

LACKAWANNA-LUZERNE  
COME, SHAPE THE FUTURE



# CHAPTER 5

## OUTREACH AND COORDINATION





## Introduction

Involving stakeholders in the development of a regional planning project is essential. If any community planning effort is to be successful, those who live, work and recreate in the community must be engaged in a dialogue with planners. It is important to learn what the stakeholders' value, what challenges exist, and their overall vision for the future.

The *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan* project team employed a public outreach program comprised of strategies to glean valuable information from stakeholders and to educate the public as to the importance of planning. In addition to an ongoing dialogue with the public, consistent coordination with government regulatory agencies involved in the planning and transportation development process provided the project teams with important information and guidance through each required step of the undertaking.

Throughout the development of the Regional Plan, the two counties weaved public outreach into the planning activities to ensure the final documents reflect a shared view for the future of the region.

Detailed here is information regarding the public outreach and agency coordination program for both the Comprehensive Plan and the Long-Range Transportation Plan components of the *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan*.

## Components of the Public Outreach Program

The Public Outreach Program was designed to be integrated throughout the Plan development – from the project initiation through implementation. The program was both universal in its engagement of the community throughout the planning process, and included elements unique to each component plan to ensure federal compliance with Environmental Justice/Title VI outreach requirements.

The overall Public Outreach Program followed a multi-fold approach for community engagement and dialogue. First, the two counties established working committees that were comprised of technical staff; state, county and municipal agency and resource personnel; elected officials; community leaders; educational institutions; business organizations; media outlets; local and regional stakeholders; and special interest groups. These committees met regularly throughout the planning process, and provided the counties support and guidance regarding development of the Comprehensive Plan and the Long-Range Transportation Plan components of the *Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan*. (Public outreach for the preparation of the Hazard Mitigation Plan also occurred as part of this Public Outreach Program).

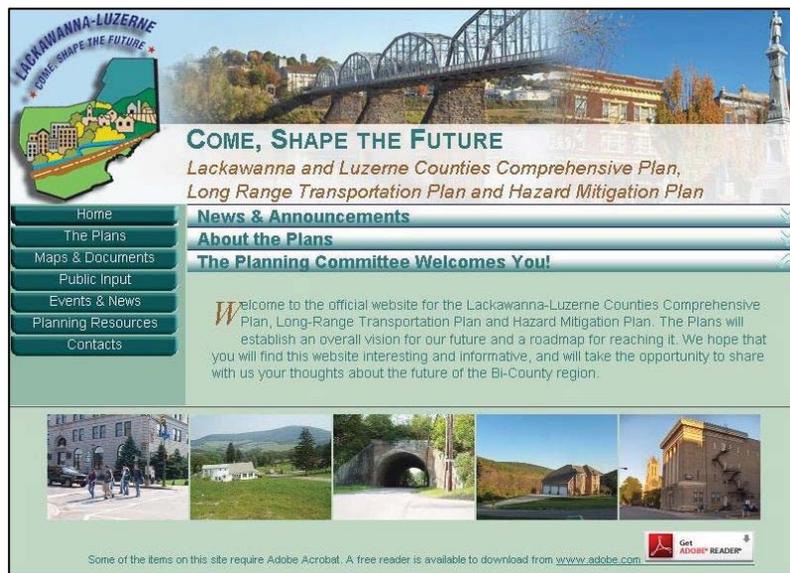


Another facet of the outreach effort included the preparation and dissemination of information throughout the two counties. Several communication methods were used, including printed materials such as fact sheets, press releases and mapping, as well as electronic media, including a one-stop website for the two counties' planning activities, PowerPoint presentations, and narrated videos. A significant component of the outreach program included direct dialogue with citizens in the two counties through tailored public coordination activities. This dialogue occurred during initial stakeholder focus group sessions, at regularly-scheduled working committee meetings, at regularly-scheduled public information meetings, during ongoing field views, as well as through targeted phone calls and e-mails.

## Dissemination of Information

County officials engaged citizens throughout the two counties through a series of electronic and printed materials, designed to foster awareness and understanding of the planning process, and encourage input and feedback. It was crucial that the outreach include all facets of the population, including underserved and potentially vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, low-income and minority populations.

A project website was established under the link [www.lackawanna-luzerneplans.com](http://www.lackawanna-luzerneplans.com). This website address was included on all outreach materials and press releases for public consumption. The website served as a portal for information on the Regional Plan. As planning activities progressed, the site was regularly updated to include the latest information and activities, including: the Work Program Schedule for the Regional Plan; copies of draft reports; links to public meeting videos and PowerPoint Presentations; news articles; committee members; maps; technical documents and contact information. A dialogue box was also established to ensure residents and site visitors could leave comments, request information or become added to the general mailing list. In addition, materials consistent with the website text and information were prepared for distribution via PowerPoint presentations, videos, fact sheets, comments forms, press releases and in letters to local officials. Planning team members regularly reviewed these materials, and made updates as necessary. A screen shot of the website is shown below.



## **Public Outreach and the Work Program Schedule**

The three-fold approach to the Public Outreach Program was integrated into all four phases of Plan development. Outreach and coordination activities began at the inception of the planning process, and specific public involvement tools were employed at key milestones within each phase. These included:

### **Phase A – Data Collection**

The Data Collection Phase consisted of two Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings, Stakeholder Focus Group sessions, presentations to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees; and one round of three Public Information Meetings.

### **Phase B – Visioning**

The Visioning Phase consisted of one Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting, one combination Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting/Visioning workshop, one presentation to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees; one round of three Public Information Meetings; and two Transportation Project Ranking meetings.

### **Phase C – Draft Plan**

The Draft Plan Phase consisted of two Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings, presentations to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees; and one round of three Public Information Meetings.

### **Phase D – Final Plan**

The Final Plan Phase consisted of one presentation to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees and one Joint County Public Hearing.

## **Comprehensive Plan Committee Meetings and Visioning Workshop**

To assist in the development of the Regional Plan, a Comprehensive Plan Committee was formed to hold regular workshops throughout plan preparation and development. The Committee met at key milestones during the planning process, and was charged with reviewing draft materials and providing comments back to the team. Committee members participated in all phases of Plan development for the two-county area.

Comprised of representatives of community and professional organizations, government agencies, and public, the Comprehensive Plan Committee provided vital input throughout development of the Plan. The first Committee meeting, held on November 1, 2007, was attended by approximately 60 people from the two-county area. These participants represented various interest groups, including representatives from EJ and Title VI populations.

The second Comprehensive Plan Committee meeting for Phase A was held on September 23, 2008. This meeting marked the conclusion of the data collection phase and solicited input on the trend scenario and alternate development ideas for land use and transportation as the process began to move into Phase B – Visioning.

A December 3, 2008 event was both the third Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting and a Visioning Workshop. Attendees focused on the revitalization of the downtowns and with a renewed emphasis on transit, all which would be beneficial to EJ and Title VI populations. Based on input received at this workshop, the Plan evolved into comprehensive and long-range transportation plans more focused on a multimodal approach and sustainable future. This was the first move toward adjusting goals and objectives and incorporating selection criteria for project prioritization that would focus on rehabilitating existing infrastructure and look to facilitate multimodal investment and connections.

At the fourth Comprehensive Plan Committee Meeting held on June 9, 2009, the team presented the draft preliminary land use plan and multimodal concept that focused on Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and transit service investment in the two-county area. Emphasized here, was the need for reinvestment in the core areas and the detailed review of development areas for future transportation and development investment.

The 88 organizations serving on the Steering Committee included the following entities:

- Abington Heights School District
- Anthracite Region Center for Independent Living, Ltd. (ARCIL)
- Anthracite Scenic Trails Association
- Area Agency on Aging
- Bear Creek Township
- Bethel AME Church
- Butler Enterprises, Inc.
- Butler Township
- Can-DO, Inc.
- Century 21 Sherlock Holmes
- City of Carbondale
- City of Hazleton
- City of Nanticoke
- City of Pittston
- City of Scranton
- City of Wilkes-Barre
- Countryside Conservancy
- Covington Township
- Crestwood School District
- Dallas Borough
- Diversified Information Technology
- Dunmore Borough
- Earth Conservancy
- Exeter Borough
- Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
- Great Valley Technology Alliance
- Greater Hazleton Area Civic Partnership
- Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Pittston Chamber of Commerce
- Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Business & Industry
- Greco Holdings
- Hanover Township
- Hazle Township
- Hazleton Area School District
- Jenkins Township
- Jermyn Borough
- Jessup Borough
- Joint Urban Studies Coalition
- Kingston Borough
- Ken Pollock Apartments

- Lackawanna College
- Lackawanna County Conservation District
- Lackawanna County Council on Education & Culture
- Lackawanna County Emergency Management Agency
- Lackawanna County Heritage Valley Authority
- Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission
- Lackawanna County Visitors Bureau
- Lackawanna River Corridor Association
- Luzerne Conservation District
- Luzerne County Agricultural Board
- Luzerne County Community College
- Luzerne County Convention & Visitors Bureau
- Luzerne County Historical Society
- Luzerne County Housing Partnership
- Luzerne County Penn State Extension Service
- Luzerne County Planning Commission
- Marywood University
- Mericle Commercial Real Estate
- Mountain Council of Governments
- NEPA Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Nescopeck Township
- Newton Township
- North Branch Land Trust
- North Pocono Council of Governments
- North Pocono School District
- Northeast Counseling Services
- Northeastern Pennsylvania Alliance (NEPA)
- Northeastern Pennsylvania Technology Institute
- PA Society of Professional Engineers - Luzerne County Chapter
- Penn State Cooperative Extension
- Penn State University - Wilkes-Barre
- PennStar Bank
- Plains Township
- PROUD - People Regardless Of Our Disabilities
- Rice Township
- Scranton Chamber of Commerce / SLIBCO
- Scranton School District
- Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association
- Sierra Club
- Taylor Borough
- The Lands at Hillside Farms
- The Nature Conservancy Northeast PA Office
- Spring Brook Township
- University of Scranton
- Valley View School District
- Wilkes University
- Wilkes-Barre Chapter NAACP
- Wright Township

In addition to the organizations listed above, the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), the Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) were invited to all Comprehensive Plan Committee meetings (**Table 5.1.1**).

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Meeting No. 1</b>	November 1, 2007	6 to 9 p.m.	Tribeca Center (Quality Inn & Suites), Pittston, PA
<b>Meeting No. 2</b>	September 23, 2008	6 to 9 p.m.	Tribeca Center (Quality Inn & Suites), Pittston, PA
<b>Meeting No. 3</b>	December 3, 2008	6 to 9 p.m.	Tribeca Center (Quality Inn & Suites), Pittston, PA
<b>Meeting No. 4</b>	June 9, 2009	6 to 9 p.m.	Tribeca Center (Quality Inn & Suites), Pittston, PA

## Stakeholder Focus Groups

After an initial review of relevant reports and other materials, Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties facilitated a series of focus group sessions with local stakeholders comprised of residents, business owners, and local officials for in-depth discussions of relevant issues, perceptions, and conditions in the region. These stakeholder focus groups occurred during the early part of the planning process as part of the planning team’s examination of existing conditions in the counties. The stakeholder focus groups examined a variety of topics for inclusion in the Plan, such as traffic, historic preservation, land development, open space, and conservation issues.

Stakeholder focus group sessions were held in January 2008 at the Scranton Cultural Center and at the Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency Building (**Table 5.1.2**). Focus group categories included Transportation, Utilities, Land Development & Housing, Historic Preservation, Economic Revitalization, and Natural Resource Protection & Open Space Conservation.

During the focus group discussions, planning team members presented the planning process underway and asked participants to offer comment on existing conditions in the two-county area, including opportunities for improvement and community-defined goals and objectives. Focus group discussions also included an overview of the next steps in the planning process, including how information gathered during the focus group discussions will be integrated into the Plan.

Focus group participants included representatives from the following organizations and agencies:

- AAA NorthPenn
- Abington Heights School District
- Agriculture in West Abington
- Alliance Landfill / Waste Management
- Architectural Heritage Association
- Butler Enterprises Inc.
- City of Carbondale
- City of Hazleton
- Civic Partnership
- Commission on Economic Opportunity
- Countryside Conservancy
- County of Lackawanna Transit System (COLTS)
- Department of Community and Economic Development
- Department of Conservation and Natural Resources - NE Regional Office
- Department of Environmental Protection
- Earth Conservancy
- Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- Friends of the Nescopeck Watershed
- Greater Hazleton Chamber of Commerce
- Hazleton Public Transportation
- Hinerfield Realty
- Joint Urban Studies Coalition
- Keystone College
- Lackawanna County Conservation District
- Lackawanna County Regional Planning Commission
- Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority (LHVA)
- Lackawanna River Basin Sewer Authority
- Lackawanna River Corridor Association
- Lackawanna State Park
- Luzerne Conservation District
- Luzerne County Agricultural Preservation Board
- Luzerne County Flood Mitigation
- Luzerne County Historical Society
- Luzerne County of Pheasants Forever
- Luzerne County Planning Commission
- Luzerne County Rail Authority
- Luzerne County Recreation Department
- Luzerne County Redevelopment Authority
- Luzerne County Transportation Department
- Meals on Wheels
- Mericle Development Corp.
- NE Chapter of the PA Society of Land Surveyors
- NEPA Alliance
- Nescopeck Township
- Normandy Holdings
- North Branch Land Trust
- North Pocono C.A.R.E.
- PA DCNR Bureau of Forestry
- PA Dept of Environmental Resources Bureau of Abandoned Mine Reclamation
- PA Northeast Railroad Authority
- Penn State Cooperative Extension - Luzerne County
- PennDOT District 4-0
- Pennsylvania Environmental Council
- Plains Township
- Rice Township
- Sanofi Pasteur
- Scranton Area Foundation
- Scranton Chamber of Commerce
- Scranton Historical Architectural Review Board (HARB)
- Scranton Sewer Authority
- Scranton Tomorrow
- Scranton-Abingtons Planning Association
- Senator Bob Mellow
- Shalom Community Development Corporation
- Sierra Club

- South Valley Partnership
- State Rep. Chris Carney
- Taylor Borough
- The Lands at Hillside Farms
- The Nature Conservancy
- UGI Electric
- United Methodist Church – Scranton
- United Neighborhood Centers of NEPA
- Valley View School District
- Waverly Historic District
- West Pittston Historical Society
- Wilkes University
- Wyoming Valley Sewer Authority

**Table 5.1.2**  
**Stakeholder Focus Group Sessions**

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Session 1 –</b> Transportation	January 15, 2008	9 a.m. to 11 a.m.	Scranton Cultural Center 420 N Washington Ave Scranton, PA 18503
<b>Session 2 – Land</b> Development & Housing	January 15, 2008	11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	Scranton Cultural Center 420 N Washington Ave Scranton, PA 18503
<b>Session 3 –</b> Economic Revitalization	January 15, 2008	2 p.m. to 4 p.m.	Scranton Cultural Center 420 N Washington Ave Scranton, PA 18503
<b>Session 4 – Utilities</b>	January 16, 2008	9 a.m. to 11 a.m.	Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency Building 185 Water Street Wilkes-Barre, PA
<b>Session 5 – Historic</b> Preservation	January 16, 2008	11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency Building 185 Water Street Wilkes-Barre, PA
<b>Session 6 – Natural</b> Resources & Open Space Conservation	January 16, 2008	2 p.m. to 4 p.m.	Luzerne County Emergency Management Agency Building 185 Water Street Wilkes-Barre, PA

## **MPO Outreach Goals & Objectives**

Officials from the Lackawanna-Luzerne Metropolitan Planning Organization developed a comprehensive and all-inclusive public outreach program for the Regional Plan that adheres to the goals and objectives outlined in its adopted Public Participation Plan (July 2004, as amended May 2005 and October 2007), as follows:

### **Goals:**

- To involve all segments of the public in the transportation planning process, in particular minority and low-income citizens according to the regulations included in the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Title VI and Executive Order 12898 regarding Environmental Justice (EJ) procedures;
- To make the transportation planning process easily-accessible and understandable to all segments of the population.

### **Objectives:**

- Conduct outreach to the general public and minority/low income segments of the population and related advocate groups through the local media, correspondence with municipalities and personal contact regarding the transportation planning process;
- Broaden the locations where transportation planning documents are placed for public comment, including the new MPO web page, and investigate the possibility of having those documents available in languages other than English should the need arise.

As part of any development or update to a Long-Range Transportation Plan, all Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) are required to provide opportunities for public participation and comment prior to adoption. For Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties, a comprehensive public outreach approach was designed to consider public opinions and input for both component elements of the Regional Plan.

## **MPO Coordinating and Technical Committees Meetings**

Two presentations were made to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees during Phase A. The first presentation on December 11, 2007, included a thorough discussion on the background of the Long-Range Transportation Plan, the determination of the steps to be taken throughout the four phase work plan, and the Metropolitan Planning Organization's role in the project development.

The second meeting and presentation to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees was held on May 5, 2008. At this time, participants reviewed existing conditions documents, assessed vital information gathered to date and examined the project schedule.

A third presentation was made to the MPO's Coordinating and Technical Committees on March 31, 2009. Attendees reviewed additional assessment information, including all layers in the GIS of existing conditions data as well as developments consistent with the Trend Scenario and those consistent with a focus on a more multimodal future. In addition, the presentation included a detailed review of the EJ and Title 6 mapping, including the identification of in poverty and minority populations as they related to the existing TIP projects, a detailed discussion on why the EJ and Title 6 concerns were important to the transportation planning process, and a review of the initial draft project ranking criteria.

## **Transportation Project Ranking Meetings**

Transportation project ranking meetings, held on August 20 and 24, 2009, were staffed by both counties and PennDOT District 4-0. These meetings included discussions of the project ranking criteria to be used for all projects on the current TIP and Long-Range Transportation Plan and incorporation of EJ-Title VI themes within those criteria. Evolving from these meetings was the final project ranking criteria, which were further discussed with a focus group of individuals from within traditionally underserved populations.

## **Public Information Meetings**

The first public information meeting was held at the culmination of Phase A – Identifying Opportunities. The meeting provided attendees an overview of data collection activities to date, including a summary of all local and regional assets, constraints, and opportunities. It also addressed the potential for the future of these communities if local land use and transportation policies remain unchanged.

Using the assets, constraints, and opportunities information to begin dialogue with local residents, planning team members worked with meeting attendees to begin identifying alternative themes that would be more in line with a desired vision of the future. The goal of this meeting was to ensure the planning team had developed an accurate picture of existing conditions and demonstrated an understanding of a publicly-held positive future for the two counties. The feedback gathered at this first meeting helped guide the alternatives development and analysis conducted in Phase B.

The second public information meeting was held during the exploration of alternatives, as the framework for the future evolution of the two-county area was being developed. The meeting included a review of information previously presented to the Comprehensive Plan Committee on June 9, 2009. A video presentation, which summarized EJ/Title VI concerns and identification of the populations, was featured. Participants also viewed mapping that illustrated the location of the populations.

This second meeting unveiled preliminary goals, objectives, and potential actions for the Lackawanna-Luzerne Regional Plan. The meeting also demonstrated how the planning team had drawn on the existing conditions analysis, opportunities, and community-defined goals and objectives to develop a range of alternatives that would ultimately be used for a draft framework of the primary land use, transportation, and conservation components of the Plan.

Public feedback during this second public information meeting informed the accuracy, prioritization, and effectiveness of these preliminary recommendations and actions.

Finally, the syntheses of these efforts were brought together during the third public information meeting. At this meeting, planning team members reviewed the draft component comprehensive and long-range transportation plans. Team members solicited feedback from attendees to ensure the emerging Regional Plan accurately represented the vision, goals, objectives, and actions desired by citizens in the two counties. The planning team revised the Draft Plan according to the feedback received at the third public information meeting and prepared a Final Draft for the Public Hearing. **Table 5.1.3** provides a listing of the public meetings.

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Location</b>
<b>Meeting 1</b>	October 14, 2008	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Luzerne County Community College Education Conference Center – Room 132 1333 South Prospect Street Nanticoke, PA 18634
	October 15, 2008	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Hazleton Area High School 1601 West 23rd Street Hazleton, PA 18202
	October 16, 2008	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Lackawanna County EMA 30 Valley View Business Park Jessup, PA 18434
<b>Meeting 2</b>	June 16, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Luzerne County Community College Education Conference Center – Room 132 1333 South Prospect Street Nanticoke, PA 18634
	June 17, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Hazleton Area School District Administration Building (Across from Hazleton Area High School) 1515 West 23rd Street Hazleton, PA 18202
	June 18, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	University of Scranton Brennan Hall – Pearn Auditorium 320 Madison Avenue Scranton, PA 18510
<b>Meeting 3</b>	December 1, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Hazleton Area School District Administration Building (Across from Hazleton Area High School) 1515 West 23rd Street Hazleton, PA 18202
	December 2, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	University of Scranton Brennan Hall – Pearn Auditorium 320 Madison Avenue Scranton, PA 18510
	December 3, 2009	6 p.m. to 9 p.m.	Luzerne County Community College Education Conference Center – Room 132 1333 South Prospect Street Nanticoke, PA 18634

## **Special Purpose Meeting**

As a complement to the larger outreach effort, Lackawanna and Luzerne County officials held an Environmental Justice/ Title VI Special Purpose Meeting for organizations representing underserved and potentially vulnerable populations, such as the elderly, low-income and minorities. The purpose of the meeting was to provide local EJ/ Title VI organizations an opportunity to offer guidance and input regarding local and regional transportation deficiencies for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. These deficiencies would include access to jobs and housing, as well as suggested improvements to various transportation modes (busing, pedestrian access, auto, etc.).

Over 40 organizations were invited to participate in this meeting by phone, letter, and e-mail, including those that represent Indian, African-American, and Hispanic/Latino populations, English as a Second Language, Low Income, and Multi-Cultural groups, and Senior/Disabled populations. Participants were asked to provide comments and input on a range of topics, including access to jobs and housing, the availability of local and regional services, and economic development. Attendees included representatives of the following organizations and agencies:

- AARP
- City of Carbondale Office of Community Development
- Commission on Economic Opportunity
- Community Counseling Services
- Lackawanna County Housing Authority
- Lackawanna County Planning Commission
- Luzerne County Planning Commission
- PA CareerLink
- PennDOT District 4
- United Way of Greater Hazleton
- Vision, Inc.

## **Public Hearing**

Upon completion of the Final Draft Plan, the governing bodies of Lackawanna and Luzerne Counties held a Joint Public Hearing accepting public comments on the Regional Plan.