

## INTRODUCTION

There are several opportunities for the public to learn and comment on the Maine Turnpike's projects and plans from the conceptual phase through the construction phase:

The "Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA)," approved by Maine voters in 1991 and codified at 23 M.R.S.A. § 73, requires the MaineDOT and Maine Turnpike Authority (MTA) to establish an effective, timely, and efficient public involvement process. In this process, the public has "timely notice and opportunity to identify and comment on concerns related to transportation planning decisions, capital investment decisions and project decisions." Requirements of this public involvement process are detailed in rules adopted by the MaineDOT, in cooperation with the MTA (attached as Exhibit A). These rules establish the baseline public involvement requirements for Significant Transportation Projects and Substantial Public Interest Projects, as defined in the STPA rules. Among other elements, the rules contain the following minimum requirements for public involvement:

### For Significant Transportation & Substantial Public Interest Projects

- A statement of the need for the project and the project purpose. (*17-229, Chapter 103, Subchapter II(2)(C)(3)(B)(i)*).
- A process to solicit public comment on identified transportation deficiencies and opportunity for the public to submit strategies. (*17-229, Chapter 103, Subchapter II(2)(C)*).

### For MTA Capital Investment Plan

- Plan made available to public to review and comment. MTA responds to all comments received. MTA holds Public Hearing on plan "where substantial public interest exists." (*Suchapter II(4), pg 26*).

The practice of MTA personnel is to develop Public Participation efforts that are tailored to a particular project and meet or exceed the requirements of the STPA. The purpose of this document is to memorialize and formalize these practices which are consistent with the requirements of the STPA

## PLANNING TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

The Maine Turnpike Authority conducts a variety of projects ranging in scope and complexity. Consistent with the STPA and Maine DOT implementing rules, the

following outlines the variety of public participation tools and techniques which are used by the Maine Turnpike Authority.

#### Methodology

- Public Information-involves dispersing information about the project purpose and potential solutions. This serves to inform the public through one way communication.
- Public Participation-Solicit public comment on the proposed project and suggested solutions that address the project purpose.
- Public Advisory Committee-For Significant Transportation Projects, the MTA may form an advisory committee to consider and recommend potential, feasible alternatives that achieve the project purpose.

The Maine Turnpike Authority utilizes a variety of tools to share information and engage the public. All of these tools are used to establish and maintain productive, informative, and frequent public participation and are used on a project by project basis.

- An interactive Website
- annual town visits with the city and town managers/officials
- Metropolitan Planning Organizations regular meetings
- public meetings on our ten year plan [**MaineDOT rules require an MTA Planning Report every 5 years**]
- public informational meetings
- public hearings
- project advisory committees
- elected officials briefings

The Maine Turnpike Authority may provide additional opportunities for public input beyond the opportunities described in this Policy at any time. This might include, without limitation, the formation of an advisory committee to meet regularly with MTA to review and/or develop detailed evaluations and recommendations, and/ or informal public meetings with local officials and the public.

#### **SIGNIFICANT TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS: PROJECT-SPECIFIC PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLANS**

A Significant Transportation Project is defined by the STPA regulations as a Maine Turnpike Authority, State or Federally Funded project that increases carrying capacity by constructing:

- (1) One or more through travel lanes that connect major distribution areas; (A minor addition of a through travel lane is not a significant transportation project.)



- (2) A new highway on new location;  
(Minor relocation of highway is not new location.)
- (3) A new bridge on new location;  
(Minor relocation of a bridge is not new location.)
- (4) Other public investments that create new capacity.

For purposes of this policy, Significant Transportation Projects only include projects that increase carrying capacity that rely fully or partially on Maine Turnpike Authority, state or federal funds.

For Significant Transportation Projects constructed by the MTA, a study is undertaken and a **Project-Specific Public Involvement Plan (P-SPIP)** is developed.

Planning Phase:

MTA will initiate a public participation process commensurate with the scope of the project

The information provided to the public may include the following:

1. A statement of transportation need or deficiency;
2. suggested strategic solutions, when available, to address the need of deficiency
3. If available, a description of projected life cycle costs and operational costs for the strategies; and
4. A description of available information on land use, energy, and environmental impacts of the strategies taking into account mitigation measures.

The public will be asked to comment on the identified transportation need and deficiency, proposed solutions and suggest additional solutions

The MTA will review the public input and based upon the transportation need or deficiency, safety consideration, technical feasibility, cost, compliance with the policies of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act and MTA's legal requirements, and will prepare a draft strategy evaluation and analysis. The public will have a reasonable period of time to comment on the draft. Based on the nature and number of comments received, the MTA may hold a public hearing. MTA will review the public input and issue a final strategy analysis which incorporates responses to the public comments.

Project Development/Permitting Phase:

The project strategy that the Maine Turnpike Authority selects shall be made available to the public. Public participation will be consistent with the process requirements of all applicable regulatory bodies.

Construction Phase:

During the construction phase, the public will be updated on the overall project status. The public shall be notified of any anticipated delays or approved detours.

**SUBSTANTIAL PUBLIC INTEREST PROJECTS: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLANS**

A transportation project that is not a significant transportation project but, which the MTA determines involves issues of substantial public interest requires a public participation effort tailored to that project. In accordance with STPA regulations, the MTA may also consider a project a Substantial Public Interest Project when formally requested to do so by one or more affected communities through their municipal officials. The formal request must outline specific public interest considerations that warrant this designation. All interchange improvement projects with a purpose and need to add capacity shall be deemed to be substantial public interest projects.

Planning Phase:

In this phase, the needs of the affected public will be thoroughly considered and addressed.

1. A preliminary statement of the purpose and need for the project will be created, which may include proposed solutions when identified
2. Land use impacts of the proposed project will be identified and assessed to determine consistency with the local Long-Range Land Use Plan adopted pursuant to the Comprehensive Planning and Land Use Regulation Act. In the event that the proposed project is found to be inconsistent with the applicable Long Range Land Use Plan or the goals of the Sensible Transportation Policy Act, MTA shall seek the advice of the community or regional entity as to how to avoid, minimize, or mitigate the inconsistency or adverse impact.
3. Notice to affected municipalities and the public will be provided with opportunity to comment on the proposed project.
4. Review public comments and suggestions and respond.



Project Development/Permitting Phase:

The final recommendation that the Maine Turnpike Authority selects shall be made available to the public. Public participation will be consistent with the process requirements of all applicable regulatory bodies.

Construction Phase:

During the construction phase, the public will be updated on the overall project status. The public shall be notified of any anticipated delays or approved detours.

**CAPITAL INVESTMENT PLAN: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

1. Prepare a draft annual Capital Investment Plan.
2. Provide public notice and opportunity to review and comment on the draft Capital Investment Plan. Consider all public comments and respond to comments either individually or in a published report.
3. After consideration of public comment, prepare final Capital Investment Plan.

**Project Development: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

In this Public Participation the MTA will:

1. Notify abutters, in compliance with MTA policy
2. Respond to individual comments and concerns of those persons impacted by the project.
3. Be available to respond to individuals affected by the project.
4. Incorporate (additional) citizen concerns and suggestions in the project design as appropriate.