

## Chapter 4: Measuring Participation Opportunities

Public input is a critical component of the success of the MPO's efforts, and the agency consistently evaluates its participation opportunities for convenience and accessibility to the public. A participation opportunity is a situation where a citizen can provide public input, either directly to staff or in a format such as a written or emailed comment that staff receives and responds to. Citizens can participate at a regularly-scheduled forum or community meeting, project workshops, events at which the MPO attends, online, or over the phone. During the 2016-2017 evaluation period, the MPO developed new opportunities and venues for the public to participate.



### Participation at MPO Public Forums, Workshops and Community Meetings

As in years past, actively pursuing public outreach to obtain citizens' feedback is a major priority for the MPO. The MPO is committed to providing multiple avenues for citizens to interact with the agency, in person, in ways that are convenient and sensitive to their available time.

The main paths to participation include attending a regularly-scheduled MPO or committee meeting, applying to become a member of an MPO committee, attending a public workshop on a specific topic sponsored by the MPO, and interacting with the MPO at fairs and exhibitions. In addition, from 2016 to 2017, the MPO expanded online opportunities for citizens to become aware, comment, and share information about transportation topics of interest.



All MPO board and advisory committee meetings from 2016 to 2017 were publicly noticed, open to the public, and provided opportunity for public comment. Public hearings were held during public meetings of the MPO Board and counted as one meeting during this cycle. Compared to the previous 2014-2015 reporting period, there was a 12% increase in attendance and 92% increase in public speakers at committee and MPO meetings in 2016-2017, due primarily to the continued interest in the TBX and Tampa Bay NEXT projects. **Table 11** contains summary information of the committee meetings held in 2016 and 2017.

**Table 11: MPO committee meetings held during 2016 and 2017**

Board/Committee	2016			2017		
	Meetings	Attendees	Public Speakers	Meetings	Attendees	Public Speakers
<b>MPO Board</b>	11	853	218	11	469	118
<b>Citizens Advisory Committee</b>	11	289	30	10	256	7
<b>Technical Advisory Committee</b>	10	191	3	10	171	1
<b>Policy Committee</b>	11	206	9	10	231	0
<b>Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee</b>	11	238	11	9	210	5
<b>Livable Roadways Committee</b>	10	283	6	11	301	3
<b>Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board</b>	6	130	6	6	109	2
<b>Intelligent Transportation Committee</b>	4	65	0	4	74	0
<b>School Transportation Working Group</b>	8	161	0	11	225	5
<b>Joint TAC/CAC Meeting</b>	1	22	0	1	21	0
<b>Joint LRC/BPAC Meeting</b>	1	42	1	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Tampa Bay TMA Leadership Group</b>	5	236	5	5	268	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>2,716</b>	<b>289</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>2,335</b>	<b>151</b>

**Public Outreach Events at which displays, presentations, discussions and feedback occurred**

Beyond regularly-scheduled meetings, the MPO hosted or participated in 225 external public meetings or events in 2016 and 2017. This represents an increase of 34% from the previous period. Although the number of attendees at these events was not always available, at least 24,800 attendees were present at events that the MPO participated in. The MPO also began tracking the number of event participants that staff members interacted with in 2017. In that year, the MPO interacted with 2,593 attendees, or approximately 25% of those who attended events in which the MPO was present. In 2016 and 2017, the events with the highest number of attendees included:



## Highest-Attended Events in 2016

1. Back to School Health Fair [August 6] (5,000 attendees)
2. Trick or Treat on the Riverwalk [October 29] (5,000 attendees)
3. Family Abilities Information Rallies [October 1] (1,000 attendees)
4. 2016 Neighborhood Conference [July 23] (500 attendees)
5. Clean Air Fair [May 5] (300 attendees)

## Highest-Attended Events in 2017

1. School Choice Expo [November 3] (3,500 attendees)
2. Bloomingdale Fall Festival [October 28] (1,000 attendees)
3. All People's Community Center Fair [October 7] (800 attendees)
4. 2017 Neighborhoods Conference [July 15] (300 attendees)
5. Innovations in Regional Transportation Summit [February 16] (200 attendees)

The complete list of events that MPO sponsored or participated in are located in [Appendices 2](#) (2016) and [3](#) (2017).

## Attendance at events in Environmental Justice (EJ) areas

Of the 225 meetings that the MPO hosted or participated in, at least 53 (23.6%) were held in EJ areas. EJ areas in Hillsborough County are census tracts one standard deviation above the county's median in concentration of one or more of the following characteristics: low income, race, and ethnicity (Hispanic and Latino). Attendance at events held in EJ areas accounted for 34.7% (8,630 attendees) of attendance at events sponsored by or attended by the MPO during this period.

## MPO Board and Committee Meeting Participation

### Number and origin of participants

A total of 5,051 participants attended MPO Board and committee meetings in the 2016-2017 cycle.

Due to logistical constraints, a recommendation from the previous MOE to track the origin of public participants at MPO Board and committee meetings was not implemented in this period.



## Public Turnout for the Transportation Improvement Program Annual Hearings (2016-2017)

The 2016 TIP public hearing attracted 395 attendees and 185 speakers, donors or commenters<sup>2</sup>, the highest numbers of any MPO public hearing in recent history, due primarily to continued intense interest in the Tampa Bay Express Lanes (TBX) Project. Attendance from the public was complemented by 139 posts on the 2016 MPO TIP Public Hearing Facebook event, nine phone calls, and 281 emails, although 159 of



<sup>2</sup> Donors provided their time to allow a speaker to speak for longer. Commenters made written comments.

those emails (57%) were templated responses. The GoToMeeting virtual event also attracted over 70 comments on its live stream chat over the course of the event.

The 2017 TIP hearing attracted 147 attendees and 105 speakers, donors or commenters. There were 22 comments left on the 2017 MPO TIP Public Hearing Facebook event, 3 phone calls, and 33 emails. The GoToMeeting virtual event attracted 62 comments on the live stream chat over the course of the hearing.

### **Number of persons on the MPO mailing list receiving regular agendas**

The number of individuals on the MPO mailing list who received regular agendas increased during the 2016-2017 cycle, largely due to growth in interest. In October 2017, the last month of the cycle in which all committee meetings were held, approximately 1,938 individuals received an agenda mailed through Constant Contact. This is a 33.8% increase from January 2016 (April 2016 for the School Transportation Working Group).

### **Surveys, Draft Documents and Plans Available for Public Comment**

From 2016-2017 the MPO hosted nine surveys seeking comments from the public and its committees. These surveys included:

- **Human Services Transportation Needs** survey, to assist in identifying transportation service gaps for transportation disadvantaged populations within Hillsborough County (31 respondents).
- **Annual CTC Evaluation** surveys, to assess the reliability, service effectiveness, service efficiency, service availability, safety, and user input of Hillsborough County's Community Transportation Coordinator (860 respondents in 2016 and 958 respondents in 2017).
- **Citizen evaluation** survey, to solicit feedback from the public on the service of MPO staff who assisted with questions or comments (13 respondents).
- **Walkability** survey to assess perceptions of the conduciveness of a route to pedestrian travel and determine perceptions of walkability (150 respondents).
- **MPO Committees Demographic Questionnaire** survey, to assess whether the MPO is meeting representative public involvement on its committees (41 respondents).
- **Brandon Corridors and Mixed-Use Centers** survey, to assess which development patterns citizens believe best accommodate expected growth in populations and jobs (701 respondents).
- **Northwest Hillsborough County Transit Study** survey, a collaboration between HART and the MPO, to collect feedback on transit improvements and respondent demographics (88 respondents).
- **Vision Zero Safety Concerns Map**, an online "Wikimapia" product, which allows members of the public to pinpoint locations of transportation-related safety concerns throughout the county (Over 400 respondents as of December 2017).

The MPO publishes all its reports online at [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org). Prior to MPO Board adoption, these reports and documents are kept in draft status; once adopted, a date of adoption is added. At any time, visitors to a project page are encouraged to contact the project manager through an email link or send general questions to [planner@plancom.org](mailto:planner@plancom.org), which is then distributed to the appropriate staff member for response. Several project pages also contain links to surveys, off-site information pages, and public comment forms. The presence of these additional resources is determined by the needs of the project.



## Increasing Public Participation Efforts with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, and the Transportation Disadvantaged

### Ensuring the MOE report reflects representative public involvement

The Public Participation Plan 2018 Update will be provided to a member of the public to review for readability.

### Developing maps with updated, community-specific demographic and socioeconomic data within the MPO's geographic boundaries

In conjunction with the Center for Urban Transportation Research at USF, MPO staff participated in the development of Communities of Concern maps during the 2016-2017 cycle. Communities of Concern supplements Environmental Justice as an expanded set of disadvantage-linked characteristics to acknowledge those who may face unique and often overwhelming obstacles related to transportation and engagement in MPO participation processes. A Community of Concern is any block group at least one standard deviation above the median in two or more of the following characteristics:

- Minority population
- Elderly population
- Limited English Proficiency population
- Disability
- Zero vehicle households
- Youth
- Income

Maps detailing the distribution of Communities of Concern and Environmental Justice populations are available in the MPO's 2018 Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan.

### Listing all MPO committee members' demographic data

As part of the 2016 Public Participation Plan, MPO staff collected demographic data to determine whether committee demography reflected that of Hillsborough County. The MPO distributed optional surveys to its committee members to determine committee representativeness. This survey yielded 41 responses and was published as an [appendix to the 2016 Public Participation Plan](#).

### Participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities

The MPO continued to ensure that tribe contacts received agenda packets and Transportation Improvement Plan documents in 2016 and 2017. These contacts also receive newsletters and invitations to participate in special surveys and studies. A staff member from the Seminole Tribe of Florida contacted the MPO after receiving the Transportation Improvement Program for 2017/18-2021/22 in July 2017 and requested future updates on these projects as well as consultation on any project requiring Section 106 consultation under the National Historic Preservation Act. The staff member further requested that the Tribal Historic Preservation Office be contacted if any archaeological, historical, or burial resources are inadvertently discovered. The MPO has taken steps to ensure that these requests are fulfilled in a complete and timely manner.