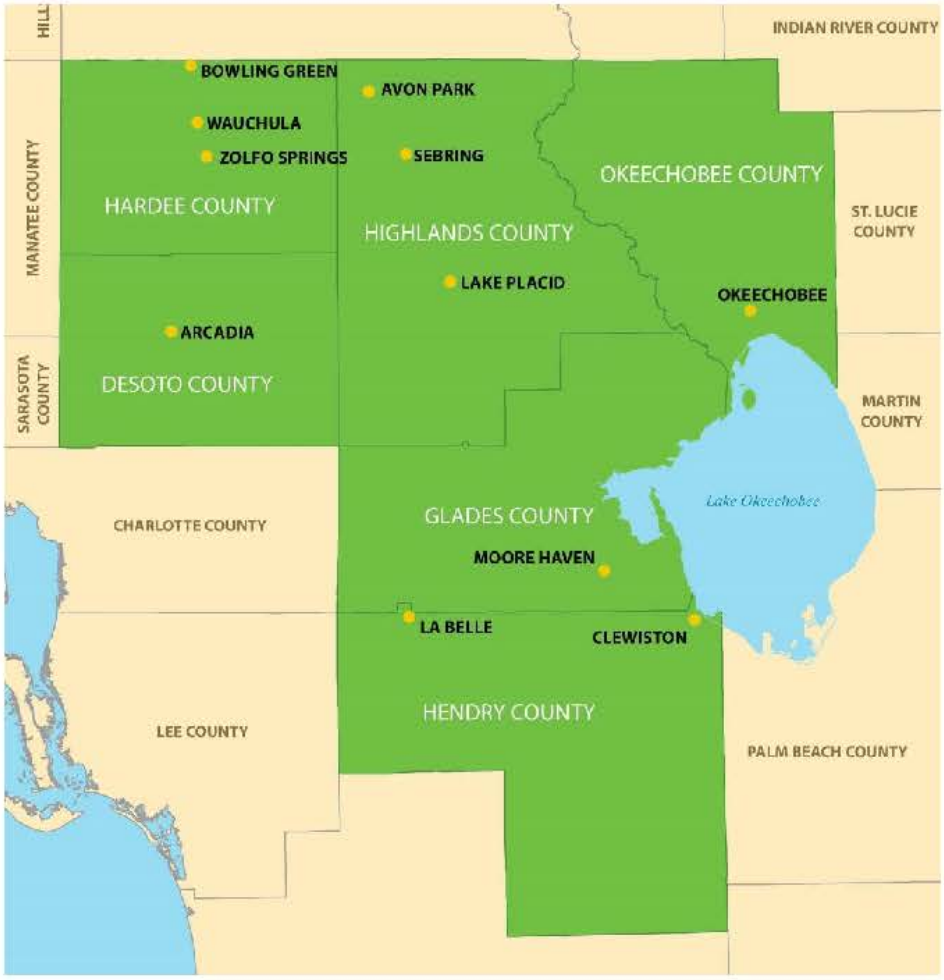
HRTPO

Heartland Regional

Transportation Planning Organization



Public Participation Plan

Adopted August 26, 2015

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 **Background and Purpose**

3 **How to Get Involved**

4 **Introduction**

Requirements For Public Participation

7 **Organization**

Governing Board (TPO Board)
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)
Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)
Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC)
Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (TDLCB's)

12 **HRTPO Plans and Programs**

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
Public Participation Plan (PPP)
Summary Table of Public Participation

14 **Stakeholders**

Traditionally Underserved
Limited English Proficiency
Indian Tribal Governments

16 **Public Participation Goals, Measurements, And Success**

Goal 1: Informing the Public
Goal 2: Involving the Public
Goal 3: Including the Public
Goal 4: Improving the Public Participation Process

21 **Appendix A:** *Relevant State Statutes and Federal Regulations*

24 **Appendix B:** *Acronyms and Abbreviations*

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This plan may be revised without formal TPO action or public comment period to update information such as contact information, addresses or locations, and scribal errors.

BACKGROUND & PURPOSE

What is a TPO?

TPO stands for Transportation Planning Organization. A TPO is the organization designated by law with the responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. TPOs are established by agreement of the Governor and units of local government which together represent 75 percent of the affected population of an urbanized area.

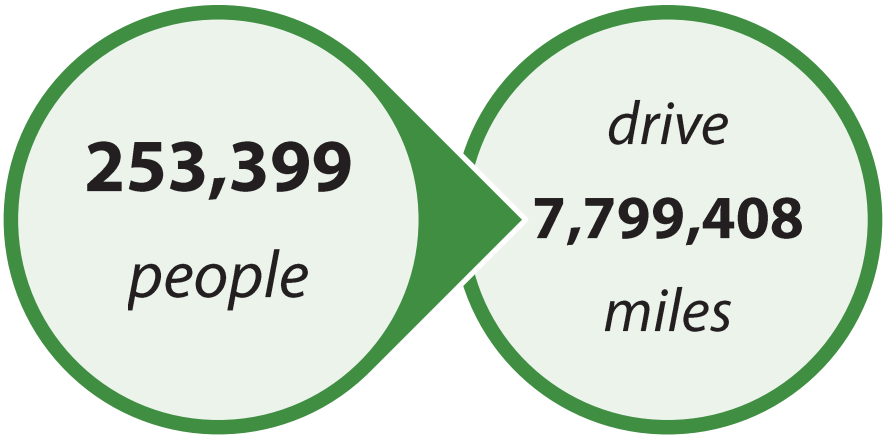
The Heartland Regional TPO coordinates transportation plans for the Heartland region including:

- *Six counties and 11 cities and towns*

DeSoto	*City of Arcadia*
Glades	*City of Moore Haven*
Hardee	*Town of Bowling Green, City of Wauchula, Town of Zolfo Springs*
Hendry	*City of Clewiston, City of LaBelle*
Highlands	*City of Avon Park, City of Sebring, Town of Lake Placid*
Okeechobee	*City of Okeechobee*

- *The Sebring Airport Authority*
- *Federally managed lands including the Avon Park Air Force Range and two Indian Tribal Governments are partially located within the Heartland region: Big Cypress Indian Reservation, Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation*

Every day in the region



Source: US Census Population 2010 & Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Highway Mileage and Travel Report 2010

What if I want to participate?

Public participation is an important part of the transportation planning process. Turn to the chart on page three to see all the ways you can get involved. The rest of this document provides details about the plan for public participation to be followed by the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). If you have questions or comments about the HRTPO Public Participation Plan, please visit our website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org, or contact Marybeth Soderstrom at (863) 534-7130 or msoderstrom@cfrpc.org.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

CALL US

(863) 534-7130
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday
Se habla español
Dial 711 for the Florida Relay Service (TTY)

WRITE TO US

Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO)
555 E. Church Street
Bartow, FL 33830

EMAIL US

General Inquiries: info@heartlandregionaltpo.org
Public Involvement/Media, Title IV/Limited English Proficiency,
Website/online media: msoderstrom@cfrpc.org

VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.heartlandregionaltpo.org

COME TO AN EVENT

The HRTPO participates in special events throughout the region and hosts workshops for citizens to learn about projects where they work and live. Visit the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org to learn more.

PARTICIPATE IN PERSON

Make a public comment at a HRTPO board or committee meeting. Find our calendar of events at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org

VOLUNTEER

To serve as a representative on a HRTPO committee contact info@heartlandregionaltpo.org or call (863) 534-7130 for more information

INTRODUCTION

Transportation planning organizations were created by law to review and administer all policies and procedures applicable for state and federal transportation funding. The Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) was established to provide transportation planning services for the six counties of the Heartland region including the urbanized area of Avon Park and Sebring.

The responsibility of the HRTPO is to manage a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that results in the development of transportation plans and programs. The HRTPO provides a forum for cooperative decision making by officials of the affected governmental entities with input from citizens and constituency groups.

Public participation is a key component of transportation planning and one of the core functions of the HRTPO. Meaningful and effective public involvement brings a diverse set of views into the discussion and improves decision making by generating ideas for how the transportation system may be improved.

The Heartland Regional TPO is the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) provides guidelines used by the HRTPO to inform and gather input from residents, communities, and interest groups throughout the six counties in order to expand the information available for planning.

Our Commitment to You

- *Early and continuous public involvement*
- *Inclusionary practices in activities and notification*
- *Consideration of the needs of the traditionally underserved*
- *Collaboration with other agencies, local governments, private sector transportation entities, and non-TPO officials*
- *Convenient meeting times and locations*
- *Reasonable access to information*
- *Timely notice of public involvement activities, including appropriate review and comment periods*
- *Acknowledgement and consideration of public comments*

HRTPO Full and Fair Participation

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or family status. Persons requiring accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or language translation, free of charge should contact Marybeth Soderstrom, HRTPO Title VI Liaison, 863-534-7130 (voice), or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by emailing msoderstrom@cfrpc.org at least three days prior to the event. The HRTPO strives to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected individuals, groups and communities in the transportation decision-making process.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Regional transportation planning is guided by laws, rules, and policies set forth at the federal and state level. Both federal and state laws require public participation in the planning process. Transportation planning activities must also consider other laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Civil Rights Act, and Americans with Disabilities Act.

Federal Requirements

The emphasis on public involvement/public participation has grown in importance as federal transportation laws and rules have changed. Transportation Planning Organizations develop Public Participation Plans in consultation with a variety of interested parties. Public meetings must be held at convenient times and accessible locations and use electronic methods and visualization techniques to provide information to the public. See Appendix A.

- *These regulations are found in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.212 and 450.316 to guide the development of statewide, local and metropolitan transportation plans and programs. These regulations also include the following:*
  - *Early and continuous public involvement opportunities throughout the planning and programming process;*
  - *Timely information to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private sector transportation entities and other interested parties, including segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;*
  - *Reasonable access to information;*
  - *Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and ample time for public review and comment at key decision points;*
  - *Explicit consideration and response to public comment;*
  - *Consideration of the needs of the traditionally underserved, including low-income and minority citizens;*
  - *Periodic review of public involvement efforts by the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to ensure full and open access to all;*
  - *Review of public involvement procedures by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) when necessary; and*
  - *Coordination of TPO public involvement processes with statewide efforts whenever possible.*

- *The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) established a national policy for the protection of the environment. NEPA requires the consideration of potential impacts on social and natural resources during transportation decision-making.*

- *In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires reasonable efforts be made to accommodate citizens with disabilities who wish to attend public meetings.*

State Requirements

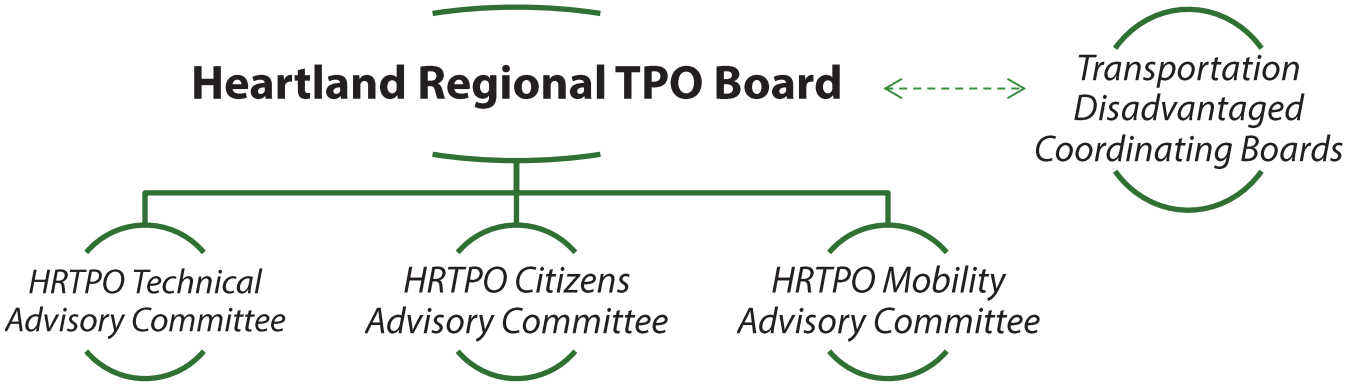
- *Chapter 339.155, Florida Statutes (F.S.) addresses public involvement in transportation planning. It requires that citizens, public agencies and other known interested parties be given the opportunity to comment on the long-range component of the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) and before*

substantive revisions to the Plan. It also requires hearings during the development of major transportation improvements.

- *Chapter 339.175.F.S. requires public involvement in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).*

- *Chapter 286, F.S., commonly known as "The Sunshine Law", addresses public access to governmental proceedings at the state and local level. The Sunshine Law requires that meetings of boards or commissions be open to the public, reasonable notice of such meetings be given, and minutes taken and made available to the public in a timely manner.*

ORGANIZATION



The HRTPO is managed by a governing board of elected officials representing local jurisdictions. The board is supported by three advisory committees and the three Transportation Disadvantaged Boards in the region. Each fulfills an important role in the transportation planning process within Heartland region. Public notifications are made for all regular and special business meetings of the board and committees. All meetings are conducted in an open public forum with an opportunity for public comment. To engage the broadest input of all citizens, at least one public meeting or workshop will be held in each county each year.

The TPO is a legislative body with the power to:

- *Develop and adopt plans*
- *Manage priorities for improvements to the transportation system*
- *Program and administer federal and state planning grants*

GOVERNING BOARD

The Heartland Regional TPO is the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The TPO Board consists of 12 voting members representing eight local governments and one non-voting adviser from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

County	County Population 2010	% of Total	Number of Members	Weight Per Vote
DeSoto	*34,862*	*13.76%*	*1.0*	**13.76%**
Glades	*12,884*	*5.08%*	*1.0*	**5.08%**
Hardee	*27,731*	*10.94%*	*1.0*	**10.94%**
Hendry	*39,140*	*15.45%*	*1.0*	**15.45%**
Okeechobee	*39,996*	*15.78%*	*1.0*	**15.78%**
Highlands (Unincorporated) + Lake Placid	*79,459*	*31.36%*	*5.0*	**6.27%**
Avon Park	*8,836*	*3.49%*	*1.0*	**3.49%**
Sebring	*10,491*	*4.14%*	*1.0*	**4.14%**
FDOT	*N/A*	*N/A*	*1.0*	**Non-voting**
Sub Total:	**253,399**	**100.00%**	**12.00**	**100.0%**

Source: US Census Population 2010

Meetings

The HRTPO Board will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members. At the last scheduled meeting in a calendar year, a regular meeting schedule for the next calendar year will be adopted by the HRTPO Board. Other meetings may be scheduled by the Chair at the request of HRTPO staff. Notice of such meetings will be given to members at least seven (7) days in advance. Special meetings may be called by the Chair with a minimum of three (3) calendar days' notice indicating the reason for the meeting and notifying all members of the HRTPO Board. In the event of an emergency meeting reasonable public notice will be given for amendments and will not be bound by the timeframes outlined on page 13.

Meeting agenda packets for the TPO Board and its committee meetings may be displayed in local government offices, county libraries, and other conspicuous locations for review by the general public.

ADVISORY COMMITTEES

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be made up of engineers, planners or other staff of local governments and agencies which review TPO work products and plans before they are presented to the TPO Board. The TAC will operate under its own adopted Bylaws and elect its own officers. The TAC is proposed to include up to 24 members.

The TPO Board's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) will be composed of technically qualified representatives of agencies responsible for maintaining, controlling, developing and improving the transportation system within the Heartland region, including the Cities of Sebring and Avon Park, the six counties, the Sebring Airport Authority, the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. Other municipalities within the six counties will be invited to participate, including those operating municipal airports. Committee duties include coordination of transportation plans and programs arising from the review of all transportation technical studies and reports.

The TAC will be represented with the following membership through staff assignment by the local government or agency:

Two staff members of each HRTPO County	**DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee**	**12 Members**
One staff member each from the cities	**Avon Park, Sebring**	**Two (2) Members**
One staff member from the following municipalities	**Arcadia, Clewiston, Lake Placid, LaBelle, Moore Haven, Okeechobee City, Wauchula**	**Seven (7) Members**
One staff member from the following agencies or authorities	**Sebring Airport Authority Central Florida Regional Planning Council Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council**	**Three (3) Members**
One staff member from the following agency	**Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)**	**One (1) Non-voting Member**

Meetings

The committee will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings and notice will be posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is a volunteer group consisting of representatives from professional associations, neighborhood associations, civic and community organizations, and the private sector representing individuals with disabilities, minority groups, and geographic areas of the region. The CAC provides an avenue for obtaining public input for the deliberations on transportation issues. The CAC will assist in identifying the needs of the public and potential outreach opportunities. Comments received from the CAC members and non-members are treated equally.

A broad cross section of the six-county region, the Citizens Advisory Committee will meet on a regular basis providing input on TPO work products and plans.

Membership of the CAC will include two citizens from each member county, and one member each from the cities of Avon Park and Sebring totaling 14 members. The CAC will operate under its own adopted Bylaws and elect its own officers.

CAC members will be selected based upon application submitted to the HRTPO. Application forms will be available at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org; through the Community Engagement Manager at info@heartlandregionaltpo.org; at public libraries; and at County and City administration offices. For an application to be complete for consideration by the HRTPO for appointment, it must be reviewed and approved by the TPO local member government where the applicant resides or works. Completed applications will be placed on the HRTPO agenda for consideration to fill vacancies. The same selection procedures apply to Alternates that may be designated for voting members.

Meetings

The CAC will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings, posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org and distributed to local media outlets. These meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for interested parties to hear and discuss transportation issues.

MOBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (MAC)

The TPO anticipates the creation of a Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC) who also may serve as the committee developing and guiding multimodal input including bicycle, pedestrian, trails, transit and other mobility modes. The MAC will operate under its own adopted Bylaws and elect its own officers.

Meetings

The committee will meet as needed, at a time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings and notice will be posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org.

TRANSPORTATION DISADVANTAGED LOCAL COORDINATING BOARDS (LCB)

The Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Board (LCB) assists the TPO in identifying local service needs and provides information, advice, and direction to the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) (Chapter 427 F.S) on the coordination of transportation services to be provided to the transportation disadvantaged.

The membership of each LCB is appointed by the Designated Official Planning Agency (DOPA) or the TPO. Each LCB has the following membership:

- *An elected official who will serve as chair (in areas where there is a multi-county system an elected official from each county will serve)*
- *A representative from each of the following: Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Department of Children and Family Services, Public Education Community, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Division of Blind Services, Local Veterans Service Office, Florida Association for Community Action, local Mass Transit or Public Transit System, Florida Department of Elderly Affairs, Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, local Workforce Board*
- *A person over sixty years of age representing the elderly*
- *A person with a disability representing the disabled in the service area*
- *Two citizen advocates representatives in the service area; one who must be a person who uses the transportation service(s) as their primary means of transportation*
- *A local representative for children at risk*
- *A representative of the local medical community*

All other members are chosen from a cross–section of the community and can either request to serve on the board through an application process or can be recommended by community civic and social organizations. Contact the LCB in your area for an application.

The three Local Coordination Board's in the HRTPO region area are:

Local Coordinating Board	Service Area	Meetings	Contact
Central Florida Regional Planning Council	*Hardee, Highlands, Okeechobee counties*	*4x per year*	*Kenneth Harley* *kharley@cfrpc.org* *Phone: (863) 534-7130 ext. 103* *Address: 555 E. Church Street Bartow, FL 33830*
DeSoto County Board of County Commission	*DeSoto County*	*4x per year*	*Peggy Waters* *p.waters@desotobocc.com* *Phone: (863) 993-4858* *Address: 201 E. Oak Street, Suite 202 Arcadia, FL 34622*
Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council	*Glades and Hendry counties*	*4x per year*	*Nichole Gwinnett* *ngwinnett@swfrpc.org* *Phone: (239) 338-2550* *Address: 1926 Victoria Ave. Fort Myers, FL 33901*

HRTPO PLANS AND PROGRAMS

The HRTPO is responsible for four core certification documents in order to be certified by the federal government as eligible to program and receive federal transportation funds. Public participation requirements prescribed by the federal government vary by document, but all of these plans and programs are completed through an open process that allows for public review and feedback throughout various stages of plan development. Final products and reports are adopted after careful consideration of community comment. TPO plans may be revised without formal TPO action or public comment period to update information such as contact information, addresses or locations, and scribal errors. Other administrative changes may be made by TPO staff as authorized by the HRTPO Board.

As these documents are developed, they will be made available on the HRTPO website: www.heartlandregionaltpo.org and paper copies are available at each TPO member government.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	➢ *Details comprehensive plan for transportation modes* ➢ *Includes long and short range goals and strategies* ➢ *Identifies funding sources and estimates costs* ➢ *Provides framework for choosing transportation projects* ➢ *Includes local government projects*	**Adopted:** *Every five years* **Amended:** *As needed* **Public Comment:** *30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous during the plan development.*
	Required by: 23 USC 134, 49 USC 5303, 23 CFR 450.322, and Section 339.175, FS	
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	➢ *Lists priority projects from the LRTP* ➢ *Provides 5-year implementation schedule* ➢ *Allocates state and federal funds for capital projects* ➢ *Becomes part of the Statewide TIP (STIP)*	*Adopted: Every year* *Amended: As needed* *Public Comment: 30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous during the development of the TIP.*
	Required by: 23 CFR 450.324, Section 339.175, FS, Section 163.3161et seq., FS, 23 CFR 450.324, Section 339.175, FS	
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	➢ *Summarizes planning tasks to be completed by the HRTPO* ➢ *Defines work products and timeline for major activities* ➢ *Proposes budget using federal and other funds for planning* ➢ *Estimates cost for each task*	*Adopted: Every two years* *Amended: As needed* *Public Comment: 30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous the development of the UPWP.*
	Required by: 23 CFR 450.308, 23 USC 134 & 135, Chapter 339.175 (9) FS	
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	➢ *Outlines organizational structure and work products* ➢ *Describes HRTPO public communication tools* ➢ *Prescribes public comment periods* ➢ *Offers opportunities for public involvement*	*Adopted: Every three years* *Amended: As needed* *Public Comment: 45 days prior to adoption with seven day notice for public meeting and seven (7) days prior to amendment.*
	Required by: 23 USC134(i)(5)(B), 23 CFR 450.316(a), 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1) and (2)	

SUMMARY TABLE OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The HRTPO follows agency organization and operation policies that provide specific guidelines for public records and public access.

PUBLIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR PARTICIPATION		SCHEDULE	PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD	PUBLIC NOTICE	PUBLIC ACCESS
OPEN MEETINGS					
Governing Board	*HRTPO*	*Meets at least 4x/yr*	*At every meeting*	*7 days public notice*	*Summary of advance public comments provided in writing, opportunity for additional public comment at all meetings prior to adoption of plans*
Committees	*TAC CAC*	*Meet at least 4x/yr*	*At every meeting*	*7 days public notice*	
	MAC	*Meet as necessary*	*At every meeting*	*7 days public notice*	
PROGRAM ADOPTION					
Long Range Transportation Plan	*LRTP*	*Every five years*	*30 days*	*37 days public notice*	*Posted on HRTPO website with public notice, hard copies available, advance comments documented for review, opportunity for comment at all meetings prior to adoption*
Transportation Improvement Program	*TIP*	*Every year*	*30 days*	*37 days public notice*	
Unified Planning Work Program	*UPWP*	*Every two years*	*30 days*	*37 days public notice*	
Public Participation Plan	*PPP*	*Every three years*	*45 days*	*52 days public notice*	
PROGRAM AMENDMENTS					
Long Range Transportation Plan	*LRTP*	*As needed*	*7 days*	*7 days public notice*	*Posted on HRTPO website with public notice, hard copies available, opportunity for comment at all meetings prior to adoption*
Transportation Improvement Program	*TIP*	*As needed*	*7 days*	*7 days public notice*	
Unified Planning Work Program	*UPWP*	*As needed*	*7 days*	*7 days public notice*	
Public Participation Plan	*PPP*	*As needed*	*7 days*	*7 days public notice*	

STAKEHOLDERS

Public involvement activities must be accessible to anyone who has an interest in transportation, regardless of race, age, income level, language or disability. Since different involvement techniques may be required to ensure inclusion, it is important for the TPO to gain an understanding of all the populations that work, live, and play in the area, so that communications methods can be tailored to their needs and preferences. Making sure that all interested members of the public are provided the opportunity to have input into our projects also helps the TPO comply with federal nondiscrimination regulations, including Title VI and environmental justice.

In addition to legal requirements, the more that is known about the study area population, the more effective the public involvement will be.

TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

HRTPO staff will make specific efforts to engage communities that traditionally have not been participants in the governmental planning processes. Traditional non-participants tend to include persons who are low-income, minority, elderly or youth, individuals with disabilities, have no vehicles, and/or are low literate or have limited English proficiency. Staff will identify opportunities and strategies that will provide these communities greater access to the transportation planning process. Communities will be identified that require more extensive public participation outreach efforts through the census and local data available, and relationships with key leaders and organizations within the communities.

Accommodations will be made to ensure all populations are given the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process when available.

LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY (LEP) PLAN

The HRTPO's goal is to develop a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan that identifies the Limited English Proficient populations in our service area and provides guidelines for TPO staff to help ensure that information and services are accessible to LEP persons.

Translation services will be made available for all HRTPO meetings and documents as requested.

INDIAN TRIBAL GOVERNMENTS

The HRTPO will offer the Indian Tribal Governments partially located in the region the opportunity to participate in all HRTPO public participation activities and will formally notice the tribes of any products or significant processes of the TPO via registered US mail.

The HRTPO area includes:

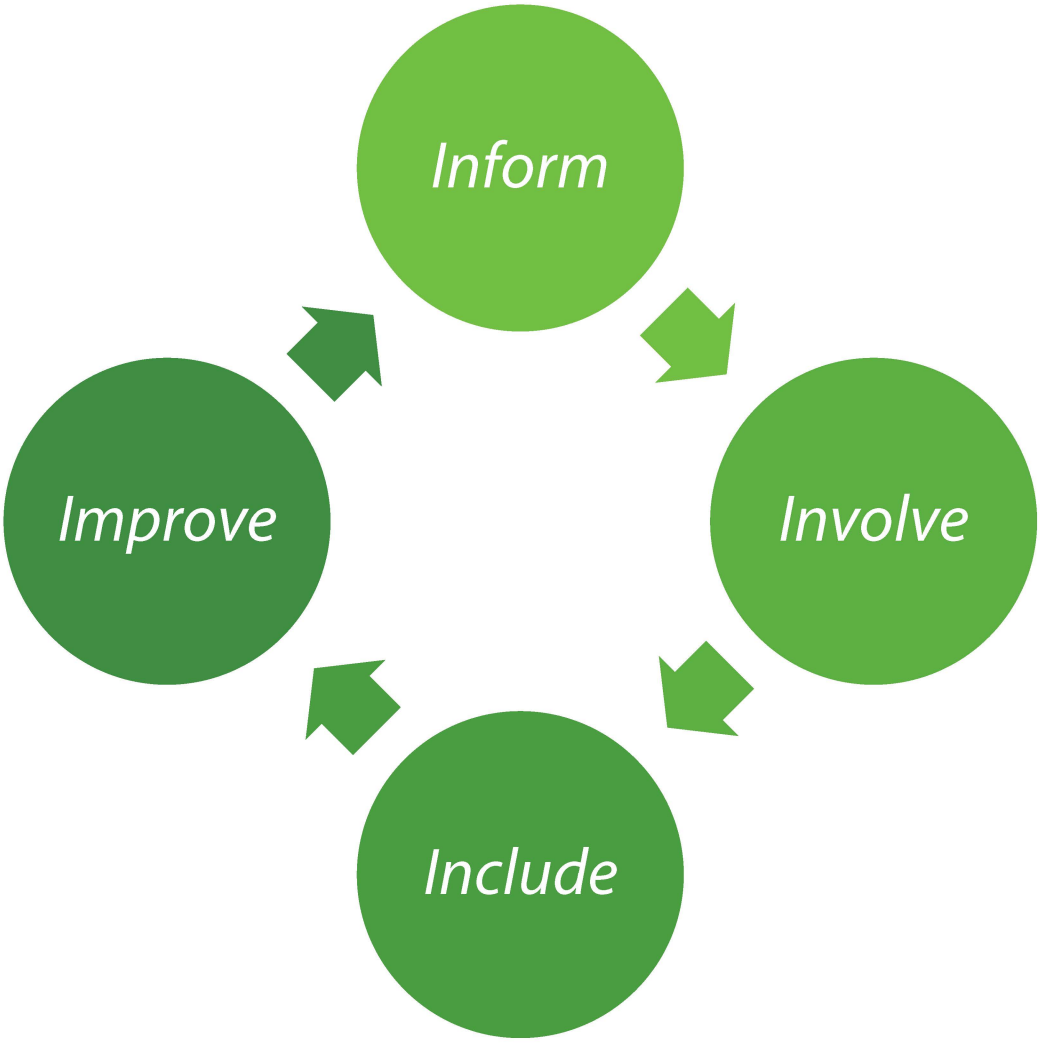
- *Big Cypress Indian Reservation*
- *Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation*

Accommodations may include:

	Seniors	Youth	Hearing Impaired	Sight Impaired	Physically Challenged	No High School	Low Income	Non-English Speakers	Transit Disadvantaged	Shift Worker
Provide extended or special meeting hours	X	X							X	X
Plan a special meeting in a convenient location	X	X		X	X		X		X	X
Incorporate games or similar activities		X				X				
Provide written materials			X							
Provide American Sign Language interpreters			X							
Use plain language guidance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Post meeting notices and project information in convenient locations						X	X		X	
Contact via telephone				X	X					
Ensure meeting location meets ADA requirements	X		X	X	X				X	
Place display materials at an accessible level during meetings	X				X					
Provide verbal assistance to convey the written information displayed at meetings				X						
Provide translated materials in languages other than English								X		
Ensure bilingual staff is available at public meetings as requested								X		

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS, MEASUREMENTS, AND SUCCESS

Public participation is an on-going activity. The HRTPO has a variety of approaches for communicating and consulting with the public and is continually working to improve its outreach. These are the primary tools used to interact with stakeholders and the community. On an annual basis, public participation activities will be evaluated and compiled into a report and will be made available for review by the HRTPO Board, committees, and general public.



GOAL 1: INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Inform the public, to the maximum extent possible with available resources, of opportunities to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

HOW WE WILL INFORM THE PUBLIC

- *Provide adequate notice of all meetings to HRTPO members, committee members, and interested parties by mail/e-mail at least 7 days in advance.*
- *Disseminate press releases announcing meetings and activities, opportunities for public participation, and the availability of documents for public review.*
- *Post meeting agendas on web page at least 7 days in advance.*
- *Include provisions in meeting announcements for interested persons to respond in writing, by phone or by e-mail.*
- *Include in public notices posted by the HRTPO that upon request and adequate notice, assistance will be provided to the hearing and visually impaired, those with limited English proficiency, the transportation disadvantaged, and others requiring special assistance.*
- *Maintain an agency's mailing list of all interested parties and their preferred contact method including US mail, e-mail, SMS text messaging, or phone. Coordinate with local government redevelopment agencies, non-profit agencies, and others who have already developed community contacts to build the list.*

HOW WE WILL KEEP TRACK

- *Progress of public participation will be tracked on a continuing basis including meeting date, time, location, and number of participants.*
- *A log of direct participant outreach will be maintained.*
- *Questionnaires will be distributed via the web or by mail to those specially notified or invited and whose name appears on the agency's mailing list.*
- *Information on the demographic characteristics of persons who attend transportation-related meetings, are members of established committees, or otherwise participate in the transportation decision making process will be tracked annually including race, ethnicity or national origin, age, gender, income, education, and occupation. A crucial piece of information is the participant's address or ZIP code.*
- *As LEP needs are determined, it will be necessary to track whether written materials and media announcements related to transportation projects and actions in these areas were translated into languages other than English.*

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

- *At least one meeting or opportunity is located in each county annually.*
- *Translators are available at public meetings in areas where a high proportion of the affected population comprises non-English speakers or when requested.*
- *100% of board and committee meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities.*

GOAL 2: INVOLVING THE PUBLIC

Involve the public early and often in the transportation planning process.

HOW WE WILL INVOLVE THE PUBLIC

- *Maintain active, standing committees such as the TAC, CAC, and MAC so residents have an opportunity to participate in the continuous transportation planning process.*
- *Include a feature on the HRTPO's web page allowing the public to e-mail staff with questions or comments.*
- *Design a community engagement strategy that incorporates a complementary mix of smaller, community-based forums, large-scale public forums and online opportunities for engagement.*
- *Inform HRTPO members of recommendations from the TAC, CAC, and MAC and inform HRTPO members of trends indicated from other contacts with the public.*
- *Allocate time for public input on each committee's agenda.*
- *Respond to citizen, agency and media queries on all HRTPO related topics and plans, providing interim responses while questions are being researched.*
- *Make comment forms available to solicit input in writing at public meetings or online.*

HOW WE WILL KEEP TRACK

- *Written minutes of meetings are kept and made available to the public. Minutes include a list of participants and a summary of public comments.*
- *For web and email activities, electronic tracking is used to track distribution of information as well as the number of people visiting the sites and the type of information they are seeking.*
- *Sign in sheets or attendance records are used to track participation at meetings and events.*
- *Data may be obtained through responses to questionnaires that are distributed. Participants surveyed would be obtained from the agency's mailing list of participating partners, organizations and individuals. Questions could assess public reaction to the clarity and completeness of information provided on public notices, fliers, newsletters, and agency presentations.*
- *A log of public requests will be maintained by the HRTPO noting time and date of request and agency responses to questions.*

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

- *100% of HRTPO meetings have comment cards available.*
- *100% of HRTPO committee meetings will have time for public input on the agenda.*
- *Responses to public inquiries are made within 3 working days of the day of receipt.*
- *Responses to media inquiries are made within 1 working day of the date of receipt.*

GOAL 3: INCLUDING THE PUBLIC

Reach out to the geographical, organizational and demographic communities that composed the TPO planning area to increase the opportunity to participate in developing transportation plans and services.

HOW WE WILL INCLUDE THE PUBLIC

- *Develop a HRTPO logo and brand identity.*
- *Develop a website that provides current information about the HRTPO activities, members, meetings, and contacts. The website will allow visitors to get to know the regional projects with visual tools and project fact sheets. The website will also include a Frequently Asked Questions section and provide links to local government transportation agencies and other websites of interest.*
- *Create HRTPO informational printed materials including brochures.*
- *Engage in online social platforms as a communication tool to inform and include the general public, partner governments, community organizations, and traditionally underserved communities and drive traffic to the HRTPO website.*
- *Participate in community outreach events, providing additional opportunities to include traditionally underserved communities.*
- *As TPO plans and programs are developed, distribute copies to public libraries and public facilities in the region.*
- *Speak at local civic group meetings, schools and leadership courses, and conferences about transportation planning as requested.*

HOW WE WILL KEEP TRACK

- *The primary data source would be responses to questionnaires that are distributed when public involvement is solicited. Participants surveyed would be obtained from the agency's mailing list of participating partners, organizations and individuals.*
- *Summary reports will be written of the HRTPO's participation in outreach events or activities.*
- *Google Analytics data of web traffic will be tracked.*

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

- *Interested governments, organizations, user groups, and individuals will have the opportunity to share their level of satisfaction on the HRTPO public participation process.*
- *Specific efforts will be made to include traditionally underserved populations in 100% of the region's counties.*
- *Placement of HRTPO materials at 100% of public libraries in the region.*

GOAL 4: IMPROVING PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation processes.

HOW WE WILL IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

- *Look for opportunities to add and create strategies that will reach greater numbers and more diverse populations.*
- *Conduct assessments of the effectiveness of public participation techniques and discuss with staff.*
- *Seek to improve community outreach activities.*
- *Continue expansion of regional inter-TPO coordination of public participation activities, particularly when projects may directly involve residents from adjacent counties.*
- *Utilize analytics tools to track the performance of online public outreach strategies.*
- *Compile an annual report of all public participation efforts for review of the CAC and any other interested parties.*

HOW WE WILL KEEP TRACK

- *General community engagement activities such as outreach events, the website, and developed resources can be evaluated on continuing basis.*
- *Regional plans and updates will be evaluated at their completion.*

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

A base-line of results will be established so that future outcomes may be evaluated with a regional perspective. These measurements include:

- *Quantity, quality and relevance of comments received.*
- *Number of opportunities for engagement.*
- *Number of meeting attendees both online and face-to-face.*
- *Number of participants in online social media formats and other online events.*
- *Amount of media coverage.*
- *Percentage of materials translated in languages other than English.*
- *Diversity of participation by geographic, age, ethnic diversity.*
- *Quality of environmental justice dialogue/feedback.*
- *Clarity of informational resources, including visualization/interactivity/printed documents/videos.*
- *Number and effectiveness of partnerships and coordination with partner agencies, nonprofit organizations and other outreach organizations.*

APPENDIX A: RELEVANT STATE STATUTES AND FEDERAL REGULATIONS

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005

- *Previously the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 required states and TPOs to involve the public to a much greater extent in transportation decision-making than under previous law. When ISTEA expired in 1998, it was replaced by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) which continued to put a strong emphasis on public participation.*

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP21)

- *MAP-21 was enacted in 2012, and carries forward all of the advancements in public participation from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation.*
- *MAP-21 continues to support previous federal public participation guidelines and adds new requirements, including the development of a Public Participation Plan by TPOs in consultation with interested parties; the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities users and the disabled as interested parties; public meetings to be held at convenient times and accessible locations; and the use of electronic methods and visualization techniques to provide information to the public. With MAP-21, public participation remains a hallmark of the transportation planning process.*

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

- *Title II of this Act, 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 12131-12134, prohibits the exclusion of persons with disabilities from participation in services, programs, or activities of a public entity. This is the basis for the Department's standard language (see Part 1, Chapter 11, Section 11-2.4 of the Project Development and Environment [PD&E] Manual) regarding accommodating persons with disabilities for such issues as hearing or visual impairment.*
- *Title III of this Act, 42 USC Sections 12181-12189, requires public accommodations to provide equivalent access to individuals with disabilities. This is important for public involvement activities, as the locations of public meetings, workshops, and hearings should be accessible.*

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Other Nondiscrimination Laws

- *Title VI, 42 USC Sections 2000d-2000d-1, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Since public funds are comprised of contributions from taxpayers of all races, colors, and national origins, fairness requires that federal activities receiving such funds be conducted in a manner that discourages racial discrimination.*
- *Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 USC Sections 6101-6107, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on age.*

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

- *Directs federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions on minority and low-income populations.*
- *Requires each agency to develop a strategy for evaluating environmental justice.*
- *Promotes access by minority and low-income communities to public information and public participation.*

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

- *Requires agencies to develop plans so that people for whom English is not their native language or who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can have meaningful access to the services provided.*
- *Requires recipients of federal funding to also provide meaningful access.*
- *Factors for determining when meaningful access is necessary include:*
  - *Number or proportion of limited English proficiency (LEP) persons in the affected area,*
  - *Frequency of contact with LEP persons,*
  - *Importance of the service provided to LEP persons, and resources available.*
- *What methods of communication constitute meaningful access?*
  - *Translation of vital documents into languages other than English*
  - *Oral interpretation through translators or other interpretive services*
- **These services must be provided free of cost to the recipient*

Florida Statute 286.011 Public Meetings and Records

- *The Florida Sunshine Law mandates that meetings of the HRTPO and its committees, workshops, and programs are open to the public.*
- *All public records of the HRTPO are open for inspection and examination at the office of the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization, 555 East Church Street, Bartow, FL 33830 on regular business days between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.*

Executive Order 07-01, Section 2 - Plain Language Initiative

- *The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that announcements, publications, and other documents provided by state agencies contain "clear and concise" information. Specific requirements include: Use of common language instead of technical jargon, Providing only the pertinent information in an organized manner, Use of short sentences and active voice, and Layout and design that are user friendly.*

Section 120.525, FS, Administrative Procedures Act

- *Requires notice of public meetings, hearings, and workshops by publication in the Florida Administrative*
- *Register (FAR) and on the agency's website, no less than seven (7) days prior to the event. Includes the general subject matter to be considered.*
- *Requires an agenda (containing the items to be considered in order of presentation) to be prepared and published on the agency's website.*

Section 286.011, FS, Public Business (Government in the Sunshine)

- *Declares all meetings of any board or commission of any state, county, municipal, or political subdivision, agency, or authority to be public meetings that are open to the public at all times.*
- *Requires reasonable notice of all such meetings.*
- *Requires minutes of any such meeting to be available for public inspection.*
- *Prohibits public meetings from being held at a facility or location that discriminates on the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, origin, or economic status or that otherwise restricts public access.*
- *Establishes penalties for violation of these provisions and exceptions for specific situations.*

Section 286.29, FS, Public Business (Green Lodging)

- *Requires state agencies to contract for meeting and conference space only with hotels or conference facilities that have been designated as Green Lodging facilities by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).*

Section 335.199, FS, State Highway System (Access Modification)

- *Requires notification of all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties at least 180 days prior to design finalization of any project on the State Highway System that modifies or otherwise affects access to the facility. Requires at least one public hearing in the jurisdiction where the project is located.*

Jessica Lunsford Act

- *Codified in Title XLVIII K-20 Education Code, Chapter 1012 Personnel, §1012.465-1012.468, this law requires background checks of any person entering school grounds when children are present. As a result of this, FDOT adopted a policy that K-12 educational facilities should not be used for public meetings and hearings. There is a provision for exceptions.*

APPENDIX B: ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

For your information, these are some of the acronyms the TPO works with on a daily basis.

AARP	*American Association of Retired Persons*
AASHTO	*American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials*
ADA	*Americans with Disabilities Act*
AER	*Annual Expenditure Report*
AHCA	*Agency for Health Care Administration*
ATPO	*Association of Transportation Planning Organizations*
APR	*Annual Performance Report*
ARRA	*American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009*
ATMS	*Automatic Traffic Management System*
BCC	*Board of County Commissioners*
BEBR	*Bureau of Economic and Business Research*
BPAC	*Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee*
BMS	*Bridge Management System*
CAC	*Citizens Advisory Committee*
CAMP	*Corridor Access Management Plan*
CAP	*Commuter Assistance Program*
CDMS	*Crash Data Management System*
CFR	*Code of Federal Regulations*
CFASPP	*Continuing Florida Aviation System Planning Process*
CFRPC	*Central Florida Regional Planning Council*
CIA	*Community Impact Assessment*
CIP	*Capital Improvements Program*
CMP	*Congestion Management Process*
CMS	*Congestion Management System*
COOP	*Continuity of Operations Plan*
CRA	*Community Redevelopment Agency*
CST	*Construction*
CTC	*Community Transportation Coordinator*
CTD	*Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged*
CTPP	*Census Transportation Planning Package*
CTST	*Community Traffic Safety Team*
CUTR	*University of South Florida Center for Urban Transportation Research*
CUTS	*Coordinated Urban Transportation Studies*
DBE	*Disadvantaged Business Enterprise*
DOEA	*Department of Elder Affairs*
DOPA	*Designated Official Planning Agency*
DRI	*Development of Regional Impact*
E+C	*Existing plus committed network (used in modeling)*
EAR	*Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report*
EJ	*Environmental Justice*
EOP	*Emergency Operations Plan*

EPA	*Environmental Protection Agency*
ETAT	*Environmental Technical Advisory Team*
ETDM	*Efficient Transportation Decision Making*
FAA	*Federal Aviation Administration*
FAC	*Florida Administrative Code*
FACTS	*Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems*
FDOT	*Florida Department of Transportation*
FAP	*Federal Aid Program*
FHWA	*Federal Highway Administration*
FM	*Financial Management*
FREDI	*Florida Rural Economic Development Initiative*
FHREDI	*Florida's Heartland Regional Economic Development Initiative*
FSUTMS	*Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure*
FS	*Florida Statutes*
FTA	*Federal Transit Administration*
FTP	*Florida Transportation Plan*
FY	*Fiscal Year*
GIS	*Geographic Information Systems*
GPC	*General Planning Consultant*
HOA	*Home Owners Association*
HP&R/D	*Highway Planning and Research/Department, also known as state "D" funds.*
ICAR	*Intergovernmental Coordination and Review.*
IMS	*Intermodal Management System*
ISTEA	*Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act*
IT	*Information Technology*
ITS	*Intelligent Transportation System*
JPA	*Joint Participation Agreement*
LCB	*Local Coordinating Board*
LEP	*Limited English Proficiency*
LOS	*Level of Service*
LRTP	*Long Range Transportation Plan*
MAP-21	*Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century*
MOA	*Memorandum of Agreement*
MPO	*Metropolitan Planning Organization*
MPOAC	*Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council*
NARC	*National Association of Regional Councils*
NHS	*National Highway System*
MSTU	*Municipal Service Tax Unit*
NPS	*National Park Service*
PD&E	*Project Development and Environment Study*
PE	*Preliminary Engineering (Design)*
PEA	*Planning Emphasis Area*
PPE	*Public Participation Element*
PIP	*Public Involvement Plan*
PL	*FHWA Transportation Planning Funds*

PMS *Pavement Management System*
RAO *Rural Area of Opportunity*
RFLI *Request for Letters of Interest*
RPC *Regional Planning Council*
RSF *Regionally Significant Facility*
RTCA *Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program*
R/W or ROW *Right of Way*
SAFETEA-LU *Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users.*
SIS *Strategic Intermodal System*
SMS *Safety Management System*
SPR *State Planning and Research*
STIP *State Transportation Improvement Program*
SWFRPC *Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council*
SWFTI *Southwest Florida Transportation Initiative*
TAC *Technical Advisory Committee*
TAP *Transportation Alternatives Program*
TAZ *Traffic Analysis Zone*
TD *Transportation Disadvantaged*
TDM *Travel Demand Management*
TDP *Transit Development Plan*
TDSP *Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan*
T/E *Trip and Equipment*
TEA-21 *Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century*
TIGER *Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery*
TIM *Traffic Incident Management*
TIP *Transportation Improvement Program*
TMA *Transportation Management Area*
TOP *Transportation Outreach Program*
TPO *Transportation Planning Organization*
TRB *Transportation Research Board*
TRIP *Transportation Regional Incentive Program*
TSM *Transportation System Management*
TTF *Transit Task Force*
UPWP *Unified Planning Work Program*
USC *United States Code*
USDOT *United States Department of Transportation*
UA *Urbanized Area*
YOE *Year of Expenditure*