

Times and Locations for MPO Board Meetings

Background:

1. As the MPO's public stature has been slowly growing since the federal audit, an increasing number of public comments have requested that:
 - a. The MPO change its meeting times to "after work" hours so that interested, working citizens can attend and participate.
 - b. The MPO change its meeting locations at least to a location that is served by public transportation and/or that the meeting locations be varied and rotated among participating jurisdictions.

MPO Requirements—What do we need to accomplish:

1. Federal regulations require the MPO to manage a Public Participation Plan (PPP) and a process that ensures public involvement and public awareness of its activities, its procedures, its decision-making methods, and its resultant plans, programs and reports. This, in turn, requires:
 - a. Reasonable public access to this information, and
 - b. A reasonable, yet effective, ability for citizens to be involved, including citizens at every level of the economic and language ladder.

So, in effect, there are two issues:

1. When and where?
2. Is the range of public outreach efforts effective?

Factors to consider:

1. The MPO must have a means to obtain both public and professional input.
2. The MPO must operate in a manner that yields a high level of visibility to its schedule of events, its Board member discussions, its regional decision-making activities, and its plans, reports, correspondence and resolutions.
3. All of this must be practical and efficient; we cannot have the tail wag the dog:
 - a. MPO Board membership is a part time function. These are extremely busy public servants whose time must be respected and whose MPO assignment times need to be structured and predictable.
 - b. The MPO Staff carries a huge responsibility, and their "after hours" assignments must be managed in a way that recognizes their normal working hour levels of responsibility, especially those that include liaison and negotiations with external federal agencies, state agencies, professional agencies and multiple jurisdictional staffs.
 - c. Plus, MPO Board meetings require a substantial number of documents for any meeting and the potential need, always, for additional documentation, all of which comes from or is at their central office in Chesapeake.

The Basis for a Potential Solution:

1. Basically, retain the MPO Board meetings at their present time and location for the reasons cited above. This include a prior practice of conducting one Board meeting a year on the Peninsula.
2. Change the way public outreach is being performed. Instead of the world trying to plug into MPO Board meetings and instead of having just this one venue, adopt multiple venues:
 - a. Require the two MPO Advisory Committees now being formed (Citizens and Freight) to conduct their regular committee meetings (estimate four per year each) in a way that they are open to the public plus require these committees conduct a few public hearings (estimate two or three per year depending on the committee). This results in about 13 new venues per year that will be open to the public with two advisory committees. In this case, the CTAC brings in public inputs, and the FAC brings in both professional and public input.
 - b. Task the MPO Staff to conduct public hearings or town hall sessions (estimate a total of four per year), and task the staff (in collaboration with sponsors) to conduct one major Annual Regional Transportation Symposium per year. This results in about five more significant public venues per year.
3. But, that is not enough. Additional suggestions include:
 - a. Video-tape and for two weeks each, replay every MPO Board meeting via a stream video process. This method will reach thousands of citizens on a regular basis.
 - b. Alter the MPO website in a fashion that enables easy public input responses to these Board meetings or for any other general public input.
 - c. And, note that our MPO already has its new MPO newsletter and impressive data bases for mailing and broadcast e-mailing purposes.

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