



**TITLE VI AND ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE PROJECT**

**FINAL REPORT**

**XIMENES & ASSOCIATES, INC.  
NOVEMBER 2002**

## FINAL REPORT TITLE PAGE

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<b>Abstract</b>			
<p>The purpose of this technical report is to summarize the activities of the Title VI and Environmental Justice Project. The project began in January 2001 and was extended to September 2002 in the hope that the strategies identified for outreach to historically underserved (low income and minority) populations could be applied in the 2002 TIP process. The strategies were identified through a series of dialogue sessions with representatives of the low-income and minority population in Bexar County, social service agencies, transportation planning agencies and the consultants who work with them. These strategies were combined to create the Community-based Transportation Planning Model that was to be a pilot project in the southern sector of Bexar County during the 2002 TIP process.</p> <p>Since there was no TIP process during 2002, and it was not clear when there would be one, the Study Oversight Committee agreed that the CD-ROM Guidance Manual would be produced and disseminated with the disclaimer that the strategies had not been applied per se. It was also agreed that the strategies would be applied in those situations where it was possible to do so. The video that was produced was created so that the correct information could be included in it at the time of airing. It is also included on the CD-ROM.</p>			
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# **Title VI and Environmental Justice Project**

## **Project Description**

The Title VI and Environmental Justice Project was funded through a grant from the Federal Highway Department that was matched by the MPO. The intent of the project was to identify ways to increase the involvement of historically underserved populations in the transportation planning process. In this case, the object was to get them involved specifically in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) since that is a process that involves the full range of transportation agencies – local, state and federal – and is managed by the MPO. It was also a process for which there was considerable data available related to projects funded, locations, and participation.

The project had essentially three major components that were overseen by the Study Oversight Committee (SOC). The committee was comprised of representatives from the Texas Department of Transportation, the City of San Antonio, Bexar County, Alamo Area Council of Governments, Texas Department of Human Services, the Alamo Workforce Development Agency and the MPO. (See the list of SOC members at the end of this report.) The three components were: 1) gathering opinions on reasons for lack of participation through the use of dialogue sessions with representatives of the agencies on the SOC, members of the target population, caseworkers from the welfare-to-work program, and a joint session with all of them; 2) from the data collected in the dialogue sessions, strategies were identified and combined to form the Community-based Transportation Planning Model that was to serve as a pilot project to test the strategies; and 3) the development of a guidance manual in the form of a CD-ROM that would be distributed to agencies and individuals seeking to improve participation by the historically underserved in the transportation planning process. Later in the project, additional funds were identified that were used to produce public service announcements in both English and Spanish.

## **Phase I- Gathering the Data**

The Study Oversight Committee (SOC) agreed that for purposes of this project, the population that would be identified as “traditionally underserved” would be low-income or minority or both. This would also fit with the perceived intended population indicated by the grantor. The MPO, using data from the US Census Bureau, developed a series of maps showing where the low income and minority populations were concentrated and where the TIP projects were that had been funded since 1993. Using this information, the study team identified individuals and organizations from those areas and invited them to participate in the dialogue sessions.

Initially, three dialogue sessions were planned; first with community representatives; next with transportation agencies, consultants and social service agencies that work with low income and minority populations; and third, a joint session bringing the groups together. Once the process began, two additional sessions were conducted: one with community leaders and another with caseworkers from the welfare-to-work program. Participants in both of these sessions were invited to participate in the joint session.

The dialogue sessions were an opportunity to explore the opinions and thoughts of the different constituency groups using a slightly different approach. The sessions were set up so that everyone was at the same level of expertise — they were asked to come together as colleagues, speak their minds, and explore their assumptions, beliefs and opinions without defending them or having to come to agreement about them.

The session facilitator prepared a series of questions and the responses were recorded on audiotape as well as on chart paper for all to see. These responses were then transcribed and prepared as a report to the SOC.

From the first group of dialogue sessions, mental models or assumptions were inferred from the opinions and comments of the participants. Mental models are those beliefs or opinions that are held, often unconsciously, that guide a person's behavior. Hence, the assumption or mental model that says that "they don't care" would lead one to think it was not important to attend transportation planning meetings if one were a community member, or if one were a member of a transportation agency or one of its consultants, you might not make much of an effort to get people involved, since they don't really care enough to come to a meeting anyway.

Some of the mental models identified "cut both ways," in other words, they were the same assumption, but operated in a different fashion depending on whether one was a member of the community or part of the transportation planning effort. The example above shows this type of assumption.

The final dialogue session was held with agency staff, consultants, and community members jointly. At this session the list of assumptions identified by the study team were explored by the participants. They also commented on the Community-based Transportation Planning Model that was designed from the comments and opinions stated at the dialogue sessions.

## **Phase II: The Community-based Transportation Planning Model: A Pilot Project**

The Community-based Transportation Model was developed based on the information gathered from the dialogue sessions and refined during several meetings of the SOC. Evaluation measures were included as part of the model,

and it was agreed that it would be tested as a pilot project in low-income and minority communities identified by census tracts in southern Bexar County.

The pilot program was intended to serve a reduced area of Bexar County and the City of San Antonio as well as some suburban cities. The proposed area was bounded on the north by Commerce Street – and an imaginary extension of it – and on the south, east and west by Loop 1604. This area encompasses the majority of the census tracts identified in the 1990 Census as having fifty percent (50%) or more of their residents at or below the poverty level, or 50% or more more minority population. It would also allow for involvement by urban and rural residents as well as those in incorporated cities and unincorporated areas. Residents in this area have typically not participated significantly in the TIP process in previous years.

The goals for the pilot project were to:

1. provide education to low income/minority populations in under-served areas about the transportation planning process, and
2. increase the involvement of low income/minority populations in under-served areas in that process.

The elements of the pilot project that were to be implemented in the first stages of the TIP process are:

1. Placement of a bilingual person for half-day (four hours) segments in the lobbies of offices of the Texas Workforce Development Centers and/or the Texas Department of Human Services to solicit proposed projects for consideration in the TIP process. Assistance in completing the application for a TIP project would be given to those interested in proposing a project. A process similar to that used at the TIP community meetings would be adapted for this purpose.

These agencies were selected because the MPO already has a relationship with them and they have representatives on the Study Oversight Committee (SOC). They have indicated by their participation in the project to date that they interested in finding way to increase participation by the target population in the transportation planning process.

It was suggested that at least four sites be chosen for implementation of this strategy. More sites should be included if there is sufficient personnel to handle the additional sites. Additional personnel may be recruited by asking the members of the SOC to volunteer or to volunteer members of their staffs. [The City of San Antonio's Department of Community Initiatives volunteered to provide personnel to staff this effort.]

2. Unfunded projects from the last TIP cycle will be identified and a survey instrument developed that would allow members of the target audience to

indicate how important they think a particular project is. Based on the response, projects achieving a certain ranking would be automatically resubmitted for consideration in the current TIP process.

The reason(s) the projects were not funded would be included in the information about the project. This information would be given to those being surveyed before they complete the survey form.

These surveys would be conducted at public housing project offices, on VIA buses, and at least one rural location where people from the community gather.

3. The community leaders who attended the dialogue sessions volunteered to host meetings of their groups. These meetings would include an explanation of the TIP process using “before and after” photos to show places where it has worked, a review of the un-funded projects, feedback on the projects, and suggestions about which projects should be re-considered. They would also have the opportunity to propose additional projects for inclusion in the current TIP process and be shown how to track a project. Twelve community members attended the dialogue sessions. At least half of them, or six organizations, should be asked to host a meeting. The meetings should be selected in order to get participation from different locations across the pilot project area.
4. The SOC should identify criteria and select a community to work to develop a comprehensive transportation plan coordinated with their community development and/or neighborhood plan. An intern would be assigned to work with the community in the development of their plan. [Interns were to be selected from members of the community itself.]

Other alternatives would be to see what transportation projects were already included in community/neighborhood plans and the intern would work with the community to help get them funded.

5. Outreach strategies that should be used to increase low income/minority participation in the TIP meetings include the following:
  - a. Messages to the electronic and print media should be framed to address some of the concerns expressed at the Dialogue sessions, i.e., that their participation does not matter, that what happens will not affect them, that everything is already decided, and that nobody will listen to what they have to say.
  - b. Flyers should be developed that can be distributed at churches across the pilot project area. At least ten churches should be

identified and requested to distribute the flyers. They should be churches located in the general vicinity of the TIP meetings.

- c. Flyers should also be distributed on the VIA buses, public housing offices, Metropolitan Health Department offices and community centers in the target area.
- d. Conduct training for personnel of the agencies involved on “talking to the public.” This training would address the issues identified in the dialogue sessions by both the community and the agencies.
- e. Materials to be used in the TIP meetings should be reviewed to reduce jargon and add simplicity.
- f. Evaluation measures will be developed to give guidance in what works and why and to show what could/should be modified for more effectiveness in meeting the goals.

Over the longer term, progress report meetings should be held with those groups that were met with earlier in the year (#3 above). The status of the projects they proposed should be reported and strategies for promoting their projects should be discussed.

This pilot project embodies many of the elements and strategies identified in the dialogue sessions as well as others stimulated by suggestions at the sessions. We believe the pilot includes enough strategies to be able to meet the goals of the Title VI and Environmental Justice Project, to test how well these strategies work, and to give feedback that will allow for modification of the strategies to improve their effectiveness.

## Evaluation Strategies

The next several pages contain the evaluation strategies for the pilot project agreed upon by the Study Oversight Committee.

OBJECTIVES	STRATEGIES	EVALUATION MEASURES
<p>1. <i>Receive an increased percentage of projects proposed from low income/minority populations in under-served areas.</i></p>	<p>1. Inform clients waiting at social service agencies about the transportation planning process and invite them to submit proposals. To be performed by staff provided by Dept. of Community Initiatives of COSA.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased percentage of projects proposed from the target area and for overall Bexar County</li> <li>• Increase in the number of proposed projects in the target area and overall<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• Create a map that would show the distribution of the projects.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>
	<p>2. Set up six (6) meetings with the organizations of those community leaders who attended the Community Dialogues so that the MPO and its member agencies can provide information for those in attendance and solicit project proposals from them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased percentage of projects proposed from the target area.</li> <li>• Compare with the number of projects at the regular TIP meetings.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> The number of projects proposed from the target area would give us a baseline from which to compare in the future.

<sup>2</sup> This is not an evaluation measure but a means of showing the distribution of the projects. It should be used with various other objectives of the pilot project.

	<p>3. Identify a community where the City of San Antonio is getting ready to do Neighborhood Sweeps and coordinate with them to include education about the transportation planning process and invite those attending to submit proposals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased percentage of projects proposed from the target area.</li> </ul>
	<p>4. Identify neighborhood plans that incorporate transportation projects and encourage the submission of projects by the neighborhood association(s) involved.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of projects proposed</li> </ul>
	<p>5. Use outreach strategies proposed in the Dialogue Sessions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in the number of people from low income/minority underserved communities attending the TIP sessions.</li> <li>• Increased percentage of projects proposed from the target area.</li> </ul>
	<p>6. Create a list of 10-12 feasible projects from the target area that were previously un-funded and survey people in the target area to see if there is interest in the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whether or not any projects received sufficient support to re-submit.</li> <li>• Increased percentage of projects proposed from the target area.</li> </ul>

<p>2. <i>Provide residents of low income/minority underserved areas with information about the transportation planning process.</i></p>	<p>1. Identify a community where the City of San Antonio is getting ready to do Neighborhood Sweeps and coordinate with them to include education about the transportation planning process and invite those attending to propose projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in attendance who are not on the MPO meeting attendance database.</li> </ul>
	<p>2. Set up six (6) meetings with the organizations of those community leaders who attended the Community Dialogues so that the MPO and its member agencies can provide information for those in attendance and solicit project proposals from them.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of people in attendance who are not on the MPO meeting attendance database.</li> </ul>
<p>3. <i>Increase the number of low income/minority residents in under-served areas who participate throughout the process.</i></p>	<p>1. Identify people who the community already sees as leaders and recruit them to serve as liaisons to the community in relation to the transportation planning process. These people could be identified through the Neighborhood Sweeps and/or the community leader meetings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep records of those who are contacted by the liaisons.</li> <li>• Keep record of those who attend meetings with the liaison.</li> </ul>

<p><i>Increase the number of low income/minority residents in underserved areas who participate throughout the process. (cont.)</i></p>	<p>2. Implement the outreach strategies suggested at the Dialogue Sessions for the traditional TIP process and the pilot program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track those people who come to the initial meetings and the follow-up meetings.</li> </ul>
	<p>3. Conduct two (2) follow-up meetings (after the City Council “B” session) with the six community leaders to inform people of the status of their projects. Invite all who submitted proposals to attend.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop baseline data by tracking those people who come to the initial meetings, the follow-up meetings and to City Hall or Commissioners Court. Compare attendance to the initial meetings.</li> <li>Record calls to the member agencies and the MPO regarding proposed projects.</li> </ul>
<p>4. <i>Increase the number of organizations representing low income/minority populations or from low income/minority areas with which the MPO works closely.</i></p>	<p>1. Set up meetings with the organizations of those community leaders who attended the Community Dialogues.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in the number of organizations</li> </ul>

<p>5. <i>Create a pool of people in low income/minority communities in under-served areas that can serve as liaisons on issues related to transportation between their communities and the MPO and its member agencies.</i></p>	<p>1. Using the community leaders and the Neighborhood Sweeps, identify people whom the community sees as leaders and recruit them to serve as liaisons to the community in relation to the transportation planning process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of a pool of people who are working as transportation planning liaisons to the low income/minority communities in the underserved areas of our target area.</li> <li>• Log contacts between the liaisons and community members.</li> </ul>
<p>6. <i>Provide information that uses a lay person's terms and is understandable.</i></p>	<p>1. Conduct training for personnel to assist them in “talking to the public.”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training conducted</li> <li>• Reported ease in talking to the public.</li> <li>• Reported ease in interacting with officials.</li> </ul>
	<p>2. Review and revise written and display materials to reduce jargon and complexity.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reported ease of understanding of the materials</li> </ul>

## **Factors That Prohibited the Implementation of the Pilot Project**

The original intent of the pilot project was to test the strategies proposed during the 2001-2002 TIP process. Although many of the elements to implement the pilot project were in place, it was not possible to do so because the TIP process did not occur as expected when the grant was originally received. Due to funding constraints, the call for new TIP projects had to be postponed beyond the time limit of this study.

The Study Oversight Committee (SOC) did not want to test the strategies and have community members propose projects that had no chance of being funded within the normal funding cycle, so they decided to close this study without obtaining the before and after statistical data from the TIP process. However, the MPO plans to employ these new outreach strategies in appropriate planning studies and the pending Metropolitan Transportation Plan update.

## **Next Steps**

The Guidance Manual CD-ROM was produced and will be distributed as planned to public agencies and organizations, and individuals requesting it. Although the strategies in the Guidance Manual were not tested as a constellation of activities to attract low-income and minority populations to transportation planning meetings, the SOC agreed that it would be useful to apply the strategies wherever feasible in the various transportation planning processes that the different member agencies conduct.

Several of the strategies were successfully used in preparation for the public meetings for two MPO projects: the East Corridor Transportation Study (Arena Area/Eastside Community Plan) and the Brooks Area Infrastructure Needs Assessment. Over 100 people attended the East Corridor meeting and over 60 people attended the Brooks area meeting.

Since the different SOC members meet on a regular basis for other projects, there will be opportunities to share anecdotal information about the relative success of the different strategies used.

The video PSA was produced in 60-second, 30-second and 15-second formats. It was produced so that the date and times of the meetings to which it is inviting the public can be included at the time of the announcement. It will be included on the CD-ROM for distribution as an example of a PSA.