



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

2021

Adopted: April 14, 2021

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This report was prepared in cooperation with:

U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Highway Administration
Federal Transit Administration
Illinois Department of Transportation

In accordance with

FAST Act & 23 CFR 450.316

*Inquiries regarding the content of this document should be forwarded to the
DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study (DSATS)
by email at DSATS@DeKalbCounty.org or by phone at (815) 756-9513*

DSATS Staff

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PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study (DSATS) is dedicated to proactively engaging the public to educate, inform, and solicit feedback on local transportation issues and decision-making opportunities that affect the metropolitan area. Any person is welcome to participate in the transportation planning process at the following input opportunities and program plan updates, or by contacting DSATS anytime at:

DSATS@DeKalbCounty.org | (815) 756-9513 | www.DSATS.org

All meetings are held at the DeKalb County Highway Department, 1826 Barber Greene Road, DeKalb, IL 60115



Policy Committee (PC)

2nd Wednesday of Each Month, 3:00PM

Members: City of DeKalb, City of Sycamore, DeKalb County, NIU, Town of Cortland, IDOT



Transit Operations Committee (TOC)

1st Wednesday of Each Month, 10:00AM

Members: City of DeKalb, City of Sycamore, DeKalb County, Kishwaukee College, NIU, NIU Student Assoc.



Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

1st Wednesday of Each Month, 11:00AM

Members: City of DeKalb, City of Sycamore, DeKalb County, NIU, Town of Cortland, IDOT

Other Recurring Partners: FHWA, FTA, IDOT Local Roads, IDOT Planning and Programming, VAC DeKalb County

<i>Program Plan:</i>	MTP	TIP	UPWP	Title VI	HSTP	PPP	Other
Update Cycle (Years)	5	1	1	3	5	5	-
Public Review (Days)	28	28	■	28	28	45	■
Committee Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mailing Lists	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	■
Public Meetings	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	■
Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Primary Strategy

■ = When Possible/Appropriate

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study (DSATS) Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to outline organizational policies and activities centered on providing meaningful public input into the transportation decision-making process. As the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) that includes all or part of the City of DeKalb, City of Sycamore, Town of Cortland, DeKalb County, and Northern Illinois University, DSATS proactively engages the public to educate, inform, and solicit feedback on local transportation issues and decision-making opportunities that affect the community.

Since their inception, MPOs have followed a fundamental continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. In addition to ensuring the continual evaluation of contemporary planning issues, this process emphasizes a vital connection between decision makers and the general public and the interconnection of transportation with other regional development opportunities.

The following sections detail the program of policies, activities, and feedback opportunities as required by 23 CFR § 450.316 pursuant to the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act signed in 2015. In support of furthering public engagement within the metropolitan transportation planning process, DSATS incorporates the following objectives into the development of this plan.

- 
- Notify** the public of policies, projects, and issues related to the planning process
 - Engage** stakeholders with opportunities for participating in the decision-making process
 - Listen** to citizen concerns and ideas and address them in a prompt manner
 - Learn** from feedback to develop consensus and generate better planning decisions
 - Expand** an effective outreach process that includes an integrated feedback process
 - Evaluate** regularly the measured effectiveness of participation strategies

Mission Statement

The DeKalb-Sycamore Area Transportation Study will provide opportunities for meaningful public and stakeholder involvement in the transportation related decision-making processes. DSATS will accomplish this by making information accessible to all citizens through multiple venues and techniques. Actual and meaningful discussion and input is the key to effective public involvement. This Policy outlines the strategies that DSATS will employ to accomplish this goal.

IMPLEMENTATION

DSATS staff place special emphasis on connecting with the public to garner local support and produce plans that are grounded in a shared vision for the future. To this end, DSATS employs a variety of techniques to inform the public about work products, input opportunities, and to raise awareness of actions affecting the local transportation system. The principles and techniques described throughout this section are consistent with the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) and the principles underlying the FAST Act. A summary of public engagement methods implemented is provided in **Table 1**.

Public Access

All contemporary program materials are available on the DSATS website, can be provided to the public upon request, and can be viewed at the DSATS office located at the DeKalb County Highway Department. Whenever time permits, DSATS will accommodate requests for meetings with interested members of the public.

All regularly scheduled meetings are held at the DeKalb County Highway Department building, which is conveniently located near the geographic center of the MPA and equidistant to the core communities of DeKalb, Sycamore, and Cortland. The meeting room is easily identifiable from the visiting public and fully ADA accessible.

DSATS is governed by three regularly scheduled public committees. Decision-making for DSATS is handled by the Policy Committee (PC), while the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) and Transit Operations Committee (TOC) serve advisory roles. Each committee's membership consists of representatives from each jurisdiction within the MPA and the state of Illinois through IDOT.

Consistent with Illinois OMA requirements, all regularly scheduled meetings of these committees are determined annually and published within a local newspaper, on the DSATS website, and included on the DeKalb County government calendar. Meeting agendas are provided to committee members, posted on the website, and displayed in the meeting space at least 48-hours prior. Meeting minutes are published on the website once approved at a subsequent meeting.

TOC and TAC meetings are scheduled for the first Wednesday of each month, at 10:00am and 11:00am respectively. PC meetings are scheduled for the second Wednesday of each month at 3:00pm. A public comment period is provided during each regular meeting, and citizens are always encouraged to provide input. Should there be nothing for the agenda in a particular month, meetings may be canceled by notification to committee members and posting the cancellation notice on the DSATS website and at the meeting location.

In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, DSATS holds three subcommittees, the Active Transportation Subcommittee, Bylaws Subcommittee, and Project Selection Subcommittee on an as-needed basis to discuss technical details regarding the specific topic area. Similar to regularly scheduled meetings, subcommittee meetings are held at the DeKalb County Highway Department during normal business hours and provide dedicated time for public comment. Notification of a scheduled meeting is published no later than 48 hours in advance.

Mandated Work Products

The following planning documents constitute the mandated work program undertaken by the MPO. Each document is created with consultation from member agencies, IDOT, and additional stakeholders where appropriate. Concurrent to public engagement strategies employed during plan development, such as public meetings, open houses, surveys, and/or other visualizations when appropriate, opportunities for public input are provided during public committee meetings held for plan review and adoption.

A public review period is a required element for most mandated plans before adoption. When appropriate, initial plan adoption and significant modifications require a public review period ranging from 14 days to 45 days. The public review period must be advertised as a legal notice within a local newspaper and on the DSATS website prior to the events.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The MTP is a guiding document that details how transportation systems in the MPA are expected to evolve over the next 20 years and documents the collaborative efforts determined by the metropolitan area to meet resulting needs. This document serves as the cornerstone plan that guides most other MPO activities, is required to be updated every 5 years, and can be amended as needed to reflect contemporary conditions. Various public engagement methods and visualizations are employed during plan development. Initial plan adoption and significant modifications require a 28-day public review period.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP documents transportation projects anticipated to be performed within the MPA over the next five years in support of the goals, objectives, and recommendations documented in the MTP. The TIP must include projects receiving federal funding and other regionally significant projects. This document is updated annually in consultation with member agencies and IDOT and is designed to receive modifications throughout the year based on project needs.

Initial TIP adoption requires a 28-day public review period while modifications necessitate a 14-day public review period when possible. Every year, in cooperation with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), DSATS also publishes an Annual Listing of Obligated Projects (ALOP) that details all projects for which federal funds were obligated in the preceding fiscal year.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Similar to the TIP, the UPWP documents transportation planning activities to be performed in the MPA in support of the goals, objectives, and recommendations documented in the MTP. The document is updated annually and details the budget and activities conducted by DSATS staff over the next fiscal year. While public review is not required, the plan is made available for review on the DSATS website prior to adoption.

Title VI

The MPO Title VI program includes information on how Title VI and Environmental Justice considerations are reflected in the planning activities of the MPO, including the formulation of the MTP, TIP, UPWP, publications, communication, and public involvement efforts. Concurrent to policies and procedures identified to ensure compliance, the document also includes direction from the PPP and goals for reaching limited-English proficiency households. The plan is required to be updated every three years. Plan adoption requires a 28-day public review period.

Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP)

Often referred to as the Coordinated Plan, this document identifies the transportation needs of individuals with a disability, older adults, and people with low-incomes and, working with the public and regional stakeholders, identifies strategies to meet their needs. Various public engagement methods are employed during plan development. Plan adoption requires a 28-day public review period.

Public Participation Plan (PPP)

As described within this document, the PPP highlights the program of policies, activities, and opportunities for public input during the MPO transportation planning process. Items outlined within this document are coordinated with statewide transportation planning public involvement and local agencies when appropriate. This plan must be updated in concert with the MTP five-year update cycle and is reviewed by DSATS annually. Plan adoption requires a 45-day public review period.

Other Engagement Activities

Public Meetings & Open Houses

When plan development necessitates substantial public engagement outside of regularly scheduled meetings, DSATS can host open houses, topic-specific forums, project-based workshops, or general feedback sessions to educate and engage the public and stakeholders in the plan development process. Public meetings are often included within the initial work schedule for most plans and projects, and will be advertised to the public through various means.

Mailing List & Notifications

DSATS maintains multiple mailing lists for committee members and regional stakeholders to distribute information pertinent to the transportation planning process, including meeting notifications, grant opportunities, and pertinent news. These lists also serve as the first level distribution of public surveys, and along with published legal notices, notification of public meetings.

Website

DSATS maintains its own website at www.DSATS.org. The website serves as the primary gateway for individuals and groups interested in learning about or participating in DSATS planning and programming activities. Documentation of DSATS's plans, studies, and committee agendas and minutes are located on the website. In addition to serving as the primary outlet for public notices, DSATS solicits public participation on the website through online comment submission forms.

Table 1: Summary of Plan Engagement Strategies

<i>Program Plan:</i>	MTP	TIP	UPWP	Title VI	HSTP	PPP	Other
Update Cycle (Years)	5	1	1	3	5	5	-
Public Review (Days)	28	28	■	28	28	45	■
Committee Meetings	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mailing Lists	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	■
Public Meetings	✓	-	-	-	✓	-	■
Website	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

✓ = Primary Strategy ■ = When Possible/Appropriate

Traditionally Underserved Population (TUP) Outreach

DSATS makes every effort to seek out and consider the needs of TUPs, such as low-income and minority households and persons with disabilities who may face challenges accessing employment and other services. The MPO identifies residential, employment, and transportation patterns of TUPs so that their needs can be identified and addressed. Public involvement processes are evaluated and improved, where necessary, to eliminate participation barriers and engage minority and low-income population in transportation decisions.

Public Input Processing

Public input received during the planning and program development process will be evaluated as to its appropriateness and significance, and written responses will be prepared only when specifically requested. Significant comments may be incorporated into final reports by either a response based on practical engineering principles and technical committee review, through policy change, or in an appendix.

When significant comments on a draft MTP or TIP are made by either the public or through an interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made a part of the final plan or TIP. If comments received on any plan or product that significantly alter the original document made available, an additional opportunity for public comments will be made.

Regional Coordination

In addition to fostering participation from the public, DSATS coordinates transportation planning and subsequent public input activities with federal, state, and local planning organizations. Various jurisdictions, including municipalities, counties, institutions, and state and federal partners serve as MPO committee member organizations and are integral to the everyday operation of the MPO. **Appendix B** provides a list of planning partners that serve on primary committees.

Outreach Strategy Evaluation

Periodic evaluation of DSATS’ efforts will determine whether public participation methods are effective. In the event a public participation program is not effective, it can be redesigned and improved to achieve the public participation goals of DSATS.

The evaluation of DSATS public participation program will focus on an assessment of each strategy’s overall success and effectiveness in achieving its participation goals. Criteria have been established to accurately measure the effectiveness of each of the recommended public participation tools in accomplishing these goals. **Table 2** illustrates the evaluation criteria in both qualitative and quantitative forms.

Table 2: Public Engagement Strategy Evaluation Measures

Strategy	Quantitative Measure	Qualitative Measure
Mailing Lists	Number of additions to mailing list	Concise and clear information portrayed
	Diversity of representation	-
	Quantity of materials distributed	-
Meetings & Open Houses	Number of public input events	Effectiveness of event format
	Number of comments received	Public understanding of the process
	Number of participants	Timing of public involvement
	Number of TUP attendees	Meeting convenience
	Diversity of attendees	Quality of public input
Website	Number of documents	Timeliness of document updates
	Number of website hits per month	Effective format for information access
	Number of comments submitted	Quality of input received
	Number of additions to mailing list	Concise and clean information

On all occasions, measures of public participation are recorded as numbers, statistics, and summaries of qualitative observations. The quantitative measurements typically determine the “who,” “what” and “where” of decision-making, whereas the qualitative measurements determine the “why” and “how”—which are not easily determined by numbers or statistics. Quantitative measurements are usually conclusive while qualitative measurements are exploratory in nature.

The quantitative and qualitative measures will be compiled annually and analyzed against previous years’ data to determine change in participation levels. Results of such analysis could be presented and discussed at an annual staff public participation meeting to determine the effectiveness of the tools.

APPENDIX A: ACRYONYMS AND DEFINITIONS

FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
HSTP	Human Services Transportation Plan
IDOT	Illinois Department of Transportation
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NIU	Northern Illinois University
OMA	Open Meetings Act
PC	Policy Committee
PPP	Public Participation Plan
TAC	Transportation Advisory Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOC	Transit Operations Committee
TUP	Traditionally Underserved Population
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program

Environmental Justice (EJ)

Environmental justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.

Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

The region designated by the MPO and Governor in which the MPO carries out its transportation planning responsibilities and encompasses at least the existing urbanized area and the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within a 20-year forecast period.

Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provides that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance.

Urbanized Area (UZA)

A contiguous urban area with a population of 50,000 or more as designated by the U.S. Census Bureau.

APPENDIX B: PRIMARY COMMITTEE PLANNING PARTNERS

Organization	Title	PC	TAC	TOC
City of DeKalb	Mayor	P	-	-
	City Alderman	P	-	-
	City Manager	P	-	-
	Director – Utilities, Engineering, and Transportation	A	A	P
	City Engineer	A	P	-
	Transit Manager	N	N	A
	Transit Grants Administrator	N	N	N
City of Sycamore	City Manager	P	A	-
	Mayor	P	-	-
	City Engineer	A	P	P
	Finance Director	A	A	A
	Human & Administrative Resources Director	A	-	-
DeKalb County	Board Chairman	P	-	-
	County Administrator	A	A	-
	Deputy County Administrator	A	P	A
	County Engineer	-	A	A
	Administrative Assistant	-	-	P
FHWA	Metropolitan Planning Specialist	N	N	N
FTA	Transportation Program Specialist	-	-	N
IDOT District #3	Region 2 Engineer	P	A	-
	Programming Engineer	A	P	-
	Cost and Estimates Engineer	A	P	-
IDOT Local Roads	Local Road Engineer	N	N	-
IDOT OP&P	Metropolitan Planning Manager	N	N	N
IDOT OIPI	Transit Operations Project Manager	-	-	N
Kishwaukee College	Vice President of Student Services	-	-	P
NIU	President	P	-	-
	Director of Community Promotions	A	A	A
	Associate VP Facilities Management & Campus Services	A	P	P
	Office Manager	A	A	A
NIU Student Association	Assistant Dean of Students	N	-	-
	Director of Advertising	-	-	P
	Student Government Association Advisor	-	-	A
Taylor Municipal Airport	Airport Manager	-	N	-
Town of Cortland	Mayor	P	A	A
	Town Engineer	A	P	P
Transdev	General Manager	N	-	N
VAC	Executive Director	N	-	N
	VP of Operations	N	-	N
	Operations Manager	N	-	N

P = Primary Voting Member A = Alternative Voting Member N = Non-voting

APPENDIX C: MPO ADOPTION

Copy of signed adopting resolution



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DeKalb, Illinois 60115
DSATS@DeKalbCounty.org | (815) 756-9513