



## Public Participation Plan: Measures of Effectiveness Report



Two Year Public Engagement Evaluation for 2018 & 2019



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## Chapter 1: Historical Perspective

The Hillsborough County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has updated its *Public Involvement Plan* (PIP, now called the Public Participation Plan or PPP) biennially since 1998. The PIP identifies a proactive public participation process for the transportation planning products of the MPO. This process includes timely public notices, complete access and input to important decisions, and support of early and continuing community involvement. Coinciding with the PIP update, the MPO also evaluates its effectiveness in the utilization of the participation plan.

The MPO continues to utilize four major categories to measure the effectiveness of public participation:

- **Visibility & Productivity:** Visibility corresponds to the initiatives and products the MPO produces to increase the agency's engagement with the public. Productivity is the output of the MPO's tasks.
- **Participation Opportunities:** Participation opportunities are the full extent of options the public has to interact with the MPO. These opportunities span from in-person meetings to virtual meetings and surveys online. The MPO measures the effectiveness of its participation opportunities not just in availability, but in whether the opportunities it produces and events it holds are accessible, time-sensitive, understandable, and meaningful.
- **Public Interest & Feedback:** Public interest and feedback is collected through surveys, comment cards, emails, phone calls, walk-ins, and other forms intended to provide a range of options for inclusion. To seize new opportunities to receive public input, the MPO has also successfully engaged the public over social media and in event-specific chatrooms.
- **Input Results:** Input results are the direct and indirect impacts that public feedback has on the MPO's reports, plans, and other activities.

Furthermore, the MPO measures its public participation with minorities, low-income individuals, and the transportation disadvantaged. The measures continue to be intertwined into four major categories, such as tracking the number of notices published in non-English newspapers and recording the number of events held in Environmental Justice areas.

In 1999, several evaluation measures were adopted by the MPO in response to the Federal Highway Administration's requirement that the MPO develop a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the PIP.

In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was enacted, carrying forward a strong federal emphasis on public participation programs. SAFETEA-LU included several major modifications, including conducting convenient and accessible public meetings, employing visualization techniques to describe plans, and making public information accessible in electronic formats. With regard to the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), SAFETEA-LU also requires participation among users of pedestrian walkways, bicycle transportation facilities, and those with disabilities. In 2006, the PIP was further amended and renamed the *Public Participation Plan* (PPP).

In 2010, the MPO updated the PPP to more clearly define procedures for notification and public participation, including an extensive review of requirements, transportation terms and acronyms, an expanded toolbox, and a new Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan. The 2010 PPP was

amended in 2012 to incorporate new public involvement techniques and procedural requirements and was adopted by the MPO along with an updated LEP Plan.

In 2014, the MPO amended its PPP to incorporate recommendations of its 2013 federal certification review of the MPO's planning process, which called for simplifying the document and adding new tools. Revisions included the consolidation of the [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org) agency website, the expansion of MPO committees, the streamlined downloading of the PPP document from the [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org) website, and clarification of the public notice process for TIP amendments.

The passage of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act in 2015 has led to requirements for the solicitation of comments from public ports, tourism interests, and certain private transportation providers.

Also in 2015, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) updated its MPO Program Management Handbook to fully incorporate principles of Environmental Justice (EJ) in programs and policies. This update came with two requirements for MPOs:

- Ensure and document early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for involvement by minority and low-income communities; and
- Scrutinize demographic data to ensure that planning activities will not have disproportionately high or adverse impacts on underserved communities, and where impacts are unavoidable, that documented steps are taken to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts. In response, in 2018 the MPO adopted a [Nondiscrimination Plan](#), which addressed requirements under a presidential EJ executive order, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act and several other statutes. Collectively, these protected populations are called "Communities of Concern."

The MPO updated its Public Participation Plan (PPP) in June 2018. The plan clarified the requirements, notices, procedures, and strategies that the MPO undertakes in its public participation initiatives. In refining the PPP process, the MPO recognized and integrated the components of the 2018 Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan Update, which included guidance for engaging with Communities of Concern, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency populations to enhance the PPP. This allowed for the exploration of some engagement technologies and tools that were suggested.

*The Hillsborough MPO has been and continues to be fully compliant with federal and state requirements pertaining to public participation, including: §450.316, §450.322, §450.324, and §450.326 in Chapter 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Limited English Proficiency Executive Order 13166; Florida Statute 339.175; and Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law.*

**Table 1** on page 5 shows the major areas of evaluation for the public participation program, and the corresponding metrics, or Public Participation Measures of Effectiveness.

**Table 1: Measures of Effectiveness for the Public Participation Plan**

|  |   | <b>Metrics</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| <b>Measuring Visibility and Productivity</b>   | Number of MPO publications produced   | Number of MPO newsletters and brochures distributed, such as Connections to Tomorrow, Vision Zero Quarterlies, Bicycle Suitability Maps, Ride Guides and Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning |
|  | Number of newspaper advertisements and public notices placed in publications with minority audiences                                      | Media inventory of newspaper articles, television, and radio coverage  |
|  | Number of West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee brochures distributed  | Number of MPO sponsored maps distributed, as well as any other sponsorship or advertisement opportunity  |
|  | Number of meetings broadcast on Hillsborough County Television  | Number of publications available on the MPO website, at a minimum to include the LRTP, TIP, and an annual list of obligated projects   |
| <b>Measuring Participation Opportunities</b>   | Number of MPO public forums, workshops, and community meetings at which displays, presentations, discussions, and feedback occurred       | Number and origin of participants at such public forums, workshops, and community meetings   |
|  | Number of participants at public forums, workshops and community meetings held in historically underserved areas or with such populations | Number of participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities, such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida   |
|  | Number and origin of participants at monthly MPO and committee meetings   | Number of persons on the MPO mailing list receiving regular agendas  |
|  | Number of draft plans, reports, other preliminary documents, or surveys posted to MPO website for public comment                          |  |
| <b>Increasing Public Participation Efforts with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, &amp; Transportation Disadvantaged</b> | Ensuring the MOE report details representative public involvement   | Developing maps with updated, community-specific demographic and socioeconomic data within the MPO's geographic boundaries at the census tract, block group, or zip code level                     |
|  | Listing all MPO committee members' demographic data, including race, ethnicity, age, and whether or not they are disabled                 |  |
| <b>Measuring Public Interest &amp; Feedback</b>  | Number of returned comment cards distributed with Newsletters and other MPO publications  | Number of verbal comments received at open forum discussions, public hearings, and at any other opportunities for public interaction   |
|  | Number of phone, fax, mail, and email inquiries or comments cards received  | Number of visitors to the MPO website  |
|  | Seeking feedback that is immediate and project specific   |  |
| <b>Measuring Input Results Refining the PPP Process</b>  | Number of issues identified through public input and responded to by the MPO  | Documented revisions to plans based on citizen input   |
|  | Periodic public involvement process surveys   | Update the PPP in conjunction with, and at the outset of, each LRTP update   |
|  | Recommendations to enhance the PPP  |  |