Public Engagement Program

Cobb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan 2040 Update

The 5-Year update of the Cobb County Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) 2040, in collaboration with Cobb cities and partner organizations, serves to identify local transportation priorities that will provide input into future local and regional planning efforts. The vision, determined by the participants through proactive public engagement, will reflect what's important to the community.

The approach to public engagement for the CTP is simple: Every Citizen Counts. Every citizen counts in terms of their input to the CTP and in consideration of citizens' travel needs– driving to work, running errands, shipping freight, riding the bus, walking to the store, or biking to school. In the effort to reach every citizen, public engagement will be proactive, diverse, and most importantly, accessible to all citizens, including environmental justice community representatives.

Public engagement is continuously evolving with new tools and techniques to engage the public in meaningful ways that maximize opportunity to provide and receive input. Technology is certainly changing the way people interact with one another on a daily basis and how they prioritize their time and energy. Technology, such as mobile accessibility and interactive websites, plays an important role in engaging the public as well as social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter. However, these are just a few of the components of what should constitute a public engagement program.

A comprehensive public engagement program should include both traditional and non-traditional techniques that aim to reach a vast audience of the population. The program should be aimed at strong messaging, relationship building, and participatory activities and techniques. Intertwining engagement activities with everyday community activities maximizes engagement and the opportunities everyone has to participate.

This CTP public engagement program focuses on these elements of strong messaging, relationship building, participatory activities, and convenience.

The purpose of public engagement is to be inclusive of all Cobb County citizens, easily accessible, and meaningful to the overall CTP process.

The public engagement process is structured within the three phases of the CTP process: **Ready. Set. Go.**

Phase I: Ready

- Develop messaging: what is the CTP Update, why is it important, what is part of the plan, what is the intent of the plan, and how do we get there
- Gather input on community needs and desires for improving everyday quality of life
- Develop Guiding Principles

Phase II: Set

- Test various scenarios to meet identified needs
- Provide input into technical assessment

Phase III: Go

- Determine project and investment priorities
- Provide input into investment strategies
- Build consensus on final plan and recommendations

The following pages outline how the public engagement program will be implemented throughout the three phases of the CTP, including a communication strategy, committee structure, coordination, and specific tools and techniques.

Communication

"All Roads Lead to Home"

Communication and public engagement go hand-in-hand, although they are fundamentally different. In order to maximize the public engagement efforts to be inclusive, easily accessible, and meaningful to the overall CTP process, it is important to have a communication strategy that works with and strengthens the public engagement component.

The strategy of the Cobb County CTP communication approach is to work within the three defined phases of the CTP engagement process: **READY, SET, GO!**

The public engagement team includes communication experts who will work closely with the public engagement specialists to ensure consistent messaging throughout the CTP process. This includes the message of *All Roads Lead To Home..*

Recently completed is a video that communicates the message of *All Roads Lead to Home* and is the foundation to communicating the importance of the CTP to the citizens and businesses of Cobb County.

Part of the communication effort will also include educational components to help citizens understand the finer details of transportation planning, including cost and benefit, so that citizens may make informed decisions regarding the future of transportation in Cobb County. Again, the public engagement team, comprised of both communication experts and public engagement specialists, will work closely to develop and execute those educational components in the public engagement activities of the CTP. This may include newsletters, games and activities, and one-page subject flyers.

Members of the public engagement team specializing in communication will also contribute content to the project website and social media sites.

The public engagement team will develop talking points for use by the project team and Cobb County DOT staff at key milestones of the CTP process; specifically, at the initiation of each phase: Ready, Set, Go. Talking points will focus on the goals of the CTP, project process, and next steps.

Finally, the public engagement team, in collaboration with County Communications staff will work closely with the media to help publicize CTP events and activities, project milestones, and ways citizens can get involved. All media requests by the media will be directed to and handled by Cobb County Director of Communications and the DOT office. The project team will assist when necessary.

Phase I: Ready

Communicate purpose, value, and impact of CTP

- **Media CTP Blitz**
- **Website Development and Launch**
- **Social Media Development and Launch**
- **News Media Outreach**
- ***"Cobb is Home"* Message and Video**

Phase II: Set

Communicate guiding principles, preliminary project recommendations, and CTP Updates

- **Updates**
- **Website**
- **Social Media**

Phase III: Go

Publish Final CTP Plan, supporting documentation, and project recommendations and priorities. Communicate impacts on quality of life, economic development, and future growth in the County.

- **Updates**
- **Website**
- **Social Media**
- **News Media**
- ***"Cobb Is Home"* Message**

CTP Public Engagement

As part of the outreach effort, committees will be formed and serve as a sounding board to the public engagement team as well as the entire project team. Each committee will meet several times over the course of the development of the CTP, particularly at major milestones where input and feedback is important to the process and moving forward. The public engagement team, along with the PMT, will identify members to serve on each committee.

Project Management Team (PMT)

- Comprised of representatives from Cobb County Department of Transportation (DOT) staff, and city staff of Acworth, Austell, Kennesaw, Marietta, Powder Springs, and Smyrna
- Directs consultant team
- Provides input and reviews data, analysis, and reports

Stakeholder Committee

- Comprised of citizens, community leaders, business leaders, major employers, and advocacy groups designated by the PMT
- Advise and provide input throughout the CTP process to the consultant team

Technical Committee

- Comprised of representatives from Cobb County Department of Transportation (DOT) staff; city staff of Acworth, Austell, Kennesaw, Marietta, Powder Springs, Smyrna; and partner organizations, including ARC, GDOT, CCT, and GRTA
- Advise, review, and comment on technical data gathered and assessed by the consultant team

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Committee

- Comprised of representatives from Cobb County Department of Transportation (DOT) staff, Cobb County Board of Health, and subject area experts
- Advise and provide input into the HIA process and documents

Coordination

The CTP public engagement program will coordinate with previous and ongoing planning efforts in Cobb County.

The CTP public engagement program will coordinate with partner organizations and outside agencies to ensure compatibility with efforts that impact Cobb County.

Coordination activities will include review of plans and studies, joint public engagement efforts where appropriate, meetings and workshops, stakeholder committee, technical committee, and project team liaisons.

Connect Cobb NW Transit Corridor Environmental Assessment

- Connect Cobb includes transit improvements in the northwest corridor on US 41 and I-75 in Cobb County. The Environmental Assessment (EA) takes a close look at benefits, impacts, and potential mitigation measures of the locally preferred alternative (LPA) identified through the Connect Cobb Alternatives Analysis.
- The EA is underway and will continue through early 2014.
- Coordinated public engagement efforts will include technical team participation, stakeholder team participation, public meetings, small group meetings, collateral materials, advertising and marketing.

Other Planning Studies

- Cobb County 2030 Comprehensive Plan
- Cities of Acworth, Austell, Kennesaw, Marietta, Powder Springs, Smyrna Comprehensive Plans
- Livable Centers Initiative Plans
- Small Area Master Plans
- CCT Service and Marketing Study
- Cobb County Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Plan
- Cobb County Trail System
- PLAN 2040

Cobb EDGE/ Cobb Chamber of Commerce

- Focus on seven benchmarks, core cluster industries
- Member of Stakeholder Committee

Cobb County Strategic Plan

- Provides a framework for Cobb's future
- Coordinates with identified strategic transportation commitment

Surrounding Counties

- Identification of cross-jurisdictional projects
- Coordination meeting(s) with adjacent jurisdictions
- Coordination with Paulding CTP, including attendance at public meetings

City Liaisons

- Project team members committed to addressing the needs and issues identified by the cities

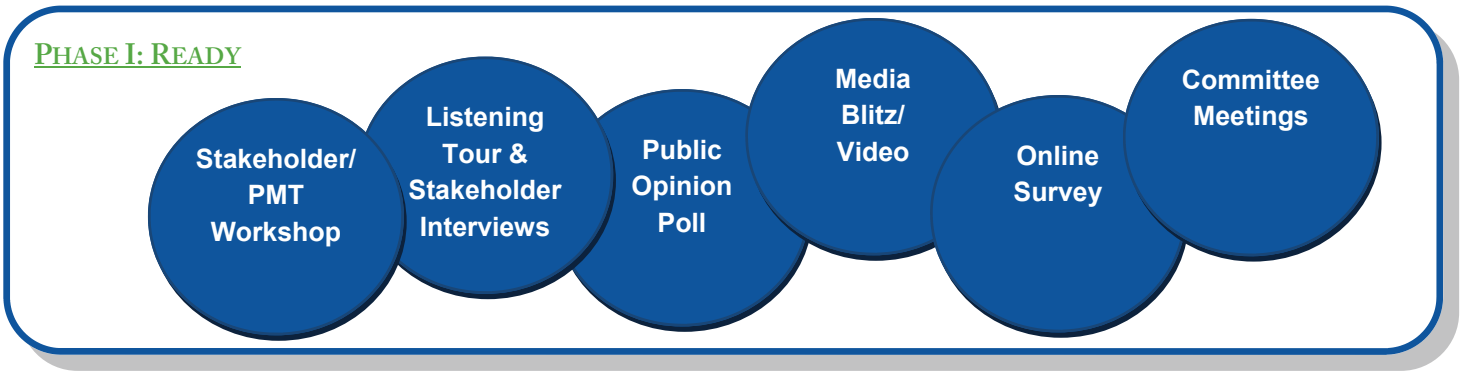
James Hudgins	Matt McDow
Acworth	Marietta
Austell	Smyrna
Kennesaw	
Powder Springs	

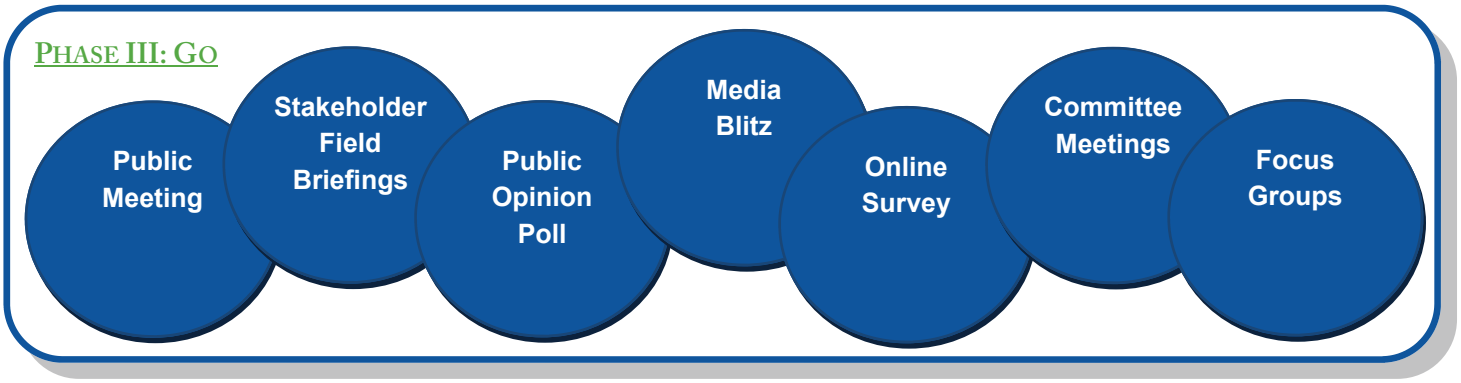
Tools and Techniques

The tools and techniques used as part of the public engagement program will be both traditional and non-traditional, with an emphasis on relationship building, strong messaging, and participatory activities. .

Several tools and techniques will be used throughout the CTP development process. These include:

- Project Website
- Social Media
- Messaging
- Newsletter
- Community Partnerships





Listening Tour: This tool is used early in the process to help the public engagement team get a 'pulse' on the community. It is meant to introduce the CTP to stakeholders in the County, including what it is, why their involvement is important, what they can expect, how we will get there, and how they will be informed throughout the process. By the end of the listening tour, the public engagement team should have an understanding from the interviewees of what drives success and quality of life in Cobb County, what stirs emotion in citizens, and how to best engage the community. Interviews are intended to be 30 to 45 minutes, with the goals for the interviewee to provide as much feedback as possible. A summary of the listening tour will be developed, provided to the project team, and posted on the project website.

Stakeholder/PMT Workshop: This 2-day workshop will be held after the listening tour is complete and will focus on developing the guiding principles of the CTP. The guiding principles will direct the project team's efforts in completing the scope of work, including public engagement strategies.

Stakeholder Interviews: As part of the existing conditions and needs assessment inventory, stakeholders, either individually or in small groups, will be interviewed to discuss their opinions and views on quality of life and transportation in Cobb County.

Public Opinion Poll: There will be two scientific public opinion polls conducted throughout the CTP process. The first poll will be coordinated with the CCT market research survey. This initial public opinion poll will include general public opinions regarding quality of life and transportation. The CCT market research survey will include transit-specific questions about why individuals use or don't use transit. The second public opinion poll will be conducted on the preliminary CTP recommendations. This second survey will also retest key questions from the first survey. Both surveys will be conducted via telephone. The CCT customer satisfaction survey will target CCT customers specifically and will be conducted on both CCT buses and at CCT transfer centers. This survey will largely seek to understand what works well and what could be improved within the CCT service.

Media Blitz: At key activities in the study process, the project team will focus efforts on dispersing information about the CTP to the general public. The media blitz will include working with partner community organizations and the media to send out information, including engagement opportunities and activities, meeting notes, and key milestones in the process. Media outreach is outlined in the communication alignment strategy.

Video: "Cobb is Home." This engagement tool will serve as a visual introduction to the CTP and demonstrate why the CTP is important to the future of Cobb County. It will highlight the best of Cobb County and include citizens and elected officials speaking about what makes Cobb County so great and planning for the future. The video will be placed on the internet and used at public engagement events, where possible.

Online Survey: In addition to the scientific public opinion polls, there will also be an online survey to provide an additional means of public engagement and feedback. The survey will use an interactive format that allows the project team to ask about range of topics and participants to view the implications of their choices, as well as others, in the present time.

Focus Groups: In order to better understand how citizens of the County think about transportation, focus groups will be conducted to gain insight into the diversity of opinions and thought as they relate to transportation issues in the County. A focus group is essentially a type of qualitative research in which a group of people are asked about their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes on a particular product, service, or concept. In this case, a groups of people will be asked about their perceptions on transportation issues. Questions are asked in an interactive group setting and facilitated by a third party facilitator.

Committee Meetings: The Stakeholder Committee, Project Management Team, Technical Committee and HIA Committee will meet to review progress and provide input into the CTP on a regular basis. The PMT will likely meet monthly while the Stakeholder, Technical and HIA Committees will meet at project milestones.

Public Meeting: a large format, traditional public meeting will be held after the preliminary project recommendations are developed.

Stakeholder Field Briefings: . These briefings will serve as a means to provide updates on the project to interested groups and organizations and gather input into the process. A presentation will be prepared by the public engagement team to be used by the project team and Cobb County DOT staff. The presentation will also be posted on the project website with voiceover and will be updated twice throughout the process as the project transitions between phases.

Social Media: Today, information is accessed and gathered through a variety of means, including social media. Twitter and Facebook will be used as part of the public engagement component, in conjunction with Cobb County staff. The existing Cobb DOT Facebook page and County Twitter page will be utilized to communicate CTP information to social media followers. The project team will develop content for posting, based on upcoming activities and the active phase of the project. The County will approve content before posting. Posting will occur regularly on the 30th of every month and when key milestones or activities take place.

Messaging: A clear and understandable message will be developed and used throughout the CTP process to engage the community, and provide consistency across all phases of the project.

Project Website: Using online capacities is essential to providing the citizens of Cobb a means of 24-hour access to information regarding the development of the CTP and providing input and feedback. A project website will be developed that will serve as a clearinghouse for all CTP information. The website will include a means for citizens to provide feedback. The project website will be developed and maintained by the project team. Content developed will be reviewed and approved by the County. The web address for the CTP update will be www.cobbinmotion.com.

Community Events: In order for any public engagement effort to be effective, members of the project team should be part of the community by attending community events, such as festivals, little league baseball games, farmer's markets, and 5K races. This will help get the word out about the CTP, how to be involved, and to develop a relationship for communicating input into the process.

Community Partnerships: The public engagement team will work with community partners to help disseminate information and engage citizens of Cobb County. Partnerships with community organizations are important to building relationships within the community. Likely partnerships will include:

- Cobb County Public Library System
- CCT
- Business Associations
- Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs)
- Little League Organizations
- Track Clubs, Race Organizations
- Bike Cobb
- NAACP
- Public Housing Organizations

Partnerships may include holding meetings or briefings at their facility, sharing and disseminating information, and attendance at organization events.

Every Citizen Counts

The public engagement program is based on the over-arching notion that every citizen counts; therefore, the program includes outreach to traditionally underserved or traditionally less involved populations, often referred to as environmental justice communities. In Cobb County, these include Spanish–speaking, African American, Asian, and lower income citizens

Targeted outreach to these populations will serve to engage them in the process and ensure that their needs are reflected in the CTP.

Targeted Outreach Efforts

- Stakeholder Committee Representation
- Stakeholder Field Briefings
- Translation of Materials
- Stakeholder/PMT Workshop (participant)
- "Meet and Greet"
- News Media
- Listening Tour (interview)
- Community Events
- Community Partnerships
- Translator available at public meetings
- Social Media

Documentation and Evaluation

All input and comments received during the CTP process will be documented and summarized in various CTP reports.

Meeting summaries will be prepared after each Committee and public meeting. Stakeholder Committee meeting and public meeting summaries will be posted to the project website.

All public engagement activities will include an activity sheet that will include the activity, name, date, project team attendees, purpose, event format, materials, location, and summary.

All reports prepared for the CTP will be posted on the project website for review and comment, including the project management plan, public engagement plan, existing conditions and needs assessment, recommendations report, and final document.

Public meeting materials will also be posted on the project website, including hand-outs, presentations, and displays.

The public opinion polls, customer service satisfactions survey, online survey, focus groups, telephone town hall meetings, and CCT market research study will be documented and included as supplementary documents to the reports that must be prepared as part of the CTP process.

An evaluation of the public engagement process will be completed at the end of the CTP process and included in the final documentation reports. The evaluation will include both quantitative and qualitative measures.

Public Engagement Evaluation

- How many groups were reached within the County?
- Were all portions of the County heard from and included in the process?
- What tools and techniques were used and what was the outcome of those tools and techniques?
- Did the program meet the guiding principles established in Phase I: Ready?