

CHAPTER 1: Introduction & Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

Mobility has a tremendous impact on a wide range of activities in Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City, Hillsborough County and throughout the Tampa Bay region. Transportation is a dynamic concept which makes it possible for us to get to our intended destination, but which also mirrors the social, economic, spatial, and political dynamics of our society.



The Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is committed to meaningful public engagement throughout the long-range transportation planning process.



Due to the far-reaching impacts inherent to transportation projects, soliciting advice and input from a wide range of stakeholders is critical to making sound transportation decisions.

Stakeholders can include both individuals and groups, whether citizens, business owners, environmental and civic organizations, agency partners, or advocacy groups that represent the needs of the traditionally underserved and underrepresented - including low income individuals, minorities, those with limited English proficiency, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities. Each of these stakeholders offer a unique perspective on what it means to be mobile, and each also presents specific transportation needs and challenges. The diversity of these needs should be considered prior to the MPO rendering decisions on transportation projects.

The vast majority of important decisions regarding a transportation project are made years before a shovel even breaks ground. Thus, it is extremely important to encourage engagement in the process early and often. Early and active participation allows stakeholders to wield greater influence over how public dollars get spent in our communities, and shape the future of this region, county, municipality, and even our own neighborhoods.

Public participation includes the process, methods, and tools used by the MPO to inform and engage the public about transportation issues. A meaningful public participation plan is guided by more than just federal requirements; it is a valuable tool used by the MPO with the goal of making transportation investments meet the needs of the public and other stakeholders in both the present and future. The Hillsborough County MPO believes that...

You are an important part of the planning process. Your opinion really does count and will help shape the future for the children of Hillsborough County.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) contains the guidelines and expectations for public participation during the transportation planning activities and processes conducted by the Hillsborough County MPO, including the procedures, tools, and strategies for outreach and education on transportation issues.

The MPO is directly responsible for making sure that federal and state dollars spent on existing and future transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process.

The following principles, developed in conjunction with best practice standards for public involvement, guide the PPP:

Provide opportunities for involvement

Avenues for involvement will be open, meaningful and organized so as to provide a milieu that encourages convenient and comfortable participation. Consideration of needs for accessibility, scheduling, location, format and language of informational materials will be structured to allow informed, constructive exchanges with clear presentation of all information. Participants will be provided information so that they more clearly understand the trade-offs of each respective proposal, plan, or project, and will be encouraged to consider and weigh the many competing transportation objectives.

Be inclusive of all constituencies

The MPO will use best practices to identify stakeholders and target audiences. New strategies will continue to be explored in order to bring the information to these groups. Efforts to reach new and existing constituencies include continuing outreach to the transportation disadvantaged, including minority, low income, the elderly, youth communities and neighborhoods or groups that may be affected by proposed projects. Creative techniques and technologies will be explored in order to engage the audience in discussion and interaction throughout the planning process.

Be responsive to participants

MPO forums will facilitate discussions that directly correspond to the participants and their available time. Informational materials should be clear and concise and address the concerns of the participants. Information will be available in sufficient detail to allow citizens to form and express their independent views. The results of all public involvement activities will be documented and given full consideration in all MPO decision-making, as well as conveyed to the implementing agencies for their consideration.





Provide a predictable process

The planning process will be understandable and known well in advance of plan considerations. The consistency in our process will allow the MPO staff, citizens, and officials to budget their time and effectively apply their resources.

Be creative and flexible

The direction and effectiveness of the PPP should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it meets the needs of both the public and the MPO. This program should continue to evolve and include new avenues of communication to inform the MPO's public outreach efforts.



Maximize exposure, minimize costs

Wherever possible the Hillsborough County MPO is committed to coordinate with other local, federal and statewide public involvement processes in order to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs. The MPO will also work collaboratively with agency partners to furnish more project-specific information to stakeholders, thus providing the public more complete information. This will allow us to reach a larger audience and minimize costs and redundancies.



The mission of the Hillsborough MPO is to develop a comprehensive long-range transportation plan (LRTP) that supports economic development and the mobility needs of the community by:

- Preserving neighborhoods;
- Protecting the environment;
- Enhancing quality of life;
- Promoting public transportation;
- Cooperating with, and coordinating between, both the community and agencies to enable the plan to work.



Maximizing exposure to engage the public in the transportation decision-making process is the vision that drives this *Public Participation Plan*.

We're listening...

It is a priority for this MPO that all citizens in Hillsborough County be given the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process, including low income individuals, the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency.

