

Chapter 2: Public Participation

Guiding Principles

Effective public engagement is critical to the MPO's success. Engaging the community ensures MPO plans and products better reflect the public's values and preferences. The Public Participation Plan helps balance the professional and technical expertise brought to projects with the community's input. It helps the MPO gain the broad support needed to ensure that transportation plans and programs are implemented.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) describes the MPO's strategies and techniques to engage the public in transportation planning issues, with the purpose of maximizing participation. 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 to provide an environment that encourages convenient public participation. The MPO will consider the needs of the public regarding accessibility, scheduling, location, format, and language of informational materials. This will allow for informed, constructive exchanges between the MPO and the public. Unfamiliar transportation terminology should be used as infrequently as possible, and when unavoidable should be clearly defined. Participants will be provided information so that they

clearly understand the trade-offs involved in making transportation decisions and will be encouraged to confront the many competing transportation objectives.

Be inclusive of constituencies

The MPO will identify potential stakeholders and other interested members of the public for its studies and projects and will identify strategies to bring information about those studies and projects to identified groups. Efforts to reach new and existing constituencies will include continuing outreach to "Communities of Concern", defined as communities which require special attention to facilitate their participation in the planning process. More information on how the MPO designates Communities of Concern may be found in the MPO's 2018 Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan.



The MPO will continue to engage neighborhoods and groups which may be affected by proposed projects. The MPO is constantly exploring new and creative techniques to better engage the audience in discussion throughout the planning process.

Be responsive to participants

MPO forums will facilitate discussion with the public while being respectful of everyone's time. Informational materials will be clear, concise, and address the concerns of participants. This information will be sufficiently detailed 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 activities as well as conveyed to implementing agencies for their consideration.



Provide a transparent and predictable process

The planning process will be understandable and communicated to citizens well in advance of plan considerations. Citizens should know who makes the final decisions and the pathways for reaching those decisions. The consistency in the MPO participation process will allow staff, citizens, and officials to plan their time and effectively apply their resources.

Be creative and flexible

The direction and effectiveness of this program should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it meets the needs of the public and the MPO. This program should continue to evolve and include new avenues of communication to further augment MPO public outreach.



Maximize exposure, minimize costs

The MPO is committed to coordinating the public participation process with local, federal, and statewide public involvement processes whenever possible. The objective of this coordination is to enhance public consideration of issues, plans, and programs, while reducing redundancies and minimizing costs.

The measures of effectiveness (MOEs) used as part of the evaluation process under these six guiding principles fall into the following categories:

- Visibility & Productivity,
- Participation Opportunities,
- Public Interest & Feedback, and
- Input Results.

At the conclusion of the review of MPO performance in each of these areas, there is an opportunity to refine the PPP process by formal amendment. Other opportunities to enhance performance may occur as a result of ongoing feedback, periodic surveys, or with the update of the PPP that accompanies the launch of each LRTP update.

In the following chapters, the MPO's adopted, quantifiable measures of effectiveness of its Public Participation Plan are denoted by headings like the one below.