



## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** TPB Technical Committee  
**FROM:** Bryan Hayes, Transportation Planner  
**SUBJECT:** Approach to Evaluating TPB Participation Activities from January 2015 to June 2016  
**DATE:** June 3, 2016

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The 2014 update to the TPB's *Participation Plan* describes a process for annual evaluation of the TPB's participation activities. The 2014 federal certification review commented on the TPB's participation efforts and provided some guidance on how to conduct an evaluation of those activities.

This memo provides context on evaluating the TPB's participation activities and proposes an evaluation framework for evaluating those activities. The framework describes some of the steps necessary to execute an evaluation that responds to the Participation Plan and the federal comment.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **PARTICIPATION PLAN**

The 2014 update to the TPB's *Participation Plan*<sup>1</sup> calls for an annual evaluation of participation activities. This evaluation is intended to inform the annual update of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

According to the *Participation Plan*, the evaluation should include an assessment of participation activities and the TPB's ability to reach previously uninvolved residents and groups. The evaluation should also include recommendations for improving recurring activities and suggestions for future activities.

### **FEDERAL CERTIFICATION REVIEW**

In 2014 the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration conducted their quadrennial certification review of the TPB. Findings from the 2014 federal certification review, published in 2015<sup>2</sup>, described the TPB's participation activities. The review also made some recommendations.

The review recommends that the TPB: 1) formalize evaluation of the effectiveness at engaging the public in the Washington region, 2) compile participation and engagement data using a centralized tool, and 3) use participation data to formulate goals, objectives, targets, and indicators to improve participation activities at the TPB.

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<sup>1</sup> Pages 23-24 - [http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION\\_ID=493](http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION_ID=493)

<sup>2</sup> Pages 15-17 - <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/Y11WV1Id20150529141934.pdf>

## PROPOSED EVALUATION

An evaluation is a tool that allows staff to periodically reflect on past activities and use information to suggest new more effective ways to carry out those activities in the future. An evaluation can help identify areas for improvement and ultimately help realize goals more efficiently.

The goal of this participation evaluation is to produce a report that responds to the 2014 Participation Plan and federal comment by documenting the TPB's participation activities, assessing their effectiveness, and suggesting ways to improve participation activities.

The plan is to conduct an initial baseline evaluation, including stakeholder involvement, for participation activities from January 2015 to June 2016. This baseline evaluation will serve as a template for future evaluations to be conducted every three years. A supplemental evaluation will be conducted annually in between the more thorough evaluations.

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

Staff propose a multi-step process for conducting the evaluation of participation activities led by staff from January 2015 through the end of June 2016. For more information on the framework, including the framework matrix, please see the appendix.

1. Identify **participation activities** led by staff, state the **policy goals** from the *Participation Plan* that relate to each activity, and list **activity objectives** that describe the connection between the activity and the policy goals.
2. Document **what staff did** to carry out the participation activities using data and qualitative description. This will be used to measure or demonstrate the effectiveness of the participation activities
3. Conduct a **staff assessment** that evaluates participation activities against the activity objectives.
4. Collect **external feedback** from stakeholders addressing how effectively participation activities meet the activity objectives.
5. Utilize staff assessment and external feedback to evaluate overall performance of activities towards the policy goals, and develop recommendations for **how to improve** the effectiveness of the TPB's participation activities.

## SHARING THE EVALUATION

Although the evaluation is primarily a tool to be used by TPB staff to improve participation activities, it is important to share the findings and resulting recommendations with key participants in the TPB process. While some of these groups will be consulted during the evaluation, the final report will be shared with the TPB's Technical committees, the CAC and AFA, and the board.

## APPENDIX

### OUTLINE

Proposed outline for the report.

1. **Executive Summary:** Summary of staff assessment, external feedback, and recommendations.
2. **Background:** A description of the context behind the TPB's participation activities and the reasons for conducting an evaluation.
3. **Method:** A description of the method used for the evaluation.
4. **Findings:** A narrative description of the findings from the evaluation. The evaluation of each participation activity will include the following sections:
  - a. Participation activity
  - b. Participation goals
  - c. Activity objectives
  - d. What staff did to implement the activity
  - e. Staff assessment
  - f. External feedback
  - g. Recommendations
5. **Recommendations:** Summary and prioritization of the recommendations, from Chapter 4, that could be included in a future UPWP to improve participation activities at the TPB.

### PARTICIPATION POLICY GOALS

The following is excerpted from the 2014 update to the TPB's *Participation Plan*.<sup>3</sup>

*The TPB believes that public input into its process is valuable and makes its products better. Regional transportation planning cannot, and should not, be based simply upon technical analysis. The qualitative information derived from citizen involvement is essential to good decision-making.*

- *Communicate effectively with appropriate audiences*
- *Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities*
- *Gather input from diverse perspectives*
- *Respond meaningfully to public comments and feedback*
- *Promote a regional perspective*

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<sup>3</sup> Pages 10-11 - [http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION\\_ID=493](http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION_ID=493)

## PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

The following is excerpted from the 2014 update to the TPB's *Participation Plan*.<sup>4</sup>

*It is the policy of the TPB to carry out the following participation activities in support of the policy statement and policy goals. In some cases, the way activities are carried out must be tailored to the needs of one or more of the constituencies identified in the Participation Strategy. The differing needs of each of the constituencies are a result of varying levels of engagement in the regional transportation planning process and awareness of regional transportation issues.*

- *Public Comment*
- *Open Public Meetings*
- *Committees*
- *Documents*
- *Publications*
- *Websites & Social Media*
- *Outreach and Training*

## STAKEHOLDERS

The 2015/2016 evaluation should include input from TPB stakeholders. The evaluation approach (page 2) was designed to include outreach with stakeholders that asks them to respond to findings and the self-assessment. Staff recognizes that it is appropriate to engage the different groups in different ways to respect their time and to maximize and focus input.

- **TPB members:** Short phone or in person interviews with select members of the TPB.
- **Technical committee:** Briefing and discussion at committee meeting.
- **Citizens Advisory Committee:** Presentation and discussion at committee meeting. Possible focus group with CAC volunteers.
- **Access for All Advisory Committee:** Presentation and discussion at committee meeting.
- **Public:** Survey or focus group with members of the public who have engaged in the TPB process—CLI alumni and people that have participated in public comment periods, commented at a TPB meeting, or received a TPB publication.
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## OTHER MPOS

The 2014 federal certification review commended<sup>5</sup> the Fredericksburg Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (FAMPO) for their plan to evaluate public participation efforts. This plan was also included in a FHWA Transportation Planning Process Resource Guide<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Pages 15-22 - [http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION\\_ID=493](http://www.mwcog.org/store/item.asp?PUBLICATION_ID=493)

<sup>5</sup> Page 17 - <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/Y11WV1d20150529141934.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public\\_involvement/publications/resource\\_guide/page05.cfm](https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/publications/resource_guide/page05.cfm)

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

	STEP ONE			STEP TWO	STEPS THREE & FOUR		STEP FIVE
	Participation Activity	Participation Goals	Activity Objectives	What staff did	Staff Assessment	External Feedback	How to Improve
Public Comment	Formal public comment						
	Public comment at board meetings						
Open Public Meetings	Board meetings						
	Other meetings						
Committees	Citizens Advisory Committee						
	Access for All Advisory Committee						
Documents	CLRP branding update						
Publications	TPB Weekly Report						
	TPB News						
	TPB Region						
Websites & Social Media	MWCOG.ORG						
	CLRP						
	Information Hub						
	Twitter						
Outreach & Training	Community Leadership Institute						