

NBAMPO

New Bern Area Metropolitan Planning
Organization
Public Involvement Plan



November 25, 2014

Continuing · Cooperative · Comprehensive
Transportation Planning

Table of Contents

1.	Introduction.....	3
2.	Purpose.....	4
3.	Objectives.....	4
4.	Committees.....	4
	TAC.....	4
	TCC.....	5
	CAC.....	5
5.	Plan Elements.....	6
	MAP-21.....	7
	ADA.....	7
	Title VI.....	7
6.	Public Notification.....	7
7.	Public Notification Guidelines.....	8
	NBAMPO Committee & Public Meetings, Public Hearings.....	8
	Comment Period.....	8
	Regular Public Involvement Opportunities.....	8
	Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items.....	9
8.	Public Comment.....	9
9.	Response to Public Comment.....	9
10.	NBAMPO’s Responsibilities.....	10
	Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP).....	10
	Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP).....	10
	Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Plan (MTIP).....	10
	Planning Work Program (PWP).....	11
11.	Toolkit.....	11
12.	Evaluation Process.....	13
13.	Conclusion.....	14

Introduction

The New Bern Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (NBAMPO) was established in 2013 as a result of the 2010 decennial Census. The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 states that any Urbanized Area (UZA) with a population greater than 50,000 is designated as an MPO. The Census Bureau establishes UZA boundaries. In addition to meeting all the federal requirements for an urbanized area, MPOs are responsible for Transportation improvement Program (TIP) project selection, and are subject to a comprehensive Federal review of their planning processes.

The New Bern Area MPO is located in Eastern North Carolina along the Neuse and Trent Rivers and includes the Town of Bridgeton, City of New Bern, urban areas of Craven County, Town of River Bend and Town of Trent Woods. According to the 2010 Census, the New Bern Urbanized Area population was 51,503. NBAMPO is governed by two committees; the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is currently being formed.

The NBAMPO strives to ensure an open transportation planning process where the free exchange of ideas and information and the opportunity for early and continuous input from interested parties can take place in an effective manner. The purpose of this plan is to outline the public participation process required for successful completion, adoption and implementation of the NBAMPO plans and programs.

The Public Involvement Plan describes public involvement programs that will apply to all of the MPO's major planning activities, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), the Planning Work Program (PWP) and the MPO's provisions for the American with Disabilities Act (ADA).

The NBAMPO will disseminate information and seek public input through a menu of techniques, including public notices, comment periods, public hearings, newsletters, surveys, media outlets and the use of committees, with citizen representatives as appointed. The techniques employed will vary, depending on the specific planning task. The NBAMPO will hold a forty five (45) day public review period for the Public Involvement Plan if substantial changes are made since the last update. The following outreach methods will be utilized to notify the public of the comment period:

1. A notice will be placed on the MPO website; and
2. A notice will be placed on social media sites; and
3. A notice will be placed on jurisdiction websites; and
4. A notice will be published in the local newspaper prior to initiation of the public comment period.

Purpose

The purpose of the NBAMPO's Public Involvement Plan is to create an open decision making process whereby citizens/stakeholders have the opportunity to be involved in all stages of the transportation planning process. This policy is designed to ensure that transportation decisions will reflect public priorities.

Objectives

1. Bring a broad cross-section of stakeholders into the public policy and transportation planning decision-making process.
2. Maintain public involvement from the early stages of the planning process through detailed project development.
3. Use different combinations of public involvement techniques to meet the diverse needs of the general public.
4. Determine the public's knowledge of the metropolitan transportation system and the public's values and attitudes concerning transportation.
5. Educate citizens and elected officials in order to increase general understanding of transportation issues.
6. Make technical and other information available to the public.
7. Establish a channel for an effective feedback process.
8. Evaluate the public involvement process and procedures to assess their success at meeting requirements.

Committees

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) is the MPO's Policy Board and has the responsibility for serving as a forum for cooperative transportation planning decision making for the Metropolitan Planning Organization. The TAC approves all federal aid transportation funds in the metropolitan area.

All decisions of the MPO are made by the TAC.

The TAC performs the following tasks:

- Reviews and approves a Planning Work Program (PWP)
- Oversees development of and approves the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Oversees development of and approves the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP)
- Oversees development of and approves all other NBAMPO documents
- Keeps the various policy boards informed of the status and requirements of the transportation planning process.
- Assists in the dissemination and clarification of decisions and policies of the

various boards.

- Ensures that the MPO is providing for meaningful citizen participation in the transportation planning process.

The Transportation Advisory Committee membership is described in the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed by representatives of the participating member jurisdictions.

Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC)

The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) is responsible for providing technical assistance and advice to the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) at the MPO level. The Technical Coordinating Committee provides the general review, guidance, and coordination of the transportation planning process for the planning area. The TCC's responsibilities include making recommendations to the TAC regarding any actions relating to the continuing transportation planning process and participating in the development and review of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, project prioritization, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Planning Work Program, the Comprehensive Transportation Plan and other MPO documents.

TCC membership includes technical experts from Local, State, and Federal governmental agencies directly related to the transportation planning process. The committee membership is described in the Memorandum of Understanding and is considered flexible.

Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)

The purpose of the NBAMPO Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) is to act as an enhanced public involvement component by serving as the principal medium for public participation in the transportation planning process. It will serve as a conduit between the citizens and the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The CAC will take into account all modes of transportation and the needs of all citizens and will serve in an advisory capacity of the MPO in the *Continuing, Cooperative and Comprehensive (3C)* transportation planning process, while disseminating information to the community and area officials.

More specifically, the CAC will:

- Ensure involvement of the public throughout the MPO transportation planning process.
- Solicit and consider input from all groups and citizens interested in, affected by, or concerned with MPO transportation plans and programs. Special consideration will be given to solicit input of the traditionally under-represented populations.
- Assist NBAMPO in formulating goals and objectives for improving the New Bern Metropolitan Area's transportation system.
- Provide the TAC with recommendations on transportation plans, projects, and information regarding citizens' wishes.
- Disseminate information about and gather support for MPO activities throughout the community.

The CAC members will be appointed by the TAC from a pool of citizens that volunteered during the Public Involvement meetings and/or applied through the application process on the NBAMPO website (www.nbampo.org). These members will represent areas of interest or groups within the MPO, with emphasis on the traditionally under-represented members of the

community and initially will address specific interests including, but not limited to:

- Bicycle and pedestrian/greenways
- Disabilities advocates
- Freight
- Road safety
- Seniors advocates
- Underserved population

If necessary, the MPO may recruit representatives of specific interests, in order to fulfill the role of the CAC.

Public involvement is essential at the early stages of planning and programming as projects are being discussed. The MPO strives to achieve an early and continuous notification process through open communication with its citizens.

Plan Elements

The Public Involvement Plan is comprised of a number of sub-policies. All planning programs and activities are required to go through the Transportation Advisory Committee's public process. In addition, the NBAMPO will initiate public involvement programs for the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), the Planning Work Program (PWP) and the provisions for American with Disabilities Act (ADA). The final component of the Public Involvement Plan is the policy review element designed to ensure that the programs are meeting their goals.

There are several laws and regulations that have been established by the Federal government to ensure the transportation planning process remains open and in the public interest. The following is a list of federal legislation and regulations that guide the public participation process:

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) (PL 112-141) emphasizes participation by interested parties in the transportation plan:

- a. In General: Each metropolitan planning organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.
- b. Contents of Participation Plan: A Participation Plan:
 - i. Shall be developed in consultation with all interested parties; and
 - ii. Shall provide that all interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the contents of the transportation plan.
- c. Method: In carrying out subparagraph A, the metropolitan planning organization shall, to the maximum extent practicable:
 - i. Hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
 - ii. Employ visualization techniques to describe plans; and
 - iii. Make public information available in electronically accessible format and

means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information under subparagraph A.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and subsequent updates: The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 encourages the participation of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and para-transit plans and services. Also in accordance with ADA guidelines, all meetings conducted by the MPO will take place at locations which are accessible facilities so as to accommodate persons with limited mobility.

Title VI – Environmental Justice: Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1967 sets standards which authoritatively outlawed discrimination in the conduct of all Federal activities. The term Environmental Justice (EJ) was created by people concerned that everyone within the United States deserves equal protection under the country’s laws. A 1994 Presidential Executive Order directed every Federal agency to make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on “minority populations and low-income population.” The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) issued its DOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Population and Low-income Population in 1997. The DOT order accomplishes this goal by involving the potentially affected public in developing transportation projects that fit harmoniously within their communities without sacrificing safety and mobility.

Public Notification

Timely, advance notice is a crucial element in any public involvement process. Citizens must be notified while projects, activities and programs are in the initial planning phases. Notification of upcoming projects provides vital information to all area stakeholders. NBAMPO will continue to provide notice of all meetings and copies of plans as requested to all local stakeholders.

Public Notification Guidelines

NBAMPO Committee Meetings, Public Meetings and Public Hearings

Public notice shall be provided to the local news media, including newsprint, radio and local government Public Information Officers, at least three days in advance. The Transportation Advisory Committee, Technical Coordinating Committee and Citizen Advisory Committee are examples of NBAMPO committees. A calendar of regular and special meetings is posted and will be maintained on the NBAMPO website, www.nbampo.org.

Comment Period

Public notice will be provided to the local news media in advance to solicit public review and comments on draft transportation plans under consideration by NBAMPO. The MPO will meet with public citizens to solicit participation on formulation of vision, goals and future needs of the area.

Public comment will be open for the following time frames prior to the TCC meeting in which the document will be presented for action. If upon initial comment period, significant changes are made, public comment will be available prior to final action or approval of documents.

<u>Plan</u>	<u>Comment Period</u>	<u>Details</u>
Public Involvement Plan	45 days	The initial Plan will undergo a 45 day comment period. Any substantial updates to the plan will also require this comment period. Routine evaluations and adjustments to the plan will not trigger the extended comment period and will be made administratively.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) (& related documents)	14 days	The MPO will develop the MTP's Vision and Goals by engaging stakeholders through a combination of surveys, presentations, online comments, participation in community events, to include at a minimum one public meeting. The Draft and Final MTP and its related documents will be made available for comments prior to approval by MPO boards
Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP)	14 days	Both Draft and Final MTIP will be made available for public comments
Planning Work Program (PWP)	14 days	Both Draft and Final PWPs will be made available for review
Major Amendments to NBAMPO documents	14 days	
Yearly Craven Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) Program of Projects (when not in conjunction with the MTIP)	14 days	

All comments received during the Comment Period will be provided to the MPO Boards. If the comments are incorporated in the affected plan/program and cause substantial changes to the original document, an additional solicitation for public input may be required.

Regular Public Involvement Opportunities

The MPO's regularly scheduled meetings are publicized on the NBAMPO's website, www.nbampo.org, as well as through the MPO notification list and current Sunshine List. These meetings are open to members of the public and upon request anyone can be added to the NBAMPO mailing list.

Public Involvement for Specific Planning Items

Public notice required for public hearings shall follow the above timeline. For particular planning issues (i.e. plan development & updates, studies, amendments to planning documents, etc.), the TAC will open a public comment period and, when necessary, hold a public hearing. The notice for the public comment period and the public hearing are advertised using the following resources:

- New Bern SunJournal
- City of New Bern website: www.newbern-nc.org
- NBAMPO website: www.nbampo.org
- Social Media: New Bern Area MPO on Facebook

The notices will include an announcement that states that persons with disabilities will be accommodated. Special provisions will be made if notified 48 hours in advance (i.e. having available large print documents, audio material, or other provisions as requested). Written comments received are compiled by the planning staff and reviewed by the TAC. When applicable, NBAMPO notices will include the following statement: “This notice will serve to satisfy the CARTS Program of Project Public Notification”.

Public Comment

The public may submit general comments to the NBAMPO at any time. A specified public comment period in reference to a transportation plan or project will be announced by public notice. Public comments will be incorporated into the plan in the following manner:

- A summary of public comments and staff responses will be provided to the CAC, TCC and TAC.
- When written comments are received on a draft plan, a summary, analysis and response will be a part of the final plan.
- TAC will take public comments into consideration.

If public comments lead to significant changes to the draft plans initially available, an additional opportunity may be provided for public comment on the revisions not seen before the public involvement effort began. In this case the draft will again be made available for review and comment for a period of fourteen (14) days after the changes are reflected in the document. The TAC chairman shall determine when changes are significant and warrant additional opportunity for public comments.

As the TAC identifies deficiencies and builds new strategies, this and other NBAMPO documents may be administratively updated, when those modification do not result in major changes to the document.

Response to Public Comment

The TAC typically acknowledges public comments in one of the following two ways:

- The TAC may incorporate a summary of public comments into a specific planning document, and/or
- Planning staff may respond directly in written form

Acknowledging public comments is a way to let the public know that its opinions are being addressed and is part of the public involvement feedback process.

NBAMPO's Responsibilities

NBAMPO is responsible for the distribution of federal transportation funds for highways, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and other projects within the entire metropolitan planning region. Metropolitan Planning Organizations are required by federal and state laws to develop and coordinate four major transportation documents. All of the current plans, documents, and listing of current committee members are available on the NBAMPO website, www.nbampo.org, and at our offices.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan is a fiscally constrained plan that identifies transportation improvements necessary to maintain adequate mobility and to accommodate growth forecasted through the metropolitan area while balancing anticipated revenue. Transportation improvements are established through a comprehensive identification of highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and freight movement transportation needs and policies. This plan is revised every five years and has a horizon of at least 20 years.

Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP)

The CTP is a multimodal plan that addresses identified transportation facility and service needs precipitated by projected growth and development based on the limitations of the existing system. Although it is not a fiscally constrained plan, it provides data-driven guidance about anticipated transportation deficiencies beyond the horizon of the MPO's long-range plan.

Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP)

The Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program identifies short term transportation projects within the Metropolitan Planning Area. The MTIP is approved by the TAC and incorporated into the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP), which identifies all transportation projects in the entire state. In both the MTIP and STIP, a seven year horizon of projects is shown along with projected costs and funding sources. The first four years of the Transportation Improvement Program are federally adopted, while the remaining three years are for informational use only. This document is developed every two years in cooperation with local, state and federal agencies and was last approved in September 2014.

Planning Work Program (PWP)

The Planning Work Program is an annual document that identifies the transportation planning budget and related activities for the metropolitan area. The Planning Work Program provides a detailed project breakdown of costs to meet the needs of projects and planning processes.

Toolkit

The Public Involvement Plan may be tailored to best match the outreach tools and resources to be used for a single upcoming plan or project. The NBAMPO public involvement process is designed to increase public awareness and involvement in all phases of transportation planning. There will be opportunities for public comment and involvement identified for each project. Public involvement incorporates many techniques that will be refined as public comment and questions lead to new ideas, and as the project moves through the decision-making process. The toolkit can be modified and updated to incorporate new public involvement techniques as available. The individual, project specific public involvement plans will incorporate a variety of techniques necessary to involve the different stakeholders involved in each project.

The following briefly describes the tools currently used by the NBAMPO for public involvement.

Website

The NBAMPO website, www.nbampo.org, is an easy and convenient way for the public to stay informed and involved in the transportation planning process. The website, www.nbampo.org, also contains a prominent public comment area and public participation survey. The website will be maintained and routinely updated by NBAMPO staff.

Because the NBAMPO understands that not all stakeholders in the planning area have regular internet access, all plans and documents will be available over the internet and hard copies will be available in the NBAMPO office. Staff will mail hard copies of planning documents when requested to the extent possible and follow these requests up with a one-on-one discussion session, if needed.

Database/Notification List

NBAMPO will maintain and update a database of business and citizen contacts. The database includes mailing information, phone and fax numbers, and e-mail addresses as available. The database will be used to establish and maintain a list of contacts for meeting notifications, newsletter distribution, and announcements.

Brochures

NBAMPO creates and distributes brochures for several purposes. They describe the NBAMPO organization, how citizens can get involved and other timely information. According to the scope of the project or plan, brochures are made available through many outlets, including but not limited to, the NBAMPO offices, community events, public libraries, transit centers, direct mailings and can be inserted into the local paper.

Advertisement

Display advertisements are used on an as-needed basis to promote special meetings. They are published in the local section of the major area newspaper, rather than the legal advertisement section, in order to reach a larger audience.

Newsletter

NBAMPO produces a quarterly newsletter available online and distributed to citizens, local governments, media and other agencies. Citizens are added to the distribution list at their own request. The newsletter includes NBAMPO contact information, upcoming meetings and community events, and current planning project reports. Newsletter stories may also include updates about significant transportation issues, and important actions taken by the TPB.

Annual Report

NBAMPO produces an annual report that summarizes accomplishments and highlights major events in the upcoming year. In addition, the annual report also serves as an informational piece and is distributed at community events to raise awareness of NBAMPO.

Social Media

NBAMPO uses social media through Facebook as an outreach tool to reach a broader base of stakeholders. The NBAMPO entity name on Facebook is New Bern Area MPO.

Community Festivals and Events

NBAMPO regularly participates in major community festivals and events throughout its planning area. Community events allow NBAMPO to reach a large group of stakeholders all at once.

Speakers Bureau

NBAMPO staff members will be available to speak about transportation issues in response to requests from business and civic groups, citizens, organizations, and state and local elected officials to the greatest extent possible. Staff member outreach will help to further identify our organization and encourage the public to ask NBAMPO their transportation planning questions.

Press Releases

Press releases and Public Service Announcements are sent to local media outlets including the local newspaper, and governments to announce upcoming NBAMPO meetings and activities.

Surveys

Surveys may be used to obtain input from the public on transportation matters during project planning or document updates. They may ask the public about transportation issues and concerns and some demographic information. Surveys are also used to gather specific technical data during planning studies.

Comment Forms

Comment forms are used to solicit general public comments at NBAMPO meetings or public hearings. Comment forms are also included on the NBAMPO website, www.nbampo.org, to solicit input regarding any current or future project. All NBAMPO materials contain our website address where a link for citizens to “Contact Us” is located on the toolbar of every page. Comment forms can be general or very specific in nature. For example, a comment form affords citizens the opportunity to express general feelings about any aspect of transportation or help identify preferred alignment alternatives considered during a corridor study.

Public Workshops

Public Workshops are used to both present information and solicit public comment on a plan or issue being considered by NBAMPO. Public comments are recorded and a summary provided to the Transportation Advisory Committee. Public workshops include visualization techniques such as maps, aerial photographs, conceptual renderings and drawings to facilitate public understanding.

Evaluation Process

An important step in public involvement is evaluating the effectiveness of the plan and outreach activities in order to ensure a full and open involvement process. The Public Involvement Plan is a work in progress, striving to improve NBAMPO’s efforts toward increasing public awareness and involvement in transportation planning. The public involvement process will be evaluated on a short and long term basis.

Short Term

At every event, participants will be asked to evaluate the public involvement activity. NBAMPO staff will ask how the public found out about this activity, if they felt this was an effective public involvement event and suggestions for improvement.

Long Term

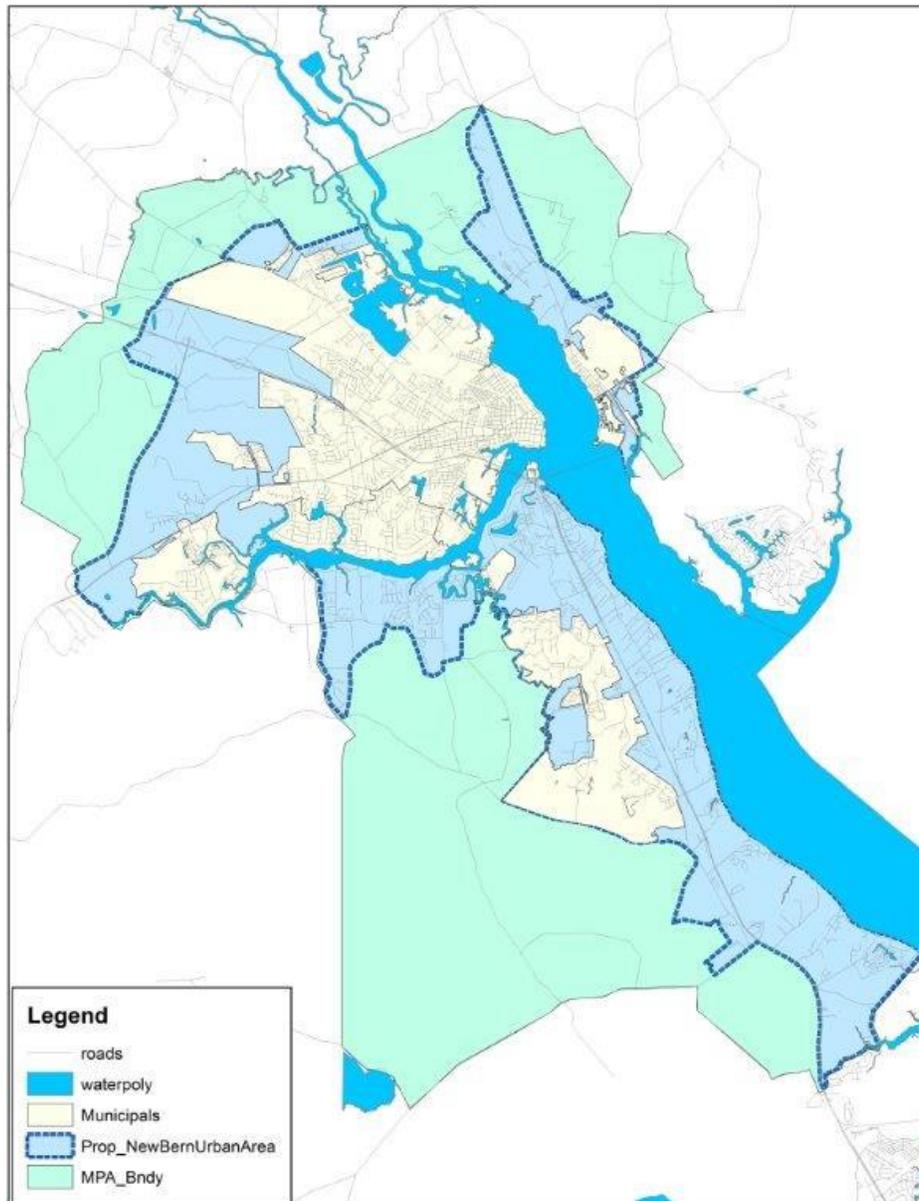
The entire Public Involvement Plan must be reviewed at least every five years before development of the MTP.

Both short and long term evaluations ensure that appropriate changes to the Public Involvement Plan are being made, implemented and evaluated by NBAMO. Once NBAMPO has evaluated the public involvement activities, it is possible to identify those that are ineffective and to improve or discontinue using them or also add new public involvement activities.

As NBAMPO identifies deficiencies and builds new strategies, this Public Involvement Plan may be administratively updated, when those modifications do not result in major changes to the document. The TAC will review and approve any administrative changes, with the CAC and TCC’s recommendation.

Conclusion

NBAMPO is striving to increase stakeholders' awareness and involvement in all phases of transportation planning. We are responsible for the transportation needs of the entire New Bern Metropolitan Area, and our transportation planning decisions affect the entire population. Seeking out and obtaining public input and comments is vital to the success of transportation planning within the New Bern Metropolitan Area.



NEW BERN AREA METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

