

Transit at the Table III

Discussion Guide for Meetings with

Transit Agencies and Transit Associations

During our discussion, we will review a variety of subjects to gain your perspectives on how you and other transit providers in rural and non-urbanized areas in your state participate in and influence statewide planning, and in turn, how statewide transportation concerns and priorities are communicated to and considered by you and other transit providers.

For this study:

- “Statewide transportation planning” is the multimodal process for setting goals and priorities in long range plans and making program decisions on resource expenditures. The process, conducted by state departments of transportation and their partners, includes satisfaction of federal joint transportation planning requirements
- “Transit providers” primarily refers to recipients of FTA grants, but may also include providers of transit services funded from other sources, including by the state, either through the state DOT or other agencies. If other transit providers are involved in the statewide planning process, however, this will also be considered by the study team.

We are particularly interested in your agency’s role in statewide transportation planning and your relationship with other organizations – including the state DOT, other state agencies, and regional agencies and local jurisdictions in rural areas – that participate in the statewide planning process. We are also interested in your recommendations for strengthening multimodal cooperation and partnerships among these organizations.

The goal of these discussions is to identify “best practices” that demonstrate effective strategies that will assist peer transit agencies in rural areas to participate more actively in the statewide transportation planning process, including resource allocation decisions.

This guide provides a general structure for discussions to identify specific insights into participation in statewide planning by transit agencies. Suggested topics include:

1. Identification of the participating agency/organization, including some background information such as:
 - Roles and responsibilities of participants in discussion
 - Basic characteristics of the agency and area of jurisdiction
 - Staff (number, background, expertise, capabilities)
 - population served/ridership (e.g., general public, human service clients, etc.)
 - type and extent of jurisdiction served (number of counties/cities, etc.)
 - service characteristics such as fleet characteristics, peak vehicle requirement, revenue hours operated
 - operating budget (fare-box recovery percentage, percentage of federal vs. state and local funding)
 - organizational structure
 - Public agency role
 - Service delivery (agency-operated or third-party contract)
 - Other contractor role
 - Management or other plans

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- State DOT, regional organization, city, county, or other representation on transit agency board
2. Routine involvement and experiences with state transportation planning activities, such as:
 - Plans and studies
 - Vision or scenario plans
 - Long range regional plan and/or Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan
 - Bicycle/pedestrian plans
 - Parking studies
 - Safety plans
 - Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (as required by SAFETEA-LU for funding for Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317)
 - Comprehensive land use/development plans, including affordable housing
 - Administration and conduct of regional or corridor studies
 - Funding decisions
 - Preparation of the Regional transportation plan/Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and/or State TIP (STIP)
 - Financial planning
 - Project selection (including criteria and performance measures)
 - Funding allocations (e.g., Section 5311, RTAP)
 - Service
 - Intercity bus and rail
 - Extent and quality of rural transit coverage
 - Provision of coordinated transit and human services
 - Multimodal transportation system
 - Air quality conformity and other environmental planning
 - Public/stakeholder involvement
 - Funded participation in the joint FTA/FHWA State Planning and Research Program
 - Other priorities or initiatives (State, Federal, other), such as:
 - Mobility
 - Accessibility
 - Safety
 - Economic stimulus/development
 - Livable communities
 - Human services coordination
 - Energy efficiency or conservation
 - Climate change: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or adaptation of transportation facilities to extreme weather (e.g., through a state climate change plan)
 - Emergency response
 - Other related roles
 3. Types of transportation planning support provided by the state or other institution/association (e.g., does the state conduct modeling or forecasting for you or provide access to GIS or GIS training?)
 4. Perceived effectiveness of participation in item 2, including barriers or other factors affecting participation by your agency or other transit agencies in statewide planning activities and resource allocation decisions
 5. Best practices or factors that have facilitated, supported, and/or encouraged your agency's and/or other transit agencies' participation in the statewide planning process

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- Can you provide examples of how successful collaboration has produced improved planning and transportation results?
 - What is the best way to determine that collaboration is “successful”?
6. Additional opportunities:
 - Related planning areas in which you and other rural transit agencies would like to be further involved
 - Barriers to involvement
 - How could this change?
 7. Any perceived impact of the FTA/FHWA’s Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program, SAFETEA-LU, and other Federal legislative and policy programs on transportation planning in nonurbanized areas
 8. Perceived impact of reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU on transportation planning in nonurbanized areas

Importance of other partners in the statewide planning process:

- Primary
 - State DOT divisions/districts
 - Statewide transit association, community transportation association, or other related association
 - Rural Planning Organizations (RPOs)/Regional Development Organizations/Councils of Government
 - Other individual local governments, i.e., cities, towns, or counties
 - Human service transportation agencies and providers (non-profits and for profits)
 - Secondary
 - MPOs
 - FTA
 - FHWA
 - Public Service Commission (or other regulatory body)
 - Chamber of Commerce or other business organizations
 - Tribal governments or providers of transit on tribal lands
 - Federal public land agencies or providers of transit on public lands
 - Civic, citizens’, or other advocacy groups
 - Mass Media
 - National Associations
 - Other (specify)
9. Any other related information or ideas about effective participation by rural transit in statewide transportation planning?
 - Suggestions on follow-up contacts or references

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Discussion Guide for Meetings with

Regional Agencies and Local Jurisdictions

*(Including cities and towns, counties, Rural Planning Organizations,
Regional Development Organizations and Councils of Government)*

During our discussion, we will review a variety of subjects to gain your perspectives on how transit providers in rural and non-urbanized areas in your state participate in and influence statewide planning, and in turn, how statewide transportation concerns and priorities are communicated to and considered by those transit providers.

For this study:

- “Statewide transportation planning” is the multimodal process for setting goals and priorities in long range plans and making program decisions on resource expenditures. The process, conducted by state departments of transportation and their partners, includes satisfaction of federal joint transportation planning requirements
- “Transit providers” primarily refers to recipients of FTA grants, but may also include providers of transit services funded from other sources, including by the state, either through the state DOT or other agencies. If other transit providers are involved in the statewide planning process, however, this will also be considered by the study team.

We are particularly interested in your agency’s role in statewide transportation planning and your relationship with other organizations – including the state DOT, other state agencies, other regional agencies and/or local jurisdictions, and rural transit agencies – that participate in the statewide planning process. We are also interested in your recommendations for strengthening multimodal cooperation and partnerships among these organizations.

The goal of these discussions is to identify “best practices” that demonstrate effective strategies that will assist peer transit agencies in rural areas to participate more actively in the statewide transportation planning process, including resource allocation decisions.

This guide provides a general structure for discussions to identify insights into the role of regional agencies and local jurisdictions in connecting rural transit agencies to the statewide transportation planning process. Suggested topics include:

10. Identification of the jurisdiction or organization, including background information:

- Roles and responsibilities of participants in discussion
- Basic characteristics of the agency and areas of jurisdiction
 - Agency’s roles and responsibilities, particularly as related to provision of transit service and participation in statewide planning, particularly for transportation
 - Organizational structure and activities involving transit decisions
 - Staff (in particular, staff time committed to transit in rural areas and to statewide transportation planning and staff expertise/capability on this topic)
 - Transit services within jurisdiction (number and types of agencies, RPOs or other associations, population served, staff sizes, funding, etc.)

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11. Relationship with transit agencies in rural areas

- How does the organization communicate and interact with transit agencies in rural areas? For example:
 - Is there formal or informal transit representation within the organization?
 - How do transit agencies participate in local and regional planning, funding decisions, and project prioritization?
 - How does the organization participate in planning and operations decisions for local transit agencies?
 - How does the organization communicate assumptions about local economic and population growth to transit agencies?
- Types of support provided to transit agencies in rural areas (e.g., technical assistance, other planning, funding, performance measures, public outreach, consensus building, advocacy, other staffing)
- Types of activities done in coordination with transit agencies in rural areas
 - Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan and other requirements including for the following programs:
 - Transportation for Elderly Persons and Persons with Disabilities (Section 5310)
 - Job Access Reverse Commute (JARC) (Section 5316)
 - New Freedom (Section 5317)
 - Setting regional priorities
 - Vision or scenario plans
 - Long range regional plan
 - Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan
 - Regional transportation plan
 - Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and/or State TIP (STIP)
 - Corridor studies
 - Bicycle/pedestrian plans
 - Parking studies
 - Safety plans
 - Transportation enhancement grants
 - Scenic byways
 - Emergency preparedness
 - Land use planning, including for affordable housing
 - Economic development planning
 - Environmental planning

12. Relationship with state DOT and/or other state agencies (formal and informal)

- Point of contact(s) at state
- Standardized forms or web options provided by state for funding applications, reporting, communication, and other purposes
- Participation in standing meetings
- Participation in formalized trainings
- Funding for transportation and transit services
- Technical assistance
- Responsibilities and obligations (e.g., in agreements)
- Legislative or other related mandates
- State expectations or required techniques for rural local consultation

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13. Your agency's role in linking transit in rural areas to ongoing statewide planning, including:

- Plans and studies
 - Vision or scenario plans
 - Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan
 - Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (as required by SAFETEA-LU for funding for Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317)
 - Comprehensive land use/development plans
 - Administration and conduct of regional or corridor studies
- Funding decisions
 - Preparation of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
 - Financial planning
 - Project selection (including criteria and performance measures)
 - Funding allocations (e.g., Section 5311, RTAP)
- Multimodal Transportation Service
 - Intercity bus and rail
 - Extent and quality of rural transit coverage
 - Provision of coordinated transit and human services
 - Multimodal transportation system
- Air quality conformity and other environmental planning
- Public/stakeholder involvement
- Other priorities or initiatives (State, Federal, other), such as:
 - Mobility
 - Accessibility
 - Safety
 - Economic stimulus/development
 - Livable communities
 - Human services coordination
 - Energy efficiency or conservation
 - Climate change: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or adaptation of transportation facilities to extreme weather (e.g., through a state climate change plan)
 - Emergency response
- Other related roles

14. Your perception of the role that transit agencies in rural areas in your jurisdiction and throughout the state play in ongoing activities of the state, including those listed in #4, and of the effectiveness of their participation, including barriers or other factors affecting participation in statewide planning activities and resource allocation decisions

- Can you provide examples of how successful collaboration has produced improved planning and transportation results?
- What is the best way to determine that collaboration is "successful"?

15. Steps taken to support and encourage participation by transit agencies in rural areas in the statewide planning process (past, current, and planned for future), including steps to overcome identified barriers.

16. Additional opportunities:

- Related planning areas in which rural transit agencies might be further involved.
- Barriers to involvement
- How could this change?

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17. Importance of other partners in the statewide planning process:

- Primary
 - Transit agencies
 - State DOT and/or other state agencies
 - Other Regional Planning Organizations/Rural Planning Organizations/Regional Development Organizations/Councils of Government
 - Other individual local governments, i.e., cities, towns, or counties
 - Statewide transit, community transportation, or other related associations
 - MPOs (e.g., in neighboring jurisdictions)
 - FTA
 - FHWA
- Secondary
 - Public Service Commission (or other regulatory body)
 - Chamber of commerce or other business organizations
 - Human service transportation agencies and providers (non-profits and for profits)
 - Tribal governments or providers of transit on tribal lands
 - Federal public land agencies or providers of transit on public lands
 - Civic, citizens', or other advocacy groups
 - Mass media
 - National associations
 - Other (specify)

18. Any other related information or ideas about effective participation by rural transit in statewide transportation planning?

- Suggestions on follow-up contacts or references

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Discussion Guide for Meetings with

State Departments of Transportation and Other State Agencies

(including Transit and Planning Divisions and state DOT district offices)

During our discussion, we will review a variety of subjects to gain your perspectives on how transit providers in rural and non-urbanized areas in your state participate in and influence statewide planning, and in turn, how statewide transportation concerns and priorities are communicated to and considered by those transit providers.

For this study:

- “Statewide transportation planning” is the multimodal process for setting goals and priorities in long range plans and making program decisions on resource expenditures. The process, conducted by state departments of transportation and their partners, includes satisfaction of federal joint transportation planning requirements
- “Transit providers” primarily refers to recipients of FTA grants, but may also include providers of transit services funded from other sources, including by the state, either through the state DOT or other agencies. If other transit providers are involved in the statewide planning process, however, this will also be considered by the study team.

We are particularly interested in your agency’s role in statewide transportation planning and your relationship with other organizations – including other state agencies, regional agencies, local jurisdictions, and rural transit agencies – that participate in the statewide planning process. We are also interested in your recommendations for strengthening multimodal cooperation and partnerships among these organizations.

The goal of these discussions is to identify “best practices” that demonstrate effective strategies that will assist peer transit agencies in rural areas to participate more actively in the statewide transportation planning process, including resource allocation decisions.

This guide provides a general structure for discussions to identify specific insights into the state’s role in connecting rural transit agencies to the statewide transportation planning process. Suggested topics include:

19. Identification of the SDOT, including some background information such as:

- Roles and responsibilities of participants in discussion
- Basic characteristics of the agency and areas of jurisdiction
 - staff (in particular, number of staff, staff time, and capabilities/expertise of staff committed to transit in non-urbanized areas and to statewide transportation planning)
 - transit services in nonurbanized areas in the state (number and types of agencies, RPOs or other associations, population served, staff sizes, funding, etc.)
 - organizational structure and roles/relationships involving transit agencies and providers in nonurbanized areas (transit planning and operations, regional transit authorities, provision of multi-modal transportation, etc.)
- Extent to which FHWA funds are spent on modes other than highways (could be a formal “flex,” or could tap the broad modal eligibilities of selected programs (e.g. STP, CMAQ, and Section 5311) in spending FHWA funds directly on transit or vice versa)

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20. Relationship with transit agencies in nonurbanized areas

- Institutions at the state or regional level that work with transit in nonurbanized areas
- How the state communicates and interacts with transit agencies in nonurbanized areas (e.g., does the state communicate assumptions about economic growth to transit agencies in nonurbanized areas and if so, how? Are these transit agencies involved in the development of growth forecasts and models?)
- Extent to which state is involved in identifying gaps in rural transit coverage and in quality of transit service in rural areas
- Use of performance measures in funding decisions
- Types of support provided to transit agencies in nonurbanized areas (e.g., planning, modeling, data collection and analysis, GIS, training, performance measures, public outreach, consensus building, other staffing)

21. Perception of the role of transit agencies in nonurbanized areas in ongoing activities of the state, including:

- Plans and studies
 - Vision or scenario plans
 - Long Range Statewide Transportation Plan
 - Bicycle/pedestrian plans
 - Parking studies
 - Safety plans
 - Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (as required by SAFETEA-LU for funding for Sections 5310, 5316, and 5317)
 - Comprehensive land use/development plans, including affordable housing
 - Administration and conduct of regional or corridor studies
- Funding decisions
 - Preparation of the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
 - Financial planning
 - Project selection (including criteria and performance measures)
 - Funding allocations (e.g., Section 5311, RTAP)
- Multimodal Transportation Service
 - Intercity bus and rail
 - Extent and quality of rural transit coverage
 - Provision of coordinated transit and human services
 - Multimodal transportation system
- Air quality conformity and other environmental planning
- Public/stakeholder involvement
- Funded participation in the joint FTA/FHWA State Planning and Research Program
- Other priorities or initiatives (State, Federal, other), such as:
 - Mobility
 - Accessibility
 - Safety
 - Economic stimulus/development
 - Livable communities
 - Human services coordination
 - Energy efficiency or conservation
 - Climate change: reduction of greenhouse gas emissions or adaptation of transportation facilities to extreme weather (e.g., through a state climate change plan)
 - Emergency response

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- Other related roles
22. Perceived effectiveness of participation by transit agencies in item 3, including barriers or other factors affecting participation in statewide planning and resource allocation decisions
 - Can you provide examples of how successful collaboration has produced improved planning and transportation results?
 - What is the best way to determine that collaboration is “successful”?
 23. Steps taken to support and encourage participation by transit in the statewide planning process (past, current, and planned for future)
 24. Additional opportunities:
 - Related planning areas in which states may further involve rural transit agencies
 - Barriers to involvement
 - How could this change?
 25. Methods and criteria used to allocate federal funds such as Section 5311 (formula-based, based on a statewide plan, etc), and state funds; the role transit agencies and others play in the process; and actions these groups can take to affect the apportionment decisions)
 26. Any perceived impact of the FTA/FHWA’s Transportation Planning Capacity Building Program, SAFETEA-LU, and other Federal legislative and policy programs on transportation planning in nonurbanized areas
 27. Perceived impact of reauthorization of SAFETEA-LU on transportation planning in nonurbanized areas
 28. Importance of other partners in the statewide planning process:
 - Primary
 - Rural Planning Organizations/Regional Planning Organizations/Regional Development Organizations/Councils of Government
 - Other individual local governments, i.e., cities, towns, or counties
 - Statewide transit, community transportation, or other related associations
 - MPOs (e.g., in neighboring jurisdictions)
 - FTA
 - FHWA
 - Secondary
 - Public Service Commission (or other regulatory body)
 - Chamber of commerce or other business organizations
 - Human service transportation agencies and providers (non-profits and for profits)
 - Tribal governments or providers of transit on tribal lands
 - Federal public land agencies or providers of transit on public lands
 - Civic, citizens’, or other advocacy groups
 - Mass Media
 - National associations
 - Other (specify)
 29. Any other related information or ideas about effective participation by rural transit in statewide transportation planning?
 - Suggestions on follow-up contacts or references