

Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council

Preliminary Draft

Public Involvement Policy

Introduction

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) is the agency designated by the Governor of the State of Indiana to perform general purpose planning on a regional basis for Adams, Allen, DeKalb and Wells Counties. NIRCC functions not only as the regional development agency, but also as the Intergovernmental Review Agency for this multi-county area. In addition, NIRCC serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Fort Wayne Urbanized Area.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council as the Metropolitan Planning Organization is charged with performing comprehensive transportation planning. Under ISTEA regulations, the metropolitan transportation planning process must occur in an atmosphere of public involvement and participation. The regulations state that this process must "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) and meets the requirements and criteria specified...".

This report documents the public involvement policy which will formally become a component of the metropolitan transportation planning process. This policy is based on NIRCC's lengthy history of citizen participation in their transportation planning efforts.

Public Involvement Policy Design and Review

The remainder of this report will detail specific areas where public involvement in the transportation planning process will continue to occur. Five major areas of public involvement in the transportation planning process are discussed. These areas include board and committee meetings, Overall Work Program activities, citizen meetings regarding the management systems, Transportation Improvement Program process, and the long range transportation planning process.

These areas will intertwine and overlap forming a seamless public involvement process. Jointly, these areas involve all facets of the metropolitan transportation planning process. In addition, NIRCC and the Indiana Department of Transportation are committed to coordinate local and statewide public involvement processes. This cooperation will maximize public participation and enhance public consideration of transportation issues, plans, and programs without redundancy and duplicated efforts.

Upon completion and prior to formal adoption, this policy will be made available to the public and public officials for their review and comment. A comment period of no less than forty-five days will occur before the public involvement process is adopted. Public notices in local newspapers accompanied with press releases will serve to notify interested parties of the comment period.

Copies of the draft policy will be available in our offices for public review. Acceptable forms of the policy will be provided to disabled individuals or groups upon request. Comments will be accepted verbally or in writing by staff members. Comments will be addressed and included in the final policy document in Appendix B. The final policy document will be adopted by both the

Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and associated Urban Transportation Advisory Board. The policy will begin full implementation during Fiscal Year 1995 which begins July 1, 1994.

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board and staff will periodically review and evaluate the public involvement process. The review and evaluation will determine whether the intended goals and objectives of the public involvement process are being fulfilled. Necessary modifications will be implemented. Significant revisions to the public involvement process will not be adopted until a forty-five day comment period has been completed. The first review of the public involvement policy will commence one year after full implementation.

Background

Section I covers two main areas including Organizational Structure and the History of Public Participation. The topic of Organizational Structure describes how NIRCC administers and implements the metropolitan transportation planning process. The History of Public Participation demonstrates the existing level of public involvement in the planning process on which the new policy will build.

Organizational Structure

The organizational structure is important for two reasons. The first reason is that according to ISTEA regulations, the public involvement process must include citizens, public officials, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers, and other interested parties. Understanding the organizational structure and composition of the respective boards and committees, makes it evident that public officials, affected agencies, private providers, and representatives of transportation agency employees all participate in the transportation planning process. The second reason is that in order to understand the entire public involvement process, it is helpful to first understand the organizational structure which supports such a process.

The Metropolitan Planning Area is commonly referred to as the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Transportation Study Area (see Figure 1). This area includes approximately 350 square miles within Allen County representing a

FORT WAYNE -
NEW HAVEN -
ALLEN COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION STUDY
AREA

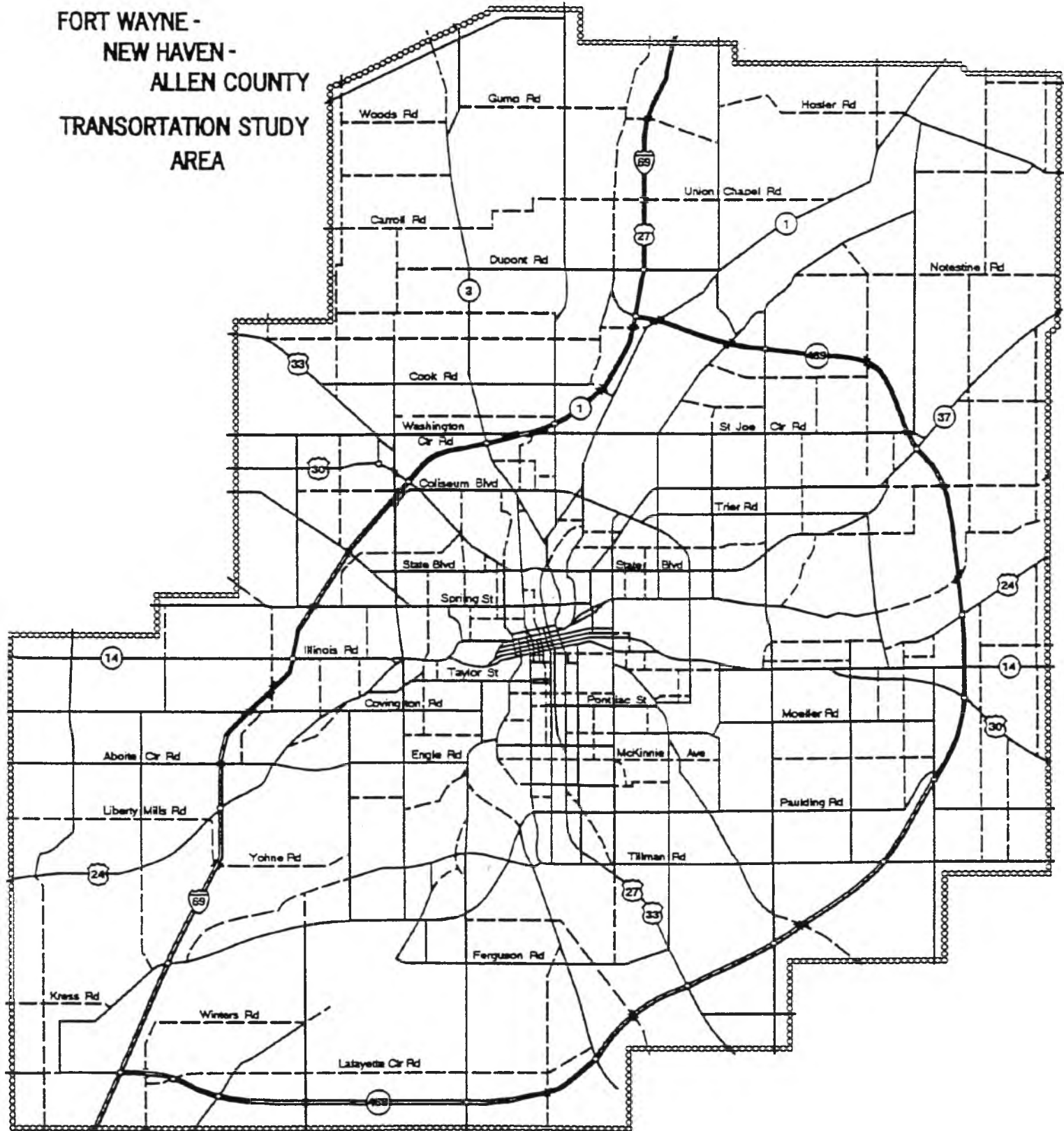


Figure 1

portion of the total NIRCC regional planning jurisdiction. The transportation study area encompasses the cities of Fort Wayne and New Haven, the towns of Grabill and Hometown, and a sizable portion of unincorporated areas of Allen County.

NIRCC was formed in 1974 and has been involved in transportation planning since its inception. NIRCC created several functional groups to assist and advise it on transportation planning issues. A transportation policy board, with related committees and subcommittees, developed under NIRCC's authority, administers the metropolitan transportation planning process. Figure 2 displays a flow chart of the organizational structure of NIRCC.

Membership in these groups includes representatives from Allen County, City of Fort Wayne, City of New Haven, Fort Wayne-Allen County Airport Authority, Indiana Department of Transportation, and Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation. Each group and its responsibilities are described below. Appendix A provides a membership listing of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council, Urban Transportation Advisory Board, Transportation Technical Committee, and the Transit Planning Committee.

The Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB)

UTAB was established by NIRCC to assist it in matters related to transportation planning within the urbanized area. The major function of UTAB is to advise NIRCC on **matters of policy** concerning the continuing phase of the Fort Wayne - New Haven - Allen County Transportation Study.

The membership of UTAB is composed of individuals from local government who are in positions of responsibility and able to make policy decisions. Duties and

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

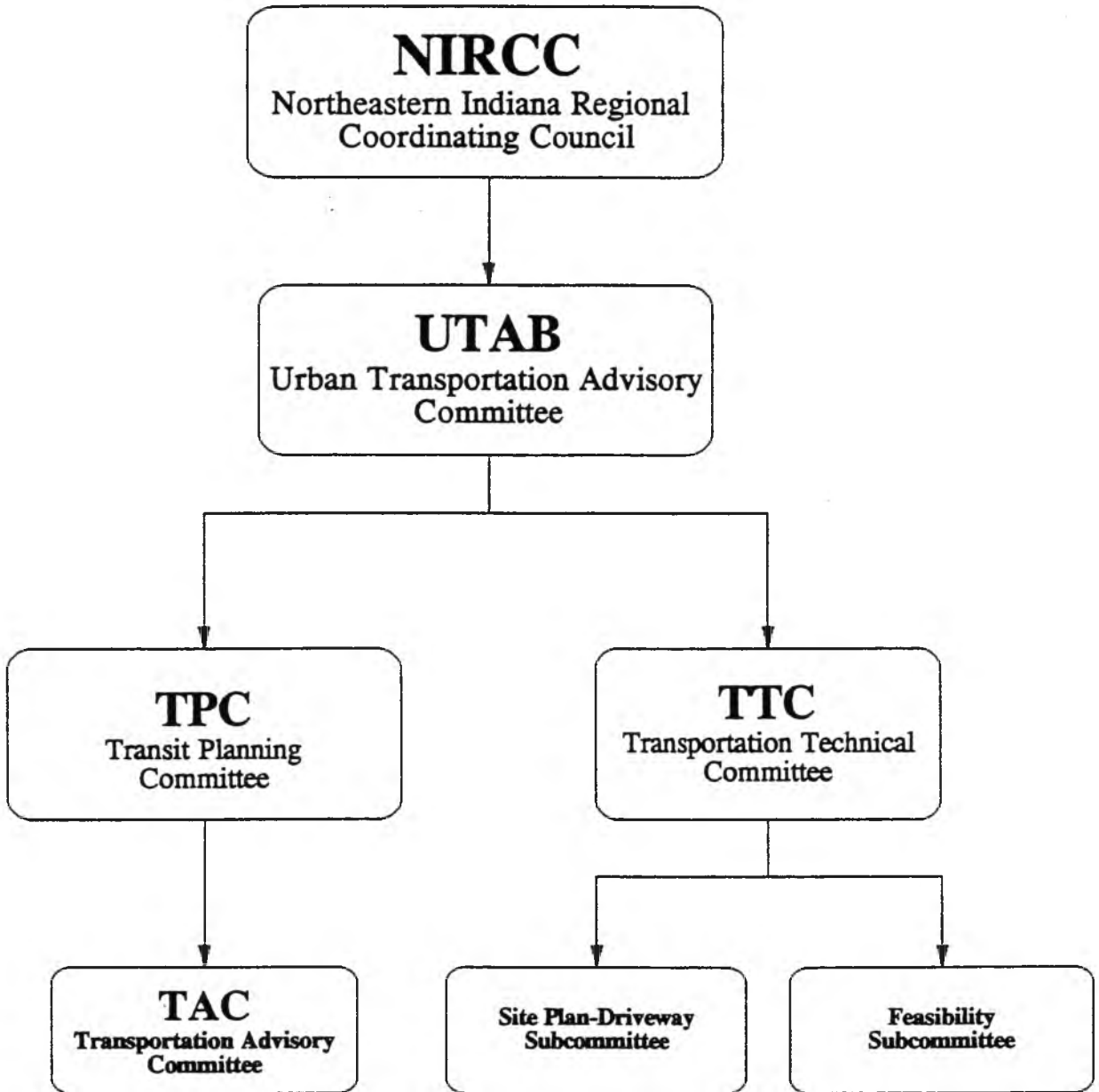


Figure 2

responsibilities of the Board include the following:

1. The Board acts in an advisory capacity to NIRCC for the planning of highways, roads and public transportation within the Transportation Study Area.
2. The Board acts as the policy board for policy decisions required under Title 23, Section 134 of the U.S. Code.
3. The Board, with technical support from the NIRCC staff, performs functions listed under Title 23, Section 134 of the U.S. Code as specified in the Overall Work Program.
4. Using the Transportation Technical Committee, Transit Planning Committee, and the NIRCC staff, UTAB is responsible for carrying out the continuous transportation planning phase. The responsibility includes the coordination of programs of the separate units of local government, and also includes the supplying of necessary information regarding land use, population, etc., needed to successfully complete the transportation work elements of the Overall Work Program.
5. Working with the NIRCC staff, the UTAB is responsible for developing the transportation work elements of the Overall Work Program.
6. UTAB reviews and appoints members to the Transportation Technical Committee and the Transit Technical Committee.
7. UTAB has the authority and responsibility to approve the use of Surface Transportation Program (STP) Funds and determine the implementation priority for transportation improvement projects within the Transportation Study Area.

The Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) and Transit Planning Committee (TPC)

Associated with UTAB is the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee which serve as working advisory committees. Working with the staff, these committees are the agent through which transportation planning information from local governments is channeled to the planning staff. The

Transportation Technical Committee oversees the day-to-day coordination activities between local governments with primary regard to highways and roads. The Transit Planning Committee oversees the day-to-day coordination activities between local governments with primary regard to public transportation. Both committees work with other modes of transportation in relation to their respective areas. Similarly, there are occasions where these two committees work jointly on projects of mutual interest.

The membership of these committees (See Appendix A) is composed of local government staff members authorized to provide planning information, offer comment, and report on transportation related activities within their agency's jurisdiction. State and federal officials participate on these committees and may hold voting or non-voting memberships. Public and private transit groups also sit as members on these committees. Duties and responsibilities of the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee include the following:

1. The Committees are responsible for obtaining specific planning information and data from local governments, and for working with staff to integrate this information into the planning process as specified in the transportation elements of the Overall Work Program. This activity may include information as related to land use, terminal facilities, traffic control features, zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, building codes, etc., and financial resources and others as necessary.
2. The Committees through their subcommittees deal with and provide recommendations regarding the Site-Plan and Driveway applications, feasibility studies, Section 16 grant applications, transit studies, etc.
3. The Committees through their subcommittees and meetings conduct coordination work activities regarding program implementation within the Transportation Study Area.
4. With regard to the continuing phase of transportation planning, the Committees assist staff in developing the work elements of the various program components.

History of Public Participation

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council through the Urban Transportation Advisory Board has established a long history of public official and citizen involvement in the transportation planning process. Since the early 1970's, the Overall Work Program has included a section dealing solely with public participation activities. Public meetings, meetings with civic groups, newsletters, and media outreach efforts have consistently been a component of NIRCC's transportation planning efforts. These activities will be discussed at greater length in the following section.

Board and committees of the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and related groups hold regularly scheduled meetings. Notification of these meetings are provided to all interested parties including news media. These meetings are always open to the public and often receive media attention.

Public meetings dealing with issues related to the Transportation System Management Program have been held annually since the early 1980's. These meetings have been held at various locations throughout the transportation study area and have covered a wide range of transportation planning issues. These meetings allow direct citizen involvement and interaction in local and state transportation systems focusing primarily on highways and transit.

Comments are recorded at these meetings and responses are prepared by staff working with the Transportation Technical Committee and Transit Planning Committee. Simple problems are remedied quickly by the highway, traffic, or transit departments of the appropriate jurisdiction. Complex problems or issues are analyzed more thoroughly to develop viable solutions and policies. The responses are prepared and provided to the citizens who attended the meetings. The long range transportation planning process administered by NIRCC also has

a solid history of citizen participation. Citizen meetings held at various stages of plan development have provided opportunity for public involvement and discussion. In addition, staff have attended numerous neighborhood and civic organization meetings making presentations and soliciting comments on the development of the transportation plan. This level of public involvement has over the years contributed to solid, long range transportation plans and updates, accepted and supported by the community.

The documentation of final plans has always been published and made available to the public for review. A report containing the technical aspects of the plan development is prepared. In addition a "popular brochure" has also been prepared and widely distributed highlighting the long range transportation planning process, including proposed strategies, policies, and projects.

Open board and committee meetings, newsletters, brochures, agency sponsored public participation meetings and presentations to civic and neighborhood groups have established a well-rounded public participation program. The future public involvement process sponsored by NIRCC will not significantly change from the existing program. This policy merely documents the process and formally commits the Council to continue these activities previously implemented as part of the transportation planning process.

Board and Committee Meetings

The major boards and committees involved in the transportation planning process include the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC), Urban Transportation Advisory Board (UTAB), Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), and Transit Planning Committee (TPC). Both elected and appointed public officials serve in different capacities on these boards and committees. The composition of these groups is provided in Appendix A. The official tasks charged to these groups is discussed in Section I.

The boards and committees hold regularly scheduled meetings. These generally occur on a monthly basis. Notices of the meeting time, date and place are provided to all interested parties including the news media. All meetings are open to the public. Minutes of these meetings as well as any presented reports are available for review through our offices.

Board and Committee meetings conducted in this manner meet several primary objectives of a proactive public involvement program within the transportation planning process. First, the membership of the Boards and Committees provides for direct participation in transportation planning by elected and appointed public officials. Secondly, open meetings provide all public officials and interested citizens the opportunity to observe and scrutinize the decision-making process. And thirdly, public involvement with these meetings and their respective contents (through minutes and reports) provides access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and Transportation Improvement Programs.

Overall Work Program Activities

The Overall Work Program (OWP) is prepared annually to provide a guide to the work which must be accomplished to achieve a Comprehensive Plan for the region. The Overall Work Program (OWP) includes the Unified Work Program (UWP) which contains the transportation planning portion. The OWP may also provide insight to other planning activities of the Council. This program outlines all work to be performed by the Council and includes the Regional, State, and Federally funded programs engaged in by the Council.

The OWP provides the Council with an administrative and management tool, and allows the Council to monitor its total work effort and assure itself that all necessary elements of the Regional Comprehensive Planning process are being addressed. The program is not designed to only achieve the goals and objectives of the Council, but also to coordinate with the goals and objectives of Federal and State agencies, and to make maximum use of available resources.

As stated in the OWP, all phases of planning from problem identification to actual program implementation require citizen input to ensure that the planning process accurately addresses the transportation needs of the area. Citizen involvement is sought from throughout the transportation study area, and includes the diverse social and economic classes within it. In order to have a more diversified and complete citizen involvement, participation from elderly, disabled and minority groups is actively solicited.

Included in the OWP are specific work elements concerned with maintaining a high level of citizen involvement in the transportation planning process. These

efforts require a considerable measure of cooperation, coordination, and work by the Council and the staff, elected and appointed officials of local, state and federal government, as well as the citizens of this community.

The OWP identifies five major areas of responsibility where staff will perform specific duties aimed at promoting and encouraging citizen involvement. These areas under the citizen participation category include meetings, newsletters, information assistance, audio-visual activities, and media information. These activities, as described below, will continue to serve as one component of the public involvement process.

Meetings

The staff meets with members of various civic and service related citizen groups as well as the public at-large to gain further knowledge of specific transportation problems. By utilizing existing citizen and neighborhood organizations, high levels of continued public participation can be sustained among the community residents, local officials, governmental agencies, and the Coordinating Council. Interaction such as this is vital in keeping government responsive to the needs and desires of the community. It further enhances the ability of citizens to make suggestions regarding projects, and to aid in the initiation of projects.

Citizen participation meetings are held with neighborhood groups, community based organizations and civic groups as requested. Transportation information presented and discussed at these meetings may be either specific or general in nature, depending on the audience's preference. Staff will continue to make themselves available to speak at these functions.

In addition, the Council will begin conducting two rounds of general citizen participation meetings on an annual basis. This policy change will enhance the previous practice of holding one round of annual meetings. Additional meetings

will be scheduled during the development of long range transportation plans. These meetings will be discussed more thoroughly in Section IV and VI respectively.

Staff routinely attend meetings and public hearings to listen to public comment and provide information on planning support for highway and transit projects, as well as land development hearings where transportation and land use issues are coordinated. Informative meetings and public hearings are often held at various stages of project implementation. Staff attend these meetings as part of the project team which may also include representatives of the implementing agency, state officials, and consultants. The planning information presented at these meetings are an important component of the citizen participation process. Likewise, feedback through citizen comment is valuable information for the staff and planning committees. Staff will continue to attend informative meetings and public hearings.

Newsletters

In an attempt to reach the greatest number of people and groups, newsletters provide an economical alternative to meetings. The newsletter is sent to interested individuals and groups as well as to the local news media, governmental agencies, and elected officials.

The staff will continue to prepare informational newsletters twice a year. The newsletters are distributed to Council members, local elected officials, State and Federal legislators, local media, governmental agencies, civic groups and interested citizens. In addition, the Council publishes a yearly final report summarizing the progress that has been made in transportation planning and project implementation. Copies of the Annual Report are distributed to board members, state and federal agencies, and made available to the general public.

Information Assistance

The staff will continue to respond to requests for information pertaining to Council activities and programs from interested citizens and groups. Assistance will be provided to interested individuals and groups upon request. From previous experience, requests include information concerning transportation improvement projects, Fort Wayne and Allen County air quality problems and plans for their resolution, transit plans, long range plans, and other programs or project activities followed by the Council. Local residents and businesses request traffic data and transportation planning information through correspondence, visits to the office, and telephone conversations. The staff responds to these requests with the most accurate and timely information available.

Audio-Visual Activities

The Council periodically prepares visual aid presentations, to be shown to civic and community groups, as an educational tool to heighten public interest in the Council's activities. Audio-Visual aids are developed and/or revised in-house as needed, or located from other sources to be shown to interested local groups, civic organizations, or schools, etc., regarding different facets of the Council's work activities. These materials aid in the understanding and awareness of the Council's transportation activities.

News Media Involvement

The news media is continually informed of Council activities through the distribution of background information or press releases, and through media interviews on television, radio, and in newspapers. Background information and press releases are prepared and distributed to the media regarding planning work activities. In addition, the staff will remain open to the news media through interviews and other forms of active participation. This process will continue as a means to inform the public through the assistance of the news media.

Summary of OWP Activities

The goal of the work program activities is to promote citizen participation to ensure that the needs and desires of the community are recognized and utilized as input into the planning process. The objective is to increase citizen interaction and participation within the region among the community-at-large, local officials, governmental agencies, and the Coordinating Council through meetings with civic and neighborhood groups, audio-visual presentations, newsletters, information supplied to the news media, and through information assistance to interested citizens and groups.

Through these efforts, the staff provides technical and other supportive assistance necessary for community meetings. The purpose of this process is: to inform citizens and officials about the planning activities of the Council and staff; to distribute and collect information; and to obtain citizen input regarding the Council's transportation related programs. These meetings will be held at various locations throughout the area with local organizations and minority groups. Staff will also prepare a bi-annual newsletter; provide information assistance to citizens, organizations, and minority groups; continue to inform the media of work activities; and prepare audio-visual presentations in a continuing effort to provide accurate information to the entire area.

The result of this extended citizen participation effort will be increased citizen involvement in, and interaction with public officials and others who affect local and areawide decision-making.

Previous Accomplishments of OWP Work Elements

Citizen participation activities conducted by the Council have provided an excellent medium for exchanging ideas and information between public officials and area citizens concerning transportation issues and problems. Staff members have attended numerous neighborhood and civic group meetings to present transportation plans and programs for public review and response. Newsletters are published twice a year and a transportation final report is distributed yearly to inform citizens, local officials, state and federal legislators, media and civic organizations of transportation issues and progress. Every year hundreds of requests for information are processed by staff concerning traffic data, road improvement projects and long range transportation plans. Audio-Visual activities include gathering slides and pictures of transportation problem areas and improvement projects for further reference in slide show presentations. The staff has provided interviews on numerous occasions to media personnel discussing various topics concerning transportation planning activities.

Citizen Meetings

Meetings with area residents will follow two different formats. General citizen participation meetings will be held at least twice a year. These meetings will cover all issues, including both local and state, involved with the transportation planning process. The format for these meetings is discussed further in this section.

NIRCC will sponsor additional public involvement meetings during the development of local long range plans and updates. These meetings will focus on selected areas of plan development. The long range planning meetings will be scheduled at strategic times coinciding with the appropriate phase as the transportation plan develops. These meetings will cover local and state issues important to the transportation study area. Further discussion of these meetings is provided in Section VI.

The general citizen involvement meetings (see Figure 3) will be held on a semi-annual basis, with one occurring in the spring and one in the fall. These meetings will allow the staff and citizens to share ideas and exchange information concerning all transportation issues. Some of the topics covered at these meetings may include long range transportation plans, management system programs, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), transit service, transportation funding and financial resource management, MPO activities and studies, air quality issues, and other related topics. Citizen concerns will be documented and presented to the applicable committees and Urban Transportation Advisory Board.

GENERAL CITIZEN MEETING PROCESS

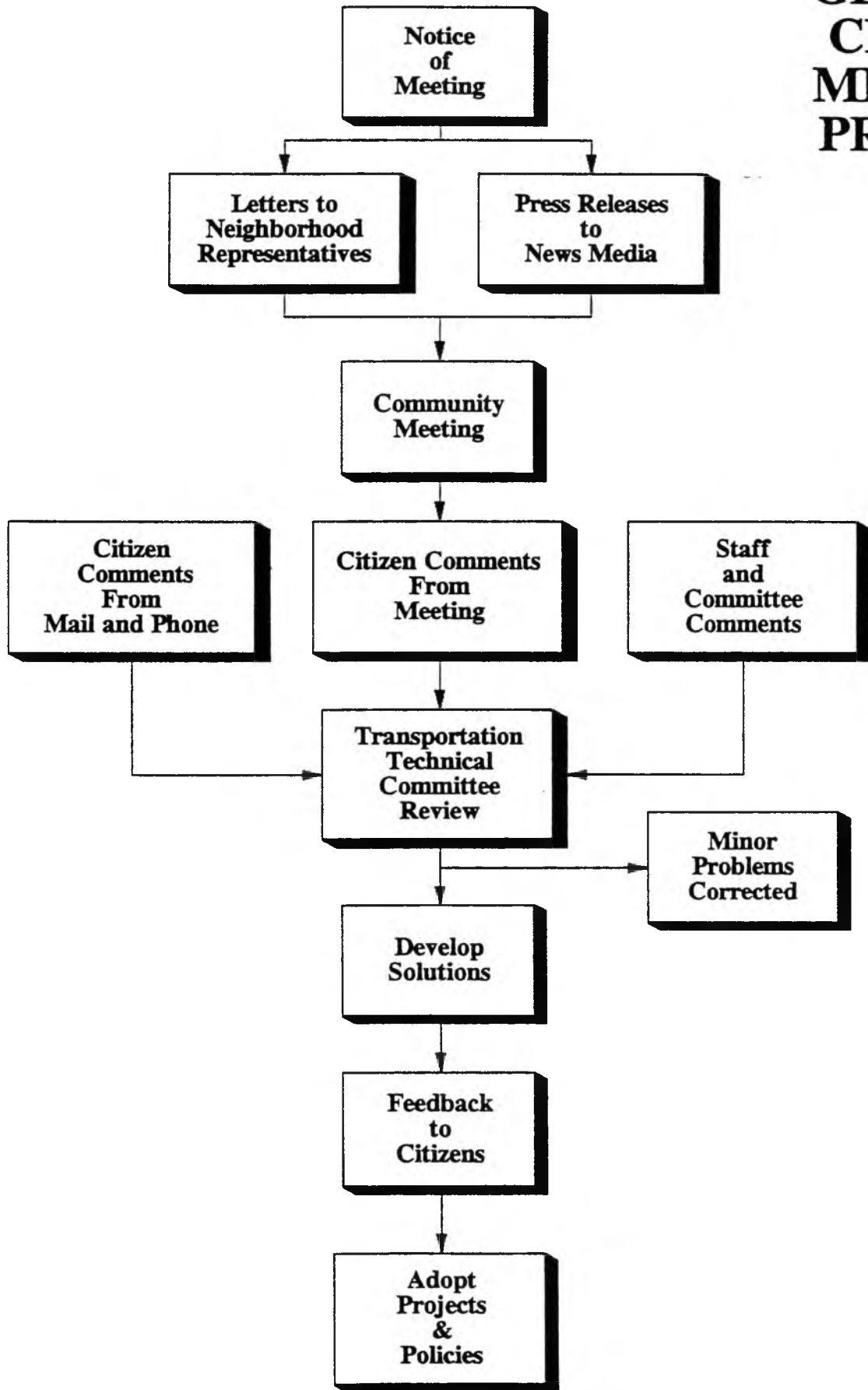


Figure 3

A direct mailing to all neighborhood associations in the metropolitan area will be used to notify residents of the scheduled meetings. Press releases will also be distributed to the media. Media coverage of these meetings has traditionally provided additional notification of meeting times and locations. Citizens unable to attend the meetings are encouraged to telephone or mail their comments and concerns to our office.

It is anticipated that the spring meeting will deal with general transportation issues with a special focus on the Transportation Improvement Program. The fall meeting will also deal with general issues and provide information on the various management systems. At both meetings, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, exchange ideas, and share information with staff members on all topics. If a response to a question or concern cannot be provided at the meeting, staff will research the issue and through TTC or TPC assistance, a response will be provided. All comments will be documented as a part of the citizen involvement process.

In the past, the citizen meetings have worked extremely well as a forum for exchanging ideas and information. Citizens are also encouraged to attend meetings of the technical committee and the policy board. As previously mentioned, these meetings are held monthly at predesignated times and places and are announced through the local media and posted at our office. The public participation process provides citizens access to the planning process, affording them the opportunity to participate in transportation planning and decision making activities.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have required a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) since 1977 from urbanized areas exceeding 50,000 population. The preparation and submission of a TIP is necessary in order to obtain federal assistance for transportation projects within the transportation study area.

The regulations define the TIP as a staged multi-year program including an annual element. The functional groups assisting the Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council (NIRCC) in this regard have determined a five year program best serves the transportation needs of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Transportation Study Area.

The TIP has historically included projects selected from the Transportation System Management (TSM) Program and the long range transportation plan. The TIP has also included projects from the Indiana Department of Transportation and from the Fort Wayne Public Transportation Corporation (FWPTC). The TIP has been updated annually by the Urban Transportation Advisory Board and approved by NIRCC as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The implementing agencies with jurisdiction in the transportation study area have participated on UTAB and NIRCC for many years. The TIP has served the local officials of the Fort Wayne urbanized area as a five-year transportation capital improvement program for federally assisted projects.

While most of this process will not change, implementing ISTEA regulations will slightly modify the TIP development procedure. The management systems

(pavement, bridge, congestion, transit, intermodal, safety) have in essence replaced the Transportation System Management (TSM) Program. Therefore, the most notable change will be that project selection will be derived from the long range transportation plan and the management systems.

The primary concern for this policy, is how NIRCC will ensure that public involvement through a reasonable opportunity for public comment is provided before the TIP is adopted. The public involvement process will continue through this policy to provide reasonable opportunity for public comment (see Figure 4). With a high level of direct public involvement in the management systems and the long range plan (the two areas where projects are selected for inclusion in the TIP), projects and policies included in the TIP will be of no surprise. In addition, specific steps to inform the public of the contents of the TIP will be continued and are described below.

The public involvement process with the TIP includes several mechanism to fulfill this objective. These include: open board and committee meetings; citizen meetings; newsletters and annual reports; release of information to the news media; and publication of the adopted TIP document.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council and the Urban Transportation Advisory Board hold regularly scheduled monthly meetings. These meetings are scheduled for the entire calendar year with meeting dates, times, and places posted well in advance at our offices. The preparation of the TIP including project selection is primarily conducted at UTAB meetings. These meetings are all open to the public. Meeting notices, agendas, and minutes are sent to all interested parties including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, and private providers of transportation.

Transportation Improvement Program Citizen Involvement Process

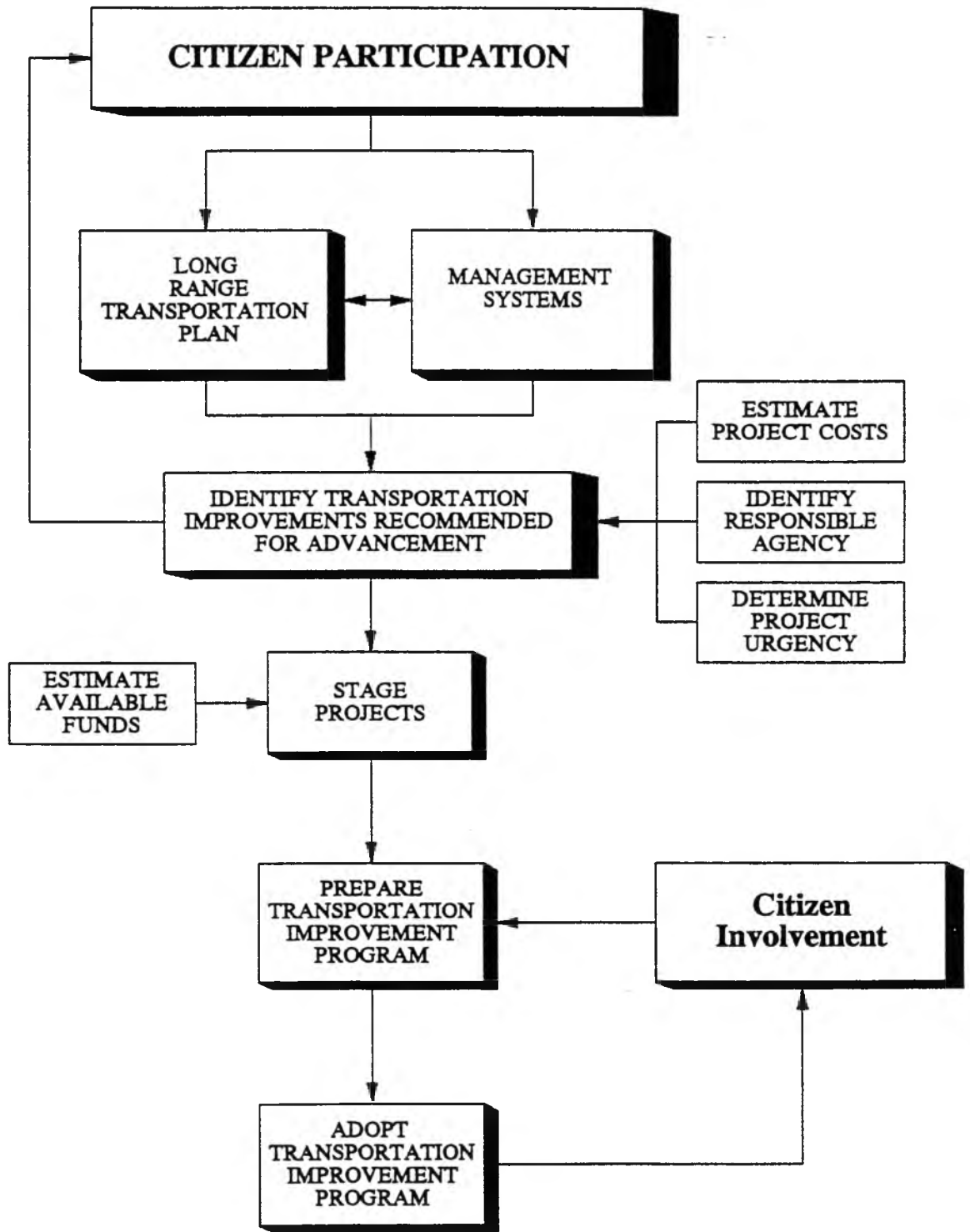


Figure 4

Citizen meetings are sponsored by the Council to gain public input to the transportation planning process. These meetings are informal, allowing citizens to ask questions, provide ideas, and discuss all aspects of local plans, programs, and funding for both transit and highway projects. In addition, presentations to organizations and neighborhood associations are used to supplement the citizen participation program through the exchange of information. These sessions include discussion of transit and highway improvements, and afford these groups the opportunity to comment on transportation plans and programs of the Council.

The general citizen involvement meeting held in the spring of each year will have a special emphasis on presenting and discussing the upcoming TIP. This meeting will be held prior to TIP adoption to allow opportunity for public comment. Comments regarding the TIP will be presented to UTAB and included in the TIP document.

The Council prepares and distributes to the public annual reports and newsletters. These publications contain information on a wide range of transportation planning issues. Special sections in these publications describe the transportation improvement program, display maps of project locations, and list highway and transit projects.

The meeting schedules and agendas are routinely sent to the news media one week to ten days prior to each meeting. Discussion of agenda items are often conducted with the media to help them understand specifically what the Board intends to review and approve. Special requests are made to the news media to print highway and transit projects as proposed for inclusion in the TIP. This process has been well received and the news media has provided a valuable service to the transportation planning process through its coverage of transportation planning issues. In addition, the results of board action is also covered by the news media.

Finally, upon completion and adoption, the TIP will be published as a document and made available for review in our offices. The TIP will contain highway and transit projects for both local and state governments within the transportation study area. Copies of the TIP are provided to UTAB members, implementing agencies, and other public officials.

Long Range Transportation Plan

The responsibility for developing a long range transportation plan which best meets the future travel needs of the Fort Wayne-New Haven-Allen County Transportation Study Area is delegated to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board. The development of the plan involves a variety of local, state and federal governmental agencies plus considerable public participation. The factors and events that lead to the selection of a plan include public participation as a critical component in the decision making process. Public officials and local citizens of the study area have historically provided valuable and comprehensive input throughout the development of the long range transportation plans and updates.

Presentations have been made to the Urban Transportation Advisory Board and related committees to inform, stimulate participation, and obtain policy guidance at all stages of plan development. These meetings were open to the public and information presented at these meeting were also available to any one present. In similar fashion, citizen participation meetings were conducted to inform area residents of the planning process and status of the plan development.

For over twenty years the Council has actively encouraged public participation in the long range planning process. When preparing a long range transportation plan, the Council has routinely held public forums at several stages of the plan development. The purpose of these sessions has been to encourage citizen participation and input throughout the development of the transportation plans. The Year 2000, 2005, and 2010 Transportation Plans were all developed with a high level of public participation.

The citizen meetings have provided the opportunity for discussing and exchanging ideas concerning the future transportation system. Questions and comments have been abundant at these meetings. Valuable information has been shared and the quality of the plans was significantly enhanced through the community involvement. The meetings have been held at various locations throughout the transportation study area.

Numerous other efforts have been made to inform and involve the public in developing the transportation plans and updates. When requested, staff have made numerous special presentations to neighborhood and civic groups. Citizens have also been encouraged to visit our offices, mail in comments, or contact us by telephone to discuss plan development and provide suggestions. In addition, the long range planning process has traditionally received extensive coverage by local news media including television, radio, and newspaper.

The finalization of a transportation plan or update has always resulted in the publication of various reports and a "popular brochure." The reports document the technical aspects of the plan including the planning process and resulting policies and projects. The brochure highlights the transportation plan's policies and projects. These documents have always been made available to all interested parties.

As part of the new public involvement process, NIRCC will continue to follow this format. The board and committee meetings where discussion of long range transportation policies take place, will remain open to the public and all materials presented will be available for public review. This provides public access to the sessions where key decisions occur and the information provided to support such decisions. And through the composition of the boards and committees, public official and interested public and private agency involvement is inherently built into the structure.

Citizen involvement meetings will be conducted at strategic points throughout the development of long range plans (see figure 5). The meetings will be held at various locations (i.e. schools, libraries, public buildings, etc.) scattered around the transportation study area. Notification of the meeting dates and times will take place through mailings to neighborhood associations and press releases to the news media. Staff will also make special presentations to any community group willing to sponsor such a meeting.

As a transportation plan develops, information will be available through our office to all interested parties and special efforts will take place to inform the news media. Upon completion, the long range transportation plan including the planning process will be documented in two formal report formats. A technical report will be distributed to board members and selected parties. A summary report will serve as a layman's guide and will be distributed to all interested parties. In addition, a "popular brochure" will be prepared highlighting the transportation plan, its projects, and its policies. This brochure will be widely distributed to all interested parties. All reports and materials resulting from the long range transportation planning process will be made available to the public through our offices.

Long Range Transportation Planning

Public Involvement Process

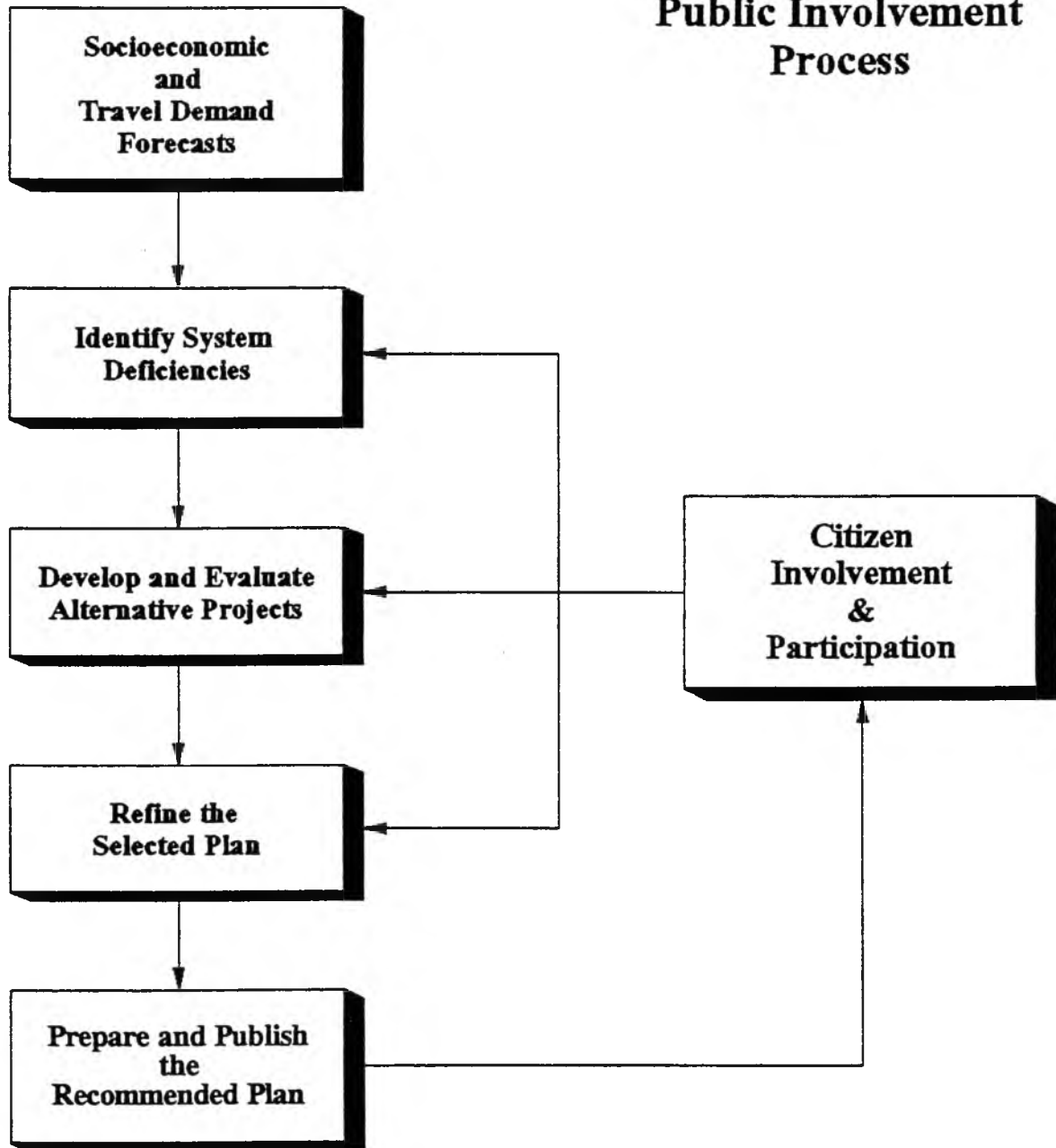


Figure 5

Summary

The content of this document represents the public involvement policy, implemented by NIRCC for the metropolitan transportation planning process. This policy addresses the entire scope of the metropolitan planning process including the long range transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). This policy is developed in good faith and designed to meet or exceed all Federal rules and regulations. This policy is in no way an exclusionary one. Our attempt is to maintain an atmosphere of public involvement, through an open and inclusionary process, where all interested parties are encouraged to, and will participate.

The Northeastern Indiana Regional Coordinating Council is committed to administering a transportation planning process where public involvement is encouraged at all levels. The well established citizen participation process sponsored by NIRCC for nearly twenty years will continue as a vital component of transportation planning. NIRCC will continue to investigate and implement new strategies which encourage public involvement to ensure our transportation planning activities are community oriented.

The periodic review and evaluation of the public involvement process will determine whether the intended goals and objectives of the public involvement process are being fulfilled. Necessary modifications will be implemented. Significant revisions to the public involvement process will not be adopted until a forty-five day comment period has been completed. The first review of the public involvement policy will commence one year after full implementation.