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PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A PUBLIC PROACTIVE INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Prepared by the
Imperial Valley Association of Governments
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I. PURPOSE and PLANNING DEFINITIONS

The purpose of a public participation plan is to ensure a proactive public involvement process that assures the opportunity for the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process by providing complete information, timely public notice, opportunities for making comments, full access to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement in developing transportation plans and programs. When the public is engaged in the process, their feedback helps assure projects address community needs. The Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG) is a subregion of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) in which SCAG acts as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the County of Imperial. Therefore, IVAG will comply with the requirements listed in SCAG's public participation plan. In the event of a conflict between IVAG's Public Participation Plan and SCAG's Public Transportation Plan, SCAG's Public Transportation Plan shall supersede IVAG's Public Participation Plan.

Within these programs the following components are defined for the purpose of establishing the proper participation protocols:

- A) Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): The Transportation Improvement Program represents the project selection document for federally-funded projects. Project priorities are indicated by the year the project is programmed. For federally-funded projects, the year programmed as indicated in the TIP refers to the Federal fiscal year ending September 30th. Under federal guidelines, the TIP is a sequential, multi-year (3-5 years) program of transportation projects which is consistent with and implements the goals and objectives as described in the approved Regional Transportation Plan.
- B) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP): This long-range plan (covering a span of 20 years) developed under Federal Transportation Planning Guidelines is designed to provide the continual development of a complete, dependable, efficient, safe, aesthetic, and economical regional transportation system.
 - a. Local Long Range Plan
 - b. Long Range Transit Plan
 - c. Non-Motorized Transportation Plan
 - d. Rail Element
- C) Air Quality Conformity Analysis (AQCA): SCAG has the responsibility to ensure that the transportation plans and programs within the SCAG planning boundaries conform to the state and national air quality plans and standards. Specifically, the emissions generated from proposed projects in IVAG's Short Range Transportation Improvement Program and the twenty year Regional Transportation Plan must be consistent with and conform to air quality standards. SCAG is required to undertake an air quality conformity analysis for two specific reasons: (1) to ensure that transportation investments (projects), strategies and programs, taken as a whole, have air quality impacts consistent with and conforming to state and national air quality plans and standards; and (2) to ensure that neither the transportation

system as a whole nor individual transportation projects cause new air quality violations or worsen existing conditions.

- D) Environmental Documents (ED): Those documents developed by the IVAG that relate directly to environmental policy.
- E) Major Transit Service Reductions (MTSR): Any reduction in transit service that results in a decrease of more than 20% of the routes or 20% of the operating hours in a fixed route service or a reduction of more than 20% of the service area for paratransit/demand response.
- F) Transit Fare Increase (TFI): Any percentage of increase in public transit fares which economically affects the general public of the fixed route and paratransit/demand response services.
- G) Overall Work Program (OWP): These projects are developed every year in conjunction with SCAG. This work program describes proposed transportation planning activities for the upcoming fiscal year. The OWP also includes those transportation planning activities and studies required by federal and state law and authorized by the SCAG Regional Council. These related planning studies address the overall social, economic and environmental effects of transportation decisions in the region.

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation means participation in planning by people (public) outside the Imperial Valley Association of Governments (IVAG) and its member entities, by planning and engineering professionals and by those who are not professional planners or government officials. It is a process of taking part in the transportation planning and decision-making affecting the community. Ensuring a strong public involvement process that includes a diversity of perspectives will help IVAG build a strong regional understanding of transportation needs.

IVAG committee efforts to secure participation will be targeted to stakeholders, who are individuals, or entities that could be significantly affected by the transportation planning recommendations or could significantly influence implementation. Stakeholders include, but are not limited to: the general public; low income, minority and disabled advocates and communities; neighborhood representatives; chambers of commerce; special transportation interests such as freight shippers, transit users and bicycle organizations; local officials; military installations; and federal and state transportation agencies.

A. Why IVAG needs the public involved in Transportation Planning:

1. The public has the right to have a voice in all matters of public policy, including planning.
2. The public can provide the information needed to develop, maintain, and carry out an effective transportation plan. Planning staff, consultants and

local officials need comments from those who know the community: the people who live and work there.

3. Involvement informs and educates the public about transportation planning and creates an informed community, which in turn leads to better planning.
4. Participation gives the public a sense of ownership of the plan. It fosters cooperation among the public and between them and IVAG.

B. The public participation plan contains the following elements:

1. **Involvement Opportunities**
Provide the opportunity for the public to be involved in all phases of the planning process. See Sections III, VI and VII for details.
2. **Communication**
Establish mechanisms for maintaining communications between the public and local officials such as processes like mailings, legal ads, displays and newsletters. See Section IV for details.
3. **Information**
Assure that technical information is available and in simplified, understandable form. See Section V for details.
4. **Response to Public Input**
A description of the methods used to respond to comments from the public. See Section VIII for details.
5. **Advisory Committees**
The use of the committees and the means of providing a cross-section of affected citizens on the advisory committees. See Section IX for details.

III. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

To have a proactive public involvement process, IVAG will provide a public comment period of 30 days on the proposed public participation procedure to be used in transportation planning process. The procedures will inform the public about how, when, and where they may participate. Public notification will be as provided in Section IV.

IV. PUBLIC NOTICE

A. Official notification of meetings, hearings or other significant events will be provided in the following manner:

1. Publication will be at least thirty (30) days prior for public hearings. An explanation of the content, along with the date, time and the place of the meeting will be published in both English and Spanish at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the Imperial Valley area.
2. Publication will be in accordance with the Brown Act and as considered an adequate period for public workshops and regular Council meetings. For workshops, an explanation of the content, along with the date, time and the place of the meeting will be published in both English and Spanish at least once in a newspaper of general circulation in the Imperial Valley area.
3. The official public hearing legal notice will be published in the legal section of the newspaper.

B. IVAG will also utilize the following techniques to disseminate the information to a larger audience when necessary:

1. Information regarding meetings and events will be placed on the IVAG web site: www.co.imperial.ca.us/IVAG
2. Public Service Announcements and interviews on radio, government cable, and television to explain subject matter and promote participation.
3. Articles and Press Releases for the newspaper or other widely circulated publications.
4. Mass mailings through utility bills or other documents that are periodically issued to the community at large.
5. Use of advisory committees for community involvement.
6. Informal presentations at regional sites, open houses, round tables, or other community forums.
7. Formal presentations to various service clubs, civic and professional groups.
8. Mailings to select individuals, groups or interests that have expressed interest or made comments at meetings.
9. Use of “riders alerts” and notices posted on board transit buses when and where feasible.

V. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

IVAG will provide the public with reasonable and timely access to technical and policy information relating to the data or content used in the development of transportation plans, programs and projects. Standard documents will be available on the IVAG web site www.co.imperial.ca.us/IVAG and at the IVAG office 940 W. Main St., El Centro, CA 92243 during normal working hours.

VI. PUBLIC MEETINGS

Public information meetings will be held at various Imperial County area locations to inform the public of the planning process and to solicit ideas, input and feedback. Public hearings and public information meetings will be held at locations accessible to and at times convenient to minority and disabled residents. The intent of holding public informational meetings at diversified locations is to solicit broad public comments. General locations of meetings will be in the City of Brawley, City of Calexico, City of Calipatria, City of El Centro, City of Holtville, City of Imperial, and the City of Westmorland.

Notice of public hearings and public informational meetings will be given in accordance with and as listed in Section IV. A reasonable attempt will be made to notify organizations representing minority and disabled people and a request made that they provide their members with meeting notice and information.

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for persons with disabilities. Interpreters may be provided to accommodate Spanish-speaking individuals.

VII. VISUALIZATION

In order to ensure that the public is able to visualize the potential impact of any particular transportation or planning project, the IVAG may provide visual aids at public meetings. The visual aids may include but are not limited to the following types:

- A) Power Point Presentations
- B) Story Boards
- C) Project Renderings
- D) Regional and Project Level Maps
- E) Satellite Photos
- F) Project Site Photos
- G) Charts and Graphs
- H) "Before and After" Depictions

VIII. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION

The IVAG will take a proactive approach to providing the opportunity for the public to be involved early and with a continuing involvement in all phases of the planning process. Extensive public notice will be undertaken of public information meetings and hearings as listed in Section IV and access to information as listed in Section V. Prior to the beginning of the public participation process, a list of names and addresses of citizens and organizations will be developed that will be contacted on a continued basis to serve as a base of interested citizens for input and comment. This list will be expanded as additional citizens attend the informational public meetings and make comments.

IX. CONSULTATION WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS

IVAG will coordinate meetings with local, state, regional, and tribal entities that are affected by its planning projects. For example, IVAG may host a meeting(s) to review

and receive comments concerning transportation-related projects in addition to mass mailings and all other official comment periods. Below is a general list of the regional partners that should be invited to participate, and the list should be updated to reflect changes in federal and state transportation planning regulations.

- A) California Department of Transportation
- B) Quechan Indian Tribe
- C) Bureau of Indian Affairs
- D) State Department of Fish and Game
- E) Naval Air Force Base – El Centro
- F) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
- G) U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- H) U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- I) U.S. Department of the Interior (the Bureau of Reclamation and Land Management)
- J) Federal Highway Administration
- K) U.S. Forest Service
- L) National Park Service
- M) Air Pollution Control District

This list assumes that the local government agencies that comprise the IVAG TAC and Executive Board membership are automatically included in a Regional Partners list.

X. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INPUT

IVAG will respond to questions and comments from the public concerning the public participation process, draft transportation plans, programs, or public agency consultation process in a timely manner and will be made directly to the individual by letter, email or telephone call or by way of a periodic newsletter. A summary analysis and report on disposition of comments may be made a part of the final plan. Rationale for policy decisions will be available to the public in writing if requested.

XI. ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Advisory committees will be formed to advise the IVAG Executive Board and staff in the preparation and review of public participation plans, transportation plans, programs, and other related matters. There are two types of committees:

A. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is a permanent committee that is composed of technical, planning and or engineering staff representatives from each of the participating agencies of the IVAG. The membership of ten is as designated by the member agencies and number of members is fixed. In addition, there are ex-officio non-voting members from the California Department of Transportation and the Air Pollution and Control District. The TAC has an area representation makeup. Subcommittees of the TAC will be utilized to study issue areas not requiring the full TAC participation.

B. The Social Services Technical Advisory Committee (SSTAC), is a committee appointed by IVAG per the PUC 99238. The SSTAC addresses the mobility needs of the community including transit dependent, the elderly, and the disabled. The

responsibilities of this committee include: Identifying the unmet transit needs within the jurisdiction, Advising IVAG on any transit matters, annually review actions and recommendations by IVAG.

C. Specific citizen advisory committees will be formed on an ad hoc basis; members will be selected for their expertise, interest, or as an affected stakeholder. Examples are representatives of interest groups, transportation agencies, minorities, disabled, or representatives of geographical areas, such as neighborhood associations. The number of committee members will vary with the purpose for which the committee is formed. All committee members will have an equal voice in deliberations.

XII. TITLE VI

As part of the transportation planning process to meet the requirements of Title VI and to better serve the community IVAG will reach out to the disadvantaged to ensure participation. Members of the Executive Board of IVAG will continue to hold localized meetings in their respective areas where transportation issues are discussed. Advertising for major public meetings will be in both English and Spanish. Citizens that express interest or make comments at a public meeting will be put on a mailing list to be notified of other meetings and any proposed actions. For those without transportation and the disabled, IVAG will provide free transportation via public transit to the meetings.

A reasonable attempt will be made to notify organizations representing minority and disabled people and a request made that they provide their members with meeting notice and information.

Attempts to have minority and disabled citizen representation on advisory committees will be made.

XIII. AMENDMENTS

Substantial changes or amendments to a transportation plan will be done only after the public has been notified of an intent to modify the plan, and only after the public has had 30 days to review and comment on the proposed substantial changes. Notice, access to information and all public meetings will be in accordance with and as listed in Sections IV, V, and VI respectively.

XIV. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

The Regional Council of IVAG will hold the final public hearing on the transportation plans. Notice of the time and place of the Public Hearing will be provided in accordance with the notification requirements listed in Sections IV, V, and VI. Following the Public Hearing, the adoption of transportation and related plans will be by Resolution of the Regional Council.

XV. FOLLOW UP

This is the initial effort of the IVAG to formalize the public participation process for transportation and related plans. This document establishes the basic techniques for disseminating the information to the public and engaging the citizens in interactive discussions about the transportation planning process.

IVAG will continue to identify and pursue other ways to increase public knowledge and participation. A review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process will be made on a triennial basis or more frequent if needed.

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