

## **INTRODUCTION**

The public involvement plan outlines the public strategies for the MULTIPLAN, providing a framework for reaching both public and private sector individuals and entities involved in and affected by transportation-related activities within the state. In doing so, a large and diverse cross-section of those impacted will be able to contribute to the development, implementation and ultimate success of Mississippi's long-range transportation planning efforts.

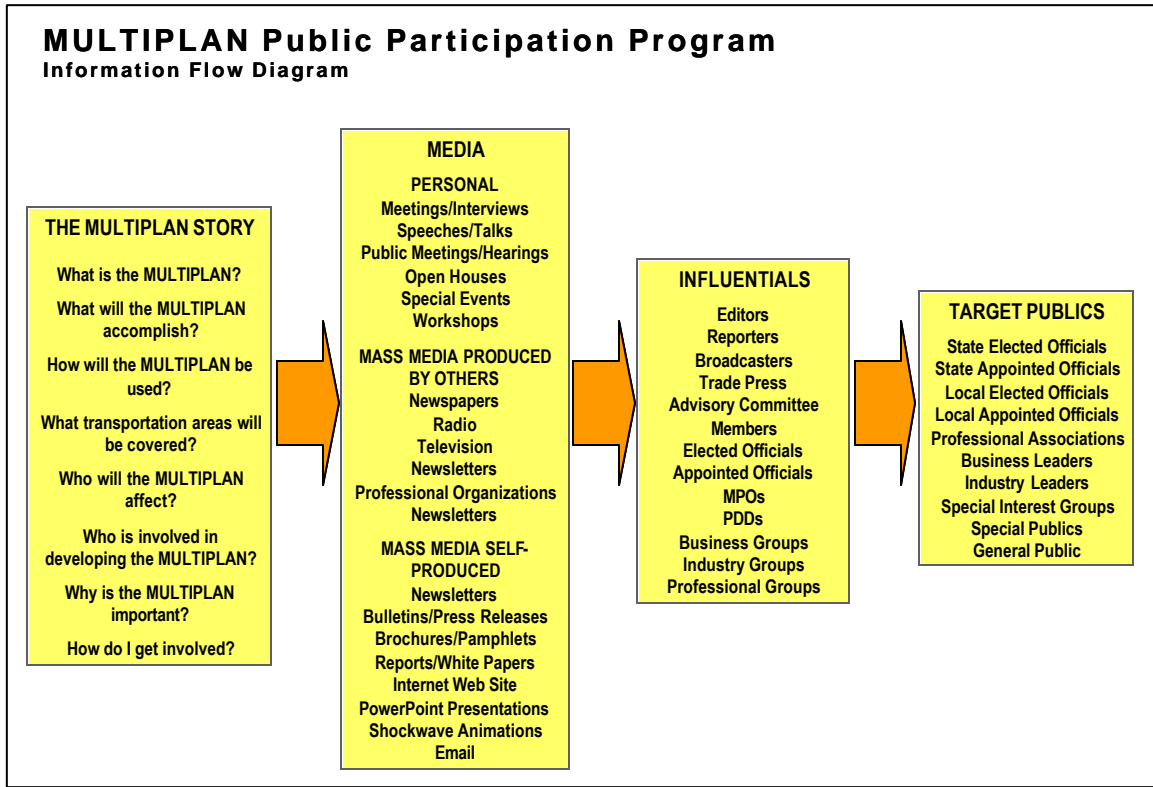
The public involvement plan will guide statewide activities throughout MULTIPLAN development by providing a variety of opportunities for public and private sector review and comment on the ongoing progress. Four key aspects of the MULTIPLAN public involvement process will be integrated throughout MULTIPLAN development, in order that the needs and concerns of a cross-section of Mississippians may be more easily addressed:

- Consistently inform stakeholders of MULTIPLAN progress;
- Provide opportunities for MULTIPLAN stakeholder involvement;
- Pay attention to the needs and concerns expressed by stakeholders; and
- Incorporate the knowledge gained from stakeholder involvement.

## **INITIAL MULTIPLAN PUBLIC PARTICIPATION/ COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT PROGRAM**

**Exhibit 12-1** illustrates the proposed flow of information from MDOT and MULTIPLAN project team members to the media, special publics (influentials) and target publics.

Exhibit 12-1  
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROGRAM INFORMATION FLOW



Following are more detailed explanations of the plan's individual components.

**Project Web Site**

The main project information for public dissemination and public interaction would be contained on the project web site at [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com). The following Internet domain names of [www.mdotmultiplan.net](http://www.mdotmultiplan.net) and [www.mdotmultiplan.org](http://www.mdotmultiplan.org) have also been secured with the following uses:

- Utilize [www.mdotmultiplan.net](http://www.mdotmultiplan.net) for internal documents (not for public dissemination) only. This site would host the community education materials for use by MDOT officials and other project team members only. This site would be password protected with user names and passwords issued to selected MDOT officials and project team members only. If someone attempts to log onto the site with the improper user name and password, they will be automatically redirected to the MULTIPLAN project's public Internet site at [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com).
- Utilize [www.mdotmultiplan.org](http://www.mdotmultiplan.org) as a potential backup site for [www.mdotmultiplan.net](http://www.mdotmultiplan.net). This would also be a protected site not available to the general public. Until enabled, all web-based queries to [www.mdotmultiplan.org](http://www.mdotmultiplan.org) will be automatically redirected to the public site at [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com).

- The main web portal, [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com), will be subdivided into areas of interest centered around each mode of transportation encompassed by the MULTIPLAN, and appropriate research, findings, commentary, press releases, newsletters and white papers will be housed on these pages for viewing and downloading (when appropriate) by the general public, news media and advisory committee members.

The public web page will also contain a contact listing of appropriate MDOT and project team officials as determined by MDOT. Names, telephone numbers, addresses and email addresses will be listed, along with a hyperlink developed for email contact of the individual listed.

Since the public web page will also serve as the main area for creation and maintenance of the mailing list database, a page for signing up for electronic distribution of information will be developed with the pertinent information such as name, address, phone, email, and areas of interest.

MDOT will create one or more hyperlinks from the official MDOT web site that will be redirected to [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com).

### **Monthly Updates of the MULTIPLAN Internet Home Page**

- The project web site [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com) will be updated throughout the project as new content becomes available from the project team and MDOT. Such new information, once approved for distribution by appropriate project team members and/or MDOT officials, will be submitted to the MULTIPLAN Webmaster in an electronic format suitable for incorporation into the web site.

A monthly listing of all new and relevant content will be generated and emailed to groups or individuals who have asked to be kept apprised of the latest MULTIPLAN information. A special HTML or PDF notification file will be generated by the Webmaster and forwarded to those interested groups and individuals. The email will reference special links of interest and will resemble the following examples:

*New information available regarding the MULTIPLAN effort is available at [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com). Special items of interest include:*

- *A White Paper discussing best practices in transportation planning, including approaches, products, strategies and processes that may have application in Mississippi;*
- *New efforts to promote economic development at the Port of Gulfport;*
- *Rural development efforts;*
- *What trends are emerging in transportation? An interview with project team members and reaction from MDOT officials;*
- *Bicycle initiatives, how to get involved;*
- *Listing of upcoming special events; and*
- *Press information.*

### **Development of a Monthly Report of MULTIPLAN Internet Web Site Activity**

A Web Server Log File Analysis and Reporting Software will be used to report on all aspects of the MULTIPLAN web site's activity, including how many people are visiting the site, where they originate from, and what pages interest them the most.

This report will include the following areas of information:

- Number of Hits for Home Page
- Number of Page Views (Impressions)
- Number of User Sessions
- Average Number of Hits Per Day
- Average Number of Page Views per Day
- Average Number of User Sessions per Day
- Average User Session Length
- Top 10 Most Requested Pages
- Top Entry and Exit Pages
- Single Access Pages
- Top Paths Through the Site
- Most Downloaded Files
- Top Users
- Most Active Organizations
- Average Number of Users per Day
- Activity Level by Time of Day
- Activity Level by Day of Week
- Activity Level by Month
- Top Referring Sites
- Top Referring URLs
- Top Search Engines
- Top Search Phrases
- Top Search Keywords
- Most Used Browser

This report will be generated in Microsoft Word format and distributed electronically to the selected project team members and forwarded to MDOT officials on the first business day following the last calendar day of each month for the duration of this project.

### **Development of Applicable Project Papers for Electronic Distribution**

Whether or not a specific project paper will be developed for electronic distribution will be at the discretion of selected project team members and MDOT officials. Some of the project papers that may be considered for distribution (for both Phases I and II) are listed below:

- White Paper discussing best practices in transportation planning, including approaches, products, strategies and processes that may have an application in Mississippi;
- White Paper reviewing the goals, strategies and action steps in the current LRTP, including status and recommendations for revisions, if any;
- Working Paper that details a menu of proposed performance measures and those recommended for use by MDOT. Included will be identification of data needed to support each measure, whether the information exists or is currently collected by MDOT and, if not, an estimate of the cost to do so;
- White Paper detailing the Statewide Transportation Framework (STF), the process by which it was derived, how it fits within the MULTIPLAN, and mapping that describes the full extent of the STF by mode;

- White Paper detailing economic and transportation trends, showing their various relationships to the STF and the MULTIPLAN;
- Performance Task Report – Assessment of the current infrastructure performance and deficiency forecast by mode;
- White Paper identifying ITS related components that could be considered in current and programmed projects;
  - ITS themes
  - ITS marketing packages
  - ITS concepts plan to be presented at all public meetings
- Statewide ITS Implementation Plan, including Statewide ITS Architecture and Early Start Projects;
- GIS/Database Management System to analyze and display the various transportation system data;
- MPO's Recommended Urbanized Area Transportation Plan adopted by the MPOs;
- Technical Memorandum summarizing the data compiled and acquired for model development and validation;
- Review of Census Data & Economic Forecasts;
- Comprehensive 30-year Needs Analysis by mode, including both units and estimated costs; and
- Report detailing a financial forecast by revenue type, assessment of revenue adequacy, three multimodal service packages, and alternative futures.

### **Interviews with Stakeholders and Leaders**

Several options have been explored and will be utilized to achieve the greatest benefit from stakeholder and leader interviews, including the videotaping of interviews with selected members of the MULTIPLAN Advisory Committee, as well as some of the leader interviews. Questions to be asked of the interviewees will be pre-approved by MDOT, and MDOT Public Information personnel may elect to participate in the interview process if available during the date and time the interview is taking place.

The main emphasis of the interview process will not be to duplicate the technical interviews conducted by other members of the MULTIPLAN project team. Rather, the main focus of the interviews will be three-fold:

- Put a public face on the MULTIPLAN by using video, still photos and audio gathering during the interview process (including cutaways and collateral material such as facility and/or transportation shots);

- Allow the MULTIPLAN story and the importance of the MULTIPLAN to be told by non-MDOT and nonproject team members; and
- Explore and possibly develop human-interest stories regarding each facet of transportation being studied in the MULTIPLAN. (An example of this would be cargo congestion at the Port of Gulfport and the impact it is having, or may have, on banana imports, as told by the Port Director or one of the cargo operators or trucking company supervisors).

With the advent of streaming animation on the Internet, such audio/video interviews could be incorporated into the project-based web site, [www.mdotmultiplan.com](http://www.mdotmultiplan.com). The interviews can be further integrated with collateral pieces developed using Microsoft PowerPoint or Macromedia Shockwave animation, for use by MDOT and project team members for public outreach efforts through presentations before professional groups and organizations.

### **Representative Interviews of Stakeholder Groups**

Although some members of stakeholder groups have been interviewed by various MDOT officials and project team members, it is important to conduct additional in-depth interviews with selected stakeholders in an effort to record or capture such interviews (audio/video) for public dissemination. This will allow for use and reuse of the resulting audio/video throughout the remainder of the project for both electronic and printed distribution, and further for a well-rounded community education program to be developed with emphasis placed among selected stakeholder groups.

For future reference, copies of the unedited interviews with selected stakeholders using either audio or video will be made available to both MDOT officials and project team leaders. This will allow for access to all information collected during the interviews.

These recorded interviews will be edited by project team members and/or MDOT Public Information staff to create story vignettes of one to three minutes each. These vignettes will be developed for deployment using a variety of communications means such as:

- Internet (MULTIPLAN public site);
- Printed materials (brochures, newsletters and press releases);
- Audio sound bites; and
- Video clips (if practical).

These finished vignettes will be made available on the project web site for download and use by the news media.

The recorded interviews will also help form the foundation of PowerPoint or Shockwave animation presentations of selected interview material for use or insertion into presentations to be made by MDOT officials or various members of the project team. These electronic files will be stored on the MULTIPLAN internal site ([www.mdotmultiplan.net](http://www.mdotmultiplan.net)).

## **Leader Interviews with Appropriate Officials**

As mentioned previously, the preferred means and methods of communications for the MULTIPLAN will be to and through selected community leaders, professional organizations and special interest groups. This task builds upon the earlier task of stakeholder interviews. In-depth interviews with selected community leaders will be conducted to gain valuable feedback for the overall development of the MULTIPLAN, as well as to help in the creation of story vignettes for use in the overall Community Involvement Program (CIP). The following main elements will be covered:

- Make unedited recordings available (video preferred) to MDOT officials and project team leaders. This will provide valuable information to members of the project team.
- Edit and condense interviews as vignettes for use on the project web site, printed materials, audio soundbites, and video clips (if practical). This will help to provide a broad base of public interest to pull information from for use in the overall CIP.
- Develop PowerPoint and/or Shockwave presentations of selected interview material for insertion into MULTIPLAN project presentations as deemed appropriate. This helps to develop the basic MULTIPLAN presentation toolkit.
- Solicit key meeting dates and presentation opportunities from these community leaders. This will allow for project teams members to determine what communications venues are available that may coincide with key MULTIPLAN project milestones.
- If a leader is a member of a related professional organization, solicit an electronic database of organization members for email or mail contact and inclusion in the project-mailing database. This will aid in broadening public outreach.
- If a leader is a member of a related professional organization, solicit and obtain permission to provide MULTIPLAN project updates and/or news articles for publication in organizational newsletters. This will aid in targeting specific communications to specific groups.
- If a leader is a member of a related professional organization, solicit a MULTIPLAN Internet Home Page site link on organization's home page for the duration of the project. This will aid in increasing overall CIP exposure.

## **Outreach Efforts with Municipal, County and Professional Organizations**

One of the axioms of mass communications is there are two choices: 1) public information professionals can attempt to communicate their message to everyone, or 2) such communications efforts can be focused on community leaders and rely upon those leaders to communicate to their respective groups. Because of practical budgetary constraints, and the long-term nature of the MULTIPLAN effort, communicating important parts of the MULTIPLAN to community leaders is the appropriate communication means.

Since city and county elected officials are often on the front line when it comes to developing, funding and implementing many transportation alternatives, it is important to develop a two-fold approach for communicating with this select group. First will be communications efforts conducted through their professional associations. Second will be a more direct approach aimed at elected officials within the MPOs.

- **Development of Outreach Materials for City and County Officials in the Form of MULTIPLAN Brochures, Specific Project Information, and MDOT, Project Team and Advisory Committee Contacts**

The development of MULTIPLAN information specifically tailored to city and county officials will be developed as a supplement to the overall MULTIPLAN brochure. Project information regarding specific areas of study within their jurisdictions will be developed and provided as collateral material. A listing of MDOT and project team contacts will be disseminated along with a contact listing of all MULTIPLAN Advisory Committee members.

- **Identification and Targeted Communications with Professional Organizations**

This task entails working with MDOT officials to identify one or more professional organizations or trade organizations with a special interest in at least one mode of transportation being considered by the MULTIPLAN. Once identified, the following actions will be explored:

- Personal visits with organizations from one or more project team members. This will help to emphasize the importance of the MULTIPLAN project and help to answer any immediate questions.
- Solicit key meeting dates and presentation opportunities from these organizations. Special called city council or county supervisor meetings are vehicles for comprehensive and high profile briefings that could occur along major milestones of the project.
- Solicit an electronic database of organization members for email or mail contact and inclusion in the project-mailing database. This also includes select city and county staff beyond that of elected and/or appointed officials.
- Solicit and obtain permission to provide MULTIPLAN project updates and/or news articles for publication in organizational newsletters. This extends to city and county official publications.
- Solicit MULTIPLAN Internet Home Page site links on an organization's home page for the duration of the project.

### **Development of a MULTIPLAN Brochure Along with Collateral Materials for Public Distribution**

Key images, quotes, stories, and soundbites that are gathered or generated in the above mentioned tasks will be used to develop a comprehensive MULTIPLAN brochure that MDOT and project team officials feel best represents the long term communications needs of the MULTIPLAN project. Once the brochure is developed for editorial review

and comment among MDOT and project team members, particulars as to printing and distribution will be discussed and determined.

### **Development of Quarterly Newsletters**

A newsletter is a self-produced informational package whose editorial content and distribution is completely controlled by the group(s) producing the newsletter for publication. Besides complete control over the editorial content, the newsletters allow more in-depth discussion of the issues surrounding the MULTIPLAN without the time or space constraints imposed by mass media.

The newsletter can take a variety of formats or employ a number of techniques for dissemination of information. One approach would be more in the format of an annual report, subdivided by transportation mode (rail, highway, air, ports, bicycle, etc.) and by any technical areas of interest such as ITS or intermodal.

Another feature of the newsletter would be to highlight or emphasize one or more of the human-interest stories developed for the MULTIPLAN, or important areas of discussion found in one of the many white papers being produced by the project team. A question and answer interview format with one or more of the MDOT officials involved in the project or MULTIPLAN Advisory Committee members could also be employed.

The main elements of the newsletter will continue to ask and answer the following questions:

- What is the MULTIPLAN?
- What will the MULTIPLAN accomplish?
- How will the MULTIPLAN be used?
- What transportation areas does the MULTIPLAN cover?
- Who will the MULTIPLAN affect?
- Who is involved in developing the MULTIPLAN?
- Why is the MULTIPLAN important?
- How do I get involved?

### **Development of Quarterly Press Releases for Distribution**

In addition to the newsletters, MDOT desires regular public communication about the MULTIPLAN. Project press releases are a common means of communication between MDOT and the press and broadcast media. These press releases will be approved by MDOT officials prior to release to the public and will be circulated through MDOT's normal distribution channels. Such information will also be posted on the project web site.

### **Participation in Broadcast News/Information Programs**

When significant project milestones are reached, or significant transportation-related data is developed and deemed newsworthy by project team members and MDOT officials, then appropriate broadcast news and information programs will be approached for possible inclusion in a more in-depth, detailed discussion of the issues involved in the

MULTIPLAN. Usually these types of programs are 30-minute television news magazine programs that commit one or more five to ten minute segments to a particular topic.

Once it is determined that there is enough information that is relevant to the general public and available for detailed discussion, such news magazine programs will be identified and approached with the MULTIPLAN as a possible subject. Broadcast outlets that are regional in nature will be targeted for such activity.

### **Development and Maintenance of a MULTIPLAN Contact/Mailing List Database**

A digital copy will be obtained of any appropriate contact and/or mailing list used by MDOT officials for the dissemination of public information. This list will form the beginnings of the MULTIPLAN contact/ mailing list for information and activity. This listing will be added to as the project progresses with a listing of additions supplied back to the appropriate MDOT officials on a quarterly basis.

Three main methods of obtaining additions to the contact list will be employed:

- As persons are contacted and interviewed by project team members in the course of their ongoing work associated with this project and express an interest in being placed on a distribution list, they will be asked to provide their contact information.
- At public presentations to groups identified as the target publics for the MULTIPLAN project (professional associations, special interest groups, business and industry leaders, etc.), a sign-up sheet gathering specific contact information will be made available for audience members to provide their contact information.
- As members of the public visit the official MULTIPLAN web site, they will be offered an opportunity to electronically subscribe to a contact list to receive future information about the project as it becomes available.

### **Development of a Contact List of News Organizations and Reporters**

This effort parallels the work in the above listings regarding development of a contact database. In this effort, press and media trade organizations will be contacted to obtain a listing of news media outlets within the state. These media outlets will then be contacted and informed of the nature of the project and to provide specific names and contact information for editors and/or reporters that want to have relevant information directed to their attention. Discussions will also take place with editors and reporters regarding format and deadlines for submitting such information.

### **Development of a Contact List of Selected MDOT Officials**

This listing will include MDOT officials that members of the news media, special interest groups or members of the general public can contact via mail, phone or email with specific questions regarding the MULTIPLAN project or specific areas of transportation as it relates to the MULTIPLAN.

## **Development of a Contact List of Selected MULTIPLAN Project Team Members**

This listing will include MULTIPLAN project team members that members of the news media, special interest groups or members of the general public can contact via mail, phone or email with specific questions regarding the MULTIPLAN project or specific areas of transportation or information as it relates to the MULTIPLAN.

### **SUMMARY**

The hallmarks of the MULTIPLAN community involvement program focus on reaching a large and diverse cross-section of individuals and organizations impacted by transportation-related planning decisions. The main characteristics include the following:

- Proactive
- Early and continuing
- Complete information
- Broad public outreach
- Timely public notice

Public involvement and participation includes more than meetings, newsletters and brochures. The process must create an open and ongoing dialogue with the public. Citizens and organizations need to understand, at the outset, how the decision-making process works, and, more importantly, how they can become involved in that process and how their input will be used.

The public involvement plan presented in this chapter will guide statewide activities throughout the MULTIPLAN development by providing a variety of opportunities for public and private sector review and comment on the ongoing progress.