportation initiatives.
- 3) better shape the region's shared future.

The Public Engagement Plan is a living document, in which the RRTPO strives to update and improve upon.

The RRTPO is committed to being open and accessible to all people in the Richmond region and believes successful planning that works for everyone relies on effective public engagement, which includes the following principles:

- transparency and integrity
- coordination
- information
- appropriateness
- responsiveness
- inclusiveness
- monitoring and evaluation
- learning and sharing

The RRTPO recognizes that meaningful citizen planning requires (1) effective citizen involvement activities, (2) open and accessible information, and (3) opportunities for engagement.

While broad citizen input and representation have long been the goal, the RRTPO recognizes that not all interested citizens and groups have had their voices heard in the planning process. This philosophy guides RRTPO engagement with the region.

The following section outlines the laws and regulations that shape the RRTPO engagement framework. This is followed by the goals, strategies, and evaluation methods identified to build broad public engagement that considers every individual in the Richmond region, regardless of their background or ability. In addition to individual citizens, the RRTPO aims to develop partnerships with local governments, agencies, and other interested parties, including community and neighborhood groups.

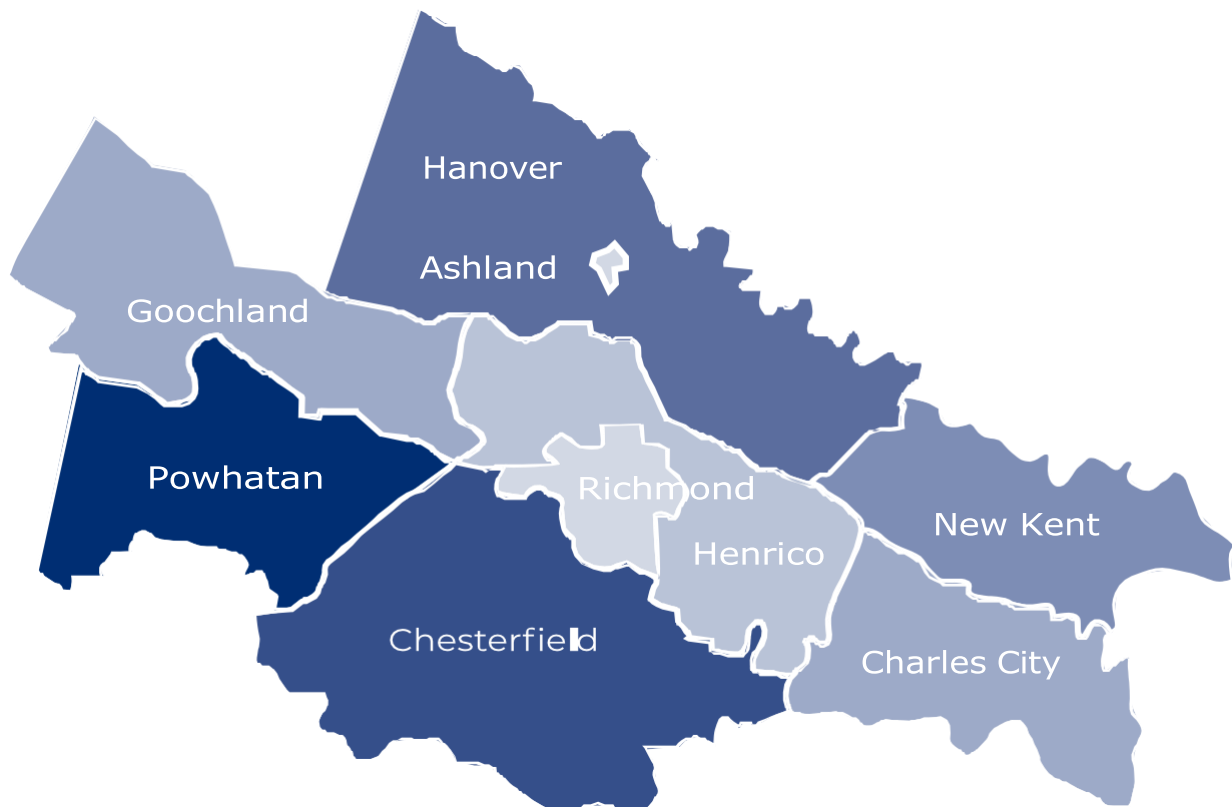
Introduction to the RRTPO

What is an MPO?

A Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an organization in charge of transportation planning and policy for areas with a collective population of 50,000 or more. The responsibility of an MPO is to provide comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout the region. The policies created through the MPO are consistent with the region's overall economic, social, and environmental goals and seek to provide equal access to a variety of transportation choices.

What is the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization?

The Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) coordinates transportation plans and policies as the MPO for the Richmond region. The RRTPO covers nine local jurisdictions including the Town of Ashland, the counties of Charles City, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, and Powhatan, and the City of Richmond.



The RRTPO includes:

- A **governing board** made up of elected officials from each of the nine jurisdictions as well as representatives from the Capital Region Airport Commission, GRTC Transit System, Richmond Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and the Virginia Secretary of Transportation. The governing board also includes the following nonvoting member agencies and organizations: Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, RideFinders, Virginia Department of Aviation, Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the RRTPO Community Transportation Advisory Committee chair.
- A **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** made up of technically qualified representatives of member localities and agencies responsible for planning, maintaining, controlling, developing, and improving the transportation system within the Richmond region.
- A **Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)** made up of citizen representatives of RRTPO jurisdictions and community organizations as designated by the RRTPO board with a focus on equity, inclusion, and community engagement.

What does the RRTPO do?

Transportation planning affects everyone. How well a person can travel throughout the region affects their safety and quality of life. The RRTPO provides an independent yet cooperative forum for regional planning and directs the allocation of annual federal transportation funding. Creating transportation plans is the first step in a multi-year process to fund, design, purchase land for, and ultimately construct a transportation project.

In the short-term, the RRTPO maintains a list of funded transportation projects called the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Additionally, a far-reaching Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) looks 20 years into the future to supply a common vision for regional transportation needs and guides the investment of public funds for transportation facilities for people and goods in vehicles, on trains, on bikes, on buses, and on sidewalks.



Legal Mandates

The following section outlines the laws and regulations that shape the RRTPO engagement framework. This is followed by the goals, strategies, and evaluation methods identified to build more complete public engagement that considers every individual in the Richmond region, regardless of their background or ability. In addition to individual citizens, the RRTPO aims to develop partnerships with local governments, agencies, and other interested parties, including community and neighborhood groups.

Beyond the RRTPO philosophy, there are several federal laws and regulations that relate to engagement and transportation planning. The following section briefly outlines RRTPO obligations and how they affect engagement efforts.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act](#) prohibits discriminating against people based on their race, skin color, or country of origin. The RRTPO has adopted a [Title VI Plan](#) which details the steps we take to prevent discrimination in our planning work. The RRTPO is committed to treating everyone fairly and ensuring everyone has a voice in shaping our region's future.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

[The Americans with Disabilities Act](#) protects people with disabilities from being excluded from public programs and from other discrimination by public organizations. This includes physical accessibility in terms of meeting and events spaces, but also includes things such as ensuring webpages are fully usable for people who are colorblind or providing closed captioning on videos for those who cannot hear. The RRTPO strives to create an inclusive environment which offers everyone the chance to be involved, regardless of ability.

Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice

[Executive Order 12898](#) requires agencies that receive federal money ensure minority and low-income communities are not disproportionately affected by the organization's decisions. The Title VI plan details the RRTPO's commitment to making concerted efforts to engage minority and low-income communities and to ensure that the effects of our transportation projects do not negatively impact them more than others.

Executive Order 13166 – Limited English Proficiency

[Executive Order 13166](#) requires the RRTPO to ensure all people can access the services and programs that we provide, regardless of English ability. This includes offering interpretive services for meetings (with advanced notice), providing workshops in other languages, and creating handouts in more than one language. The RRTPO policy on Limited English Proficiency is included in the Title VI plan.

Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments

[Executive Order 13175](#) commits the federal government to consulting and coordinating with tribal governments when making decisions that could affect native communities. In January of 2018, the Chickahominy and Eastern Chickahominy tribes were formally recognized by the federal government. These tribes are in Charles City and New Kent counties. The RRTPO recognizes the importance of including tribal governments in decisions which may impact them. The RRTPO commits to working with the Chickahominy and Eastern Chickahominy tribes to create a consultation process.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), most known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), ([H.R. 3684](#)), is a United States federal statute signed into law on November 15, 2021. This bill provides new funding for infrastructure projects like federal highway aid, transit, highway safety, hazardous materials, rail, broadband access, clean water, and electric grid renewal.

Our Approach to Public Engagement

The following section outlines goals for public engagement as shaped by RRTPO philosophy and legal mandates. Each goal is divided into three sections. “What will we do?” covers recommended strategies and actions to be taken. “What will we measure?” covers metrics used in evaluating our success. “What is success?” defines the trends or metrics which are consistent with a robust community engagement process.

Goal 1 – Robust and Creative Opportunities to Engage

Provide robust and creative opportunities for all residents to engage in planning for transportation, including people in the region who are not easily engaged because of their age, ability, language, lack of financial resources, lack of access to technology, or other reasons.

What will we do?

1. Public Meetings
 - Hold engagement meetings at convenient, accessible, times and locations.
 - Use maps, charts, graphs, and other tools to visually convey information presented.
 - Host streamed and recorded videos of all RRTPO committee meetings on the RRTPO website.
 - Create a digest of actions taken at RRTPO committee meetings for interested parties.
2. Engaging Traditionally Underserved Communities
 - Offer interpretive services for public meetings and events (with advance notice).
 - Host workshops and events in underserved communities when updating the Long- Range Transportation Plan.
 - Partner with civic organizations that represent people who are not easily engaged to hold workshops and to share opportunities to be involved.
 - Consider offering compensation to attendees.



3. Project-specific Engagement Strategies

- Develop a public involvement strategy for the Long-Range Transportation Plan and any other plan as needed.
- Select the best tools from the engagement toolkit (Appendix B) based on the target audience and desired outcome.
- Use digital surveys, maps, and other tools to make engagement convenient for residents of the region.
- Publish a guide to public involvement for the LRTP (and any other plans as needed) before starting public engagement.
- Coordinate the public involvement process with statewide public review processes to maximize citizen engagement wherever possible.
- Supply food at RRTPO hosted events to encourage attendance and promote an informal atmosphere when appropriate.
- Collaborate with local community organizers to engage and mobilize their constituents around planning topics.

4. Public Comment

- Provide a comment period at every RRTPO committee meeting.
- Offer periods for review and comment before adopting any plan or allocation decision.
- Create a comment page on the website with instructions on how to submit comments via email, mail, or in person.
- Include comments received with proposed item in RRTPO committee agenda packet.
- Summarize comments received when presenting proposals to RRTPO committees.

What will we measure?

- Attendance at RRTPO committee meetings.
- Website visits.
- Subscribers to email digest.
- Attendance at public workshops and other events.
- Number of public comments received on proposed plans and regional transportation issues.
- Number of meetings held in underserved communities.
- Number of meetings held with hard to engage groups.

What is success?

- Increased attendance at public meetings.
- Increased website visits.
- Increase in public comments received.
- Growing subscriber mailing list.
- The percentage of meetings held in underserved communities equal to the share of population.

Goal 2 – Informing and Educating the Public

Inform and educate the public so they can purposefully engage and provide feedback in the transportation planning process.

What will we do?

1. Media engagement
 - Actively reach out to a variety of regional media outlets with press releases about significant initiatives.
 - Develop a working relationship with the press for coverage of events, plans, or public meetings.
 - Continue to expand and consistently update social media accounts to build following and promote public engagement opportunities.
 - Take advantage of social media marketing through social media ads to promote the RRTPO and upcoming public meetings.
2. Notice of Meetings
 - Use our communication channels to share notices for upcoming meetings.
 - Ensure agenda is posted on website when sent to RRTPO committee members.
 - Share meeting notices with partner localities for posting on their website and public spaces, including government offices and libraries.
 - Develop a stakeholder database to inform constituents of timely events and opportunities.
3. Engagement in Regional Events
 - Be present at a wide range of community events and festivals to share RRTPO projects and engage attendees.
 - Provide resources on current projects and public comment.
 - Partner with surrounding universities and community colleges to host events focused on engaging younger residents of the region.
 - Work through member governments and partner agencies to provide regional planning resources for local events.

4. Website

- Create a separate page for the Long-Range Transportation Plan process and other significant projects.
- Ensure all pages and content are accessible.
- Audit the website regularly to check for dead links and pages.

5. Visualization and Document Design

- Branding, including logos, for plans requiring public input.
- Create visually appealing and easily navigable documents.
- Use plain language in all public documents.

What will we measure?

- Media hits or mentions in newspapers or magazines, online and in print.
- Analytics for social media engagement: clicks, impressions, mentions, etc.
- The number of people engaged at regional events.

What is success?

- Increased mentions in local press.
- A working relationship with journalists or reporters.
- Increased social media impressions, shares, and mentions.
- Steady rate of email opens.

Goal 3 – Continuous Evaluation and Improvement

Continuously evaluate our progress toward our public engagement goals and amend this plan's strategies and metrics as needed to increase public involvement.

What will we do?

- Continue to use metrics to track progress toward plan goals.
- Publish an annual report on progress toward plan strategies and metrics.
- Review and update this plan before developing the public involvement strategy for the Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- Maintain openness to public feedback and input on improvements to our engagement process.

What will we measure?

- On-time publication of annual report.
- On-time review and update of plan.
- Number of comments or feedback received.
- Changes implemented.

What is success?

- Annual report posted to website by end of July each year.
- Plan reviewed and updated at least two (2) years before Long-Range Plan adoption.
- Increased feedback on how to improve public outreach.

Regular Planning Timelines

As a resident of the Richmond region, you have a say in planning the transportation infrastructure that gets built. The chart below summarizes the general approval timeline for each planning process and highlights opportunities for you to be involved. Each major program will have more detailed events and opportunities to engage. A more detailed look at each process follows.

Process	Approval	Amendment	Where to find information?
Long-Range Transportation Plan	30 days	15 days	Press; website; social media
Transportation Improvement Program	30 days	15 days	Press; website; social media
Unified Planning Work Program	15 days	15 days	Website; social media
Regional Funding Decisions	15 days		Website; social media,
Public Engagement Plan	45 days	45 days	Website; social media
Other Studies and Plans	15 days		Website; social media



Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The RRTPO updates the long-range transportation plan every five (5) years, though the work for the update takes place over several years. This process begins with a count of the number of people, jobs, and cars in the region before developing a projection for the future based on statewide estimates and expected development. This information is used to create a plan to manage and maintain a transportation system for people on transit, in cars, on foot, and on bikes over the long term. This plan is fiscally constrained, meaning that the cost of the proposed projects in the plan is limited by the funds reasonably expected to be available over the next 20 years.

During this planning process, the RRTPO offers several chances for you to be involved. The exact format and timing of these opportunities changes with each cycle as we learn from earlier plans. A guide to taking part in the LRTP will be created at the beginning of each process and posted to the RRTPO website. You can also get information on our website and social media pages, or by signing up for our email notices.

When the draft plan is completed and posted to the website, the RRTPO will offer a **30-day public comment period**. During this time, RRTPO staff will hold public meetings throughout the region to discuss the document and gather more feedback. All comments will be reviewed by staff and will receive a response. The comments and responses will be provided to the RRTPO policy board before action on the plan. If the comments raise concerns which lead to a significant change in the plan, the RRTPO will open a new **15-day public comment period** to receive input on the changes.

On occasion, the long-range transportation plan may need to be changed to reflect new projects and changing priorities. Whenever an amendment is needed, the proposed changes will be open for public review and comment. The RRTPO will offer a **15-day public comment period** for all amendments to the plan. The changes will be posted on the website and all comments will be shared with the RRTPO policy board before it acts.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program details planned transportation spending over the next four (4) years. Project phases in the TIP are generally expected to occur within the four- year period. The TIP is updated every three (3) years following a schedule set by the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT).

Developing the TIP takes most of a year, with work beginning in the late summer and concluding the next year in early summer. Existing projects are reviewed, and new projects are added where needed.

The draft of the TIP is opened for a **30-day public comment period**, generally around mid- February. All comments are reviewed by staff and will receive a response. If the comments raise concerns which lead to a significant change in the plan, the RRTPO will open a new **15- day public comment period** to receive input on the changes. All

comments are provided to the RRTPO policy board with the final draft before action on the document.

If the TIP needs to be amended, you will have the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed change. The RRTPO will offer a **15-day public comment period** for all amendments to the TIP. The changes will be posted on the website and all comments will be shared with the RRTPO policy board before their meeting. Minor administrative modifications will not have a formal public comment period.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program is the RRTPO list of plans and studies to be completed in the year. The UPWP is also a budget document and describes the sources of funding and timeframes for completing the work.

The UPWP covers a period from July 1 until June 30 of the next year and must be updated every year. Each winter, the RRTPO begins work on the next budget year's UPWP. Before adopting the UPWP each May, the RRTPO will provide a **15-day public comment period** on the work program and any amendments. Staff will send all comments to the RRTPO Policy Board along with the proposed UPWP before its meeting.

Regional Funding Decisions

One of the jobs of the RRTPO is to decide how to spend regional transportation money. Some funding programs need decisions every year, while others only need decisions every other year. The RRTPO has adopted guidelines to rank potential projects and promote regional goals when deciding where to spend these funds.

Before funding any new projects, the RRTPO will provide a **15-day public comment period** on the project list, generally around March or April every year. The proposed list, with schedule and funding will be posted on the RRTPO website. All comments received will be provided to the RRTPO policy board before action on the item.

Other Studies and Plans

In addition to these plans, the RRTPO also leads studies of transportation issues affecting the region. These studies are not directly tied to projects or funding sources but are often the first step in making regional decisions. The need for public involvement is determined on a case-by-case basis for each study. Before accepting the findings of a consultant-led study, the RRTPO will provide a **15-day public comment period**. Staff will send all comments to the RRTPO policy board along with the draft of the study before its meeting and all comments will be summarized in the final document.

RRTPO Committee Meetings

Beyond specific planning processes, all committees of the RRTPO hold regular meetings which include time for public comment. These meetings are a chance to learn about upcoming projects and conversations taking place in the region. Meetings are held at the [RRTPO offices](#) which are accessible and open for all to attend. The [general meeting schedule](#) for each committee is summarized below. The agenda is generally posted on the RRTPO website a week before the meeting.

Committee	Meeting (subject to change, check site for updates)
RRTPO Policy Board	1st Thursday of the month
Executive Committee	1st Thursday of the month (before RRTPO policy board meeting)
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	2nd Tuesday of the month
Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)	3rd Thursday of every other month (Jan, Mar, May, July, Sept, Nov)



Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

We try to avoid using technical jargon and acronyms without explanations. In case we missed any, here are some commonly used acronyms and terms in transportation planning.

CTAC – Community Transportation Advisory

Committee LRTP – Long-Range Transportation Plan

MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization

RRTPO – Richmond Regional Transportation Planning

Organization TAC – Transportation Advisory Committee

TIP – Transportation Improvement Program

UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program

Appendix B: Public Engagement Toolkit

This appendix is a summary of the tools that could be used to raise awareness of planning efforts and to engage the public in the process. Tools are classified by potential use.

Educate means the tool can be used to share information.

Promote means the tool can be used to share opportunities to be involved.

Engage means the tool can be used for gathering input and feedback.

	Educate	Promote	Engage
Brainstorming/Visioning			X
Briefings	X		
Charettes	X		X
Conferences	X	X	
Fairs and Events		X	X
Focus Groups			X
Games and Contests	X	X	X
Instant Polling Technology			X
Interactive Kiosks	X	X	X
Key Informant Interviews			X
Mailing/Email Lists	X	X	X
Media Relations/Press Coverage	X	X	
Engagement Meeting in a Box			X
Open Houses	X	X	X
Paid Advertising		X	
Public Deliberation			X
Public Meetings	X		X
Public Service Announcements		X	
Role Playing			X
Site Visits	X	X	X
Small Group Technique			X
Social Media	X	X	
Surveys			X
Tailored Outreach	X	X	X
Video and Webcasts	X	X	X
Websites	X	X	X
Workshops	X		X
Youth Outreach	X	X	X

Appendix C: Public Comments and Responses

Comment 1 – February 16, 2024

Sorry, it looks like the first section may have been edited a bunch of times and words are now left out/added. Overview: The Public Engagement Plan for the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) aims to outline how, at a broad level, the RRTPO will plan to engage the community to

- 1) better understand the RRTPO's role in the region
- 2) see [the plans for] themselves and participate in public engagement for transportation initiatives
- 3) better shape [remove: for] the region's shared future.

Staff Feedback – 3/19/2024.

Changes Made - 3/20/2024 to clarify our intent:

- 2) see themselves reflected in the plans and participate in public engagement for transportation initiatives
- 3) better shape the region's shared future.

Comment 2 – February 16, 2024

P. 9 "Collaborate with local community organizers to engage and mobilize their constituents around planning topics." - I encourage you to reach out to PTAs and sports leagues. They can provide efficient ways to reach your community through connected members!

Staff Feedback – 3/19/2024.

Thank you for that suggestion.

Comment 3 – February 18, 2024

My entire family and I choose to bike to get around. Please keep the cycling community safe by adding more protected bike lanes. A white bike painted in the middle of a vehicle lane is not enough.

Staff Feedback – 3/19/2024.

Thank you for that suggestion. We will consider your input.

Comment 4 – March 13, 2024

Paying people to attend a meeting is probably the lamest way to get attendance. Whom do you think will show up because of money?? Start with educating the public on benefits.

Staff Feedback – 3/19/2024.

We are operating under best practices for equitable engagement that acknowledges that participation from community members demands their time, skills, and knowledge—and asks them to share highly personal life experiences, and we should consider equitable compensation strategies that value such contributions. More on this [resource](#) at the Urban Institute.

Comment 4 – March 13, 2024

Im all for any support of walking or transit. Multimodal urban planning is a must in a changing and growing world. Increased density and a commitment to justice and accessibility are extremely important. No specific comments about specific pages. Just a general show of support, and a hope for further development.

Staff Feedback – 3/19/2024.

Thank you for the support, we will consider that perspective.

Appendix D: Title VI and Non-Discrimination

The Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes, executive orders, and regulations in all programs and activities. The RRTPO operates without regard to race, color, national origin, income, gender, age, and disability. Any person who believes him/herself or any specific class of persons, to be subjected to discrimination prohibited by Title VI may by him/herself or by representative file a written complaint with the RRTPO Title VI Coordinator. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 days after the date of the alleged discrimination. Please contact the Title VI Coordinator via phone at 804-323-2033 for more information. The RRTPO meetings are conducted in accessible locations and materials can be provided in accessible formats and in languages other than English. If you would like accessibility or language accommodation, please contact the Title VI Coordinator at 804-323-2033. If you wish to attend a RRTPO function and require special accommodations, please give RRTPO one week's notice in advance.

No Discriminación

El Organización de Planeación Regional de Transporte de Richmond (RRTPO) cumple plenamente con Título VI de la ley de Derechos Civiles de 1964 (Civil Rights Act of 1964) y con estatutos relacionados, órdenes ejecutivos, y reglamentos en todos las programas y actividades. El RRTPO opera sin distinción de raza, color, origen nacional, ingresos, género, edad, y discapacidad. Cualquier persona que cree que él /ella o cualquier clase específica de las personas, hayan sometido a una discriminación prohibida por el Título VI puede por él /ella mismo o con un representante puede presentar una reclamación por escrito con el Coordinador del Título VI de RRTPO. La reclamación debe ser presentada no más tarde de 180 días después de la fecha de la supuesta discriminación. Por favor hace contacto con el Coordinador del Título VI por teléfono en 804-323-2033 para más información. Las reuniones se llevan a cabo en lugares accesibles y los materiales pueden ser proporcionados en formatos accesibles y en otros idiomas aparte de Inglés. Si usted desea alojamiento u otra idioma, por favor hace contacto con el Coordinador del Título VI en 804-323-2033. Si desea a asistir a una función de RRTPO y si requiere acomodaciones especiales, por favor dé RRTPO una semana previo aviso.

Appendix E: Resolution of Adoption



POLICY AGENDA 4/4/2024; ITEM B.-4.

Public Engagement Plan Update

Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization

On motion by Jessica Schneider, seconded by Roscoe Cooper, the members of the RRTPO Policy Board voted to adopt the following resolution (voice vote):

WHEREAS, the Public Engagement Plan (PEP) is the guiding document that establishes consistent procedures to ensure people have reasonable opportunities to be involved in the planning process and provides the framework for developing outreach strategies for individual plans and projects; and

WHEREAS, the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) has committed to reviewing and updating the PEP before starting updates to the long-range transportation plan; and

WHEREAS, the Community Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC) has reviewed and recommends approval of the proposed changes;

WHEREAS, the draft PEP has undergone a 45-day public review period;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RRTPO) policy board adopts this update to the Public Engagement Plan (PEP) as proposed.


.....
This is to certify that the Richmond Regional Transportation Planning Organization Policy Board approved the above resolution at its meeting held April 4, 2024.

WITNESS:

BY:



Janice Scott
Board Relations Manager
PlanRVA



Myles Busching
Secretary
Richmond Regional Transportation
Planning Organization