

## Introduction

The purpose of this document is to establish citizen (public) participation policies and procedures for information dissemination and public comment solicitation for development and review of programs and projects carried out by Dorchester County.

### A. Public Participation Law

The Federal regulations bearing on this Public Participation Plan are as follows:

#### A.1. Federal Transit Administration

Federal Transit Administration Program-of-Projects Requirements and Section 5307 Grant Program 49 U.S.C. Section 5307(c)(1) through (c)(7) is the enabling legislation empowering Federal grant programs for public transit throughout the United States. The legislation also instructs the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) to implement public participation requirements as a condition of Federal funding. FTA grant applicants must integrate compliance with public participation requirements into Section 5307 grant program applications. The grant applicant must explicitly state that public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review and comment on the TIP will satisfy the program-of-projects requirements of the Urbanized Area Formula Program. A project that requires an environmental assessment or an environmental impact statement will involve additional public involvement, as presented in joint FHWA/FTA environmental regulations, "Environmental Impact and Related Procedures," 23 C.F.R. Part 771.

#### A.2. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit plans and services. In accordance with ADA guidelines, all meetings conducted by Dorchester County will take place in locations that are accessible to persons with mobility limitations. Also, auxiliary aids and services are provided when necessary to ensure effective communications, unless an undue burden or fundamental alteration would result, to allow a person with a disability to participate. "Auxiliary aids" include such services or devices as qualified interpreters, assistive listening headsets, television captioning and decoders, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDD's), videotext displays, readers taped text, Brail materials, and larger print materials. Dorchester County public meeting notices specify that special accommodations will be provided upon request.

## A.3. Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by recipients of Federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, and national origin, including matters related to language access for Limited English Proficient (LEP) persons. The objectives of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are:

1. To ensure FTA-assisted benefits and related services are equitably distributed without regard to race, color or national origin.
2. To ensure that both the level and quality of transit services provide equal access and mobility for any person without regard to race, color or national origin.
3. To ensure that access to the planning and decision-making process is open and without regard to race, color or national origin.
4. To ensure that decisions on the location of transit facilities and services are made without regard to race, color or national origin.

To comply with these objectives, Dorchester County has adopted the suggested methodology and framework set forth in the Title VI reporting guidelines (FTA Circular 4702.1, Chapter IV). By using this methodology, Dorchester County monitors and compares the performance of its service delivery in line with the stated objectives of its Title VI program.

## A.4. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Title VI directs each Federal agency to develop and implement a system by which limited English proficiency persons can meaningfully access the services it funds. Federal agencies published guidance for their respective grant recipients in order to assist them with their obligations to LEP persons under Title VI. As a result, the FTA published guidance and implemented regulations requiring that grant recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for LEP individuals. Dorchester County as an SCDOT grantee is required to ensure meaningful access to benefits, services and information for LEP persons. Dorchester County is currently working to implement a draft language implementation plan for LEP persons as part of its Title VI program.

## B. Dorchester County's Public Participation Program Elements

### B.1. Citizens Input

Dorchester County will solicit public input on an ongoing basis thru a multifaceted social media strategy including, but not necessarily limited to the County's website and other tools. This approach will provide opportunities for proactive, early, and continuing public participation for County projects, programs and decision making. This multi-pronged strategy will allow staff wide latitude to adapt to take advantage of changing communications technologies and to interact with individuals, group, businesses and strategic partners to ensure citizen access and participation. Mailings and other outreach efforts may be made to solicit input from a forum of organizations serving minorities, low- and moderate-income persons, as well as persons with disabilities and limited English proficient populations.

More structured meetings may be held on specific proposals and projects when desirable to expand support and encourage broad based public participation in the development and review of programs and projects. Dorchester County will aggressively promote opportunities for the inclusion of minority, low- and moderate-income and limited English populations in this forum. Public input may be drawn from, but not necessarily limited to, entities such as:

1. Transit users
2. The general public
3. Non-profit organizations that provide services to the homeless, LEP populations
4. School Districts
5. Neighborhood Organizations
6. Municipal Partners

**B.2. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Dorchester County will continuously monitor, evaluate and improve its public participation process. Regular review will be accomplished by tracking website usage and activity including the number of individuals on Dorchester County’s contact list that receive newsletters, meeting notices and agendas, and other related materials. Furthermore, the public will be encouraged to provide comments and suggestions through various channels and open dialogue will be maintained with advisory groups throughout the community on transportation and planning issues. A record of public comments and those of institutional representatives will be kept, as well as responses to such comments, where pertinent.

**B.3. The Solicitation of Public Comment**

It is Dorchester County’s policy is to disseminate information and to solicit and respond to public comment regarding transportation projects in a manner which is reasonable and practical. Specific elements of this policy are as follows:

1. Except when impossible because of an emergency condition, advance notice of not less than fifteen (15) days will be provided to neighborhood and communities affected by transportation projects. The methods of providing such notice include, but are not limited to, distribution of revised timetables, handouts, posted notices and/or media releases. Moreover, notices will be published in a newspaper of general circulation and also, if applicable, in newspapers oriented to the specific groups or communities affected. Such published notices will include information as to the date, time and location of any public hearings. Not sooner than fifteen (15) days after the notices are published will at least one public hearing be held.

# Dorchester County, SC Public Participation Plan



## Complaints

Any and all Title VI complaints may be directed to Dorchester County's Title VI Coordinator:

Dorchester County  
Human Resources  
Attn: Title VI Coordinator  
201 Johnston Street  
St. George, SC 29477  
tthompson@dorchestercountysc.gov  
Phone: 843-563-0144