



# ***Public Involvement Plan for Transportation Planning***



***San Luis Obispo  
Council of Governments***

***Plan Adopted December 5, 2001***

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# San Luis Obispo Council of Governments

## Public Involvement Techniques

### In Transportation Planning

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#### **Purpose**

It is the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments intended purpose to instigate, seek and foster greater public involvement in the decision-making process regarding all transportation matters within its discretion. SLOCOG desires the citizens of San Luis Obispo County and its cities to assist in delineating values, goals, and objectives of transportation-related services and planning documents. Further, it is the SLOCOG's wish that those same citizens will participate in the selection of transportation facilities and programs for planning and programming. The citizens are charged with the responsibility of providing feedback on a continuous basis regarding all plans and programs under the SLOCOG's authority. Finally, it is the goal of SLOCOG to adequately provide information to and solicit input from the historically underserved community of San Luis Obispo County (i.e. elderly, minority groups, youth, disabled, and lower income people).

SLOCOG directs its staff to provide professional expertise to both the public officials of the Council of Governments and its member agencies as well as the citizen users of the various transportation systems. The staff is further directed to provide technical knowledge and social skills in dealing with transportation-related groups in dealing with conflict resolution, and the provision of information.

The Council of Governments and its member agencies are responsible for determining policy, adopting plans and programs, and awarding funds to implement these plans. In its public participation process, SLOCOG commits to listening to the public. SLOCOG further commits to providing an environment, which is both conducive and receptive to public involvement in the planning process.

#### **Introduction**

As a Regional Transportation Planning Agency (RTPA), the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG) addresses issues of mutual concern to the county and the cities in the San Luis Obispo region, and satisfies Federal and State transportation planning and programming mandates. SLOCOG provides a forum for planning, discussion, and study of area-wide issues; prepares and adopts regional plans and programs; serves as the regional agency for federal and state transportation programs and funding opportunities; and addresses other area-wide issues based on the desires of the member jurisdictions. The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments represents its member jurisdictions as planner, programmer, and broker in developing an efficient and effective inter-modal transportation system that provides for the mobility needs of people, goods, and services while protecting the environment. It has always been the goal of the SLOCOG to invite public participation into the decision-making process.

Historically, SLOCOG has sought and distributed information to the public for comments and feedback. Public involvement into the SLOCOG transportation planning and programming took on a new emphasis when Congress passed the Federal Intermodal Surface Transportation Act of 1991 (ISTEA). Federal regulations to implement ISTEA call for a proactive public involvement process. The process must respond not only to the requirements of ISTEA but also those of related Federal acts, such as the Clean Air Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act.

TEA-21 is the successor legislation to the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA, Public Law 102-240), a landmark piece of transportation legislation that expired on September 30, 1997. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, TEA-21, is the name given to the Federal legislation (Public Law 105-178), which authorizes a balance of Federal highway, highway safety, transit and other surface transportation programs. The bill was signed into law on June 9, 1998, and covers the period October 1, 1997 through September 30, 2003. TEA-21 builds on the initiatives established in ISTEA. It continues most of ISTEA's programs and policies. Of particular interest, the public involvement procedures from the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) were continued in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), which mandates Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to establish, periodically review, and update public involvement processes. These processes should assure early and continued public awareness of and access to the transportation decision-making process.

Along with the landmark Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the recent Executive Order on environmental justice and the ISTEA and TEA-21 transportation bills of the 1990's all require an aggressive outreach and public involvement program for all transportation agencies that receive Federal funding, especially to low-income communities and people of color. The rule of the game is that the public must be involved early and often. Many agencies have citizen advisory committees that can be an important forum for input, but all major projects and planning documents must also provide ample opportunity for the public to present their concerns far in advance of the actual decision-making deadlines.

The SLOCOG Public Involvement Techniques in Transportation Planning are tailored to local conditions and encourage creative and fresh ideas as much as possible. This Plan goes beyond the minimum standards set by statute to attract as much public participation as possible. Below is a summary of the minimum standards for public participation as set forth by statute. Additional techniques incorporated into the plan include workshops and public meetings; extensive use of advisory committees; newsletter distribution, citizen surveys, and community activities; and public access through open house, charrettes, and focus groups when appropriate.

The 2001-2002 Public Participation Plan was updated to include web-based information distribution and information on environmental justice.

As stated in the seven planning factors in TEA-21, the overall goal of transportation planning is to:

- Support economic vitality, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase safety and security of transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Increase accessibility and mobility options available to people and for freight.
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, and improve quality of life.
- Enhance integration and connectivity of the transportation system across and between modes, for people and freight.
- Promote efficient system management and operation.
- Emphasize preservation of the existing system.

This public involvement plan is one tool that will be used in achieving these seven planning goals. SLOCOG's objective is to follow the 3C's approach: Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive. In order to achieve this objective and the goals stated above, SLOCOG acknowledges that:

- Comprehensive regional transportation planning should be understood from several perspectives, among which are mode, participation and setting.
- All modes shall be considered.
- Decisions shall be made with the full participation of the community.
- Consistent with a collaboratively crafted vision, the region will work together to determine how best to provide a full range of transportation options for all system users.

## Statutory Requirements – Background

### The Brown Act (Government Code sections 54950-54962)

The Ralph M. Brown Act governs the meeting and actions of governing boards of local public agencies and their created bodies. Requirements of the Brown Act also apply to any committee or other subsidiary body of a local agency, whether permanent or temporary, decision-making or advisory, which is created by such a governing board.

The Brown Act sets minimum standards for open meetings relative to access to the public, location of meetings, notice posting, agenda distribution, and public input. The public agency may adopt reasonable regulations ensuring the public's right to address the agency, including regulations to limit the total amount of time allocated for public testimony.

The SLOCOG Board and its standing committees all adhere to these requirements involving proper noticing, access and the ability to address the Board and committees.

### TEA-21 (Continued from ISTE A)

Section 450.316 states that the following listed metropolitan transportation planning process elements must be followed by an Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO):

- (1) Include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions; and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP's) and meets the requirements and criteria of the regulations as presented below.
  - (i) Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;
  - (ii) Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
  - (iii) Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIP's and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
  - (iv) Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIP's (in non-attainment areas, classified as serious and above), the comment period shall be at least 30 days for the plan, TIP, and major amendment(s);
  - (v) Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
  - (vi) Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low income and minority households;

- (vii) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) conformity regulations (not applicable to the SLOCOG region), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;
- (viii) If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;
- (ix) Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;
- (x) These procedures will be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) during certification reviews for Transportation Management Associations (TMA's) (not applicable to the SLOCOG region), and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to assure that full and open access is provided to MPO decision-making processes;
- (xi) Metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs, and reduce redundancies and costs.

#### Americans with Disabilities (ADA)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of services. All events held for programs or projects with Federal aid and open to the general public must be made accessible to everyone, including the disabled.

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments is in compliance with ADA by having accessible formats and public hearings, consult with individuals from the disability community, and conduct an outreach by maintaining an extensive mailing list, developing contacts, and other means of notification to participate in the planning process.

## Environmental Justice (EJ)

The legal and policy environment for considering Environmental Justice (EJ) issues are outlined below.

Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are not new concerns. The recipients of Federal-aid have been required to certify and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) must ensure non-discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and many other laws, regulations, and policies. In 1997, the DOT issued an Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations to summarize and expand upon the requirements of Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice. The EPA defines Environmental Justice as the "fair treatment for people of all races, cultures, and incomes, regarding the development of environmental laws, regulations, and policies." The Federal Highway Administration considers three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

To comply with the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898, and other laws, regulations, and policies, the following processes need to be followed within the "3-C" (Continuing, Cooperative, and Comprehensive) regional transportation-planning program:

- Develop a demographic profile for the metropolitan area, which must identify the geographic locations of low-income and/or minority populations.
- Include agencies and organizations that serve low-income, elderly, mobility-impaired and/or minority groups.
- Document the distributional effects of transportation investments through the decision-making process of local elected officials to determine the benefits and drawbacks that public policy may have on low-income and minority populations;
- Quantify anticipated effects (positive, negative or both) and identify where disproportionately high proportions of high and adverse effects will occur to low-income and/or minority populations; and
- The appropriate course of action (i.e., avoidance, minimization or mitigation).

The Public Involvement Plan is one means of helping to achieve environmental justice, through outreach activities that make the transportation-planning program responsive to the needs of disadvantaged communities

# **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TECHNIQUES**

The adopted SLOCOG public involvement techniques go beyond the statutory requirements noted. Seven major techniques are summarized. Additional techniques beyond statutory minimum include: workshops and public meetings, extensive use of advisory committees, newsletter distribution, surveys, and public access through open houses, focus groups, and city governing board presentations before City councils and the Board of Supervisors.

## **Technique A – Agendas and Public Notices**

### **Purpose**

The Brown Act requires every agenda for regular SLOCOG meetings to provide an opportunity for the public to address the SLOCOG Board on any item of interest to the public within SLOCOG's jurisdiction. Public notices are used to inform the general public and media of meetings, workshops, and public hearings.

### **Procedure**

The Brown Act requires public notices be posted at least 72 hours before regular meetings or 24 hours before special meetings. SLOCOG policy for posting public notices shall be fifteen days in advance of the event, with a minimum of seven days unless posting is required to be longer by statute (e.g. Unmet Transit Needs requires 30 days). SLOCOG shall circulate a long agenda with supporting "draft" staff reports to all advisory committee members. Short agendas without supporting reports shall be sent to newspapers, broadcasting media, libraries, and members of the public, upon request. Short agendas will also be available through computer network systems, such as SLONET and the Internet. The Brown Act also requires all written materials provided to the SLOCOG Board be made available to the public upon request. SLOCOG shall also circulate long agenda packets to three San Luis Obispo County libraries: the City County Library, South County Library, and Atascadero Library. It is a SLOCOG goal to distribute all SLOCOG long agendas to SLOCOG delegates and their administrative staff twelve calendar days prior to the next regular meeting. Short agendas for advisory committee meetings will be made available to libraries and electronic bulletin board services. The short agendas will include a brief narrative describing the purpose and role each advisory committee plays in the decision making process.

Public notices describing the purpose and citing the time, date, and location will be posted as follows:

- Regular SLOCOG meetings – 15 days
- Public Participation Plan - 45 days (23 C.F.R. 450.316(b)(1)(i).)
- Federal Transit Administration: Grant Notice – 30 days
- Federal Transportation Improvement Program – 30 days (23 C.F.R. 450.316(b)(1)(iv).)
- Environmental Review
  - Negative Declaration – 20 days
  - Negative Dec Submitted to State Clearinghouse for review – 30 days (CEQA Guidelines Section 15072)
  - Draft Environmental Impact Report – 30 days (CEQA Guidelines Section 15087)
  - Final EIR – No Notice Necessary by law (CEQA Guidelines Section 15089)
  - Notice of Determination – 30 days (CEQA Guidelines Section 15094)
- Unmet Transit Needs – 30 days (PUC Section 99.238.5)
- Regional Transportation Plan – 30 days (23 C.F.R. 450.316(b)(1)(iv).)
- Regional Transportation Improvement Program – 30 days (23 C.F.R. 450.316(b)(1)(iv).)
- Other regional plans – 15 days

## Technique B – Public Hearings

### Purpose

Public hearings are held prior to a decision point and are a formal means to gather citizen comments and positions from all interested parties for public record and input into the decision making process. SLOCOG public hearings are necessary for the adoption of major plans (e.g. Regional Transportation Plan), programming of money (e.g. Transportation Improvement Programs), and for the annual Unmet Transit Needs analysis.

### Procedure

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments shall publish a public hearing notice in a general circulation newspaper citing the time, date, and place of the hearing. SLOCOG will accept prepared comments from the public during the period between the notice and hearing date. These comments will be considered part of the public record. Also during this period, SLOCOG staff will accept questions and provide clarification on issues raised by the public.

Notification of public hearings shall also be included in the distribution of the SLOCOG newsletter. The newsletter is circulated approximately thirty (30) days in advance of the hearing date. The agenda for each SLOCOG meeting shall include an upcoming public hearing notice section, citing the time, date, and description of the public hearing item. SLOCOG policy for posting public hearing notices shall be fifteen days in advance of the meeting, with a minimum of seven days unless otherwise required by statute.

For issues of local concern, an option available to the SLOCOG Board is to alternate the location of the SLOCOG meetings. Alternating the location of the meetings in the north county and south county location may provide greater access to the public and meet the needs of people with disabilities.

Translators/interpreters will be provided for non-English speaking and hearing-impaired individuals if requested at least 48 hours in advance of the meeting. SLOCOG staff will regularly make available such services when it is reasonable to assume they will be needed (i.e. Unmet Needs Hearing, Call Box Access issues).

SLOCOG will prepare notices and conduct outreach in Spanish for certain activities that merit such outreach. The notices for the Unmet Transportation Needs Assessment will be prepared in Spanish and translators will be available at the public hearing.

### Statutory Requirements

See Public Notices and Agendas, Brown Act summary attached in Appendix A. Specific hearing requirements directed by statute include Regional Transportation Improvement Program (Section 65082 of Caltrans *Statutes Relating to the Programming and Funding of Transportation Projects*, dated January 1993), Unmet Transit Needs (Section 99401.5 of the *Transportation Development Act*) and the Regional Transportation Plan (Government Code Section 65081(a)).

## **Technique C – Workshops and Public Meetings**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of workshops and public meetings is to present information to the public and obtain informal input from citizens. These meetings are typically held throughout the planning process and can be tailored to specific issues or citizen groups. These meetings can be conducted either formally or informally. They can be scheduled at specific milestones or phases within a participatory process. Public meetings meet TEA-21 goals by providing citizens time to speak and bring all opinions and ideas into the planning process. Public meetings and workshops achieve a basic level of citizen input to transportation planning and project development and exchange information with a wide representation of citizens.

### **Procedure**

Properly scheduled public meetings facilitate citizen participation. Pre-meeting materials shall be prepared, including meeting announcements and agendas, displays, and any mailings or publicity that may be necessary. The public shall be informed of the free access to these materials. Some ground rules for workshops and public meetings may be established including: listening carefully and sharing discussion time with others; encouraging everyone to participate; discussing with the intent to identify areas of agreement, clarify differences, and search for common understanding; and establishing a speakers time limit.

Public meetings and workshops usually occur during regularly scheduled SLOCOG Board meetings. More informal evening meetings may occur in other locations acceptable to the affected community. It is a SLOCOG goal to post all public notices describing the purpose and citing the time, date, and location of the meeting fifteen days prior to the meeting, with a minimum of seven days unless otherwise required by statute. Every effort shall be made to develop a public notice that is less bureaucratic and more enticing for the public to want to participate in the meeting/workshop, including but not limited to visually oriented public notices when appropriate. See section on Public Notices and Agendas.

SLOCOG will provide meeting summaries in the form of written meeting minutes, describing areas of agreement and disagreement. All points shall be clearly and fairly stated.

Translators/interpreters will be provided at public meetings for Non-English speakers and hearing-impaired individuals when requested at least 48 hours advance, and in other situations when it is assumed such services are needed.

## Technique D – Advisory Committees

### **Purpose**

SLOCOG works cooperatively with four advisory committees: the Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC), the Technical Transportation Advisory Committee (TTAC), the Regional Transit Advisory Committee (RTAC), and the Executive Committee. It is SLOCOG's policy to distribute all draft SLOCOG agendas and supporting documents to CTAC and TTAC for their review, input, and recommendations prior to the distribution of the regular SLOCOG long agenda. The minutes and recommendations of each committee are included in the SLOCOG long agenda for Board consideration.

All advisory committee meetings are open to the public where the general public has the opportunity to provide input. Interpreters are provided to translate public meetings for bilingual and the hearing impaired if requested ahead of time. SLOCOG will work to facilitate the input of advisory committee members with childcare responsibilities. SLOCOG will work with the eligible children providers to address the needs of advisory committee members as necessary.

### CTAC

The CTAC develops and forwards recommendations to the SLOCOG Board on transportation policies and implementation. They review and study existing and proposed transportation-related issues including draft SLOCOG agendas, reports, and programs. CTAC members shall represent various public interests concerned with transportation and shall be appointed by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, incorporated cities, San Luis Obispo Regional Transportation Authority (SLORTA) and the San Luis Obispo Council of Governments in accordance with their bylaws.

### TTAC

The TTAC serves as the technical engineering and planning review committee of SLOCOG. TTAC shall assist in the preparation and maintenance of the Regional Transportation Plan, provide advice and recommendations to SLOCOG in its review of state and federally funded transportation projects; provide assistance and recommendations to SLOCOG in its allocation of funds from the Transportation Development Act; serve as the Surface Transportation Program (STP) committee to recommend projects to be funded with STP funds for SLOCOG approval; and reviews the draft SLOCOG agenda and staff reports.

The TTAC membership shall be represented by the planning and engineering areas of each public agency involved in the transportation planning and programming process as more thoroughly defined in TTAC bylaws.

## RTAC

The RTAC shall participate in the annual identification of regional Unmet Transit Needs and advise the SLOCOG on any other major public transit issues that affect the region including the coordination and consolidation of specialized transportation services. The RTAC shall also review annually transit operator performance, including the compliance with performance audit recommendations and to identify, analyze, and recommend potential transit system improvements to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and quality of transit service. RTAC members shall represent various public interests concerned with public transportation as more thoroughly defined in the RTAC bylaws.

## Executive Committee

An Executive Committee also meets on an ad hoc basis to review the draft SLOCOG agenda, identify items to refer to advisory committees, and provide policy input on agenda items, major sensitive issues, and the agency work program. The committee consists of the SLOCOG president, vice-president, and immediate past president.

## Other Standing Committees

Several other standing committees meet on an ad hoc basis to discuss issues of particular concern to their area of interest or as referred by the full SLOCOG board. These committees include: an administrative committee (consisting of all city managers and the county's administrative officer); a Legal Committee (consisting of SLOCOG's legal counsel and the attorneys of members agencies); and a Planning Committee (consisting of the planning directors of each member agency).

## Statutory Requirements

All SLOCOG advisory committees are open to the public. The Brown Act requires at least 72 hours public notice citing the time, date, and location before regular meetings. SLOCOG policy for posting public notices for advisory committee meetings shall be seven days in advance of the meeting. SLOCOG shall circulate a short agenda for posting without support documents at the City County Library, South County Library, Atascadero Library, the County Government Center, and members of the public (upon request). Each advisory committee agenda shall include a brief narrative describing the purpose and role each committee plays in the decision making process.

## Technique E – Media Strategies

### Purpose

Effective media strategies help to generate interest in a project or program. SLOCOG media strategies shall inform the public about projects and programs through newspapers, radio, TV, the internet, press releases, mass mailing of brochures or newsletters, and the distribution of flyers if necessary. Working with the media, SLOCOG takes an active role in disseminating information to the public. SLOCOG proactively frames public messages, rather than allowing the media to do it themselves. Effective use of media helps to deliver a uniform message and alleviates the spread of misinformation that often becomes a barrier to understanding or implementation. More people participate in the planning process when they have access to substantial and accurate information.

### Procedure

The San Luis Obispo Council of Governments uses a variety of media sources to generate public involvement into the planning process.

#### Press Releases

SLOCOG shall prepare press releases to newspapers and broadcasting media of news worthy events that affect the region, including major actions, notification of workshops, completion of major projects, and actions taken by state agency decision making bodies.

#### Newspapers, Radio and TV

When possible, the briefing of reporters and editorial boards of both newspaper and broadcasting media with in-depth background on a project or program shall occur to help prepare them to analyze SLOCOG's approach and report on aspects of an issue in an objective manner.

#### Newsletters or Brochures

SLOCOG shall prepare a newsletter following each regular scheduled meeting. The newsletter shall include recent actions taken by the SLOCOG Board, articles on upcoming events, plans or programs where early public input is necessary, and other related issues. The newsletter will be available to the public approximately forty to fifty days prior to the next regularly scheduled SLOCOG meeting. The newsletter will be widely distributed to all local government elected officials, planning commissioners, applicable member agency staff, media contacts, chambers of commerce, and interested organizations.

#### Flyers and Posters

Flyers and posters shall be used to focus attention to a specific public group, e.g. transit users for purposes of informing them early of public meetings or hearings that may have a direct affect on them.

### Internet

SLOCOG maintains a web site at <http://www.slocog.org>. Using this medium, planning documents, meetings locations and agendas, contact information and a variety of other information are made available to the general public who has access to the internet.

It should be noted that SLOCOG will make an effort to expand the interactive nature of the MPO website, and to expand its content over time. Documents will be provided to the public online and the public will have an opportunity to comment on such projects online via internet e-mail or by other means. Comments will be received, answered by project staff, and they will become part of the public record.

## **Technique F – Community Activities**

### **Purpose**

Various community activities such as transportation fairs and booths at community festivals help to bring an interest in transportation issues to citizens and in specific projects or programs. These activities keep participants informed, interested, and up-to-date on SLOCOG projects and programs. Non-traditional public involvement methods encourage people to participate and are usually fun for attendees.

### **Procedure**

With good publicity, community activities become a known opportunity for citizens to participate in transportation planning. SLOCOG shall share information and discuss issues, giving the participants a status report on projects and programs. Participants will be encouraged to view the exhibits, ask questions, consider the information, and give comments.

SLOCOG shall include an article in its newsletter prior to the community activity that describes the purpose of the event, attractions, and other activities associated with the event.

## **Technique G – Ad hoc Strategies**

When appropriate, SLOCOG shall apply a number of other public involvement strategies as part of the agency's transportation planning and programming process. Among those strategies are citizen surveys, focus groups, charrettes, and project specific open houses.

### I – Citizen Surveys

Citizen surveys assess widespread public opinion. Survey results show public reactions to agency actions and gather useful information for use in the planning process. They can accurately report on what people know or want to know. Surveys can test the agency perception of what people are thinking and reinforce decisions that have been made through participatory programs. SLOCOG will consider this technique in coordination with the Air Pollution Control District and Regional Rideshare Program in assessing community and citizen's transportation practices, attitudes, and thoughts. SLOCOG is also working with the Transportation Management Association and Ridesharing Program to establish a base line mode split database. This database will be used to monitor performance of the transportation system. This periodic direct public input will be used to set goals and objectives for the planning and programming of projects of each of the different transportation modes. It is SLOCOG's goal to conduct a biennial citizen survey on general transportation issues and mode split. SLOCOG may also conduct periodic special surveys to assess community attitudes on specific countywide issues such as supplemental local option funding sources.

### II – Focus Groups

A focus group is a tool to gauge public opinion. A focus group is a small group discussion with professional leadership. It is a meeting of carefully selected group of individuals convened to discuss and give opinions on a single topic. A focus group is a place for people to speak out without criticism of their comments. Subcommittees of SLOCOG advisory committees often act as a focus group to solicit specialized information.

SLOCOG will make efforts to provide a family-oriented environment at focus group events that take into account the needs of the children. SLOCOG is committed to providing these services so more families are capable of providing public input. These services will be provided upon request

### III – Charrettes

A charrette is a meeting with a specified time limit to resolve a problem or issue. The breadth of background of participants assures full discussion of issues, interrelationships, and impacts. Problem solving in nature, Charrettes produce visible results. They are often used early in a planning process to provide useful ideas and perspectives from concerned interest groups.

### V – Open House

An open house provides each potentially affected interest group the opportunity to ask questions, express concerns, react to what is being proposed and even make suggestions to the technical experts who are responsible for developing a plan or program. The open house is an informal setting, which allows for one-to-one exchanges, usually extending over several evenings and part of a weekend, between any concerned and/or interested person and the public officials and professionals. Open houses are typically used for major plan or project input.

SLOCOG will make efforts to provide a family-oriented environment at open house events that take into account the needs of the children. SLOCOG is committed to providing these services so more families are capable of providing public input. These services will be provided upon request

### V – Web Based Surveys

Web based surveys are a tool used to gather information on people's perceptions, preferences, and practices. The benefit associated with using the internet as a medium for surveying is the greater likeliness of achieving higher success rates than what would be accomplished if a more traditional medium was used (ie. Mail). This can be attributed to how much less time a web based survey usually takes to complete and how little effort is required to give the results back to the issuing entity. As a bonus, results of a web-based survey are instantly compiled, updated, and displayed once a participant completes the survey instrument.

Some people will not have access to the Internet thus they will have limited access to the results of a web-based survey instrument. SLOCOG's uses the media strategies described in Section E in trying to notify the general public that might not have access to the Internet. The information being sought and the use of that information in the regional transportation planning process will vary.