

Public Participation Plan

South Central Transit Authority

2025



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■ Introduction

South Central Transit Authority (SCTA) is the management organization that oversees The Red Rose Transit Authority (RRTA) in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and Berks Area Regional Transportation Authority (BARTA) in Berks County, Pennsylvania. SCTA was formed by the County of Berks and the County of Lancaster to manage BARTA and RRTA's public transportation services. SCTA is a municipal authority and began operations in 2014.

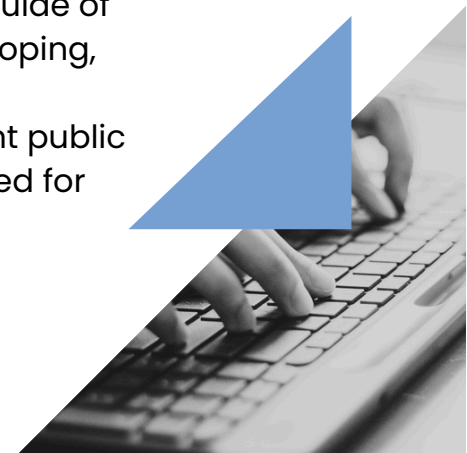
Together SCTA, BARTA, and RRTA provide both fixed-route bus service and door-to-door paratransit service and transport roughly 5.1 million passengers annually with a fleet of 99 buses and 124 paratransit vehicles. Funding to provide service is derived from the Federal Transportation Administration, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation, Berks County, Lancaster County, and through passenger fares.

SCTA is governed by a volunteer ten-member Board of Directors that is responsible for establishing policies and procedures for the daily operation of the Authority. The Board hires a Solicitor for legal advice and an accounting firm to conduct annual audits of revenues and expenditures. The responsibility for the daily operation of the Authority falls to the Executive Director of SCTA who ensures that the policies and procedures are distributed and followed by all employees.

The Public Participation Plan outlines the strategies SCTA will use to engage the public in the organization's planning process. This plan establishes the baseline public involvement methods that must be followed for each SCTA plan, project, or program established for BARTA or RRTA.

Purpose

The purpose of this Public Participation Plan is to provide the public and all other stakeholders with a comprehensive guide of the public engagement process SCTA follows when developing, updating, or reviewing transportation plans, projects, and programs. SCTA will use this plan to obtain and implement public feedback into the planning process for projects established for BARTA and RRTA (see Appendix A).



Goals

Provide a Predictable Process for Public Participation

- Clearly describe how the public can become involved in the decision-making process for SCTA's transportation projects that affect their communities.

Engage Relevant Stakeholders

- Encourage public participation in SCTA's project planning by establishing productive, inclusive, and accessible engagement opportunities for stakeholders.

Receive Constructive Input

- Obtain relevant feedback from the public throughout the planning process.

Enhance Decision-Making

- Apply relevant feedback to the decision-making process to ensure the decisions associated with the proposed project reflect the community it will serve.

Measure Effectiveness

- Report the effectiveness of community engagement efforts following the project's completion against the public participation goals.

Guiding Principles for Public Participation at SCTA

■ Regulatory Compliance

- SCTA complies with all Federal and State Requirements affecting the public participation plan.

■ Transparency

- SCTA clearly communicates when, where, and how stakeholders may have an impact on decision making.

■ Consistency

- SCTA regularly communicates with stakeholders and the public by providing updates throughout the planning and decision-making process.

■ **Diversity and Inclusivity**

- SCTA strives to obtain community opinion and feedback representative of all populations that will be impacted by the proposed project

■ **Accessibility**

- SCTA ensures all stakeholders and the public have equal access and opportunity to participate in all engagement activities and submit their comments on a proposed project.

■ **Relevant Laws & Regulations**

State Requirements

● ***Pennsylvania Sunshine Act***

The Pennsylvania Sunshine Act, 65 Pa. C.S. §§ 701-716, requires agencies to deliberate and take official action on agency business in an open and public meeting. It requires that meetings have prior notice, and that the public can attend, participate, and comment before an agency takes official action.

● ***Pennsylvania Sunshine Act Amendment***

In 2021, the Sunshine Act was amended to provide new requirements for publishing and posting public meeting agendas. The amendment requires local governing bodies to post agendas to their publicly accessible website at least 24 hours in advance of the public meeting.

● ***Pennsylvania Right to Know Law***

Under the Pennsylvania Right to Know Law, 65 P.S. §67.101 et seq., Pennsylvania residents have the right to examine, inspect, and duplicate any public record of a public agency.

Federal Requirements

● ***Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)***

As a recipient of federal transit funding, SCTA is required to produce and manage a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which serves as the short-range transit investment strategy. A separate TIP is created for the RRTA service area and one for the BARTA service area. The TIP considers the constraints of federal, state, and local funding throughout the next four years. Projects that are included in the TIP come from the SCTA's Capital Projects Budget and the Program of Projects.

● ***Title VI***

Title VI, 42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq., was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

● ***Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)***

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in several areas, including employment, transportation, public accommodations, communications and access to state and local government' programs and services.

■ Public Participation Process

Project Partners & Stakeholders

Internal Assessment

SCTA staff will conduct an internal assessment at the start of each project. The agency will define the project, identify the decision to be made, list all project partners and stakeholders affected by the proposed project, and discuss the expected outcomes for public participation.

External Assessment

SCTA staff will work with project partners and/or an outside third-party to identify and list all stakeholders that should be engaged in the decision making process, begin to identify how stakeholders perceive the decision to be made, and consider how to reach stakeholders in order to achieve expected outcomes defined in the internal assessment.

The Spectrum of Public Participation

SCTA will select an appropriate level of public participation for each project using the International Association for Public Participation's (IAP2) Spectrum of Public Participation (Figure 1). The Spectrum of Public Participation is a model used to define the public's role in any community engagement process. This tool outlines five levels of involvement ranging from minimal to substantial impact on the final decision: Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate, and Empower.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Figure 1: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

Public Participation Strategy & Tools

After defining the appropriate public participation level, SCTA will determine the tools necessary to execute the engagement strategy.

Assess Resources

Based on the public participation goals defined during the internal assessment and the level of public involvement selected, SCTA will determine the resources necessary to achieve the public participation goals such as printing, room rentals, staffing, etc.

Ensure Activities are Inclusive and Accessible

SCTA will select engagement activities and tools that are inclusive and accessible to all populations that will be impacted by the proposed plan, project, or program.

SCTA will select public participation tools from the following list depending on the level of public involvement determined. A combination of tools from multiple levels may be selected as long as all tools fall under the highest public participation level selected. SCTA will consider the public participation goals, the stakeholders to be engaged, available resources, and any other relevant context to determine the public participation tools best suited for the plan.

*Note: All print/digital communication will be provided in English and Spanish.

Public Participation Tools By Level of Influence

Inform:

● **Website Content**

- SCTA website
 - New & Updates
- RRTA and BARTA websites
 - Alerts
 - New & Updates

● **Digital Screens**

- RRTA customer screens
- BARTA customer screens

● **Social Media Posts**

- Facebook
- Twitter
- Instagram
- LinkedIn

● **Media Outlets**

- Newspaper articles
- Press releases

● **Outreach Events**

- Attend community events targeting populations impacted by proposed project
 - Ensure outreach events target under-represented populations including by not limited to:
 - Elderly
 - Persons with disabilities
 - Low-income
 - Non-English speaking

● **Fact Sheets**

- Print and digital
 - List key information and updates about the proposed project

● **Promotional Posters, Flyers, Brochures**

- Print and digital
 - Promote project/plan
 - Promote engagement tool (Ex: How to partake in survey)

● **Public Meetings/Hearings**

- Public meetings/hearings held in person or virtually with the goal of informing/updating the public on the proposed project's development
 - The scheduling and location of the public meeting will be determined to maximize the potential participation by the public at a location that is accessible for persons with disabilities and by public transportation.

Consult:

● **Sunshine Law Meetings**

- Monthly Board Meetings
 - Public may make comments on proposed project during monthly board meetings

● **Open Comment Periods**

- Public may submit comments online or by mail through established comment period
 - Open Comment Period may be promoted on social media, website, digital screens, and/or during outreach events

● **Focus Groups**

- In person or online sessions with small groups of demographically targeted citizens who may share comments and feedback on the proposed project

● **Contests**

- Contests to engage and encourage public to submit ideas for proposed project

Involve:

● ***Public Meetings/Hearings***

- Public meetings/hearings held in person or virtually with the goal of acquiring public opinion and feedback throughout the proposed project's development
 - The scheduling and location of the public meeting will be determined to maximize the potential participation by the public at a location that is accessible for persons with disabilities and by public transportation.

● ***Surveys***

- Public opinion surveys
- Statistical surveys
 - Both print and digital surveys will be available to the public. Print surveys will be distributed at in person events, meetings, and/or workshops. Digital surveys will be distributed through channels such as social media, SCTA/BARTA/RTA's website, email, and/or QR codes.

Collaborate :

● ***Charrettes***

- Workshops for public to provide feedback to SCTA, and potentially SCTA's project partners, throughout the development process of the proposed project

Empower:

● ***Citizen Advisory Board***

- Appointed group of representative stakeholders within the community who offer feedback and assist in project planning throughout each phase of the proposed project's development

■ Public Participation Plan Steps

SCTA will use the following steps at the beginning of a project's development to determine the appropriate public participation strategy that will be used.

- 01 Define Project and Goals**
- 02 Identify Project Partners & Stakeholders**
- 03 Determine Public Participation Level**
- 04 Define Public Participation Goals**
- 05 Select Public Participation Tools**
- 06 Implementation Strategy**
- 07 Timeline**
- 08 Communicate Results to Stakeholders**
- 09 Measure Success**

■ Appendix A

Public Participation Plan Template



Project: _____

Division: _____

Date: _____

■ Appendix A

01. Define Project and Goals

Date:

Project:

Division (SCTA/RRTA/BARTA):

Define Project:

Overview of the project

Timeline:

Start Date (Month/Year)

End Date (Month/Year)

Project Goals:

1

2

3

■ Appendix A

02. Identify Project Partners & Stakeholders

Project Partners:

Organizations working with SCTA to carry out the proposed project

Stakeholders:

Groups impacted by proposed project

Appendix A

03. Determine Public Participation Level

Public Participation Level:

Reference Figure 1 and check the appropriate public participation level for the proposed project.

Inform
 Consult
 Involve
 Collaborate
 Empower

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation



IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

		INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL		To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC		We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Figure 1: IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

■ Appendix A

04. Determine Public Participation Goals

List public participation goal(s) for the proposed project (EX: number of meeting attendees, number of relevant comments, social media engagement rates, etc.)

Metric(s):

Goal(s):

Empty box for Metric(s)

Empty box for Goal(s)

■ Appendix A

05. Select Public Participation Tools

Engagement Activities:

Check the appropriate engagement level and list the tools you will use to engage stakeholders. These tools are informed by the engagement level determined in Step 3 and the public participation goals determined in Step 4.

Engagement Level	Engagement Activities (public participation tools used)
<input type="checkbox"/> Inform	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consult	
<input type="checkbox"/> Involve	
<input type="checkbox"/> Collaborate	
<input type="checkbox"/> Empower	

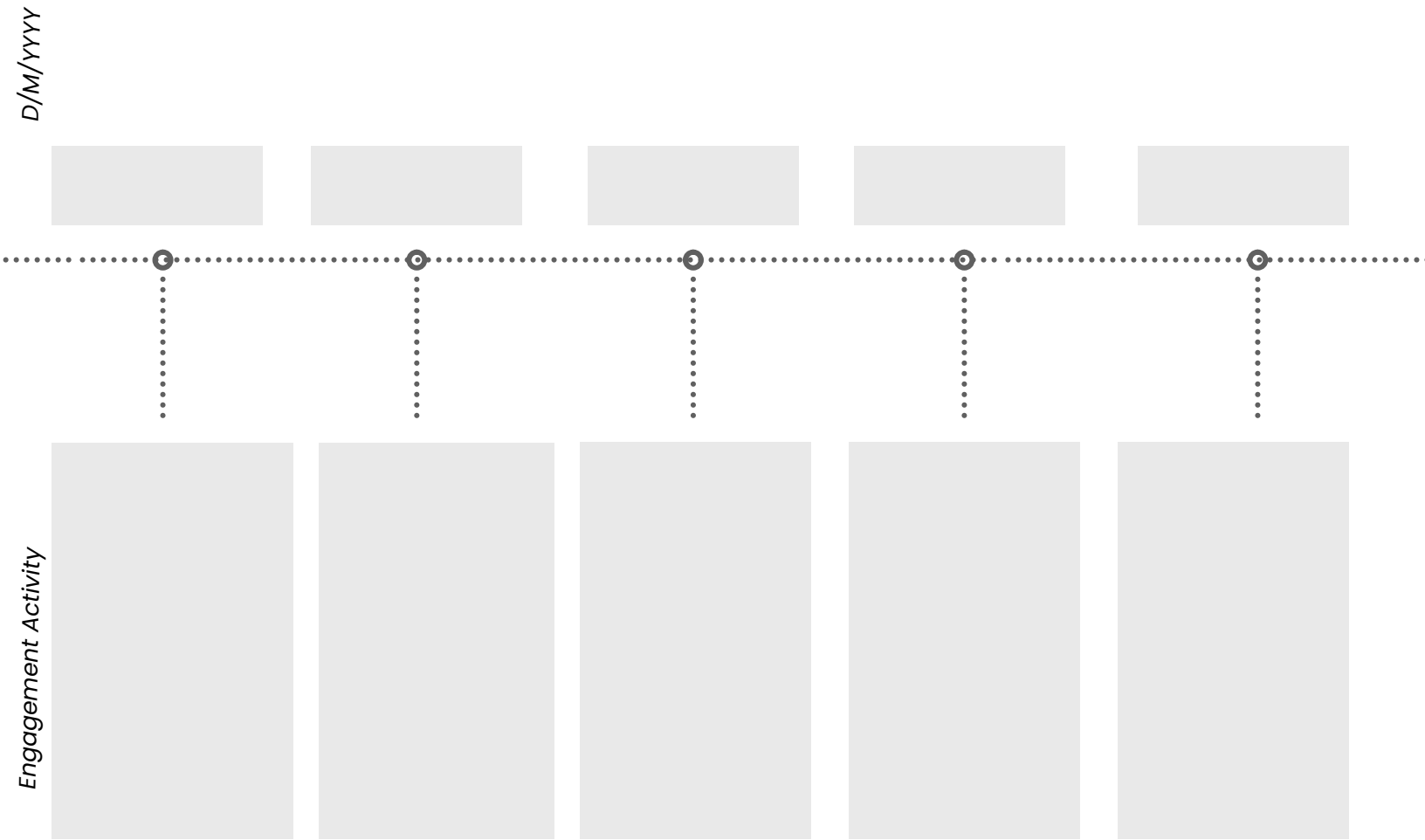
■ Appendix A

06. Implementation Strategy

Engagement Activity <i>List each engagement activity determined above</i>	When <i>M/D/YYYY</i>	Where <i>Location/online</i>	Resources <i>Supplies, staff, cost, etc. necessary to carry out each activity</i>	Inclusivity and Accessibility <i>List efforts made to ensure each activity is inclusive and accessible</i>

■ Appendix A

07. Timeline



■ Appendix A

08. Communicate Results to Stakeholders

Community Feedback:

What we've heard

Resolution:

What we're doing

--	--

Communicate Results:

List how updates will be communicated to public throughout the planning and decision-making process.

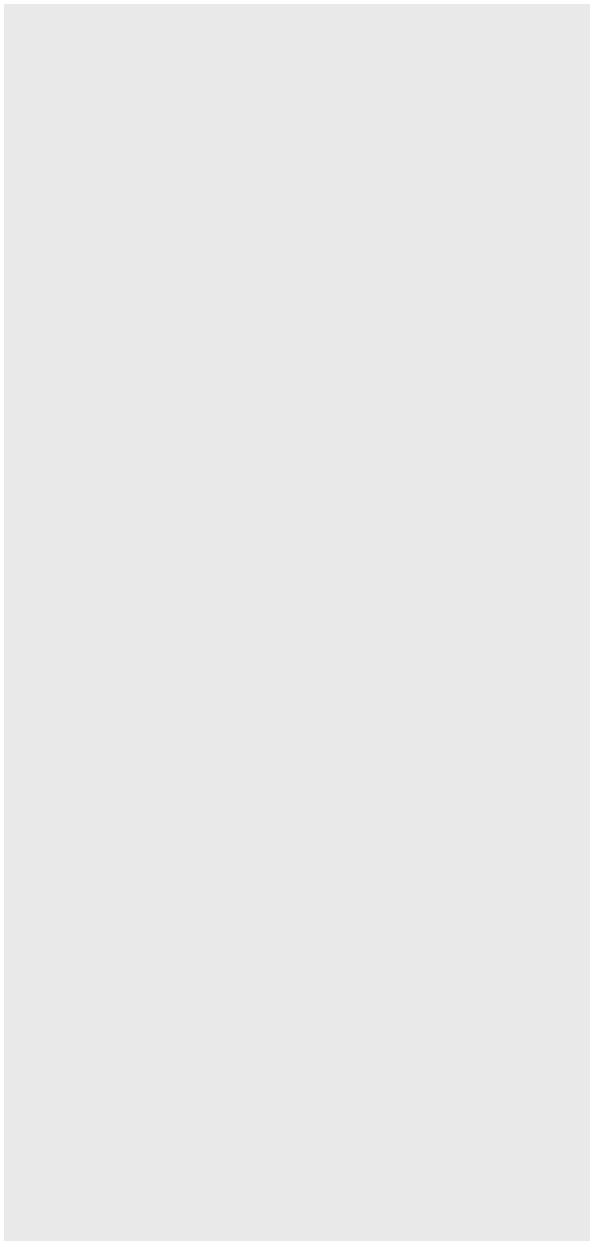
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■ Appendix A

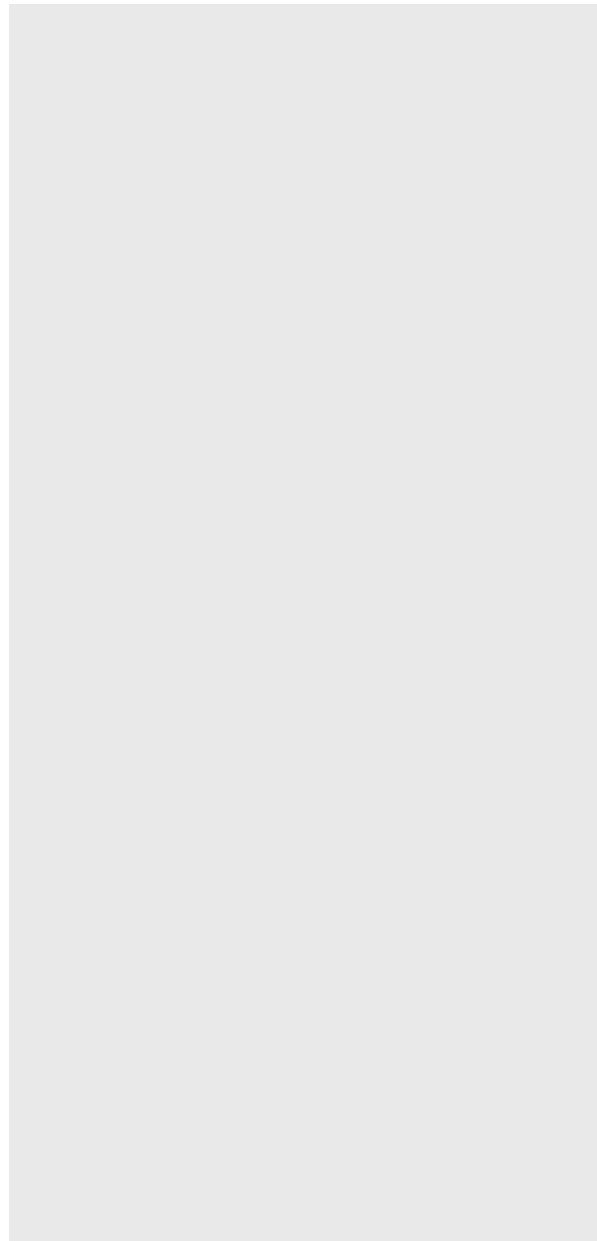
09. Measure Success

Measure success of public engagement strategy by comparing public participation goals determined in Step 4 to actual results of public engagement process once the project is completed.

Goals:



Results:



■ Appendix B

Public Participation Strategy

Service and Fare Changes



■ Appendix B

Public Participation Plan: Service and Fare Changes

Purpose

As a recipient of 5307 funds, SCTA is required to have in place a plan to notify and provide the opportunity for public participation and comment on service and fare changes. In accordance with Section 5307, SCTA developed this Public Participation Plan for Service and Fare Changes.

SCTA will follow the specific public participation plan outlined below when providing public participation opportunities regarding service and fare changes. This plan will adhere to all goals, guiding principles, and laws and regulations outlined in the public participation plan (pp. 3-5).

When is a Public Hearing Required?

A public hearing is required as follows:

1. There is a change in any fare.
2. There is a change in service, which affects:
 - a. 25% or more of the route miles of a route;
 - b. 25% or more of the revenue vehicle miles for a given day;
 - c. 25% or more of the ridership of a route for a given day; or
3. A new route is established.
4. A route is discontinued in its entirety.

Exceptions to the above include promotional discounts or free fare days; headway adjustments of up to 5 minutes in peak and 15 minutes in non-peak hours; standard seasonal variations; emergency services or experimental services up to 180 days in length.

■ Appendix B

Public Notice

A public hearing, with proper advertisement of notice published for one (1) day in a general circulation newspaper, will be utilized to provide the public with the opportunity to comment on the proposals set forth by SCTA. SCTA may hold the hearing prior to its regularly scheduled public Board meeting at SCTA's Administrative Offices, 45 Erick Road, Lancaster, PA or at SCTA's Reading Office, 1700 North 11th Street, Reading, PA or on an alternate date with the place and time to be announced. The proposed changes shall be presented publicly at the prior public Board meeting, if held, and the appropriate notice of the hearing published no less than twenty (20) days before the scheduled hearing.

In addition to publishing a general description of the proposed changes within the time frame indicated above in a general circulation newspaper, SCTA will prepare and distribute a rider notice on the affected routes or all routes in the case of annual changes. This notice will provide relevant information on changes not only which meet the public hearing thresholds, but also other changes which affect customers. This notice will include information on the time and place of the public hearing and advise interested persons their comments may also be submitted in writing or through email.

In the event SCTA makes minor adjustments to a schedule or route for reasons of safety, efficiency or other necessary reason, a notice or other reasonable attempt shall be made to inform customers of the change.

In addition to posting and distributing the notices on the vehicles, the rider notice will be posted and copies made available at Queen Street Station, BARTA Transportation Center, Lancaster Operations Center and/or Reading Operations Center as required based on the location affected by the proposed fare and/or service change.

■ Appendix B

Notices of a proposed change in any fare or service changes are posted on SCTA's, BARTA's and/or RRTA's website. The website notice will include information on the time and place of the public hearing and advise interested persons their comments may also be submitted in writing or through email. Text and Twitter alerts will be issued about the availability of this information on the website.

Notices of a proposed change in any fare or service changes are announced on large digital signs installed at the BARTA Transportation Center and Queen Street Station. The notice will include information on the time and place of the public hearing and advise interested persons their comments may also be submitted in writing or through email.

For shared ride service fare increases, in addition to the public hearing notice in a general circulation newspaper and a SCTA, BARTA and/or RRTA website notice, notices will be posted on the shared ride vehicles, distributed to SCTA customers and a letter will be sent to the agencies who utilize and fund the service.

The rider, website and digital sign notices for fare or service changes will be provided in English and Spanish.

SCTA will provide a Virtual Public Meeting participation option at the same time the in-person public hearing is scheduled.

■ Appendix B

Public Participation Plan Process

Receiving Public Comments

- SCTA records all comments received from persons attending the public hearing or in writing or through email. The SCTA staff provides written responses to the comments received and recommendations as to how to proceed based on the comments received. This written report is presented to the Board at the meeting where the service or fare change will be considered. If no comments are received on a specific route, schedule or fare change, this will be noted in the written report to the Board.

Communicating Results

- Once the SCTA Board takes action on the proposed service or fare change, the public will be informed of the changes approved through a rider notice, website announcements and a posting on the digital sign. These announcements will also note the date the change goes into effect.

■ Appendix C

Public Participation Strategy

Annual Program of Projects



■ Appendix C

Public Participation Plan: Annual Program of Projects

Purpose

As a recipient of 5307 funds and in accordance with Section 5307, SCTA will hold public hearings as part of the development of its annual Program of Projects. The procedures followed in holding these public hearings is described in this Public Participation Plan for SCTA’s annual Program of Projects .

SCTA will follow the specific public participation plan outlined below when providing public participation opportunities regarding the development of its annual Program of Projects. This plan will adhere to all goals, guiding principles, and laws and regulations outlined in the public participation plan (pp. 3-5).

Public Notice

The draft Program of Projects and the Authority’s draft Capital Budget for the next fiscal year will be presented at a public Board meeting. Following this meeting, a notice explaining the Program of Projects and announcing the date, time and place for the public hearings will be published in a newspaper of general circulation in Berks and Lancaster Counties and posted on SCTA’s website no less than twenty (20) days before the scheduled hearings. A notice regarding the Public Hearings on the Program of Projects is posted on the large digital signs at the BARTA Transportation Center and Queen Street Station, on the buses and at Queen Street Station, BARTA Transportation Center, Lancaster Operations Center and Reading Operations Center.

Information on the proposed Program of Projects and the scheduled public hearings is forwarded to the Berks County Planning Commission and the Lancaster County Planning Department for posting on their respective websites and for distribution via email to individuals and agencies on their email distribution lists.

■ Appendix C

The hearings will be held on separate days and generally in the late afternoon at SCTA's Administrative Offices, 45 Erick Road, Lancaster, PA and at SCTA's Reading Offices, 1700 North 11th Street, Reading, PA. Individuals are invited to provide comments at the hearing or in writing through the mail or an email.

SCTA will follow specific public participation plan outlined below when providing public participation opportunities regarding the development of its annual Program of Projects. This plan will adhere to all goals, guiding principles, and laws and regulations outlined in the public participation plan (pp. 3-5).

The information and notices on the proposed Program of Projects will be provided in English and Spanish.

SCTA will provide a Virtual Public Meeting participation option at the same time the in-person public hearing is scheduled.

Public Participation Plan Process

Receiving Public Comments

- SCTA records all comments received from persons attending the public hearing or in writing or through email. The SCTA staff provides written responses to the comments received and recommendations as to how to proceed based on the comments received. This written report is presented to the Board at the meeting where the Program of Programs will be considered for approval. If no comments are received, this will be noted in the written report to the Board.

Communicating Results

- Once the SCTA Board takes action to approve the Program of Projects, a notice describing the approved Program of Projects will be posted on the SCTA website.

■ Appendix D

Resources

IAP2 Spectrum Evolution. International Association for Public Participation.

<https://www.iap2.org/page/SpectrumEvolution>

Public Participation Plan > Pierce Transit. <https://www.piercetransit.org/public-participation-plan>

Public Participation Plan – Talk PA Transportation. <https://talkpatransportation.com/how-it-works/ppp>

Public Participation Plan – RTC Washoe. <https://rtcwashoe.com/planning/public-participation-plan/>

Public Participation Guide: Process Planning | US EPA. US EPA. <https://www.epa.gov/international-cooperation/public-participation-guide-process-planning>

Public Engagement Plan. <https://www.transportation.ohio.gov/programs/public-involvement/toolbox/planning/public-engagement-plan#:~:text=The%20PEP%20should%20designate%20how,controversial%20projects%20is%20strongly%20recommended>

Public Participation Plan & Measures of Effectiveness Report – Plan Hillsborough. Plan Hillsborough. <https://planhillsborough.org/public-participation-plan-evaluation-report/>

Public Participation Plan, Lancaster County Planning.

<https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dd84058d84ad618650cb55d/t/646e13c3b32d1036fe2e36c4/1684935622375/Public+Participation+Plan+%28April+2023%29.pdf>

Public Participation Plan, Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization.

<https://fampo.gwregion.org/wp-content/uploads/2017-adopted-public-participation-plan-final.pdf>

What is Public Participation? Let's Talk Bloomington. <https://letstalk.bloomingtonmn.gov/public-participation-spectrum>