

## Chapter 8: Summary, Results & Recommendations

### Notable Successes in Public Engagement

- 1. Gulf Coast Safe Streets Summit** – The MPO hosted the very first safe streets summit for West Central Florida, which was a joint effort by all six MPOs of West Central Florida: Hillsborough, Hernandez/Citrus, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk and Sarasota/Manatee, in partnership with the FDOT, USF CUTR, Bike/Walk Tampa Bay, and Walk/Bike Tampa. The summit was completely sold out and had approximately 244 attendees at the event. The lineup of engaged speakers assured the audience that the work of planners, engineers, health professionals, advocates, law enforcement, and elected officials is helping to make headway in saving lives. They also inspired, humbled, and challenged participants to spread the Vision Zero message and be open to new ideas, in order to be effective in saving lives in the most critical communities.
- 2. Local Host and Partner for Safe Routes to School National Conference:** Over 420 participants came together for the three-day conference to discuss transportation, safety best practices and creating health, equitable communities. **The 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Gulf Coast Regional Safe Streets Summit** was held on the third day, immediately following the wrap of the final session of the conference. The summit was a collaborative event of the Hernando/Citrus, Hillsborough, Pasco, Pinellas, and Sarasota/Manatee Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Polk County Transportation Planning Organization, the Florida Department of Transportation, the USF Center for Urban Transportation Research, and Walk Bike Tampa. This partnership provides a regional approach to prioritize the Complete Streets initiative throughout the local jurisdictions along the Gulf Coast of Florida. This educational event aimed at encouraging the implementation of Complete Street that are safe and accessible for all.
- 3. MetroQuest: It's TIME Tampa Bay** survey - Over the summer of 2018, the metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) of Hillsborough, Pinellas and Pasco County asked citizens of the three counties to identify priorities for land use and transportation and consider three very different scenarios for future growth. There were approximately 10,000 survey responses.
- 4. MetroQuest: It's TIME Hillsborough** survey – available electronically and hardcopy (Spanish and English). The It's TIME Hillsborough 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan update involved a collaborative effort, between the Hillsborough Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Hillsborough Planning Commission to implement a two-phase public engagement process. Over 5,000 responses were received from the survey. In addition, during this outreach period, the MPO and Planning Commission staff interacted with over 16,000 attendees at 34 events, meetings, and presentations.
- 5. FHWA Vision Zero Peer-to-Peer with MPOs:** The MPO hosted two Federal Highway Administration peer exchange mini-conferences for the MPO's around the state and country - one on Vision Zero and one on Safety Target Setting. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Office of Safety convened a day and a half peer exchange in Tampa, Florida. The peer exchange brought together transportation safety practitioners from metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) in Florida (FL), Nevada (NV), New Mexico (NM), Colorado (CO), Oregon (OR), and California (CA) as well as the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and FHWA Division staff to learn and share experiences on regional Vision Zero plans including: MPO Vision Zero Plans – State of the Practice;

Integrating Vision Zero into Transportation Plans; From MPO Vision Zero Planning to Implementation; and Challenges and solutions.

- 6. FHWA Safety Target-Setting Workshop:** Working with FHWA's Office of Safety on a first of its kind one-day workshop on Target Setting for MPO's. Topics included purpose of safety performance target setting, expectations and responsibilities of the MPOs, rationale behind setting targets, and overview of crash trends in Florida. The attendees discussed how they currently setting targets and how programs like Vision Zero can influence target setting. Lastly, there was discussion on how to improve coordination between State and MPO, particularly since the Hillsborough MPO used a methodology to predict performance based on different investment levels for safety projects versus adopting the state FDOT's target of zero.

## 7. Expanding the MPO's following

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 2018 and 2019. 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.

## 8. Making it Easier to Participate

The MPO continues 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 2018 and 2019 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. Both events were also streamed through the Hillsborough TV public access channel.

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 two-phase public engagement process for the 2045 LRTP update during this cycle, the MPO utilized MetroQuest as the primary public engagement tool. The interactive nature of the platform allowed users to rank, rate, and comment on a variety of questions. A paper survey in Spanish and English and a PowerPoint presentation was created for in-person meetings and events.

## 9. Online Interactive Map Tools

Several interactive mapping tools are available on the MPO's website: the TIP Tool, the Health Atlas, the traffic Counts Map, and the Bike Suitability Map. The following tools make it easier

for members of the public to get specific information they are looking for. Data for the tools is continuously uploaded to provide quick and accurate information to the public. The Health Atlas is intended to provide communities and planners a baseline of chronic disease, demographic, transportation, emergency preparedness, and environmental indicators within our communities. The TIP Mapping Tool can be used to find funded transportation projects in the TIP. The traffic counts map tool can be used to find current and historical traffic counts for all major roads. The MPO maintains the consolidated database for the counts. The Bicycle Suitability Map portrays on-road and off-road routes suitable for travel by bicyclists.

## Recommendations to Enhance the Public Participation Program

Based on this review, the MPO's Public Participation Plan has worked effectively during the 2018 - 2019 cycle. As the MPO is committed to continuous improvement and making the best use of limited resources, the following refinements are recommended:

**1. Increase citizen engagement in the Environmental Justice areas to increase agency awareness and expand the agency's presence in the community by cultivating relationships with nonprofits, faith-based groups, and other community organizations.**

This will assist the agency in receiving feedback and input from diverse viewpoints not just for plan updates. Vision Zero outreach and the Garden Steps project will be utilized for continued networking opportunities, educational programs, and informational gatherings throughout the community. Schedule "meet and greet" events to personalize the outreach and assure they are receiving monthly newsletters from the agency. In order to keep the lines of communication open, follow up quarterly to see if there are questions or possible collaborative initiatives.

**2. Utilize short videos to inform** both a broader and more targeted range of participants about a plan, study, or initiative taking place in their area. This will assist in reaching the younger demographic group, who often utilize YouTube. However, it can be challenging for people with limited income who have to consider data consumption. The videos can be embedded in presentations and on the website to help with public education and speakers bureaus. When Vision Zero Coalition members go out and speak to the public, they will be able to bring short videos along with them.

**3. Develop strategies for flexibility in meeting public plan requirements.** With the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 impacting how MPOs can conduct required outreach, while operating under a declared State of Emergency. A mechanism to hold community forums, hearings, meetings, or workshops, virtually has been included. Meetings will be held in a virtual webinar, and the public will have the opportunity to participate as they would an in-person meeting, but in a virtual capacity. When meetings can only be held virtually in the event of disasters or public health emergency related situations, the process will continue until the Department of Health and Human Services or another form of government states that it is safe to hold in person meetings with the public.

During disaster recovery situation more flexibility be provided in how meetings are conducted utilizing all available technology while maintaining access to decision making. The capability to provide public comments during the meeting by phone will be included in events of this nature.

**4. Seek feedback on our public engagement strategies.** In the past, the MPO has conducted periodic public involvement process surveys. When long answer comments are received, in any

format, we will review the comments and see if there are public engagement process that should be improved. A 45-day period review period is allowed every two years when changes are made to the Public Participation Plan. This information is advertised in the newspaper, as well as, on social media. When surveys are completed, we will add the “how did you hear about this survey” to the process. This will help when making decisions about deciding where it is best to distribute or post surveys.