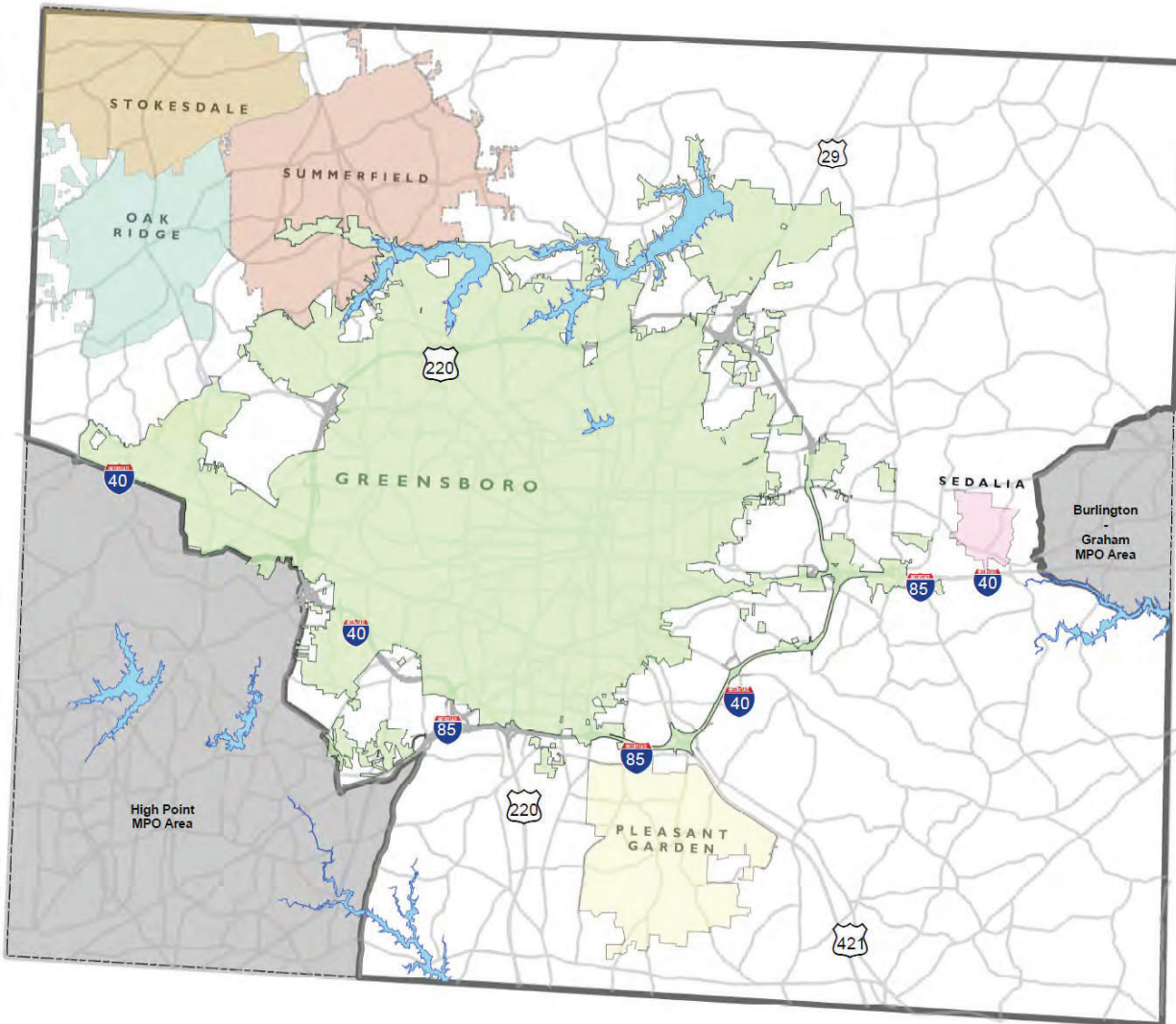


2023 Public Participation Plan

September 20, 2023



Greensboro
Oak Ridge
Pleasant Garden
Sedalia
Stokesdale
Summerfield
Guilford County

GREENSBORO
URBAN AREA
MPO
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION



Background and Goals

The Greensboro Urban Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) develops and coordinates transportation plans, programs, projects, and other documents for the MPO area.

The MPO develops a Public Participation Plan to ensure the public receives timely notice and information about these documents and processes; to ensure the public has reasonable opportunities to share views with decision-makers; and to comply with federal Metropolitan Planning Regulations.

The MPO works diligently to effectively and efficiently provide public information, opportunities for public input, and access to the transportation decision making process. That includes a commitment to periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies outlined herein. The following timeline represents the changes that have been made over the years:

- 2007: The plan was introduced to provide guidance and flexibility on appropriate public input steps in a wide range of situations.
- 2013: Clarified the different levels of changes that can occur with the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP), and what level public involvement is necessary with those changes.
- 2014: Extended the Public Participation Plan to cover the Program of Projects document accounting for current year transit grants as well as any transit fare changes or major service changes that may be proposed.
- 2018: Added elements required under revised federal metropolitan planning regulations and updated procedures for communicating public comment opportunities including current technological trends such as social media.
- 2020: Streamlined procedures for document distribution and outlined the use of virtual

meetings with phone-in access where appropriate.

- 2022: Provided more detail about Amendment and Administrative Modification process based on the comment on the Certification Review from FHWA in April 2021.
- 2023: Amends the plan to account for new electronic meeting procedures and distribution strategies that will ensure the proper functioning of the MPO in a changing digital environment.

The Public Participation Plan establishes an **administrative process** and **three tiers of public involvement** to accommodate items ranging from minor changes/routine items to high-impact changes/long-term plans with the potential to be of considerable public interest. The administrative process and the three tiers establish a baseline of required public participation activities with the flexibility to customize additional steps as appropriate.

Routine and procedural items are handled under the administrative process with public involvement limited to the regular MPO meeting notice and public comment opportunities. Relatively small or localized projects, items with few potential impacts, and/or items with a wider scale but little general interest are classified as Tier 1. Area-wide plans or projects with potentially significant community impacts are classified as Tier 2 or 3.

A **toolbox** identifies additional steps that may be used for items at each tier as appropriate. The toolbox is not exhaustive, and additional steps may be taken as appropriate. In addition, the Public Participation Plan specifies the tier that some documents fall under, but it leaves to interpretation the tier assignment for other documents. For such items, MPO staff will identify the tier for such items and any additional steps to use with the guidance and oversight of the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC).

The MPO uses the Public Participation Plan to emphasize equity by seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing

transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

Where a participation strategy is intended to help reach these communities, it is marked with an asterisk ().*

The Public Participation Plan is supplemented by the Limited English Proficiency Plan available on the MPO website.

Who is the public?

For the purposes of the Public Participation Plan the public includes anyone interested in MPO activities. Consistent with federal Metropolitan Planning Regulations, the public also includes individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool programs, vanpool programs, transit benefit programs, parking cash-out programs, shuttle programs, or telework programs), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties.

DISTRIBUTION OF TITLE VI INFORMATION

Information on Title VI and other programs will be crafted and distributed to employees, contractors and subrecipients, stakeholders, and the general public.

Public distribution efforts may vary depending on factors present, but will generally include: posting public statements setting forth our nondiscrimination policy in eye-catching designs and locations; placing brochures in public places, such as government offices, transit facilities, and libraries; having nondiscrimination language within contracts; including nondiscrimination notices in meeting announcements and handouts; and displaying our Notice of Nondiscrimination at public meetings.

At a minimum, nondiscrimination information will be distributed on our website and on posters in conspicuous areas at our office(s). Project-related information and our most current Title VI-related information will be maintained online.

A Note about Title VI

We will inform people of their rights under Title VI and related authorities with regard to our program. The primary means of achieving this will be posting and distributing the policy statement and notice.

Additional measures may include verbally announcing our obligations and the public's rights at meetings, placing flyers at places frequented by targeted populations, and an equal opportunity tag-on at the end of radio announcements.

The method of notification will be determined through an initial screening of the area.

Amendment or Administrative Modification?

Administrative Modification – a revision to the Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) that is not significant enough to be considered an amendment. Examples include:

- Any change to projects in years 5 or later
- Minor change to project descriptions, scopes, sponsor funding
- Minor cost increases in highway projects that do not exceed both \$2 million and 25% of the original project cost
- Minor cost change (increase or decrease) in transit projects that do not exceed either \$1 million or 25% of the original project cost
- Schedule changes that move project authorization dates within the first 4 year STIP time window and do not affect local air quality conformity findings
- Funding source changes between traditional funding sources (i.e. substituting available CMAQ funds for FTA section 5307 formula transit funds)
- Project approved for Emergency Relief funds do not generally have to be included in the STIP, so any changes made for emergency projects may be considered minor modifications.

Administrative modifications will generally be presented to TAC for informational purposes and concurrence. Public notice will be given through the MPO's regular meeting notice provisions and routine distribution lists consistent with Administrative Process provisions.

Amendment – a revision to the MTIP that is consistent with federal and state requirements for TIP amendments. Examples include

- Change in project cost beyond a predetermined threshold; increase in highway projects that exceed both \$2 million and 25% of the original cost and may affect fiscal constraint and changes (increases or decreases) in transit projects that exceed either \$1 million or 25% of the original project cost
- Any additional or deletion of a federally funded regionally significant project into the first 4 years of the Program
- Change in project design or scope that significantly changes; the termini or project type, purpose, or number of through lanes on a non-exempt (for transportation conformity purposes) project
- Any addition, deletion or significant modification of non-traditional funding source to a project (traditional sources of revenue include federal, state, or local government tax revenues. Non-traditional sources include state bonding and/ or private participation)
- Project schedule shifts that move ROW, major capital acquisitions, or construction authorization dates either into or out of the 4 year STIP time window
- Project schedule shifts in years 1 through 4 that move project completion dates across Horizon Years as determined by the local Long Range Transportation Plan
- Project schedule shifts to incorporate the project from an out-year into the current (four-year) STIP

Public notice will be given through the MPO's regular meeting notice provisions and routine distribution lists consistent with Administrative Process provisions.

Administrative Process: Minor Modifications

Routine and procedural items are handled under *the administrative process* using the regular MPO meeting notice and public comment opportunities. Public notice of such items is given through the distribution of MPO agenda packets online and via established e-mail distribution lists, including the *Interested Parties* list, to which any interested person will be added upon request. Opportunities for comment on such items include the *Public Comments* agenda item included on each TAC meeting agenda. This provides an opportunity for interested persons to make comments or ask questions to the TAC upon recognition by the Chair, subject to any reasonable time limits as the Chair may impose. MPO meetings are held in an accessible, transit-served, and convenient location.

Items processed using administrative process procedures, including MPO meeting agendas and agenda packets, are an important part of the MPO's efforts to providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.

The Administrative process includes but is not limited to the following:

- Administrative modifications or routine amendments to the MTIP or adopted Program of Projects.
- Modifications of the MTP text, analysis, or mapping to account for minor project changes or small projects with few impacts or to make minor corrections.
- Corrections and minor modifications of the text, analysis, or mapping of other MPO Plans such as the BiPed Plan, Public Participation Plan, and the Coordinated Human Services Public Transportation Plan.
- Systems planning studies contributing or supplementing the MTP such as the Congestion Management Process or MPO Performance Measure reports.
- Other technical/preliminary/exploratory studies.

Tier 1: Limited Reach, Impact, or Interest

Tier 1 includes but is not limited to:

- Relatively small or localized projects with significant impacts.
- Items with a wider scale but with relatively few impacts and relatively modest interest.
- Studies affecting portions of the urban area.
- Geographically focused plans.
- Periodic revisions to the Public Participation Plan.

Tier 1 items shall contain maps, photos, renderings, or other visualization tools as appropriate to aid in understanding.* Tier 1 items are to be as jargon-free and succinct as possible.*

Tier 1 minimum requirements are listed below. Additional steps may be taken as appropriate:

1. Documents shall be available for public review for at least 30 calendar days on the MPO website (an accessible website* hosted by the City of Greensboro) and in print at the GDOT Office. Printed documents will be made available upon request.
Note the review period for Public Participation plan updates will be a minimum of 45 days.
2. During the public review period, comments shall be allowed to be submitted:
 - Via mail, fax, or other delivery method, and
 - Via e-mail, and/or website forms
3. Notice of the item and the public comment opportunity will be provided at the beginning of the public review period to include:
 - Where the document can be reviewed online and, upon request, in print;
 - Instructions for submitting comments;
 - Due date for comments;
 - Contact information for questions; and
 - Notice of the date, time, and location of any public meetings.
 - Public notices will include maps, photos, or other graphics as appropriate.

4. Public comments received will be:
 - Acknowledged with a written or e-mailed receipt message for comments submitted in writing, via e-mail, or through Internet forms;
 - Responded to as appropriate, which could include a direct communication to the commenter or a response in the revised document;
 - Documented and presented to the MPO's Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and TAC, in summary form or verbatim, before a vote is taken to adopt the plan or document in question; and
 - Included in summary form or verbatim with final documents, if sufficiently significant.
5. Public notice will be given via the following outlets:
 - Display ad in at least major newspaper.
 - City of Greensboro and GUAMPO Website.
 - Press release to media outlets. MPO staff will maintain the list of media contacts.*
 - At TCC and TAC meetings and/or via email to members of stakeholder agencies.
6. Periodic revisions to the PPP will also include at least one display ad in a newspaper that serves minority communities.*

When warranted by the specifics of the item the following additional steps may be used:

- As needed, an agenda item for a public hearing or comment opportunity may be established at the TAC meeting where action as scheduled.
- Advertise in a newspaper that serves minority communities including Spanish-speaking residents.* (*this is a required step for periodic Public Participation Plan revisions*).
- Advertise in local newspapers serving the Towns of Oak Ridge, Pleasant Garden, Sedalia, Stokesdale, and Summerfield
- Provide additional notice to local government officials including from the Towns of Oak Ridge, Pleasant Garden, Sedalia, Stokesdale, and Summerfield.

*The Limited English Proficiency Plan provides additional steps for items with a significant potential impact or important to language groups with significant numbers of Limited English Proficiency individuals**

Tier 2: Larger Geographic Reach or Impacts

Projects, studies, and plans with a wide geographic reach and potential significance are classified as Tier 2. Tier 2 includes but is not limited to:

- Adoption of the MTIP, Major Amendments to the MTP, and any air quality documents that may be required.
- Major projects, studies, plans, or amendments impacting much of the urban area or affecting minority or low-income populations significantly or in unusually high proportions.*
- The Program of Projects (POP) documents prepared annually by MPO member agencies the GTA and PART.
- Fare changes and major transit service changes (*See next page for more information*).

Tier 2 minimum requirements:

All Tier 1 procedures and steps except as modified below.

1. Additional public notice will be given via the following outlets:
 - Display ad run in a newspaper that serves minority communities.*
 - Notifications shall be available for public at transit hubs and buses.
2. An electronic notice will be sent to a list of interested parties, including representatives of neighborhood and community organizations, especially in minority and low-income communities, to provide timely information about public comment periods and meetings.*
3. At least one public meeting should be held during the public review period, to present the document and solicit comments.

- Scheduling and location shall be accessible to the public (this includes a location near public transit, a time when transit is operating, as well as an accessible building and room for individuals with disabilities).*
- Special services shall be available upon five business days advance notice, when practical, and subject to availability of services and resources. These special services include translation for non-English speakers, materials for the visually impaired, and services for the deaf and hard of hearing, in accordance with City policies. The availability of these services should be mentioned in public notices.*
- *The public hearing requirement for the POP may be satisfied at the TAC meeting where POP adoption is scheduled.*
- An additional opportunity for public comment will be provided on major amendments or adoption of a new MTP or MTIP if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP:
- Differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO, and;
- Raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.

Program of Projects (POP)

Federal regulations require that a POP be developed for the MPO area each year. The POP includes a brief description of expected projects for the year, total project costs, and federal share for each project. The POP accounts for the urbanized area's Section 5307 apportionment, other FTA formula and discretionary grants, State funding, and other sources.

The MPO prepares the POP annually in consultation with the Greensboro Transit Authority (GTA), the Piedmont Authority for Regional Transportation (PART), and Guilford County Transportation & Mobility Services (TAMS) and consistent with the *MPO Transit Resource Allocation Policies*.

Public review and comment on the MTIP document are sufficient to satisfy the POP public review and comment requirements. When separate public involvement procedures are used for the POP, they are to be consistent with those used for the MTIP, except that the public hearing requirement for the POP may be satisfied at the TAC meeting where POP adoption is scheduled.

One special requirement applies to the POP: the public announcement of the proposed POP must contain a statement that the proposed program will be the final program unless amended.

Transit Fare and Major Service Changes

Public involvement is required prior to implementation of major fixed route transit service changes and any change in the fare structure for area fixed route services.

The transit operator shall seek public input using Tier 2 guidelines. Comments are to be presented to the Transit Operator's board before a vote is taken to approve the changes.

After reviewing public comments and the analysis of the changes, the Board may authorize staff to implement the changes or may direct other action.

Major service changes include changes to GTA routes and services in a manner expected to result in a decrease or increase of 15% of total revenue hours.

Tier 3: Very Broad and Long Range

Tier 3 is reserved for plans and programs with a wide significance and level of interest for residents and communities. This tier can include:

- Plans that are the first of their kind in the area
- Major and comprehensive updates to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan beyond the scale of typical updates (infrequently undertaken).

Visualizations in documents should include photos, graphics, or renderings to enhance understanding.*

Tier 3 requirements include:

Requirements listed for Tier 1 and Tier 2.

1. Use as broad and inclusive an electronic contact list as possible to ensure that as many people as possible receive information. Items that should be sent to this list include:
 - Progress/update newsletters to provide timely notice at project kick-off, at the beginning of public comment periods, and otherwise as appropriate;
 - Surveys to elicit comments that might not otherwise be volunteered.
2. Spanish language public notices and advertisements should be submitted for posting to the leading Spanish-language newspaper.
3. Social media and online outreach platform strategies will be used to maximize the opportunity for public to review and provide comments.
4. At least one public meeting shall be held. The meeting should be accessible to individuals with disabilities. Locations should be held in a transit-accessible locations except where the geographic scope dictates meetings in areas not served by fixed route transit service.*

Online Public Meetings

Online public meetings may be held at the discretion of the MPO. Online meetings will be advertised in the same manner as in person meetings, and will use a publicly accessible platform that offers participants the ability to see and hear the meetings. Ability to comment via chat or voice will be offered as appropriate given the format and purpose of the meeting. Meeting registration or admittance by staff may be required to maintain appropriate on-line security protocols.

Toolbox of Additional Measures

The MPO will take additional steps to publicize comment opportunities and seek input as appropriate. This toolbox gives examples of some of the approaches that may be used for that.

- Use strategies mandated for higher tiers selectively to enhance lower tier comment opportunities.
- Distribute information through community groups such as Action Greensboro, Neighborhood Associations, or member jurisdictions to more easily access their established contact networks.
- Use pre-existing citizen committees or forums provided by other community organizations to share information and seek input.
- Use social media to promote public information and input opportunities and/or seek comments.
- Bundle multiple public review opportunities together when possible for logistical efficiencies and for the convenience of interested parties.
- Use surveys in the public involvement process to elicit comments that might not otherwise be volunteered.
- Consult the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.
- Accept comments over the phone or in person, allowing those with limited writing skills to comment.*
- Provide a longer public review period.
- Create new committee(s).

- Hold workshops or design charrettes instead of standard public meetings or drop-in sessions.
- Reverse the traditional flow of information: interested parties or groups could be invited to make presentations to the TAC, TCC, or other policy boards.
- Use focus groups and/or statistically valid telephone surveys.

MPO Meetings

Every public meeting held by an official MPO board, committee, or subcommittee will meet or exceed the requirements of the North Carolina Open Meetings Laws §143-318, Article 33, Meetings of Public Bodies.

Meetings of the TAC and TCC are open to the public. Each TAC meeting includes a *Public Comments* opportunity. Meeting minutes are public record. Past minutes and the schedule of meetings are available at the MPO's Web site. Prior to each meeting, a contact list of interested parties receives reminder notices, meeting agendas, and other material consistent with procedures described under the *Administrative process*. To join the *Interested Parties* list, please contact MPO staff.

Virtual MPO Meetings

MPO TAC and TCC meetings may be held solely online or by phone when deemed appropriate by TAC Chair and in accordance with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law.

- A phone number and instructions to access the online meetings will be provided for public to listen and/or watch the meetings.
- Meetings should be streamed live on an online platform that allows the public to see and hear the meetings
- Meeting agenda, materials, and presentations should be posted online in advance of the meetings.
- If public comments cannot be made in person during the meetings, provide means and

instructions for people to provide their comments by phone call or email prior to the meetings.

Review of Effectiveness and Revision

The MPO will periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process. This evaluation will consider attendance at meetings, the quantity of comments, Web site usage statistics, and tally sheets from printed documents distributed to public review locations. The periodic review may lead to steps deemed inefficient or ineffective to be replaced with more effective and efficient methods.

Periodic revisions to the Public Participation Plan shall be handled as a Tier 1 process with a 45-calendar-day public review period and an additional requirement to advertise in a newspaper that serves minority communities.

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

A motion was made by TAC Member Tammi Thurm and seconded by TAC Member Mike Fox for the adoption of the following resolution, which upon being put to a vote was duly adopted.

WHEREAS, public participation is a key element in every major transportation-related process and decision; AND

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan helps to ensure the provision of timely notice and information to the public regarding planning activities and a reasonable opportunity for the public to share their views with decision-makers; AND

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan is updated on a regular basis based on new requirements, changing circumstances, and lessons learned from ongoing public participation efforts; AND

WHEREAS, the 2023 Public Participation Plan Update introduces a clearer summary timeline of past changes to the document to improve the process for the public in an efficient manner; AND

WHEREAS, the 2023 Public Participation Plan removes the requirement that paper documents be made available for public review at NCDOT Division 7 and the Guilford County Commissioners Office for efficiency and in consideration of a clear public preference for accessing the documents via other means; AND

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan clarifies that virtual MPO meetings may be held when deemed appropriate and necessary by TAC Chair and in accordance with the North Carolina Open Meetings Law; AND

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan introduces minor wording updates including the use of consistently gender-neutral language; AND

WHEREAS, the plan is consistent with the public involvement provisions set forth in federal law and regulation; AND

WHEREAS, the plan is a result of periodic evaluations of the previous Public Participation Plan, dated May 11, 2022 which the plan replaces; AND

WHEREAS, the plan's development included a public review period of at least 45 calendar days, as required by the previous Public Participation Plan; AND

WHEREAS, comments received during the aforementioned public review period have been duly considered and addressed in the revised Public Participation Plan;

NOW THEREFORE, be it resolved, that the Greensboro Urban Area Transportation Advisory Committee hereby adopts the Public Participation Plan, on this day, September 20, 2023.

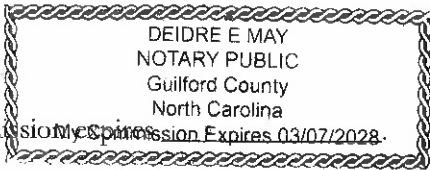
I, Marikay Abuzuaiter, TAC Chair
(Name of Certifying Official) (Title of Certifying Official)

do hereby certify that the above is a true and correct copy of an excerpt from the minutes of a meeting of the Greensboro Urban Area TAC duly held on this day, September 20, 2023.

Marikay Abuzuaiter
Chair, Transportation Advisory Committee

Subscribed and sworn to me on this day September 20, 2023.

Deidre E May
Notary Public



My commission expires 03/07/2028.