Public Participation Plan



Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study (DUATS)

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CHAPTER I – BACKGROUND

The Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study (DUATS) serves as the regional transportation planning entity for the Decatur Urbanized Area and fulfills federal and state requirements for transportation planning in urban areas with more than 50,000 persons. Today the entity fulfills the all-important role of coordinating regional coordination efforts to ensure that regional transportation activities are undertaken in a coordinated and interrelated manner. In addition, federal regulations require the incorporation of public involvement into the metropolitan transportation planning process. Components or objectives of the existing public involvement process followed by DUATS staff have been revised to incorporate elements required of a Public Participation Plan process by 23 CFR Part 450.316 pursuant to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) (Public Law 117-58)

DUATS is continuing its effort to make a concerted effort to increase and enhance its position regarding public involvement. DUATS has committed itself to proactively engaging the citizens of the County in assisting in our regional transportation planning and problem-solving activities.

DUATS intends to more adequately and fully address these principals through communication, consultation, cooperation, and community outreach. At the present time communication, consultation and cooperation are principally accomplished through information sharing and discussion between the members of the Technical and Policy Committees.

The Policy Committee that is served by policy makers from:

- 1. City of Decatur
- 2. Macon County
- 3. Village of Forsyth
- 4. Village of Mt. Zion
- 5. Illinois Department of Transportation District 7

The Technical Committee consists of transportation professionals from the following organizations who recommend action to the Policy Committee:

- 1. City of Decatur
- 2. Macon County
- 3. opens in a new windowDecatur Public Transit System
- 4. Decatur Park District
- 5. Village of Forsyth
- 6. Village of Mt. Zion
- 7. Illinois Department of Transportation District 7

CHAPTER II - CORE DUATS PROGRAMS AND PLANS

2.1 UNIFIED WORK PROGRAM (UWP)

An annual document that summarizes the work areas that DUATS staff will focus on during the program year utilizing the available Federal, State and local funds. It includes the status of ongoing transportation planning activities and the accomplishments which are anticipated. The UWP details the anticipated expenditures for DUATS for the year. Work program procedures contain a description of the functional responsibilities of each participating agency as well as a brief explanation of the means or methodology used to accomplish the work activities for all elements, which are ongoing or periodic in nature.

Unexpected circumstances sometimes necessitate additions to the document outside the regular annual cycle. When this happens, and funding has been clearly identified for any new activities, the Board can amend new work into the UWP as part of its monthly meetings.

2.2 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a financial and implementation schedule for projects receiving federal transportation funding in the Decatur metropolitan area. The TIP documents how DUATS will prioritize limited transportation resources to meet the needs of the region. It contains major surface transportation projects planned to receive federal, state, and local funding within the metro area that will be carried out in a four-year period. Project examples include new roadways, additional lanes to existing streets, interchange construction or modification, improvements to intersections, transit amenities, and bicycle/pedestrian infrastructure. DUATS updates the TIP every year.

With the annual solicitation of project proposals for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), staff reviews and makes recommendations regarding priorities and rank during the approved selection and prioritization process. Areas such as safety, ADT, level of service, lanes, and security are among the criteria used to select projects.

Unexpected circumstances sometimes necessitate additions of new projects to the document outside the regular annual cycle. When this happens, and funding has been clearly identified for any new activities, the Policy Committee can amend the new work into the TIP with a 14-day comment period.

- A minor revision to the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes minor changes to project or project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously-included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates can be approved through an administrative modification that does not require public review and comment

2.3 LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN (LRTP)

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) plays an important role in outlining the existing status and future needs of the MPO planning area's transportation system. It helps set the direction of planning efforts and programming investments. The LRTP evaluates demographic, economic, passenger, and freight forecasts to understand how anticipated growth or decline will interact with expected land use to impact the demands on the transportation system. Through the development of the plan, stakeholder involvement and public input is requested to help guide priorities and projects that will be submitted for federal/state funding at the MPO level.

Staff will use a variety of techniques to ensure that a broad cross section of citizen and group perspectives are considered. These techniques may include surveys, focus groups, stakeholder meetings, issue forums, consultation with planning partners, web-based information exchanges, newsletters, and other public meetings.

- A minor revision to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) that includes minor changes to project or project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously-included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates can be approved through an administrative modification and does not require public review and comment.

2.4 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN (PPP)

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) provides a framework to guide the public participation process for all activities at DUATS, including transportation planning projects and a range of programs and special studies, such as major investment studies. This plan specifies the strategies and techniques DUATS staff will consider and employ in achieving the goals of the public participation process.

As part of the plan, DUATS documents and assesses current public involvement approaches and activities. We identify new ways that our agency should and can reach out to the public, inform the public, and ensure meaningful involvement from all the region's residents. DUATS is dedicated to a planning process that allows all citizens affected by the agency's activities to have a voice.

Effective public involvement requires that the agency be as inclusive as possible to serve the widest range of citizens, especially the hard-to-reach populations who reside in the metro area. The plan will be continuously reassessed and updated as needed. Amendments require opportunities for public review and comments.

CHAPTER III – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

3.1 PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENT

Notices concerning the public review and comment period for the aforementioned transportation plans and programs will be published in a local newspaper and by sending notices to any media outlet requesting such notice.

Public information related to transportation plans and programs and meeting notices of the Decatur Urbanized Area Transportation Study will be provided electronically on the World Wide Web https://decaturil.gov/departments/development-services/decatur-urbanized-area-transportation-study-duats/, including draft and final versions of the Public Participation Plan. The website will also provide meeting agendas and minutes, information on the purpose, programs and structure of DUATS, information on MPO planning projects and studies, and contact information for MPO staff.

Available resources, including web-based mapping, published maps and illustrations and other graphic data will be used by the MPO to visually convey information related to and improving understanding of metropolitan transportation plans and programs.

Any written or oral comments received during the public review period will be considered before adoption of the plan or program. If the final version of the plan or program would be significantly different from the draft which was made available for public review, then the revised version will be put on display for public review and comment in accordance with the aforementioned comment periods. A summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of these comments will be placed in the final draft of the report.

3.2 COMMITTEE MEETINGS

All meetings are open to the public. All meetings will be held at places and times convenient to the public. Meeting rooms will be handicapped accessible. Meetings will not be held on legal holidays. All meetings will be held in accordance with the Illinois Open Meeting Act as referenced in the Illinois Compiled Statutes.

3.3 OUTREACH EFFORTS

As the regional planning agency, our community and transportation planning activities impact every resident in the Decatur Metropolitan Area. We are committed to involving everyone—including low-income, minority, elderly, and limited English proficient populations, and individuals living with disabilities—in regional discussions surrounding social, economic, environmental, community development, and transportation planning decisions.

This intent is based on the following principles:

1. Citizens should be reasonably versed on transportation issues and how transportation related decisions are made which use public tax dollars on public projects. Individuals and communities

impacted by the outcome of public projects should want to have their opinions and perspectives taken into consideration.

- 2. Planners cannot maintain current and relevant knowledge about regional problems without spending time listening and learning from citizens who are directly affected.
- 3. Better planning is accomplished through a balance between local and regional priorities.

DUATS will strive to find new and creative ways to reach and involve people in programming and planning efforts by:

- 1. Clearly articulating the process for public information and involvement from the outset of a project.
- 2. Expanding the types of opportunities for participation