

# **TOWN OF WOODSTOCK PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

Town of Woodstock  
First Selectman's Office  
415 Route 169  
Woodstock, CT 06281

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## **Introduction**

The Town of Woodstock has a strong commitment to informing and seeking the advice of its residents in transportation planning and other programs and projects. The Town's public participation plan is designed to ensure opportunities for the public to express its views and to become active participants in the decision-making process.

In terms of transportation in the Town of Woodstock, the Connecticut Department of Transportation (ConnDOT) is the leading agency. ConnDOT provides funding to the Town of Woodstock to facilitate work necessary on the Town roads and, when awarded, bridge repairs.

The Participation Plan is intended to provide direction for public involvement activities to be conducted by the Town and contains the policies, objectives, and techniques used by the Town for public involvement. In its public participation process, the Town will:

- Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects.
- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan other transportation plans and projects, and conduct open public meetings.
- Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points.
- Ensure that the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are met and that appropriate actions are taken during all phases of public involvement to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Evaluate and continuously review the public participation process.

The Town of Woodstock has an extremely small variance in race, color, national origin, English proficiency, income, religious creed, ancestry, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, military service, or gender identity or expression, and public participation is solicited without discrimination for every facet of its community in the process of any plan or project.

## **Title VI/Environmental Justice**

The Town of Woodstock is committed to compliance with the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, and all related regulations and statutes. Section 601 of the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declares it to be the policy of the United States that "No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance". Consistent with this policy, and in accordance with Section 602 of Title VI, codified as amended at 42 U.S.C. §2000d-1, the Department of Justice promulgated regulations prohibiting recipients of federal funds from "utilizing criteria or methods of administration which have the effect of subjecting individuals to

discrimination because of their race, color, or national origin, or have the effect of defeating or substantially impairing accomplishment of the objectives of the program as respects individuals of a particular race, color, or national origin.” 28 C.F.R. § 42.104(b)(2). The United States Department of Transportation later promulgated nearly identical regulations – See 49 C.F.R. § 21.5(b) (vii) (2). Since the Civil Rights Act of 1964, other nondiscrimination laws have been enacted to expand the range and scope of Title VI coverage and applicability:

- The Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970 – prohibits unfair and inequitable treatment of persons displaced or whose property will be acquired as a result of federal and federally-aided programs and projects.
- The Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 – states that no person shall, on the grounds of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal assistance under this title or carried on under this title.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 – states that no qualified disabled person shall, solely by reason of his disability, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity that receives or benefits from federal financial assistance. This Act protects qualified individuals from discrimination based on their disability.
- The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 – states that no person shall, on the basis of age, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. This act prohibits age discrimination in Federal Assisted Programs.
- The Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987, P.L. 100-209 Amends Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act – states that discrimination is prohibited throughout an entire agency if any part of the agency receives federal assistance.
- The American Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 – prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in employment, transportation, public accommodation, communications, and governmental activities and requires involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of public services and capital facilities. Meetings and hearings must be held in ADA compliant buildings. Special accommodations must be made to assist those with disabilities to participate in meetings, planning and programming activities.
- Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency – requires each federal agency to examine its programs and activities and to develop and to implement plans by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those programs and activities.
- 23 CFR Part 200 – Federal Highway Administration Regulations Title VI Program and Related Statutes – addresses Implementation and Review Procedures.
- Presidential Executive Order 12808, Environmental Justice – Environmental Justice is defined as the “fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and income with respect to development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, programs and policies.” Fair treatment means that no racial, ethnic or socioeconomic group should bear a disproportionate share of the negative environmental consequences resulting from the operation of industrial, municipal and commercial enterprises and from

the execution of federal, state, local, and tribal programs and policies. The Federal Highway Administration articulates three fundamental environmental justice principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

The Town of Woodstock assures that no person or group(s) of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, age, national origin, disability/handicap, and income status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any and all programs, services, or activities administered by the Town, regardless of whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not federally funded.

The Town also assures that every effort will be made to prevent discrimination through the impacts of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations. In addition, the Town will provide meaningful access to services for person with Limited English Proficiency.

Public participation in the transportation planning and programming process is a priority for federal, state and local official since the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) in 1991; its successors.

## **Plan Objectives**

The Town of Woodstock believes that public input into its process is valuable. Planning is intended to provide a two-way process of information and idea sharing with the public and directly affected communities. The Participation Plan is designed with the following goal: “Open access and effective communication leads to knowledgeable, informed stakeholders.”

The Town will raise the level of understanding of the transportation planning process by seeking out under-involved populations within the Town, including minority, low income, senior citizen and immobile populations. It will target different audiences for planning, as necessary, including residents, businesses, and under-served and under-represented populations, and hold public meeting at sites convenient to potentially affected citizens. It will promote meetings in a manner appropriate to the population groups from which communication is desired.

The Town will keep the public informed of on-going activities on a continuous basis, using a variety of written and graphic means.

- Make all publications and work products available electronically to the public via the Town of Woodstock website ([www.woodstockct.gov](http://www.woodstockct.gov)) and at the Town of Woodstock offices.
- Website will be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled users.
- Website shall be updated and maintained to provide the most current and accurate information available. The website will, at a minimum, contain the following information:
  - Contact information (mailing address, phone, fax and email)
  - Meeting calendars and agendas
  - Staff will be reasonably available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location during normal business hours and after hours at the request of community interest groups with reasonable notice.

The Town will strive to continuously improve public participation and will revise this Plan and participation mechanisms as necessary to make them most effective. The Plan will be reviewed and adopted, with revisions if necessary, at least every five (5) years in order to improve the effectiveness of public involvement.

## **Public Participation Techniques**

Public participation is an ongoing activity of the Town of Woodstock, including the regular posting and copying of notices and reports in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act. This section describes the public participation tools currently being used by the Town.

Website	Legal Advertised Notices	Public Releases
Public Hearings	Public Contacts Database	Direct Mailings

### Comment and Complaint Procedure

Using one or more of these techniques, the intent is to expose and engage the public in general or even target certain population groups or neighborhoods to issues and proposals being considered, including, but not limited to:

- Age, gender, education, income and race/ethnic-specific issues and neighborhoods
- Potential environmental areas and issues
- The various users of all portions of the transportation system in Town

The following are the specific techniques that could be used, but others could be added as necessary. Not all will be used for every communication with the public or at every meeting. However, the intent is to provide reasonable information about the proposals being considered and the discussions that are taking place.

## **Website**

The website will be utilized to provide basic information relating to meetings dates and times on various topics, general or transportation planning. Specifically, it will include documents relating to Title VI, such as the Public Participation Plan, Limited English Proficiency Plan, and helpful links to other transportation related sites at the local and national level. The website will be maintained by the Town of Woodstock and regularly updated. Additionally, the site will be compliant with Section 508 of the Americans with Disabilities Act for disabled users.

## **Public Contacts Database**

The Town of Woodstock will maintain a master database of individuals interested in planning in Town, including those that have an interest in transportation issues. The database will include contact information to be used for direct mailing or electronic meeting notification and announcements. The database will be used to enhance any or all public involvement activities.

## **Legal Advertised Notices**

Notification of all meetings, both regular and special, conforms to the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (CGS Section 1-21). All meeting notices and agendas are sent to the Town Clerk's Office, media and other interested parties the prior week or as soon as the meeting notice is ready in accordance with FOIA. Annually, the schedules of all regular meetings of the Town of Woodstock Boards and Commissions for the upcoming calendar year are sent to the Town Clerk's Office and to any interested parties. An interpreter for the hearing-impaired or Limited English Proficient can be made available if requested at least five working days prior to the meeting.

When action is required on the State's TIP or on a TIP amendment, the agenda will include a project number and brief description of the project directly or by reference. Each regular meeting agenda includes an opportunity for public comment, and this is clearly indicated on the agenda that is distributed in advance of the meeting.

All required legal notices will be made in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act to be posted in the Town Hall and advertised in the Norwich Bulletin or other publications as required.

## **Direct Mailings**

Direct mailings will be an infrequent means of communicating with the public. When used, it could announce upcoming meetings or activities or provide information to a targeted area or group of people and are usually letters, but can be postcards or flyers. An area may be targeted for a direct mailing because of potential impacts from a project. Groups are targeted that may have an interest in a specific issue.

## **Press Releases**

Press releases will be sent to the Norwich Bulletin, WINY, Reminder Newspaper and the Villager to announce upcoming meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the Town. When specific communities are affected by transportation plans, local newsletters and media will be sought to communicate the project status.

## **Public Meeting/Hearings**

These are formal public meetings used to solicit specific public comment on a project or issue being considered for adoption by the Town of Woodstock. Hearings provide a formal setting for citizens to provide comments to decision-making bodies. Meeting minutes are taken and maintained and language assistance will be available, if requested in advance.

Notice that draft plans/documents are available for review shall be sent to the Town Clerk for posting, media, involved board/commission members and other interested persons. The media notified shall include at least the local newspaper and local radio station. Following the notice of availability, a public comment period of at least thirty (30) days shall be provided prior to adoption of any plan.

A public information meeting and/or public hearing shall be held prior to the adoption of any Plan for the purpose of both providing information and receiving public comment.

At least ten (10) days, but no more than twenty (20) days in advance of any public information meeting or public hearing, a notice, including agenda, will be sent to the Town Clerk in each member municipality for posting, media, Board members, and any other interested persons.

The notice of a public information meeting shall include the date, time, place and subject of the meeting, and shall indicate where subject documents can be reviewed in advance of the meeting. Copies of the subject documents shall be made available at the Town Clerk's Office and, if possible, through the Town website.

Special assistance, if required, will be made available upon request at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the event. All public hearing notices and advertisements shall state the following, "If you require special assistance to attend or participate in this meeting or need additional information please contact a Town of Woodstock representative noted below ten (10) days prior to the meeting event so that the special assistance can be accommodated." The Town of Woodstock will include language in its public notices and advertisements relating to nondiscrimination and avenues of redress if an individual feels they have been discriminated against. All public meeting notices and advertisements shall state the following:

Town of Woodstock meetings are conducted in accessible locations and materials can be provided in accessible formats. If you would like special accommodations, such as an interpreter, please contact the Town of Woodstock at 860-928-0208 x310 or [selectmen@woodstockct.gov](mailto:selectmen@woodstockct.gov) at least 3 days prior to the meeting. The Town of Woodstock fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. The Town of Woodstock does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, English proficiency, income, religious creed, ancestry, disability, age, gender, sexual orientation, military service, or gender identity or expression. Any person who believes himself/herself or any specific class of persons have been subjected to discrimination prohibition by Title VI or related statutes or regulations may, himself/herself or via a representative, file a complaint with the Town of Woodstock.

### **Comment and Complaint Procedure**

Comment forms are often used to solicit public comment on specific issues being presented at a workshop or other public meetings. They could also accompany documents made available for public review. Comment forms can be very general in nature, or can ask for very specific feedback. For example, a comment form may ask for comments on specific alignment alternatives being considered during a bridge project, or may ask for a person's general feeling about any aspect of transportation. Comment forms can also be included in publications and on websites to solicit input regarding the subject of the publication and/or the format of the publication or website.

In compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, these comment opportunities allow for complaints associated with minority groups as described in Title VI of the U.S. Code (42 U.S.C. § 2000d et seq.). Such complaints will be formally logged in a the First Selectman's Office and reviewed according to the Department of Justice's investigation procedures manual, then forwarded to ConnDOT and FHWA for further review and direction. Title VI complaints may be emailed, mailed or communicated directly by calling or visiting the First Selectman's Office.

### **Evaluation Methods**

In order to determine the effectiveness of the public involvement tools, they must be evaluated on a periodic basis. Such evaluations will be on an informal basis, but will be sufficiently detailed to guide the activities of the next program year. Effectiveness of the programs will be based on:

- The number of published articles, notices or other public notices of transportation activities and meetings.
- The number and frequency of targeted population groups from which input is received.
- The number of people attending meetings.

In assessing the above information, comparison will be made, the methods of contact, means of notices or advertisements, etc., in order to make correlations between action and response. Overall, the Town will continually strive to improve public involvement. Improvements should be made to increase public awareness and to improve the quantity and quality of information provided to the public.