

Notice to the Public of Rights under Title VI

- The City of Columbia operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, and national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act. Any person who believes he or she has been aggrieved by any unlawful discriminatory practice under Title VI may file a complaint with the City of Columbia.
- The contact information for agencies to file a complaint is listed below:

City of Columbia

Office of Business Opportunities

Attn: Carla Eichelberger

1401 Main Street, 4th Floor

Columbia, SC 29201

Phone (803) 545-3381

Email: carla.eichelberger@columbiasc.gov

Federal Highway Administration

Attn: Title VI Team Leader

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE

Washington, DC 20590

Email: nicole.mcwhorter@dot.gov

- Complaints must be filed within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory act.
- For additional information on the Title VI Program you may contact Carla Eichelberger or visit the website at <https://www.columbiasc.gov/obo>.

TITLE VI PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

City of Columbia, SC

I. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to establish citizen (public) participation policies and procedures for information dissemination and public comment solicitation for development and review of programs and projects carried out by the City of Columbia.

The City is committed to having an effective public involvement process that is proactive and provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions and an opportunity for early and continuing involvement.

II. Relevant Public Participation Law

A. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The American with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit plans and services. In accordance with ADA guidelines, all meetings conducted by the City of Columbia will take place in locations that are accessible to persons with mobility limitations. Also, auxiliary aids and services are provided when necessary to ensure effective communications, unless an undue burden or fundamental alteration would result, to allow a person with a disability to participate. "Auxiliary aids" include such services or devices as qualified interpreters, assistive listening headsets, television captioning and decoders, telecommunication devices for deaf persons (TDD's), videotext displays, readers' taped text, Brail materials, and larger print materials. City of Columbia public meeting notices specify that special accommodations will be provided upon request.

B. Title VI

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination by recipients of Federal financial assistance on the basis of race, color, and national origin. The objectives of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 are:

1. To ensure FTA-assisted benefits and related services are equitably distributed without regard to race, color or national origin.

2. To ensure that both the level and quality of transit services provide equal access and mobility for any person without regard to race, color or national origin.

3. To ensure that access to the planning and decision-making process is open and without regard to race, color or national origin.

4. To ensure that decisions on the location of transit facilities and services are made without regard to race, color or national origin.

To comply with these objectives, the City of Columbia has adopted the suggested methodology and framework set forth in the Title VI reporting guidelines (FTA Circular 4702.1, Chapter IV). By using this methodology, the City monitors and compares the performance of its service delivery in line with the stated objectives of its Title VI program.

C. Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

Title VI directs each Federal agency to develop and implement a system by which limited English proficiency persons can meaningfully access the services it funds. Federal agencies published guidance for their respective grant recipients in order to assist them with their obligations to LEP persons under Title VI. As a result, the FTA published guidance and implemented regulations requiring that grant recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access to the benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for LEP individuals. The City of Columbia as an SCDOT grantee is required to ensure meaningful access to benefits, services and information for LEP persons.

III. City of Columbia's Public Participation Program Elements

A. Outreach

The City will solicit public involvement and input through a multifaceted approach that will provide opportunities for proactive, early, and continuing public participation for its projects, programs and decision making with individuals, groups, businesses and strategic partners.

Mailings and other outreach efforts may be made to solicit input from a forum of organizations serving minorities, low- and moderate-income persons, as well as persons with disabilities and limited English proficient populations. Staff will contact minority group leaders and advertisement of all notification processes for public meetings or

public review of agency documents advertised in minority and diverse language media outlets.

B. Citizen Input

The City of Columbia will aggressively promote opportunities for the inclusion of minority, low- and moderate-income and limited English populations in this forum.

1. Public input may be drawn from, but not necessarily limited to, entities such as:

- a) Transit users
- b) The general public
- c) Non-profit organizations that provide services to the homeless, LEP populations
- d) School Districts
- e) Neighborhood Organizations
- f) Municipal Partners

2. In planning public meetings, City staff will consider the following to obtain maximum attendance: (1) appropriate number of meetings and hearings needed; (2) appropriate locations, and (3) convenient days and times.

Structured meetings may be held on specific proposals and projects when desirable to expand support and encourage broad based public participation in the development and review of programs and projects. The City of Columbia will use visuals to describe plans when possible. Additionally, project planning information will be published and made available in an electronic format.

Additional methods that may be used to encourage public input include:

- a) Focus group discussions
- b) Neighborhood meetings – less formal setting ideal
- c) Workshop format public meetings

IV. Monitoring and Evaluation

The City of Columbia will continuously monitor, evaluate and improve its public participation process. Regular review will be accomplished by tracking website usage and activity including the number of individuals on the City of Columbia's contact list that receive newsletters, meeting notices and agendas, and other related materials.

Furthermore, the public will be encouraged to provide comments and suggestions through various channels and open dialogue will be maintained with advisory groups throughout the community on transportation and planning issues. A record of public comments and those of institutional representatives will be kept, as well as responses to such comments, where pertinent.

V. Complaint Process

The City of Columbia has developed a Title VI Complaint Process that will be posted online.