

Chapter 8: Summary, Results & Recommendations

Notable Successes in Public Engagement

1. **Vision Zero:** Hillsborough County's Vision Zero project was a successful collaboration between over 25 public and private entities, drawing in elected officials, the business community and citizens to determine how to reduce the county's high number of fatal and severe injury-producing crashes to zero. Over 250 participants in four action tracks helped to shape the Action Plan, which was adopted by Hillsborough County and the cities of Tampa, Temple Terrace, and Plant City in 2017. Following intense support from the public and private businesses, Vision Zero continues to be supported by dozens of representatives from the coalition through a speaker's bureau and pop-up events.

2. **School Transportation Working Group (STWG):** The MPO formed a School Transportation Working Group (STWG) comprised of school board members and elected officials aimed at tackling issues of traffic circulation, walk/bike safety, school-pools, and transit. This committee joins previous efforts aimed at enhancing the lines of communication between schools and the MPO, such as the addition of a Hillsborough County School Board member as a voting member of the MPO Board. STWG is a springboard for connecting the MPO with parents and students to get their input on planning issues such as school busing, safe routes to schools, and Vision Zero, among others. The MPO has collected input through STWG and a presence at school-related events such as the School Choice Expo, Parent University, and the Back to School Health Fair.

3. **Continued FDOT Collaboration:** The MPO and FDOT worked together to develop better educational materials and more thoroughly handle public requests for information through projects such as FDOT's Citizens Transportation Academy.

Expanding the MPO's following

The MPO continued to expand its engagement efforts with the public in 2016 and 2017, with more participants taking part in committee meetings and the MPO attending more events than ever before. The MPO's 2016 TIP Public Hearing attracted 395 attendees, the highest of any MPO hearing in recent history. More members of the public followed and engaged with the MPO on Twitter and Facebook compared to the previous two-year period, and the number of subscribers to the agency's online publications and notices grew as well.

The MPO once again received the **All Star Award** from Constant Contact, Inc. in 2016 and 2017. The All Star Award is provided to the top 10% of Constant Contact, Inc's businesses and nonprofits, recognizing them for success in engaging their customers. Qualifications include consistently high open rates, click-through rates, and low bounce rates.

Making it Easier to Participate

The MPO continued to host committee meetings and events that took place on a variety of dates and times to ensure that the public had an opportunity to attend and comment. Both the 2016 and 2017 TIP Public Hearings took place in the evening, and the MPO operated a dedicated phone line in the week leading up to the event to allow the public to call in and leave comments. The MPO continued to operate Facebook event pages in the week leading up to the hearings to solicit comments on the TIP documents, and live streamed the event in 2017 alongside a public chatroom which allowed the public additional opportunities to comment. Both events were also

streamed through the Hillsborough TV public access channel and the online GoToMeeting streaming service.

On its PlanHillsborough.org website, the MPO began disaggregating reports by chapter to help documents load faster and make searches more relevant. It continued to keep its meeting calendar up to date with the latest information about hearings and meetings, and provided downloadable agenda packets for each of its meetings at least one week prior to their occurrence.

During the earliest stage of its 2045 LRTP update in late 2017, the MPO continued the use of live-audience polling technology to solicit feedback to questions about transportation priorities from public meeting audiences and MPO committees. This technology allows users to vote for priorities through their cellphones, and is being piloted for a wider rollout during later stages of the update. The MPO collected over 6,000 surveys during its 2040 LRTP update, and has reflected on that experience to boost the number and range of participants in its 2045 update.

Recommendations to Enhance the Public Participation Program

Based on this review, the MPO's Public Participation Plan has worked effectively during the 2016-2017 cycle. As the MPO is committed to continuous improvement and making the best use of limited resources, the following refinements are recommended:

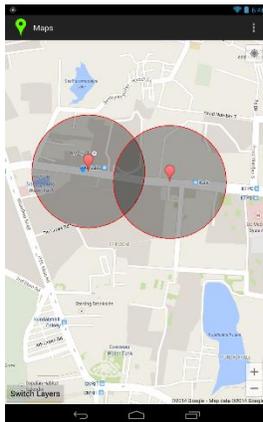
1. Seek feedback that is immediate and project specific, by asking questions such as “was this informative and helpful to you?” at the conclusion of every survey or public meeting sponsored by the MPO. This would be in lieu of conducting periodic polls on the effectiveness of public engagement. *(Continued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



For this Measures of Effectiveness update, MPO staff conducted a content review of how other transportation planning agencies across the country solicit public feedback and evaluate their own outreach efforts. Some of the standout recommendations are listed below.

- Collect contact information and survey participants after the project to determine whether they found the effort engaging, whether their time was valued, if they understood the goal and their role, and whether they felt their contribution was reflected in the final project.
- Conduct occasional staff meetings to determine what worked, what did not, and what could be improved upon in future outreach efforts. This can be combined with the MPO's existing periodic reviews of the public participation log.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of various outreach tools, such as the project website, newsletter and comment cards, at engaging participants. The most effective engagement tools may be used as a primary means for evaluating the effectiveness of project-specific outreach efforts.
- Ask event attendees whether any other members of the public should have been invited to the event.
- Keep a log of comments received from individuals living in a Community of Concern.

It is crucial that the public understand a project or initiative, their role, and how their feedback may influence the process and/or outcomes. Soliciting feedback at the end of a meeting, even if it is as simple as asking participants to raise their hand if they found the event informative and helpful, and how it could be made more so, can help to ensure that the public is fully engaged in the task at hand. The MPO may consider the size and type of the event to determine the degree of public effort these involvement techniques will entail.



2. Utilize new technology to inform both a broader and more targeted range of participants about a plan, study or initiative taking place in their area.

Technology such as geofencing, which can send a text message or application pop-up when a user enters a defined transportation project area, or peer-to-peer messaging can be utilized to solicit greater public involvement in MPO projects and initiatives. Assuming user consent, these messages can be helpful at informing the public about a project and how to get involved. These techniques may supplement existing efforts, such as posting public hearing signs near project locations, to lead a greater proportion of the public to participate in the MPO's studies.

3. Promote a unified message for responding to citizen questions and concerns about the 2045 LRTP, Regional Transit Feasibility Plan (RTFP), and Tampa Bay NEXT.

Citizens often cannot distinguish between various transportation planning initiatives, or see planning conducted by different agencies as an opportunity to engage with an amorphous “government.” MPO staff should develop a unified message, as well as coordinate resources with other agencies, to ensure that attendees at any meeting related to the 2045 LRTP, RTFP, and Tampa Bay NEXT can pose questions or comments on any of the three projects addressed. As these efforts are closely tied together, both in visibility and citizen engagement, citizens may have questions about one project that is a component of another. Therefore, the agency should develop a message and process to ensure that citizen input can be addressed in a standard format at any event related to the three projects.



4. Coordinate data products with FDOT and other agencies.

The PIMA Mapping Tool hosted by Plan Hillsborough contains many of the same projects as FDOT District 7's own mapping tool for projects in their five-year work program, although PIMA also includes local projects. The MPO may benefit from reduced overlap and better coordination among products by holding more frequent debriefs with FDOT and any other agencies that provide data product tools. The MPO may also benefit from developing a way to enable the public to submit comments on specific projects in PIMA.

5. Provide a glossary of acronyms and reduce acronym use for major planning documents and in presentations.

To increase readability among the public, the MPO may benefit by decreasing the use of acronyms in documents and/or provide a link to a glossary explaining these terms in every major planning document. The MPO may also consider phasing out the use of acronyms in documents intended for the public.

6. Empower individuals from the community through training and/or one-on-one sessions.

To improve communication with the public regarding MPO processes and as a means of relationship-building, the MPO might consider offering additional training, orientations, and one-on-one learning opportunities. Continuing the Citizens Transportation Academy on a permanent basis may be one option to kickstart these enhanced learning opportunities. In the MPO staff's volunteer activities, such as their yearly participation in the Women Build project, staff may consider drawing from a volunteer list of public participants to engage in fun and meaningful community-building activities.



7. Routinely research best practices on how to engage and empower the community, craft program messaging, conducting meeting in a way that makes individuals feel valued, and solicit feedback to incorporate best practices into current practices.

The MPO might develop internal reviews of how their programs are being perceived by the community, construct metrics of engagement, and solicit both internal and public feedback to determine how to incorporate best practices into current practices. Focus groups are one way to determine public messaging and evaluate engagement efforts, and can also be a way to further communicate MPO processes.

8. Continue utilizing and seek new avenues for the use of social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

The MPO has continued to grow the number of user interactions with its Facebook and Twitter accounts over the prior cycle, and notably launched a Vision Zero page in late 2016. The MPO should consider new ways to engage the public in this technology, and explore other uses for social media in reaching the public. Furthermore, as neighborhood and civic organizations are often not meeting as frequently as they have in the past, the MPO may consider utilizing neighborhood-based networking services to connect with the public on a recurring basis. Per a recommendation from the MPO's Technical Advisory Committee, the MPO will explore utilizing Instagram to share photos of projects and events.

9. Update and expand accessibility to real-time engagement through video streaming and other online access options.

Per a recommendation from the MPO's Citizens Advisory Committee, the MPO will evaluate ways to offer additional online video streaming options for its MPO Board meetings and public hearings. Currently all MPO Board meetings are streamed online through Hillsborough TV, available through cable providers and online at <https://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/HTVlive>. All Board meetings are also uploaded to the MPO's YouTube profile, although there is some lag in receiving and uploading these videos. Furthermore, beginning in 2016, the MPO has streamed its TIP

Public Hearings through sites such as GoToMeeting and Facebook. The MPO will explore additional options for updating and expanding accessibility such as publicizing Hillsborough TV's schedule including rebroadcasts, continuing to offer a chat room during public hearings, and live-streaming TMA Leadership Group meetings.