



NASHVILLE AREA

Metropolitan Planning Organization

MEDIA RELEASE

Ikard Joins Nashville MPO, Leads Public Involvement Around Regional Transportation Planning

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Nashville Area Metropolitan Planning Organization recently named Mary Beth Ikard, APR, as its communications director. Ikard will lead the MPO’s efforts to increase and maintain public involvement around a major update to the Regional Transportation Plan for greater Nashville.

“I’m confident that Mary Beth will be able to assist the Nashville Area MPO with the development of our regional transportation plans and programs by increasing public and stakeholder involvement, so that we can include as many people as possible in the planning process,” said Michael Skipper, executive director. “It’s important that citizens understand that now is a critical time to share their thoughts on how our region should grow in the years to come – so that Middle Tennessee might continue to prosper, but also encourage sustainable development practices that protect and preserve our most valuable community and natural assets.”

After earning her BA in journalism and English from Indiana University—Bloomington in 2001, Ikard gained experience in media relations and public policy when she served as assistant to the press office for the late Indiana Gov. Frank O’Bannon. She then moved to the public information office of the Family and Social Services Administration —Indiana’s umbrella human services agency with 157 programs and \$6 billion annual budget, serving one of every six Hoosiers— followed by a stint at Indiana’s longest active advertising agency, MZD, where she handled grassroots media relations strategy for the state’s tobacco prevention and cessation campaign.

In 2005, she relocated to her hometown of Nashville to work for KVBPR —one of the southeast’s leading public relations firms— on various health care accounts including BlueCross BlueShield of Tennessee. Just prior to joining the MPO, she was the communications director for the non-partisan, not-for-profit Governor’s Books from Birth Foundation®, overseeing public relations efforts for Dolly Parton’s Imagination Library on a statewide basis.

Ikard currently serves on the Boards of Directors for the League of Women Voters—Nashville and the Nashville Adult Literacy Council, and co-chairs the Generation Conservation (Gen-C) steering committee for the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy. She is a 1997 *Magna Cum Laude* alumna of Hume-Fogg Academic Magnet High School, downtown Nashville.

About the Nashville Area MPO:

Established through federal legislation, MPOs exist throughout the United States in all urbanized areas of more than 50,000 people and have the authority to plan, prioritize, and select transportation projects in urban / metropolitan areas for federal funding and to coordinate any major transportation initiative that has significance to the region. The Nashville Area MPO is the federally-designated transportation planning agency for over 2800 square miles and more than 1.5 million people throughout Davidson, Rutherford, Sumner, Williamson, Wilson and parts of Maury and Robertson counties.

Serving as a regional partnership among the U.S. DOT, Tennessee DOT, local elected leadership, local planning and public works directors, the business community, and citizens across the five-plus county planning area, the MPO leads in the development of the region’s long-range transportation plan and short-range Transportation Improvement Program, and contributes to ongoing conversations about issues such as land use, economic development, climate change and the environment, safety and security, and health. To learn more, visit NashvilleMPO.org.