

Chapter 7: Refining the Public Participation Process

Periodic public involvement process surveys and citizen service feedback

In the past, the MPO has conducted periodic public involvement process surveys with its committees. Although the agency did not conduct any surveys of this nature in the 2016-2017 cycle, it continued to solicit general feedback from the public in situations where staff provided assistance in answering questions. MPO staff received 13 citizen evaluations between August 2016 and December 2017, with the majority (85%) rating the MPO's overall quality of service with respect to other agencies and businesses as "excellent".

Federal Certification Review

The Hillsborough MPO participated in its four-year federal certification review in April 2017, which ensures that the county remains eligible for federal funding for transportation improvements. The review, which was conducted by officials at the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and FDOT, positively cited the MPO for several "noteworthy practices":

- Vision Zero plan
- Unique MPO activities in the Unified Planning Work Program
- Outreach and participation opportunities for the underserved
- Performance-based scenario planning in the LRTP
- Performance measures in the congestion management process
- Development of a planning information map for the TIP
- A screening tool for TIP priority projects in the TIP
- Leveraging resources, transportation goals and objectives in TMA regional coordination

The MPO did not receive any corrective actions in this review, but did receive public participation-related recommendations. These recommendations include evaluating the participation process to determine when a public meeting versus public hearing is necessary, adding an interactive planning acronym list to the Public Participation Plan, and updating the Title VI Inclusivity Plan.

The MPO responded to the latter recommendation by beginning to update its Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan in late 2017. It reviewed its PPP and PlanHillsborough.org website to ensure that the differences between public hearings and meetings are expressed correctly, and will clarify those differences more explicitly in the 2018 PPP update. The MPO is currently exploring technological solutions for a searchable glossary of planning terms and acronyms, which the agency will implement in its 2045 LRTP update. The agency also implemented new software to present the 2040 LRTP online document in a "flip book" format, which allows the document to be searched with relevant search terms highlighted for the user.



New and existing regional participation opportunities

Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (TMA)

The TMA Leadership Group is an advisory group comprising three members of the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas MPO boards as voting members, along with non-voting advisors from FDOT and TBARTA. The purpose of the Leadership Group is to develop regional consensus priorities for the TMA, including the allocation of federal and state funds. This group meets once every other month to discuss traffic movements between major cross-county transportation markets to ensure the Tampa Bay metropolitan area speaks with one voice on regional transportation prioritization issues and the use of financial resources. The TMA Leadership Group recommends regional priority projects on a recurring basis. All TMA meetings are open to the public and invite public comment.

TBARTA West Central Florida MPO Chairs' Coordinating Committee



Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority

Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) and the Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee (CCC) continued work to align efforts and prevent duplication in creating a combined regional master plan and regional LRTP. The CCC was created by statute in 1993 to coordinate regionally-significant projects and decisions, and institute a conflict resolution process. The CCC Board includes the Chairs of the area's five MPOs and one TPO, who are voting members, and non-voting members from FDOT Districts 1 and 7, the Florida Turnpike Enterprise, TBARTA, and the Central Florida, Tampa Bay, and Southwest Florida Regional Planning Councils. The CCC meets twice a year and approves current and future regional priority projects on an annual basis. All meetings are open to the public and invite public comment. In 2017, the Hillsborough MPO funded an update of the TBARTA CCC Regional PPP, expected to be completed in 2018.

Regional Big Data Working Group

The Hillsborough MPO began hosting a twice-annual Regional Big Data Working Group (RBDWG) in May 2017. The purpose of the RBDWG is to bring together transportation and ITS professionals to help collaboratively solve the Tampa Bay region's transportation systems management and operations problems as well as tackle general data issues facing the region. The kickoff event in May 2017 attracted 21 attendees and discussed issues of multimodal transportation, spatial data analysis, and data management. The group is overseeing an effort to establish a data portal to compile and make transportation data available to the public.

Follow-up on recommendations from the last Measures of Effectiveness report

The previous MPO Measures of Effectiveness report covered the period of January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2015. Below are the recommendations from that report and their status.

1. **Seek feedback that is immediate and project specific**, by asking questions such as “was this informative and helpful to you?” at the conclusion of every survey or public meeting sponsored by the MPO. This would be in lieu of conducting periodic polls on the effectiveness of public engagement. *(Continued from 2012/2013 and 2014/2015 Measures of Effectiveness Reports.)*



The MPO strives to ask attendees at the end of every meeting whether the information provided was informative and helpful to them. This enables the MPO to refine its message to improve understanding and engagement with participants at subsequent meetings. Additional recommendations for obtaining and analyzing public feedback on specific projects is contained in [Chapter 8: Summary, Results and Recommendations](#).

2. Increase public participation efforts with minorities, low-income individuals, and the transportation disadvantaged.

In late 2017 the MPO was in the final stages of producing an update to its Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan. This update contains an evaluation of recent efforts undertaken to ensure representation and diversity among MPO committees and equity in the planning process. These efforts include county-wide mapping of environmental justice areas and disadvantaged demographics, as well as the recent designation of seats on the Citizens Advisory Committee to represent racial, ethnic, age and gender-based minority groups.

The MPO continued translating key documents into Spanish during the 2016-2017 cycle. These translated documents include the entirety of the 2040 LRTP, the adopted FY 16-17 and FY 17-18 TIP documents, the 2016 Public Participation Plan, and others. As part of the 2045 LRTP update, the MPO will translate key messaging and marketing materials into different dialects of Spanish. Translation will be provided for speakers of other non-English languages as requested.



Between December 2016 and February 2017, the MPO conducted a committee demographic questionnaire to collect information on the representativeness of its committees. This survey yielded 41 responses to questions regarding gender, age, race, disability status, and eligibility for governmental assistance as a proxy indicator for household income. The data culminated in a report assessing the MPO’s board and seven committees on composition of race and age for all eight of the MPO’s committees, and proportion of disabled persons on the Livable Roadways Committee, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board.

The MPO will distribute a draft of the Public Participation Plan 2018 Update to a member of the public to review for inclusivity and readability, in addition to seeking feedback from its committees

and subcommittees. This effort is to ensure that the report is understandable to a range of members of the public.

3. Continue to improve public participation and cooperation with our agency partners through better education about the planning and project implementation processes.

The MPO has strived to work closer with collaborating agencies to promote information about its role in the transportation planning process. Over the last two years the MPO has worked with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to provide the public with information about the LRTP, FDOT's role, and the Tampa Bay NEXT proposal.

As a component of the agency's Tampa Bay NEXT public engagement, FDOT has begun a webinar series called the Citizens Transportation Academy. This six-webinar series contains information on the metropolitan planning process, how transportation projects are funded, and regional transportation roles and responsibilities, among others. The content of these videos is derived from public priorities heard at FDOT's Community Working Groups and public outreach events.



The public notices for the 2016 and 2017 TIP public hearings contained lists of major projects within the TIP that were derived from interest among the public. Furthermore, the MPO has published newsletter articles providing further detail about some of the most significant projects.

In addition, early-stage presentations on the MPO's 2045 LRTP update have provided information about how the LRTP identifies priority projects for funding, how it derives from local comprehensive plans and identifies priorities for the TIP, how it is implemented through the FDOT Five Year Work Program and other capital improvement programs, and how it is coordinated with other regional MPOs. This information is intended to promote the value of this document and participation among members of the public in shaping regional transportation priorities. To kickstart the launch of the 2045 LRTP, a Poll Everywhere phone survey provided to the MPO's committees in late 2017 helped to identify the drivers of change in affecting growth, strategies for accommodating population growth, and information on where to focus transportation resources.

4. Continue to expand use of technology designed to facilitate public participation, such as "virtual" meetings, workshops or hearings, and telephone call-in lines to enable the public to participate remotely from their home or workplace.

During the agency's 2016 and 2017 annual TIP hearings, MPO staff continued utilizing an online GoToMeeting streaming platform that enabled viewers to view the hearing and provide comments in real-time. This effort joined a Facebook page launched prior to the hearing which allowed citizens to provide comments that would be distributed to MPO board members.

In June 2017, MPO staff launched a Facebook Live video stream which provided citizens an additional option to



Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Public Hearing
Hillsborough County · 346 views · 8 months ago
The Official Hillsborough County, Florida Government YouTube channel is powered by Hillsborough Television (HTV), find more of our programming at these outlets: Hillsborough County, Florida cable ...

remotely view and comment on the annual TIP public hearing. Furthermore, the event was streamed on YouTube via the Hillsborough County TV profile. These efforts complemented existing traditional opportunities to provide remote comment, such as a dedicated voicemail line for TIP comments and written, mailed input.

New layperson-friendly technology continued to be introduced in 2016 and 2017 to complement MPO outreach efforts. The public PIMA Mapping Tool, which allows citizens to view information about both mapped and unmapped TIP projects, relaunched in 2016 with usability improvements. The Vision Zero initiative used a citizen-driven safety concerns mapping tool, which allows users to pinpoint locations of missing sidewalks, missing or unsafe bike facilities, unsafe crossings, excessive driving speeds, and general opportunities for improvement. Users can add comments to these designations, providing additional detail for their concerns. As of December 2017, over 400 members of the public have provided safety concern information through this tool.

5. Publicize interactive tools and comment forms available on MPO or project-specific web pages to maximize public feedback.

Both social media and MPO newsletters were utilized to spread information about interactive tools, comment forms, and surveys during 2016 and 2017. Twitter and Facebook were used to promote the Brandon Corridors & Mixed-Use Centers Pilot Project public survey in early 2017, with many related Twitter posts receiving over 1,000 impressions contributing to a total of over 700 completed surveys. Twitter was also utilized to promote Facebook events to collect online comments regarding MPO Board public meetings. The MPO further provided social media support for comment pages on projects produced by partner agencies, such as retweeting FDOT’s 5 Year Work Program and HART’s 2017 “Mission MAX” bus route overhaul. Both the MPO’s newsletters and the later consolidated agency-wide newsletter contained links to provide comments on the Tampa-Hillsborough Greenways and Trails Plan Update, Brandon Corridors & Mixed-Use Centers Pilot Project survey, and other projects.



Vision Zero featured prominently in regional advertising efforts, including a radio PSA produced by Cox Media Group Tampa and student-produced videos on walk-bike safety. Brendan McLaughlin, formerly of ABC Action News, recorded a 45-second radio advertisement that encouraged listeners to visit PlanHillsborough.org to learn more about the initiative. This advertisement complemented media stories on TampaBay.com, 83DegreesMedia.com, and other news websites, as well as Vision Zero workshop coverage aired on local television stations such as Bay News 9 and ABC Action News. This

advertising helped to cause a surge in attendance across Vision Zero's year-long workshop schedule, increasing the number of attendees from 50 at the first event to 80 at the fourth event. These multi-channel outreach efforts contributed to an increase in the number of community pledges, individuals interacting with the safety concern map, and has inspired several attendees to participate in a speaker's bureau to spread the Vision Zero message at events across the county.