

The Georgia Department of Transportation's (GDOT's) Consultation Process with local officials in rural areas of the state will provide affected local officials that have responsibility for transportation an opportunity to be involved in transportation plans and programs, on a consultation basis, for portions of the plan in non-metropolitan areas of the state. Consultation meaning that one party confers with another identified party in accordance with an established process. This implementation plan addresses the process in which the GDOT shall use to confer with Rural Local Officials or state associations and agencies representing Rural Local Officials during the development of and final product for the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan and the State Transportation Improvement Program.

Described below is the methodology that is recommended to achieve Local Government Consultation. It is GDOT's objective that the implementation of this proposed process will be maintained separate from GDOT's current Public Involvement Process.

STATE TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (STIP)

As part of the STIP development process, the District Planning and Programming Engineers shall meet with representatives (rural local government officials) from each county and city in their area to discuss projects in the STIP, to solicit comments and to answer questions. These meetings will typically occur between April and June. During these meetings, a range of transportation issues may be discussed and rural local officials will be asked to sign a "Certification of Consultation with Elected Officials" documenting STIP consultation (Please see [attachment](#)). The Office of Planning will send a kickoff letter, to all of the rural cities and counties announcing the meetings (addresses to be supplied by GDOT District Offices) indicating that the STIP consultation meetings are being scheduled as part of the Rural Government Consultation Process. The District Planning and Programming Engineer will follow up the Office of Planning's announcement letter, with a letter or email (to rural city and county government officials) giving each City and County government official an opportunity to meet with the District Planning and Programming Engineer to discuss the STIP. Along with the District's letter, copies of the projects, within the county that are anticipated to be placed in the STIP, should be attached for each individual county's review. The District Office letter or email, transmitting the list of projects should occur prior to the STIP development meeting. The District will provide a list of meeting dates and times, for all STIP meetings concerning local elected officials, to the STIP Public Outreach Coordinator before meetings take place.

Requests that cannot be addressed during these meetings will be forwarded to the appropriate GDOT office for response and the rural local official shall be copied. The responding office shall reply to the rural local official in writing within thirty days.

STATEWIDE STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION PLAN CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS (SSTP)

The Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG), the Georgia Municipal Association (GMA) and the Regional Commission (RCs) shall be included as part of the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan's (SSTP) Stakeholder Advisory Committee. The Stakeholder Advisory

Committee shall work with GDOT in an advisory role to provide continuous feedback on SSTP work products and tasks. During the stakeholder meetings, the attendees will be encouraged to voice their concerns and ask questions. Responses may be made available at the meetings or be forwarded to the appropriate GDOT Office for response. Every comment and concern will be considered. Responses will be made in a timely manner, with the amount of time required being dependent upon the availability of information and the time required to generate the needed information for an appropriate response by GDOT.

The Stakeholder Advisory Committee shall meet a minimum of three times during the development of the SSTP. The first meeting shall be held at the beginning of the process in order to give the advisory committee an opportunity to help define the process. The second meeting shall be held during the process to provide status information and to solicit input from committee members. The last meeting shall be held near the completion of the SSTP development in order to inform the committee of draft findings and recommendations and to solicit comments from the advisory Committee. Comments received from the advisory committee shall be responded to during the meetings when possible and made part of official minutes for that meeting. Otherwise, comments shall be addressed in writing. All comments and responses shall be included in the official documentation of the SSTP process.

Local government (city and county) officials shall be given the opportunity to participate in the SSTP as members of a rural transportation focus group. The focus group shall provide local officials, with the responsibility for transportation in rural areas of the state, an opportunity to comment on and provide direction for statewide planning in non-metropolitan areas. The results of these focus groups will be considered in the development of the SSTP.

The ACCG, the GMA, the Regional Commissions and Rural Local Officials shall be notified in writing at least fifteen days prior to beginning the SSTP development. The initial notification shall inform them of the SSTP process, proposed schedule, and how they may participate in the process. They shall also be notified in writing at the conclusion of the SSTP update informing them on how they may review and comment on the final documentation of the SSTP.

FIVE (5) YEAR REVIEW OF CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

As part of GDOT's implementation plan, the Office of Planning shall review and solicit comments from non-metropolitan local officials or Regional Commissions for a period of not less than 60 days regarding the effectiveness of the consultation process and proposed modifications at least once every 5 years. GDOT shall be responsible for determining whether to accept any proposed modifications. If a proposed modification is not accepted by GDOT, it will be made publicly available [the reasons for not accepting the proposed modification] including written notification to non-metropolitan local officials or their associates.