

ITEM 7 – Action
October 21, 2020

Participation Plan Update

Action: Adopt Resolution R7-2021 to approve the TPB’s Participation Plan.

Background: The board will be briefed on comments received during the Participation Plan public comment period, which closed on October 9. Staff will also provide an overview of changes to the plan based on those comments.

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
777 North Capitol Street, N.E.
Washington, D.C. 20002

**RESOLUTION APPROVING
THE TPB PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020 UPDATE**

WHEREAS, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), which is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for the Washington Region, has the responsibility under the provisions of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process for the Metropolitan Area; and

WHEREAS, the metropolitan transportation planning regulations that apply to the FAST Act require MPOs to develop a Participation Plan in consultation with interested parties; and

WHEREAS, the TPB has conducted public participation activities under four previously approved processes for public involvement, beginning with a Public Involvement Process adopted in 1994 and most recently with the Participation Plan approved in 2014 in response to requirements of MAP-21, the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act; and

WHEREAS, the TPB has made a number of enhancements in its public involvement activities in recent years, including outreach activities related to the development of Visualize 2045, the regional long-range plan approved in 2018; and

WHEREAS, the draft Participation Plan was developed in consultation over the past year with a number of different committees and stakeholder groups, including the Citizens Advisory Committee, the Access for All Advisory Committee, and the TPB Technical Committee; and

WHEREAS, the TPB underwent a Federal Certification Review in 2019, and this Participation Plan responds to comments that the TPB received following that review; and

WHEREAS, the draft Participation Plan was developed to be a practical document with sections focused on different users' relationships to the TPB, including a Participation Policy, a Public Guide, a Staff Guide, and a Federal Guide; and

WHEREAS, the goals of the Participation Plan, which describe what the TPB is trying to achieve through its participation activities, include the following:

- Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools
- Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities
- Gather input from diverse perspectives
- Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully
- Promote a regional perspective; and

WHEREAS, the Participation Plan identifies principles for engagement that articulate the TPB's values for informing and engaging the public, and these principles feature the following key themes:

- Equity perspective
- Plain language
- Early and continuing participation
- Timely response
- Clarity of purpose; and

WHEREAS, the Participation Plan supports and affirms TPB Resolution R1-2020, which was approved on July 22, 2020, establishing equity as a fundamental value and integral part of all the TPB's work activities; and

WHEREAS, the TPB, as demonstrated by its past activities and articulated in this Participation Plan, believes that the information derived from engagement with the public is essential to good decision-making; and

WHEREAS, on August 25, 2020, the TPB Participation Plan was released for a 45-day public comment period which ended on October 9, 2020; and

WHEREAS, the comments and staff responses were reviewed and considered as part of the approval of the TPB Participation Plan by the TPB on October 21, 2020;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT the NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD approves the 2020 Update to the TPB Participation Plan.



MEMORANDUM

TO: Transportation Planning Board
FROM: Bryan Hayes, TPB Transportation Planner
SUBJECT: Summary of public comment for the TPB Participation Plan update
DATE: October 15, 2020

The TPB's Participation Plan draft update underwent a 45-day public comment period that ended on October 9, 2020. This memo summarizes comments received. More detail on the comments and staff response can be found in the attached table.

COMMENT SUMMARY

TPB staff received comments from four members of the public. Federal partners at the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also submitted comments.

Comments received from members of the public said that the Public Guide chapter of the draft Participation Plan makes information clearer and more accessible to the public than the previous plan, and they noted that this new section will help the public know how to get involved at the TPB. These public comments also provided suggestions on some enhancements to the Public Guide.

A more detailed summary of these comments and staff response can be found on pages 1-2 of the attached.

Most of the submitted comments came from the TPB's federal partners who stated that the plan is consistent with recommendations from the 2019 federal certification review. These federal comments also suggested more specificity in the plan. They encouraged staff to provide more information about constraints to public involvement, staff roles for plan oversight and implementation, and the decision-making process for determining when public participation is needed.

A detailed summary of all federal comments and staff responses can be found on pages 2-8 of the attached.

UPDATING THE PLAN

In response to comments received, staff made a number of clarifications and enhancements in the draft Participation Plan, although none of these changes represent substantive alterations in the draft that was released for public review. These changes are documented in the attached.

BACKGROUND

The 2020 TPB Participation Plan update started its federally required 45-day public comment period on Tuesday, August 25. The comment period ended on Friday, October 9. To promote the public comment period, staff sent an email announcement to the TPB public comment email list, the Citizens Advisory Committee, and the Access for All Advisory Committee. A TPB News blogpost about the public comment period was published on September 8. TPB social media posts during the comment period asked the public to review the draft Participation Plan and submit comments.

NEXT STEPS

The board will be asked to approve the TPB Participation Plan update, with changes made based on public comments received, at the October 21, 2020 TPB meeting.

Following approval, TPB staff will work with the team leaders in the Department of Transportation to implement the updated Participation Plan. This includes a series of trainings with each of the teams on how to incorporate the Participation Policy and Staff Guide into their work.

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
RICHARD HALL	1.	The Public Guide helps the public know how to get involved with the TPB.	Staff appreciates this comment.
RICHARD HALL	2.	Keep it balanced with all races, and that they be part of the decision making	The Policy Statement says that, “It is the TPB’s intent to make both its policy and technical processes inclusive of and accessible to all constituencies.” This comment is also addressed in the Policy Principle about using an “equity perspective” and also in the Policy Goal to “Gather input from diverse perspectives.” This policy guidance is implemented in the Staff Guide, steps 3, 4, 5, and 6.
NANCY ABELES	3.	The Public Guide makes information clearer and more accessible than the previous plan.	Staff appreciates this comment.
NANCY ABELES	4.	The TPB must work to align expectations for public involvement with the actual decision-making process. These activities should seek to build public knowledge about transportation decision-making to encourage meaningful public involvement at various states of that process.	Staff agree that it is important that expectations for public involvement are clearly communicated when staff engage the public. This is reflected in the Principle for Engagement called “clarity of purpose,” which is in the Participation Policy chapter. This concept is also reflected in Steps 3, 4, and 6 of the Participation Workflow in the Staff Guide.
NANCY ABELES	5.	The Public Guide’s “Get Informed” section could provide more detailed and specific resources or referrals for people seeking information on specific topics, including: glossary of acronyms, technical terms, and planning procedures.	The Public Guide refers the public to available resources. Staff agree that developing additional resources can support members of the public who seek to better understand the TPB and its role in the region. Staff hope to produce these materials as part of ongoing participation activities.
NANCY ABELES	6.	Provide the public with education on the relationships between transportation, land-use, etc.	The Community Leadership Institute is the primary program through which staff inform community leaders about the regional transportation decision-making process. The program includes discussions about the relationship between transportation and land-use and the role that community leaders can play in planning and decision-making.
NANCY ABELES	7.	The Public Guide could include a matrix to show the scope of TPB participation activities and how the public hopes to benefit the process	TPB staff conduct a variety of activities. Due to the extent of these activities, there is no one specific set activity or series of participation techniques that can be detailed that applies broadly to this work. The Participation Plan approaches this reality by laying out a specific Participation Workflow that staff must complete to craft an approach for public participation. Part of this workflow calls upon staff to clarify the public’s role in all activities, and clearly express that role to the public.
NANCY ABELES	8.	What happened to the CAC operating procedures?	The CAC operating procedures are no longer part of the Participation Plan. New operating procedures will be presented to the TPB in October and are expected to be approved by

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
			the TPB in November. These will live in their own document.
AUDREY DERISSAINT NWAZE	9.	The Public Guide does help the public know how to get involved with the TPB.	Staff appreciates this comment.
AUDREY DERISSAINT NWAZE	10.	One thing that could be considered is to make sure that the material is accessible for those individuals who may be visually impaired. Such as having the information available in Braille.	<p>The COG Title VI Plan and Program and the Language Assistance Program provide guidance on preparing materials for people who do not read English or who need other accommodations</p> <p>Staff will work with members of the Access for All Advisory Committee to make sure that there is a version of the updated Participation Plan that is accessible to people with visual impairments, primarily through screen readers</p>
AUDREY DERISSAINT NWAZE	11.	The Participation Plan is straight to the point which is good.	Staff appreciates this comment.
MARIAN DOMBROSK	12.	The Public Guide helps the public know how to get involved with the TPB.	Staff appreciates this comment.
MARIAN DOMBROSK	13.	Suggestion for Tools and Techniques: Post signs in parks which will be impacted by planned projects. Many people do not tweet, blog or otherwise rely on electronic communications.	Using strategically placed signs in areas that will be impacted by planning projects makes a lot of sense. Staff have already discussed using signs and other location specific information tools to raise awareness about the upcoming Visualize 2045 update.
MARIAN DOMBROSK	14.	Natural Areas including streams and rivers are being adversely impacted by transportation projects. Presentation materials - include maps of adequate detail to include contour lines, water bodies.	It is important to be aware of the environmental and other impacts of transportation projects. Staff will share this recommendation with colleagues who produce maps for the TPB.
FHWA / FTA	15.	Any constraints to public input need to be identified. The more clearly you articulate the areas for input, the more meaningful the ultimate input will be.	<p>Staff agree that it is necessary to identify constraints to public participation when planning an activity. This is reflected in the Policy Principle about using an "equity perspective." This is also reflected in Step 5 of the Staff Guide.</p> <p>Staff have enhanced the Staff Guide (steps 4 and 7) to emphasize that it is necessary for staff to 1) recognize constraints or barriers to participation, and to 2) work to overcome those barriers or constraints when possible.</p>
FHWA / FTA	16.	We suggest a staff team or designated identified staff public participation experts and/or contractors that you will need to conduct the various facets of public participation and meet your promise to the public. Identify any training and development that is necessary for the team to succeed.	The Participation Plan identifies the Plan Development and Coordination Team as the primary staff responsible for supporting the Participation Plan. Members of this team that work on communications, outreach and participation are considered the Participation Team and they will support plan implementation. Other staff that work on GIS and communications may also be called upon to assist with preparing materials for the

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
FHWA / FTA	17.	Conducting a public forum or listening session is a good way to let the public know that you do indeed care about their views and ideas. Such sessions can be useful in encouraging the public to get further involved.	<p>public. A full organization chart can be found in the Title VI Plan (B-1).</p> <p>Public forums and listening sessions are listed in Step 7 of the Participation Workflow (page 19) as types of public meetings that the TPB uses.</p> <p>Staff agree that public forums and listening sessions are effective tools for both informing and gathering input from the public. Forums were an important part of the public involvement for Visualize 2045 in 2017 and 2018. It is likely that forums or listening sessions will also be part of public involvement for the next update to Visualize 2045, starting in 2021.</p>
FHWA / FTA	18.	The complexity of politics intimidates citizens, preventing them from getting involved. The many levels of government make it difficult for anyone to know where to begin, whom to approach, and how to be influential. Awareness and education regarding these processes will help individuals gain the self-confidence to begin.	<p>The TPB has a history of working to educate the public about how they can be influential in the regional transportation planning process. The Community Leadership Institute, which started in 2006, is designed to help residents understand complex decision-making structures and how they affect local needs and actions. Through the CAC, and TPB News, the TPB also seeks to educate the public about regional planning and how the public can get involved.</p> <p>Staff has enhanced the Public Guide to better acknowledge these challenges to participation.</p>
FHWA / FTA	19.	Provide additional information about staff roles in footnote on page 11.	Staff expanded this footnote to reference the organization chart in the Title VI Plan and Program.
FHWA / FTA	20.	Identify senior level officials responsible for staff guide implementation and how staff will recognize or be trained for a consistent and clear internal communication on public participation policy.	<p>Staff has revised the Participation Plan draft to clarify that the team leader in charge of the Plan Development and Coordination Team oversees the implementation of the plan. Page 26</p> <p>The Staff Guide in the draft plan has also been expanded to include a section called “Training,” which will key to the successful implementation of the Participation Plan. This section also includes reference to training provided as part of the Title VI Plan and Program. Page 26.</p>
FHWA / FTA	21.	Regarding the Participation Policy, consider simplifying or presenting in a different way.	Staff has re-ordered the content in the Participation Policy to provide a more rational narrative flow. The text now begins with the Policy Statement and Policy Goals (“what” we plan to do), followed by Principles for Engagement and Constituencies for Engagement (key concepts for “how” we plan to conduct public participation). We believe this re-ordering, along with some clarification

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
			of the text itself, will help the reader to more easily navigate the text.
FHWA / FTA	22.	Specifically cite 23 CFR 450.316 to be clear about what the federal requirements are.	Staff has expanded all references to the federal requirements, so they specifically cite 23 CFR 450.316. The specific requirements were added in two places: How to Use this Plan and the Federal Guide.
FHWA / FTA	23.	The Participation Plan should address online or virtual participation more explicitly.	Staff has enhanced the plan to more explicitly add online participation to Step 7 in the workflow.
FHWA / FTA	24.	Additional information about online participation can be included in Step 7 of the Staff Workflow.	See above.
FHWA / FTA	25.	Utilize dashboards and catchy slogans.	<p>Many TPB products already include dashboards and visualizations, and in recent years, we have sought to use branding and slogans, along with a deliberate use of plain language, to broaden the resonance of the TPB's work.</p> <p>In response to this comment, staff has expanded the evaluation section in the Staff Guide to highlight the use of dashboards. We have also included reference to the distillation of key messages into memorable slogans or phrases in Step 3 of the Staff Guide.</p>
FHWA / FTA	26.	Page 32 notes that when possible, meetings are held at COG offices. Discuss how this can be a challenging during a pandemic for people with limited mobility, and people who live further out in the region.	Staff have revised Appendix A of the draft plan to indicate that meetings may be conducted online or in a fashion combining online and face-to face formats. The draft indicates that virtual meetings are particularly important in times of emergency, such as the current pandemic.
FHWA / FTA	27.	On page 30 clarify whether you mean CLRP or Visualize 2045.	The term "CLRP" is no longer used for the TPB's long-range plan and its inclusion in the draft was a mistake. Staff have updated page 30 to make it clear that the Long-Range Transportation Plan is currently called Visualize 2045.
FHWA / FTA	28.	Statements like "If staff believes" in the document leave it up to staff to determine when public participation is needed (arbitrary and capricious).	Staff has expanded the opening language of the Staff Guide to clarify the decision-making process for determining whether an activity should include public information or involvement. As described in this section, staff will be expected to complete the Participation Workflow for each new major planning activity to determine whether public participation is needed and how it should be applied. We believe this approach is deliberate and thoughtful, and is, in fact, the antithesis of "arbitrary and capricious" (which were terms of concern used by FHWA/FTA in their comments). The staff responses to the

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
FHWA / FTA	29.	The plan provides an overarching framework and goals for engagement but lacks specificity in certain areas on how those activities will be carried out. Practical examples of how certain goals/objectives can be achieved related to outreach and participation should be included to a greater degree.	<p>Participation Workflow will be shared with their team leader, and possibly even other teams and the director. The responses to the workflow will be one factor in determining whether an activity should include public information or involvement. Other factors including timing, staff capacity, and budget.</p> <p>TPB staff conduct a variety of activities. Due to the extent of these activities, there is no one specific set of participation techniques that can be detailed that apply broadly to this work. The Participation Plan approaches this reality by laying out a Participation Workflow that staff must complete to craft an approach for public participation. In so doing, staff will develop activities specifically tailored to their work. Since the Participation Workflow is aligned with the Participation Policy, staff-led participation activities should reflect the goals and values of the TPB around participation and equity.</p> <p>Step 7 in the Participation Workflow identifies different techniques and activities that can be applied to achieve certain objectives.</p>
FHWA / FTA	30.	Visualization techniques provide the public with ways to understand complex materials.	Step 7 in the Participation Workflow acknowledges the importance of using visualizations to communicate complex ideas and make materials more accessible to the public.
FHWA / FTA	31.	Utilize different techniques for sharing information, like: video, photos, drawings, etc.	Step 7 in the Participation Workflow acknowledges the importance of using visualizations to communicate complex ideas and make materials more accessible to the public.
FHWA / FTA	32.	The document provides website addresses for finding out more information. We suggest providing additional ways to get information that does not require internet access. For example, mailing address, phone number, contact person name, email address, etc.	Staff recognizes the importance of providing options for residents to get information without using the internet. We have added the TPB's mailing address and phone number to the title page of the draft plan. We have also added language under Step 5 of the Staff Guide describing the need to take extra steps to reach out to people who do not have access to the internet. Among other things, this new text calls for the inclusion of the TPB's address and phone number in our documentation.
FHWA / FTA	33.	Has MWCOG verified what message (context) is being relayed when their information is translated in different languages via google translate?	The Participation Plan does not directly address the operation and maintenance of this website. COG provides translation services as part of its Title VI Plan, and questions about translating the website will be addressed in the next update to the Title VI Plan and Program.

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
FHWA / FTA	34.	A new employee, a member of the public and others should be able to walk through the plan and know exactly what it does step by step when public outreach/participation is needed. The plan would be an overly uniform process that may have some flexibility but those would need to be explained clearly.	<p>This plan is written so that a new employee or member of the public can walk through the decision-making process to better understand how staff plan public-facing activities to share with the public.</p> <p>As mentioned in response to question 28, staff added language in the introduction to the Participation Workflow to be more explicit about the process for determining whether and how participation activities should be implemented for individual planning activities.</p>
FHWA / FTA	35.	Clarify the role of advisory committees in the TPB process, including an explanation of how these groups can help others critically analyze and identify project properties that impact public.	Staff have added references to the advisory committees in Steps 3 and 4 of Staff Guide that highlight the role that these groups play as conduits to their communities.
FHWA / FTA	36.	Online accessibility tools might be used in beneficial ways. Technology and design can potentially transform the lives of people with diverse physical, cognitive and sensory abilities and needs.	Staff agree that digital tools provide new opportunities to reach people and get them involved. Staff believe that the best engagement activities do not rely on one tool or technique but provide a mixture of opportunities to learn about and participate at the TPB. In particular, we would note that Step 7 in the Staff Guide emphasizes that there “is no one tool or technique that can be broadly applied to reach all audiences. The most effective approaches to information sharing and engagement with the public use multiple tools and techniques to meet as many people as possible.”
FHWA / FTA	37.	Improve online engagement with anonymity. Anonymity removes barriers to engagement, breaks down power relations and frees up individual expression. It means individuals regardless of race, sex, orientation or ability can contribute their opinions and the resulting input is of equal value, both to participants of the planning process, and to those that benefit from data collected.	<p>Staff recognize that providing anonymous opportunities for the public to comment and get involved at the TPB can lower barriers for participation. Surveys and focus groups conducted by TPB often allow for anonymous content. Anonymous comment can also be submitted online via email.</p> <p>The TPB staff is seeking to develop ongoing dialogues with residents through our participation activities and therefore we hesitate to lose the opportunity to know who is participating in our process and how we might communicate with them. However, understanding that anonymity may be appropriate in some situations, we will explore new opportunities to permit anonymous commenting and participation.</p>
FHWA / FTA	38.	Evaluate performance systematically and by using sets of indicators, rather than relying on a single indicator or evaluation effort. Evaluation results can also be categorized by level of controversy, level of environmental review, or other characteristics that indicate	Staff has revised the “Participation Evaluation” section in the Staff Guide to indicate that when possible and appropriate, the TPB’s public participation activities should be evaluated using sets of indicators, not simply with one measure.

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
FHWA / FTA	39.	whether a potential for bias may exist.	<p>Staff has revised the Public Guide to be more explicit that the public can maximize the impact of their engagement by getting involved early in planning processes at the local and state level.</p> <p>Once the plan is approved, staff plan to develop supplemental materials that spin off the Public Guide into several different formats for distribution to the public and posting onto the website.</p>
FHWA / FTA	40.	Discuss what was learned from the previous consultant evaluation and how has that been applied or will be applied going forward to improve public participation.	<p>In 2018 and 2019 TPB staff worked with consultants to evaluate participation activities conducted in 2017 and 2018. That evaluation included recommendations that informed the development of the 2020 TPB Participation Plan. In particular, staff referred to the following recommendations when working on this plan:</p> <p><i>One - Update the Participation Plan to streamline content, clarify roles and purposes, and evolve strategies to reach different constituencies.</i></p> <p>This update to the Participation Plan places increased emphasis on clarifying roles and purposes. This can be seen in the Principles for Engagement and the Participation Workflow. The workflow also addresses using different strategies to reach different constituencies.</p> <p><i>Three - Revisit Participation Plan on a regular basis, through tools such as an annual survey.</i></p> <p>This update to the Participation Plan puts additional emphasis on regular evaluation. Surveys may be used as part of that evaluation.</p> <p><i>Seven - Clarify expectations and role of each committee, particularly regarding public input and communications.</i></p> <p>Staff believe it is important to clarify expectations and the role of advisory committees. Due to the extent of this work, staff decided to remove the Citizens Advisory mission and operating procedures from the Participation Plan so that they can be updated through a separate process.</p> <p><i>Fourteen - Plan for ways to improve overall participation based on lessons learned including an evaluation of what was successful in Visualize 2045.</i></p>

COMMENTOR	#	COMMENT	STAFF RESPONSE
FHWA / FTA	41.	The plan is consistent with the recommendations from the 2019 FHWA/FTA certification report.	Staff called upon lessons learned from Visualize 2045 outreach in 2017 and 2018 when developing the Participation Workflow in general, and Step 7 on tools and techniques. Staff appreciates this comment. We took deliberate steps to ensure the new plan is consistent with recommendations from the 2019 federal certification review.

TPB PARTICIPATION PLAN - DRAFT

2020 Update



National Capital Region
Transportation Planning Board

TPB PARTICIPATION PLAN - 2020 UPDATE

DRAFT – October 2020

ABOUT THE TPB

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for metropolitan Washington. It is responsible for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the metropolitan area. Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia, 24 local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies. The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

CREDITS

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to TPB committees and other stakeholders for providing in-depth review and comment. The Citizens Advisory Committee and Access for All Advisory Committee were particularly instrumental in producing this document.

ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

Alternative formats of this document are available upon request. Visit www.mwcog.org/accommodations or call (202) 962-3300 or (202) 962-3213 (TDD).

TITLE VI NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations prohibiting discrimination in all programs and activities. For more information, to file a Title VI related complaint, or to obtain information in another language, visit mwcog.org/nondiscrimination or call (202) 962-3300.

El Consejo de Gobiernos del Área Metropolitana de Washington (COG) cumple con el Título VI de la Ley sobre los Derechos Civiles de 1964 y otras leyes y reglamentos en todos sus programas y actividades. Para obtener más información, someter un pleito relacionado al Título VI, u obtener información en otro idioma, visite mwcog.org/nondiscrimination o llame al (202) 962-3300.

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PREFACE

This Participation Plan states the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board's (TPB) commitment to transparent communications and engagement with the public and with relevant agencies to support the regional transportation planning process. This includes communications and engagement to inform developing the Long-Range Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The plan articulates the TPB's policy for public participation. It describes how members of the public can get involved and demonstrates how staff will work to meet and exceed federal requirements. Most importantly, this plan guides TPB staff interactions with the public so their public-facing work can: 1) reach as many people as inclusively as possible, and 2) collect meaningful input and build support to inform TPB plans and programs, and aid in decision making.

This Participation Plan is required under federal laws and regulations pertaining to metropolitan planning. The plan builds on previous efforts designed to encourage participation in the TPB process and provide reasonable opportunities for residents and other interested agencies to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

As required by federal regulation, TPB staff developed the plan in consultation with interested parties, including residents, representatives of people with disabilities, users of public transportation and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and affected public agencies. In addition, federal regulations require the plan to be released for a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days before it is adopted by the TPB.

ABOUT THE TPB

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is designated under federal law as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Washington region. As an MPO, the TPB brings together key decision makers to coordinate planning and funding for the region's transportation system. The TPB relies on advisory committees and participation from interested parties in order to make informed decisions.

The TPB was created in 1965 by the region's local and state governments to respond to federal highway legislation in 1962 that required the establishment of a "continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated" transportation planning process in every urbanized area in the United States. The TPB's membership includes key transportation decision makers in the metropolitan Washington region. The board includes local officials— mayors, city council members, county commissioners/board members, and others—as well as representatives from the state transportation agencies, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA), and the state legislatures. The TPB also includes non-voting representatives from key federal agencies, the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority, and the National Capital Planning Commission.

The TPB became associated with the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) in 1966. Local cities and counties established COG in 1957 by to deal with regional concerns including growth, housing, environment, public health and safety—as well as transportation. Although the TPB is an independent body, its staff is provided by COG's Department of Transportation Planning.

The TPB prepares plans and programs that the federal government must approve in order for federal-aid transportation funds to flow to the Washington region. In particular, federal law and regulations relating to the work of MPOs require the TPB to adopt a long-range transportation plan and the six-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TPB must also ensure compliance with other federal laws and requirements, including federal air quality conformity requirements.

In addition to ensuring compliance with federal laws and requirements, the TPB performs many other functions, including acting as a regional forum to coordinate policy making and providing technical resources for transportation decision makers. The TPB receives input and guidance from advisory committees that include members of the public, special interest groups, and jurisdictional staff.

HOW TO USE THIS PLAN

This plan clarifies the TPB's commitment to transparent and open collaboration with the public and renews the TPB's commitment to equity. The plan seeks to highlight a practical approach to public participation. The actionable information in the plan varies based on the user's relationship to the TPB.

Public
Guide

Staff Guide

Federal
Guide

Participation Policy

Public Guide

If you are a member of the public, including individuals, community groups, non-profits, advocacy groups, and others, please consult with the Public Guide. It walks you through the ongoing and predictable ways that you can interact with and get involved with the TPB. It also connects you to where you can learn about future activities and get involved locally.

Staff Guide

If you work for the TPB, consult the Staff Guide. This guide walks you through the process for determining whether your work activity requires or would benefit from public participation. This guide also presents a workflow, or a series of questions, that need to be answered in order to develop a plan for interacting with the public as part of your activity.

Federal Guide

If you want to learn about federal requirements (23 CFR 450.316) for the TPB's participation activities – whether you are staff, a regular participant in the TPB process, or a member of the public – consult the Federal Guide.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

The Participation Policy provides the foundation for all the TPB's interactions with the public so that it can reach as many people as inclusively as possible while collecting meaningful input, building support for TPB plans and programs, and aiding in decision making.

This Participation Policy chapter consists of four parts. The Policy Statement articulates the TPB's commitment to making its process and products accessible to everyone who lives in metropolitan Washington. The Policy Goals state what the TPB is trying to achieve through its public-facing work. The Principles for Engagement declare the TPB's values for interacting with the public. Finally, the Constituencies for Engagement describe three target audiences to help staff focus information and participation activities.

Policy Statement

It is the TPB's policy to provide public access and involvement under a collaborative planning process in which the interests of all TPB constituencies are reflected and considered. It is the TPB's intent to make both its policy and technical processes inclusive of and accessible to all constituencies.

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 information derived from public involvement is essential to good decision making.

Policy Goals

The Policy Goals describe what the TPB is trying to achieve through its participation activities. When planning public-facing work, staff should use these goals to set desirable outcomes, and then refer to the goals when evaluating their work.

- **Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools.** The TPB will disseminate information and solicit input using different tools and conduits. Engagement activities will be conducted in ways that are tailored to specific constituencies, ranging from active participants to the general public.
- **Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities.** The TPB will work to improve access to technical and planning information and, where appropriate, tailor that information to be accessible to more constituencies. Opportunities for participation in TPB meetings and in committee meetings will be clearly defined and provided at each meeting.
- **Gather input from diverse perspectives.** The TPB will encourage participation from diverse constituencies and will provide for discussion about transportation issues that are responsive to the interests of different constituencies. In addition to encouraging input from people with different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, the TPB will seek the perspectives of people who use all transportation modes and come from all areas of the region.

- **Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully.** The TPB will give thoughtful consideration to how public input might affect its decisions and how input might improve TPB plans and products. The TPB will acknowledge the comments that were received and how they were considered.
- **Promote a regional perspective.** The TPB will communicate how regional transportation planning plays a vital role in coordinating planning activities on many levels. The TPB will also work to connect the public to where their input can have the biggest impact, which is often on the local or state level.

Principles for Engagement

The Principles for Engagement state TPB values around informing and engaging the public. These principles recognize that most people who are impacted by transportation decisions are not technical experts and that being inclusive means meeting people where they are. These principles guide engagement and point towards the Policy Goals without specifying those goals or the means to achieve them.

- **Equity perspective** – Staff strive to incorporate an equity perspective into their work activities so that work acknowledges and seeks to accommodate different contexts, experiences, and abilities. This equity perspective is informed by COG’s Title VI Plan and Program, the TPB Equity Statement¹, and the TPB’s Equity Emphasis Areas. It acknowledges past inequities and barriers to involvement and seeks to be more just.
- **Plain language** – Staff strive to use plain language and prepare their materials in a variety of ways. This will make TPB work accessible and understandable to as many people as possible and serve as a foundation for meaningful participation
- **Early and continuing participation** – Staff strive to maximize public input by involving the public early in planning processes. Staff also strive to involve the public throughout processes to create repeat interactions with the public. This will help foster transparency and keep the public up to date and aware of future opportunities to learn more and to participate.
- **Timely response** – Staff strive to acknowledge receipt of public input in a timely manner and provide information about how public input will be used. This will build trust by demonstrating the value and purpose of input.
- **Clarity of Purpose** – Staff strive for clarity of purpose when planning public-facing work. This will help staff determine if the work is meant to inform, consult, or engage the public. This will also help the public understand their role in the TPB plan or activity and how their input will be used.

¹ Appendix C: TPB Equity Resolution

Constituencies for Engagement

The TPB acknowledges that not every person is aware of the TPB or has an understanding for how decisions are made at the regional, state, and local levels. To make sure that TPB participation efforts are most effective, it is important to tailor communications and outreach to different constituencies.

The constituencies below are grouped according to varying levels of engagement in regional transportation planning process and awareness of regional transportation issues.

- **Active participants** are both knowledgeable about transportation policy issues in general, as well as the TPB's role in the regional transportation planning process. These individuals and organizations already actively participate in the TPB process and have an extensive understanding of regional transportation issues and policy. Among others, this category includes the TPB's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the Access for All (AFA) Advisory Committee, and graduates of the Community Leadership Institute.
- **Community leaders** have some knowledge of transportation policy issues but are less familiar with the TPB's role in the regional transportation planning process. They also may not be fully aware of the regional context underlying transportation challenges and experiences throughout the region. This group often includes community and opinion leaders who work at the local level.
- **The general public** has an inherent interest in transportation challenges but often possess little direct knowledge of transportation policy making. This group represents most of the region's population, although in some cases, it may also include local leaders or even elected officials who have limited exposure to transportation planning.

An equity perspective is vital for understanding how to work within these different constituencies. The TPB recognizes that each of these constituent groups include people of color, people with limited English proficiency, differing abilities, people with low incomes, and people of all ages, including youth and elders. Staff remain aware of the need to make extra efforts to engage these populations through information and participation.

PUBLIC GUIDE

Although this participation plan is primarily a guidebook for TPB staff to use in designing and implementing public engagement activities, it also articulates the TPB's commitment to an open and transparent planning process. The TPB and its staff are part of an ongoing partnership with the public, so this plan's policies and goals are meant to represent values that we share and are working toward.

The TPB recognizes that transportation planning is complex. Multiple levels of government and political interests are involved. This complexity can be intimidating and makes it difficult for the public to know where to begin. The following guide is an attempt to present high-level opportunities for the public to get informed and involved at the TPB. Staff also recognize that there are many seen and unseen barriers to participating in planning processes. You should reach out to staff if you are concerned that barriers to your involvement are not being addressed. Staff contact information is often included on document and on the web if you are not sure who to ask.

If you are looking for practical tips for getting involved, there are many ways you can be part of the TPB process. The next few pages describe how the region's residents can follow TPB activities, learn about key issues, provide comments, and otherwise get involved in the TPB's work.

Get Informed

There are a variety of ways to stay informed about what is going on at the TPB and in the region. You can attend meetings of the board or one of its subcommittee, read about regional transportation issues through TPB publications, or follow us on social media.

TPB MEETINGS

The TPB meets once a month except in August. The meetings are held at the COG offices, although during the pandemic of 2020, they have been conducted on a virtual-only basis. They are open to the public for observation and comment and usually take place on the third Wednesday of the month at noon. The TPB's agenda and meeting materials are posted on the website six days before the monthly meeting. Meeting materials, meeting recordings, and a live stream of the meeting can be found at mwcog.org/tpbmtg. Anyone may subscribe to an email list to receive the agenda and materials when they are posted. You may subscribe or update your subscription here: mwcog.org/subscribe/.

TECHNICAL SUBCOMMITTEES

The TPB's subcommittees focus on specific subject matter like public transit, freight, bicycle and pedestrian issues, travel forecasting, and other topics. Subcommittee meetings bring together technical experts from local and state agencies and inform TPB work and processes. To find out more about the subcommittees, visit mwcog.org/tpbtech.

TPB NEWS

TPB News is a bimonthly newsletter and blog that shares information about what is happening with the TPB and COG's Department of Transportation Planning. TPB News covers issues going before the board, staff work, committee work, how to get involved, and deep dives into various programs and

federal requirements. TPB News is one of the best ways to stay in the know about what is happening at the TPB. TPB News posts can be found on the COG website at mwcog.org/tpbnews.

COG WEBSITE

The website for the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, or COG, at mwcog.org is home to everything you need to know about the TPB. You can also find TPB News, events and meetings, documents and plans, and more. You may visit the COG website at mwcog.org.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Residents who want to get the latest information about TPB activities can follow us on Facebook (facebook.com/natcapregtpb) and Twitter (@[natcapregtpb](https://twitter.com/natcapregtpb)).

COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

The CLI is an educational program that encourages community leaders to get involved in transportation-related decision making at all levels. CLI participants learn to be regional transportation leaders by connecting the interests of their local communities, constituencies, and elected officials with the planning issues facing the entire metropolitan Washington region. Learn more about the CLI at mwcog.org/cli.

Follow Major Plans and Programs

These regional plans and programs are the primary focus of the TPB's work. Residents who want to be involved with the TPB's process will benefit from an understanding of how these plans are developed. Future updates will offer opportunities for public input and will be guided by the strategies and procedures for engagement that are laid out in this participation plan. Information about how to get involved in these planning activities can be found at mwcog.org/tpb.

VISUALIZE 2045

Visualize 2045 is the TPB's current federally mandated, long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. When it was approved in 2018, the plan represented a new kind of long-range transportation planning effort for our region. For the first time, in addition to including projects that the region's transportation agencies expect to be able to afford between now and 2045, the plan identified aspirational initiatives – projects, programs, and policies – that go beyond financial constraints. The plan is updated every four years. The TPB is scheduled to update Visualize 2045 in 2022. Extensive opportunities for public engagement will be available before its approval. Learn more at visualize2045.org.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The TIP is a federally required document that describes the planned schedule in the next four years for distributing federal, state and local funds for state and local transportation projects. It includes highway projects, rail, bus and streetcar projects, and bicycle and pedestrian improvements, as well as maintenance funds and operational programs. The TPB's FY 2021-2024 TIP contains over 300 project records and more than \$15 billion in funding across the region. The TIP undergoes a public comment period before approval. Every two years the TPB also conducts a TIP Forum, an open public meeting where the state DOT's share information about their state funding documents. Learn more about the TIP at mwcog.org/TIP.

OTHER PLANS AND INITIATIVES

The TPB is always in the process of updating various plans. Some are focused on specific modes of transportation – such as freight or bicycle and pedestrian needs. Other initiatives focus on specific segments of the region’s population, such as planning activities to serve older adults and persons with disabilities. Public engagement in these planning activities can help them become more effective in meeting their desired outcomes.

Get Involved in the TPB

Once you’re informed, there are a variety of ways to be involved in regional transportation issues through the TPB or elsewhere.

EXPRESS YOURSELF FOR THE RECORD

Present your ideas during the TPB public comment period at the beginning of each board meeting. TPB meetings begin at 12 noon on the third Wednesday of each month (except August). To participate, call (202) 962-3315 or email TPBComment@mwkog.org. Meeting time and place is subject to change. Check the website for updates.

PUT IT IN WRITING

Send a letter or submit a written statement to key decision makers. You can submit a written statement to the TPB Comment form. You may also send your message by e-mail (TPBComment@mwkog.org) or regular mail (Transportation Planning Board, MWCOG, 777 N. Capitol St., NE, Washington, DC 20002).

APPLY TO SERVE ON A TPB ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The TPB has two advisory committees that provide insight from the region’s residents. The Citizens Advisory Committee provides independent, region-oriented citizen advice to the TPB on transportation plans and issues. The Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) advises the TPB on transportation issues, programs, policies, and services important to low-income communities, people of color, people with limited English proficiency, people with disabilities, and older adults. The committee raises important issues to determine whether and how these issues might be addressed within the TPB process.

These advisory committees are called upon by TPB staff to provide specific input in the development of TPB plans and programs. They are frequently asked to provide a public perspective on materials before they go to the board. More broadly, these committees bring perspectives and ideas to light that shape TPB work over time.

You can get information about how to apply to serve on these committees on our website: mwkog.org/tpbcac and mwkog.org/tpbafa.

Get involved at the state and/or local levels

If you are interested in a specific project or issue, it is often most effective to get involved early in the planning process, which typically occurs at the local and state levels. Key decisions often must be

made before they come to the TPB. Many projects are formulated based on local needs. State agencies often work with locals to determine which projects to pursue. Here are some ways you can have an impact on transportation challenges facing the region outside of the TPB:

- Get information. Contact local, regional, and state transportation planning agencies to ask about projects in which you are interested. Find out how citizens are involved in these projects.
- Get out there. Attend public meetings on projects or plans. These sessions are often advertised in local papers or posted on the Internet by local or state agencies.
- Talk with decision makers. Contact elected officials or the staff at transportation agencies to request information about projects or plans. Find out how citizens can get involved.
- Work with your neighbors. Contact your neighborhood or civic association to see if their members are interested in a particular transportation issue and if they plan to take any action.
- Join a group. Join an organized group that is promoting a specific transportation project or is advocating broad policy changes regarding transportation investments in your community or across the region.

STAFF GUIDE

The Staff Guide is a tool that TPB staff will use as they start work on a new activity. The guide walks staff through a process of determining if their work has a public-facing component and if it is covered by any federal participation requirements. The workflow described in this chapter also helps staff plan for public participation that is in accordance with the TPB's Participation Policy and makes sure that the work can reach as many people as inclusively as possible while also collecting meaningful input, building support for TPB plans and programs, and aiding in decision making.

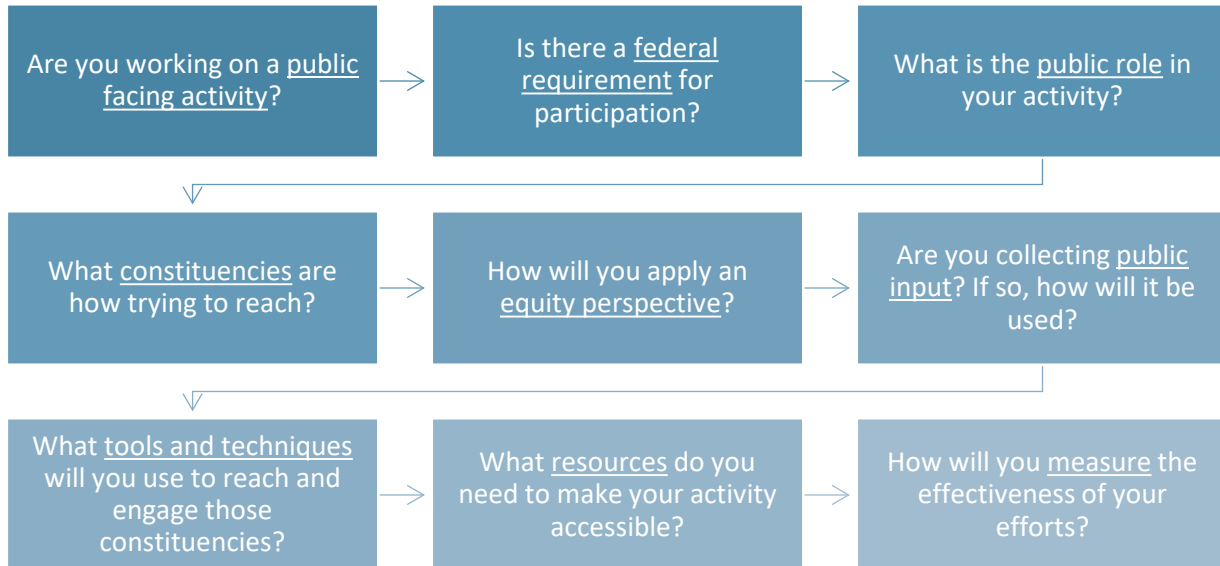
Not all the work led by TPB staff requires direct input from the public, but there is value in being clear about how technical work can inform the public. The TPB process is at its best when technical work, combined with input from an informed public, supports decision making.

Participation Workflow

This workflow walks staff² through a series of questions to ask themselves as they start a new activity. Each question is accompanied by a description and considerations to inform and provide context. The answers to these questions will outline an approach for how staff can work with the public in their activity. These questions will also help staff identify material and staffing resources to assist with their activity.

When staff start a new activity, they should spend time completing the Participation Workflow. This workflow walks them through questions they need to consider, helping them determine if their activity should include elements that inform or involve the public. Once completed, staff should take their answers and discuss with their team leader and, if possible, with members of the Participation Team. Working together they will make the determination about public information and involvement. Members of the Participation Team, other team leaders, and the director of transportation planning can also provide input into this process. Activities that have federal requirements must follow the participation guidance as described in regulations (23 CFR 450.316).

² The staff roles identified in this chapter's workflow can be broadly defined as follows: "TPB staff" is anyone who is responsible for an activity. "Team Leaders" are the managers who oversee staff who conduct the work outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program, which is the TPB's work plan. The "Participation Team" are the people who work in communications, outreach, and participation as part of the Plan Development and Coordination Team. For more detail on staff roles, refer to the Organization Chart (B-1) in the COG Title VI Plan.



1) ARE YOU WORKING ON A PUBLIC-FACING ACTIVITY?

If staff work is going to be presented to the TPB or committees, then it is considered a public-facing activity. Public-facing activities include all TPB activities, products, or events that the public has— or should have— the opportunity to review, participate in, or potentially influence. The audience for these activities may include one or more of the constituencies identified on page 6 of this plan— active participants, community leaders, and the general public.

Examples of public-facing activities include one-time events, like webinars, training programs, and public forums. They also include multi-faceted planning projects that offer a variety of opportunities over a period of time for public information and engagement. Such activities include developing and updating the TPB’s long-range transportation plan, as well as more specialized work such as the Regional Freight Plan or the Enhanced Mobility Program. And most obviously, public-facing work includes all materials that are publicly presented for discussion and official action.

Not all staff activities are public-facing, and in such cases, there may be no need for staff to proceed with this workflow. Such work may be purely technical, intended for internal use only, or designed to support larger activities. In other cases, such work may be conducted in collaboration with jurisdiction partners who take the lead on how public input will be framed.

However, even activities that are not public-facing may contribute to a plan or activity that directly impacts the public. Whenever possible, such materials should attempt to use plain language that is understandable to the public, as well as to elected officials who may not have technical backgrounds.

Are you working on a public-facing activity?		
Yes	No	Uncertain
If your work is public-facing, or informs a public-facing product, proceed to question 2.	If your work is not public-facing or does not impact the public, then you do not need to proceed through this workflow.	If you are uncertain whether your work is public-facing, then consult with your team leader or a member of the Participation Team.

2) IS THERE A FEDERAL REQUIREMENT FOR PARTICIPATION?

Some of the activities and processes overseen by TPB staff are federally required. These include developing the Long-Range Transportation Plan, currently known as Visualize 2045, and the Transportation Improvement Program, or TIP. See the Federal Guide for information about federal participation requirements.

Federal participation requirements are a starting point for some plans and activities. These requirements typically focus on the length of a public comment period. When resources are available, staff are encouraged to go beyond these requirements to achieve the Participation Goals.

Is there a federal requirement for participation?		
Yes	No	Uncertain
If your product does have federal requirements for participation, refer to the Federal Guide or Appendix B. Note those requirements and move on to Question 3.	If your work does not have federal participation requirements, please proceed to Question 3.	If you are uncertain whether there is a federal participation requirement for your work, consult with your team leader or the Participation Team.

3) WHAT IS THE PUBLIC ROLE IN YOUR ACTIVITY?

The International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) describes a spectrum for participation³ that ranges from informing the public, at the most basic level, all the way to empowering the public to shape outcomes, at the most involved level. In between these extremes there are opportunities to work with the public with different levels of intensity.

³ Public Participation Spectrum used with permission from IAP2. For more visit: iap2usa.org/cvs.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	<i>Inform</i>	<i>Consult</i>	<i>Involve</i>	<i>Collaborate</i>	<i>Empower</i>
<i>Goal</i>	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
<i>Public Promise</i>	We will keep you informed	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

It is important for staff to decide where on this spectrum their activity fits. This will help set expectations with the public, TPB staff, jurisdiction and agency partners, in addition to committees and the board. Identifying the public role in an activity is important to help determine tools, techniques, and resources that will be utilized as part of the activity.

The three most common levels of participation at the TPB are inform, consult, and involve. If staff believe an activity would benefit from the additional forms of involvement that are identified on the IAP2 table – public collaboration or empowerment – they should talk with the Participation Team and their Team Leader.

Inform

If staff determine the public's role is to be informed, they should focus their efforts on making the information they are sharing accessible. Staff should prepare materials using plain language and in a variety of formats. This means explaining complex information in simpler terms. Taking the time to explain concepts help people to better understand the information you are trying to convey. You may want to consult the Participation Team to figure out your key messages and create memorable phrases or slogans that will resonate with the public. Visualizations, maps, interactive maps, and videos are other tools that staff can use to make their materials accessible as they inform the public.

There are multiple ways for staff to inform the public. These might include:

- writing a blog post for TPB News and sharing it in an email newsletter
- sharing information through social media
- pursuing traditional media coverage
- sending information through TPB member jurisdictions, agencies, and other partners who can widely disseminate data and key messages
- using non-digital tools, including the US postal service, to reach people who may have limited internet access.

For some activities it is enough to only inform the public and not move on to more active engagement. When informing the public is the primary purpose, staff should work with the Participation Team to think about creative and innovative ways to do that.

Consult

If staff believe the public's role in an activity is consultation, they should focus on how they want to solicit feedback in addition to making sure the information they are sharing is accessible and uses plain language. Feedback can be solicited through public comment periods, focus groups, and via comments on social media and other platforms.

When consulting with the public, staff should be clear at the beginning of the process about the type of feedback that is sought, the length of the opportunity, and how staff will summarize and use that feedback to inform decision making. As a best practice, staff should share with people who submitted feedback a summary of all feedback received and a description for how it was used in the activity.

For example, in announcing a public comment period for a plan update, staff might offer specific questions for the public to consider in crafting their input. The announcement should also let people know how long the comment period will be open and how commenters can find out how their comments were summarized and used in the final version of the plan.

Involve

If staff decide to get the public involved in an activity, they should focus on making sure there are multiple opportunities for the public to interact with information and provide feedback. At a minimum, staff should engage the public at the beginning of a process, mid-way through that process, and at the end to demonstrate how feedback has been used to inform decision making and the final product.

When involving the public, TPB staff often call upon the Citizens Advisory Committee and the Access for All Advisory Committee. These committees are comprised of members of the active public who are familiar with the TPB's role in regional transportation planning and have a sophisticated understanding of transportation planning issues. The members of these groups can serve as conduits to their communities and can help to critically analyze public needs and identify solutions. For example, the committees have provided input that has fundamentally changed key TPB projects and programs, including ongoing regional safety planning and the inception of the Regional Transportation Priorities Plan.

With regular meeting schedules, these advisory committees are a natural fit for public involvement, however staff are encouraged to look beyond these advisory committees when involving the public, when possible. Thinking about how community leaders and the general public can be involved in a process will help make the public involvement more equitable.

What is the public role in your activity? What level of participation is appropriate?			
Inform	Consult	Involve	Uncertain
If part of your activity is to inform the public, think about the what you'd like the public to know. Proceed to Question 4.	If you plan to consult with the public, think about which aspects of the activity require or would benefit from consultation. Proceed to Question 4.	If you plan to involve the public, think about the aspects of your activity that are best suited for regular interactions with the public. Proceed to Question 4.	If you are uncertain the public role in your activity, then consult with your team leader or a member of the Participation Team.

4) **WHAT CONSTITUENCIES ARE YOU TRYING TO REACH?**

The Participation Policy describes constituencies with whom the TPB strives to engage on public-facing activities. Staff should identify which of these constituencies need to learn about or be engaged in a staff activity. To learn more about these groups, consult the Constituencies for Engagement on page 6.

When identifying constituencies, it is also important to recognize that groups have different constraints or barriers to participation. List those constraints and barriers so that you can refer to them in Step 7 when selecting tools and techniques.

Active participants are both knowledgeable about transportation policy issues in general, as well as the TPB's role in the regional transportation planning process. When working with the active public, staff should take the following into consideration:

- Recognize and support the vital contributions of individuals and groups who are already active in the TPB process.
- Engage with and tap into the active public's expertise and commitment (both individuals and groups) to inform the TPB's decision making.
- Support the active public in their efforts to disseminate information about regional transportation planning to their communities.
- Members of the TPB's two advisory committees are considered active participants. They understand the MPO process and provide direct feedback on TPB materials and activities. These committees can be called upon to provide public input once per project or before materials go to the board. These committees are also able to provide ongoing input throughout a process.

Community leaders have some knowledge of transportation policy issues but may not be familiar with the TPB's role in the regional transportation planning process. When working with community leaders, staff should take the following into consideration:

- Provide information and knowledge about regional transportation issues that will empower community leaders to positively affect transportation decision making at local and state levels.
- Engage community leaders as conduits to disseminate information about regional transportation issues at a grass roots level.
- Encourage community leaders to get involved in the regional transportation planning process at the TPB.
- Provide opportunities for cross-jurisdictional networking.

The general public has an inherent interest in transportation challenges but often possesses little direct knowledge of transportation policy-making structures. When working with the general public, staff should take the following into consideration:

- Make available basic information on regional transportation and land-use challenges to create a more informed public.

- Increase the capacity of the general public to understand transportation and land-use issues so that some of them might become community leaders or active participants.
- Understand that most members of the general public may not have the time or inclination to become more engaged in transportation planning activities. Therefore, outreach activities for interested people should focus on basic issues, not planning processes or institutions.

5) HOW WILL YOU APPLY AN EQUITY PERSPECTIVE?

The constituencies described in Question 4 are differentiated according to their levels of knowledge and past involvement in the TPB. But when determining how to tailor outreach, it is equally important for staff to consider an equity perspective in deciding how to develop and implement engagement activities.

An equity perspective will sharpen staff’s attention on those who may not have been historically engaged by the TPB. These include people of color, people with limited English proficiency, people with differing abilities, low-income people, and people of all ages. Staff need to put extra effort, attention, and resources into reaching out to members of these communities to overcome the lack of effort from the TPB in the past. Specifically, staff should think about and think through how an activity may impact traditionally underserved communities, or populations living in Equity Emphasis Areas.⁴

In looking through the equity lens, it will be helpful to consider the following:

- Staff should acknowledge past mistakes when working with groups that have been left out of the planning process and voice a commitment to do better.
- Staff should acknowledge barriers to participation and offer accommodations to help overcome those barriers.
- Staff should think about how to adapt their work to make it accessible despite these barriers.
- Staff should recognize that people in this group are part of the constituencies described in the previous step (active participants, community leaders, general public), so the considerations for reaching out to those groups also apply here.

Equity in Virtual Engagement

Limited access to the internet is an example of an everyday barrier to participation. As the world becomes increasingly reliant on digital communications, it can be easy to forget that some people do not have computers at home or otherwise cannot readily access the internet.

Extra efforts are needed to make sure these people are not left out. For example:

- Staff should include the MWCOG/TPB mailing address and phone number— not just website links and emails addresses— in documentation whenever possible.
- When appropriate, staff should print and distribute copies of key documents instead of relying solely on internet distribution.

⁴ Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs) are small geographic areas with above average concentrations of minority and low-income populations. The EEAs have been approved by the TPB to be the primary tool for regional Environmental Justice analysis.

- As meetings increasingly become virtual, staff should seek out ways to get input from people on the other side of the digital divide who cannot participate in such sessions online.

How will you apply an equity perspective to your activity?	
If you have thoughts on how you can apply an equity perspective to the activity share those ideas with your team leader and the Participation Team.	Uncertain
	If you are uncertain about how to apply an equity perspective to your activity, consult with your team leader or a member of the Participation Team.

6) ARE YOU COLLECTING PUBLIC INPUT? IF SO, HOW WILL IT BE USED?

The Participation Policy states that public input into TPB work makes its products better. This can only happen if there is a plan for how to incorporate public input into an activity or work product. The decision about collecting public input is related to the public’s role in the activity (Question 3). If the public’s role is primarily to be informed, then there may be no need to collect public input. If the public role is consultation, involvement, or something more extensive, then it is important to plan for collecting, summarizing, and using input.

Before deciding the tools and techniques to use to collect input, staff need to decide when input will be collected and what resources are available. This decision should be informed by the Principles for Engagement on page 5, which calls upon staff to offer early and ongoing participation. The public’s role in the activity will help determine when and how often public input will be collected. If the public’s role is consultation, then input will likely be collected once toward the end of an activity. However, if the public’s role is involvement, then it is important to collect input early and throughout a process.

Here are some key points to consider:

- **Take enough time.** Regardless of how often input is solicited, staff should ensure that adequate time is built into the outreach process so that staff and decision makers can fully consider the comments received and use that input to potentially make changes in final products and decisions.
- **Be clear about how you will use input.** Of course, until comments are received, it will be hard to know whether and how they might specifically affect final products and decisions. Nonetheless, staff should be as precise as early as possible in describing the ways in which input will be synthesized and potential changes that might result. In some cases, it might be helpful to flag issues or decisions that could be particularly subject to change based on the public input received.
- **Show how input was used in the past.** Staff may also want to highlight ways in which input is made and continues to make a difference in engagement activities. For example, public forums and workshops have indirectly influenced the course of TPB planning. For example, concerns about regional growth patterns that were expressed in public forums led to the creation of the Transportation Land-Use Connections (TLC) Program. More recently, the survey and public forums conducted for Visualize 2045 highlighted the public’s desire for

more reliability in the transportation system, a theme that was ultimately highlighted in the long-range transportation plan approved in 2018.

- Follow up to let people know they were heard.** When possible, staff should follow up with the public to let them know how their comments and input were used in the final product. Again, such follow-up activity can be time-consuming and therefore, it will require advance planning and must be prioritized. But **closing the loop** with residents who have participated in TPB planning activities will strengthen public support for changes the TPB is seeking to promote and it will encourage individuals and community groups to participate again in future TPB public engagement efforts.

Are you collecting public input? If so, how will it be used?		
Yes	No	Uncertain
If you are collecting public input, think about the format of that input. How will that be input be summarized and shared? How will that input be used?	If your activity does not require input, proceed to Question 6.	If you are uncertain whether you will be collecting public input, or how it will be used, consult with you team leader or the Participation Team.

7) WHAT TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES CAN YOU USE TO REACH AND ENGAGE THOSE CONSTITUENCIES?

There are a variety of tools and techniques available to TPB staff as they plan to inform and engage the public. Staff should consider who their audience is and what kind of participation they are seeking, and then consider which tools may be best to reach that constituency.

The tools and techniques that staff utilize should be responsive to the public’s role in an activity, the constituencies that staff are trying to reach, and whether staff plan to collect public input. There is no one tool or technique that can be broadly applied to reach all audiences. The most effective approaches to information sharing and engagement with the public use multiple tools and techniques to meet as many people as possible.

Even if you have used a tool in the past, you should reevaluate its effectiveness in reaching your desired audience. You might also consider using new tools and techniques, which are being developed all the time. Staff should consider the benefits and drawbacks of new tools before moving forward with their use. It is a good idea to consult with the Participation Team and your team leader before proceeding to make sure resources are available and timing works.

The COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 accelerated the deployment of virtual meeting tools and other forms of online engagement. The effects of these changes can be both positive and negative. On one hand, virtual engagement can increase participation, particularly from people who are reluctant or too busy to attend live events. Online accessibility tools also can be used to accommodate people with diverse physical, cognitive, and sensory abilities and needs. But online engagement can sometimes leave out people with limited access to the internet. And as staff are called upon to host more public interactions in online and virtual spaces, the need for responsiveness is especially important but often challenging.

When selecting a mix of tools and techniques to help reach and engage the public, refer to the list of constraints and barriers you identified in Step 4. Think about how those tools and techniques can be used to accommodate or overcome those constraints and barriers.

Examples of tools and techniques include:

- **Public comment periods** are one of the most basic ways for the public to participate and for staff to collect input. Public comment periods typically last 30 days. During public comment periods the materials are provided online for the public to review. They can then submit their comments via online form or by mail. At the conclusion of the comment period, staff summarize the comments received and write draft responses to comments. Sometimes, these responses are written in collaboration with jurisdiction and agency partners. The staff's summary and response document is typically shared with the board before a plan or other board action is approved. Although public comment periods are often held towards the end of an activity, they can also occur at the beginning or in the middle of its development.
- **Open or ongoing opportunities to comment** are less formal than a traditional public comment period and can occur via a form on a website or a box in the back of a room during a public meeting. This type of comment is less about soliciting specific input on an activity, and more about creating an opportunity for the public to share general thoughts on an activity or process. Open and ongoing comment opportunities are best suited for supplementing other ways to collect input from the public. Even though this type of outreach is often more open-ended than other approaches, staff should still develop a plan on how the information is going to be collected, used, and shared.
- **Public meetings** provide staff a unique opportunity to share information with and hear back directly from the public in real-time. Public meetings are meetings where the public is the primary audience and typically start with a presentation that provides context for a planning activity, before proceeding with presentations that dive deeper into activity content. Following this information sharing with the public, there is often an opportunity to collect feedback. This feedback can be collected in a variety of ways, including an open forum in which people queue up and ask questions, dividing the audience into small groups for discussion, or activities in which people interact with the material via maps and other means and provide feedback directly to staff. A variation on a public meeting, called an open house, presents information on posters positioned throughout the room. During the event staff and the public mingle to answer questions and solicit input.
- **Online public meetings** provide flexibility when planning public meetings where the public is the primary audience. They allow for people from across the region to attend without having to travel. They also provide an opportunity to host meetings at non-traditional times to allow for participation from people who are not available during the day or early evening when public meetings are typically held. In order to minimize barriers to participation, staff should select online tools that are familiar to the communities they are trying to reach. Polls and small group breakouts are a few ways to keep people engaged and to collect feedback during online meetings. Staff should recognize that not everyone in the region has access to the internet or a computer and that participating in online meetings may not be an option for these people. To overcome this, staff can distribute phone numbers for calling in, or partnering with non-profits or other community groups to help provide an internet connection or alternative.
- **Publications** provide information about the TPB process, projects, and programs. Publications can take several forms, from short articles that explain a topic, to more detailed white papers and reports that explore a topic in depth. TPB staff publish reports and white papers via the website,

and articles through TPB News. Publications can be printed, but increasingly they are shared in a digital format. Other techniques can be incorporated into publications to make them more accessible, including visualizations and maps. If the public's role is to be informed, then publications can be an effective way to do that. If the public's role is more involved, publications can support other tools and techniques.

- **Multimedia** is another way to provide information about the TPB and its projects and programs. Multimedia includes videos, interactive story maps and webpages, and can include other formats like audio. Multimedia materials support activities by presenting information in a way that may be more accessible to people with different abilities and non-native English speakers.
- **Trainings** provide a more in-depth opportunity to inform the public. Whether conducted online or in person, trainings allow for presentations, discussions, and activities that allow participants to apply what they have learned. One example of a training is the Community Leadership Institute, in which community leaders from across the region come together to learn about transportation planning on the local, state, and regional levels. The institute punctuates presentations with activities through which participants apply what they have just learned. Other examples of trainings include webinars and online workshops.
- **Surveys and polls** are used to collect input from many people. While surveys and polls can be open to the public, they are especially useful if they provide a statistically significant and representative sample of responses.
- **Focus groups** provide an in-depth opportunity to learn about a community's thoughts and opinions on a topic. Qualitative research through focus groups can be used to supplement opinion research obtained through surveys. Focus groups can also be effective means for gathering input from communities that are more difficult to reach.

Do you know what tools and techniques you can use to reach constituencies?	
Yes	No
Consider who your audience is and what kind of participation you are seeking, and then consider which tools may be best to reach that constituency. Even if you have used a tool in the past reevaluate its effectiveness in reaching your desired audience. It is a good idea to consult with the Participation Team and your team leader before proceeding to make sure resources are available and timing works.	If you don't know what tools and techniques are most appropriate for your activity, consult with your team leader and the Participation Team.

8) WHAT RESOURCES DO YOU NEED TO MAKE YOUR ACTIVITY ACCESSIBLE?

TPB staff work is often technical. Making complicated concepts and materials accessible to the public requires effort. Reaching out to the public requires skills and knowledge outside the daily responsibilities of most TPB staff. The TPB's Participation Team specializes in the skills that can be used to assist staff with public-facing activities.

It is important for TPB staff to identify the need for public engagement and reach out to the Participation Team as early as possible. This will ensure that resources are available and there is plenty of time to coordinate to ensure timely completion. If time and budget allow, consultants can also be brought on to assist. Staff and consultants can help plan and run an activity, contribute visualizations and maps, design surveys, and conduct outreach, among other things.

The following resources are just some examples of ways that the Participation Team and consultants can assist with a public-facing activity.

- **Assistance with planning and running participation events** – The TPB has conducted a variety of participation events over the years, ranging from basic online webinars to deliberative forums with hundreds of participants and live polling. There are many tasks that go into hosting an in-person or online event. Staff can provide support with scheduling, identifying appropriate audiences, collecting feedback, preparing materials, and more.
- **Facilitating discussions** – Focus groups and targeted interviews can result in high-quality qualitative input. With advance notice, staff or consultants can help staff prepare questions for facilitated discussions, as well as helping to identify appropriate participants and schedule the discussions.
- **Conducting outreach to disadvantaged communities** - It can be challenging to engage people in the region who are not traditionally involved in transportation issues, such as residents with limited English skills or those who do not have reliable access to the Internet. Reaching out to groups beyond the “usual suspects” requires time and skills. If a work activity may impact people or seeks to solicit input from people in these hard-to-reach groups, it is important to call upon someone who has the skills to help incorporate that group into the activity.
- **Designing graphics and visualizations** – Complex topics can sometimes be easier to understand if they are presented in a visual way. Graphical elements like photographs, charts, timelines, and more can be used to explain projects, processes, and more. For graphics and visualizations to be effective, it is important to have a clear message in mind for a specific audience. Designing graphics and visualizations can take time, and sometimes may require special expertise.
- **Developing maps and interactive story maps** – Transportation projects often have a geographical element. Visualizing planned changes to infrastructure and infrastructure improvements can help the public better understand the content of plan or activity. Developing maps takes time and requires data resources, often from jurisdiction partners. Make sure that there is enough time set aside to coordinate with staff to develop maps.
- **Writing, editing, and publishing blog posts** – One of the most common ways that TPB staff share their work with the public is through blog posts published in TPB News. These posts, written in plain language, provide a high-level of summary TPB work that is more accessible than memos and technical documents. Staff can provide writing and editing assistance. The COG Office of Communications may also be able to help raise awareness of work produced. The Communications Center on COG’s intranet provides staff resources for all types of writing.
- **Producing videos or other media content** – Videos provide another way to explain complex ideas in an accessible format. Videos can include narration, illustration, and animation to help explain complex or new ideas. Audio is another medium for sharing TPB work. Producing videos and audio can be time consuming and resource intensive.

Do you need additional resources to make your activity accessible?		
Yes	No	Uncertain
If you need additional resources work with your team leader to make sure there is budget available. Also consult with the people you'd like assistance from you make sure they have time and capacity.	If your activity does not require any additional resources, proceed to Question 9	If you are uncertain whether activity would benefit from utilizing additional resources, consult with your team leader or the Participation Team.

9) HOW WILL YOU MEASURE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR EFFORTS?

Evaluation is necessary for organizational improvement. Taking time to reflect on what went well with an activity and what can be improved is fundamental to becoming more effective over time. During recent certification reviews of the TPB's planning process, federal partners encouraged staff to develop a more robust evaluation for their participation activities.

This question in the workflow has two steps. Before beginning the activity, staff should think about what success looks like for their activity, and then think about how they will evaluate their activity. Once the activity is completed staff should reflect upon their answers to the evaluation questions and develop recommendations for future activities.

Before the activity begins

Evaluation starts when planning an activity. The answers to the previous questions in the workflow effectively outline the approach for interacting with the public for an activity (Planning Questions). Once those questions have been answered, staff need to take a moment to think about what success will look like and how it can be measured (Evaluation Questions).

Staff should set aside the answers to these questions and share them with the Participation Team. They should be used to design the public-facing components of their activity. The evaluation questions should be referenced as a guide to ensure that the public activity is going well.

Topic	Planning Questions What are you going to do to inform or engage the public?	Evaluation Questions: How will you know if you are successful?
Constituency	Which policy constituency or constituencies is staff trying to reach for this activity?	Once the activity is completed, how will staff know they've reached this constituency?
Public Role	What is the public's role in the activity?	Once the activity is completed, how will staff know if the public fulfilled that role?
Tools and Techniques	What tools and techniques will staff use to work with the public?	Once the activity is completed, how will staff know if these tools and techniques were effective?
Input	What type of input is staff seeking and how will it be used?	Once the activity is completed, how will staff know that they've received the type of input they sought? Was staff able to use this input as planned?
Equity	How will staff apply an equity perspective in this activity?	Once the activity is completed, how will staff know that it has been equitable?

After the activity is completed

Once an activity is completed, it is important to take time to conduct an evaluation. Staff should get together with the people that worked on the activity and briefly reflect on the list of planning and evaluation questions.

The discussion should start with a review of expected outcomes that references the answers to the planning and evaluation questions recorded before the activity began. The discussion should proceed with an overview of what happened. Staff should compare the results of the activity against the expected outcomes and ask themselves: What went well? How can future success be built upon what went well? What didn't work as expected? And what could be improved?

Beyond the benefits of reflection, the purpose of this discussion is to identify recommendations for future activities and to identify lessons learned for things that should be avoided.

Documenting and sharing this discussion with staff will help to ensure that staff are always working to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their public participation.

Training

Following approval of this plan, TPB staff will be trained on how to use the Participation Policy and Staff Guide to identify activities that have a public-facing component and how to plan for informing and involving the public. This training will also cover the federal requirements (23 CFR 450.316) for participation for MPOs. Trainings will occur by team, as outlined in the Organization Chart in the Title VI Plan (B-1). After staff have been trained, additional trainings will occur annually to acquaint new staff with the Participation Plan and provide a refresher for staff who have already received the training.

In addition to training on the Participation Plan, TPB staff will receive additional training as outlined in the COG Title VI Plan and Program.

The team leader for the Plan Development and Coordination Team will oversee plan implementation and training.

Participation Evaluation

In addition to evaluating individual participation activities, more comprehensive evaluations of the TPB's public engagement activities will occur on a regular basis. These will include an annual Public Participation Impact Statement and a third-party review, which will occur every four years.

Evaluations will include dashboards tracking TPB participation activities and make recommendations for how to improve participation efforts. In addition to qualitative input drawing from the evaluation questions (Participation Workflow Step 9), evaluations will use data to show numbers of participation activities, participation levels, and demographics (when available). When possible and appropriate, the TPB's public participation activities should be evaluated using a combination of indicators, not simply with one measure.

REGULAR EVALUATION

Once a year, the Participation Team will prepare a Public Participation Impact Statement that will evaluate participation activities over the year. This statement will be shared with the advisory committees, the Technical Committee, and the board. By documenting and evaluating participation activities and sharing them with key stakeholders, these statements will demonstrate both staff efforts to improve the effectiveness of their public interactions and staff commitment to approaching public participation from an equity perspective.

The Public Participation Impact Statement will summarize the evaluation summaries written for each participation activity and include data about communications activities to support participation, a summary of social media engagements, and a summary of unsolicited comments received. This statement will also include a preview of anticipated activities in the following six-month period.

The impact statements will be timed to inform the annual development of the Public Involvement Program Element of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).

QUADRENNIAL EVALUATION

Every four years, staff will engage consultants to conduct an in-depth evaluation of participation activities. The timing of this evaluation should be scheduled to inform future updates of the Participation Plan and major participation activities like updates to the long-range transportation plan.

FEDERAL GUIDE

Many of the TPB's planning activities have their origins in federal law and regulation. The TPB is designated under federal law as a Metropolitan Planning Organization or MPO. Among other things, MPOs are required to develop long-range transportation plans (in our region, that plan is currently called Visualize 2045) and Transportation Improvements Programs (TIPs).

Public participation requirements are part of the federal rules guiding these core planning functions (23 CFR 450.316), as well as others. Key elements of those requirements are described below. Appendix B includes the statutory and regulatory language behind these requirements.

The TPB and its staff are committed to meeting these requirements.

Metropolitan Planning Organizations

Federal law requires each metropolitan region with a population of more than 50,000 residents to designate a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) to develop transportation plans for the region. For Metropolitan Washington, the TPB is our region's MPO. The law requires each MPO to create a public participation plan for providing the public a reasonable opportunity to be involved in the transportation planning process.

Transportation Legislation and Regulations

Section 134 of title 23, United States Code, amended by the most recent federal transportation reauthorization act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, includes provision for public participation in the development of transportation plans.

Federal regulations, which elaborated on the FAST Act, specify that the planning process should meet certain standard, at a minimum. Those standards are summarized below and quoted in Appendix B:

- **Adequate time:** Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the long-range transportation plan and the TIP.
- **Access to information:** Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.
- **Visualization:** Employ visualization techniques to describe long-range transportation plans and TIPs.
- **Internet postings:** Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available on the internet and through other electronic means.
- **Convenient & accessible meetings:** Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times.

- **Demonstrated consideration of comments:** Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the long-range transportation plan and the TIP.
- **Underserved communities:** Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.
- **Follow-up comment opportunities:** Provide an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and “raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.”
- **Work with the states:** Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes.
- **Evaluation:** Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.
- **Documentation of comments:** Develop a summary, analysis, and report on the comments received and how they were considered as part of the development of the long-range transportation plan and the TIP.

Federal regulations also require the planning process to provide reasonable opportunity for interested parties to be involved in the metropolitan planning process. The regulations specify these interested parties as follows:

- Individuals
- affected public agencies
- representatives of public transportation employees
- public ports
- freight shippers
- providers of freight transportation services
- private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program)
- representatives of users of public transportation
- representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- representatives of the disabled
- other interested parties

More specifically, the regulations say that in developing long-range transportation plans and TIPs, MPOs should consult with and, whenever possible, coordinate with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan planning area that are affected by transportation, including:

- state and local planned growth

- economic development
- tourism
- natural disaster risk reduction
- environmental protection
- airport operations
- freight movements

For direct text from relevant federal laws and regulations, see Appendix B.

Other Laws and Regulations

Other key federal laws and regulations provide guidance for the TPB’s public participation process. They are summarized below. Direct excerpts from these laws and regulations are provided in Appendix B.

TITLE VI: NONDISCRIMINATION IN FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments (Title VI) prohibit excluding people from participating in or being discriminated in any federally funded program or activity on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Other federal laws further expand legal protection from discrimination, including the Federal aid Highway Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disability Act of 1990.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order 12898 in 1994 reinforced the provisions of Title VI and expanded its provisions to environmental justice for the environmental and health conditions in minority and low-income communities. Executive Order 12898 provides: “Each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Executive Order 13166 requires improved access to federal programs for people who are limited in their English proficiency. The order requires federal agencies to provide assistance to federal fund recipients to provide reasonable access to those users of federal programs with limited English proficiency.

NONDISCRIMINATION

The TPB’s Participation Plan identifies and describes the TPB’s policies and approach for inclusive public participation and ensures access to the transportation planning process for low-income and minority populations.

COG and the TPB are committed to assuring that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, or sex, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights

Restoration Act of 1987 (PL 100.259), be excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity.

COG further assures that every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. COG and TPB's nondiscrimination policies and practices apply to not only the population groups included under the Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (people of all races, colors, national origin, and genders) but also to people with disabilities, those with low-incomes, persons with limited English proficiency, and people of all ages and ethnicities.

The COG Board of Directors' "Title VI Plan to Ensure Nondiscrimination in all Programs and Activities" was developed to document the efforts COG undertakes on a continual basis to ensure compliance with Title VI and related statutes regarding nondiscrimination and environmental justice. The Plan includes a Title VI Policy Statement, Title VI Assurances, organization and compliance responsibilities, nondiscrimination complaint procedures. It also describes how the TPB ensures that Title VI requirements, including Environmental Justice considerations, are met.

Because COG acts as the administrative agent for the TPB, the COG Title VI Plan and Program apply to the TPB as well. As a matter of long-standing TPB policy and a requirement of federal law, the regional transportation planning process must make special efforts to consider the concerns of traditionally underserved communities, including low-income and minority communities and people with disabilities.

Putting Federal Requirements in Context

Meeting federal requirements is essential. The metropolitan planning process that the TPB undertakes on a continuing basis has its origins in federal law and regulation. Continued funding for this process is contingent upon the faithful implementation of these federal laws and regulations.

However, federal participation requirements are just a starting point for plans and activities. They do not prohibit more extensive participation activities that are specifically tailored to our regional needs. As described throughout this document, the TPB is committed to a robust course of action in implementing participation practices that not only meet federal requirements, but also seek to make our regional transportation system more responsive to the needs of our residents today and for decades to come.

APPENDIX A: PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS & COMMENT POLICIES

For items on which the TPB will formally act by way of vote, the TPB will share information about the proposed action items.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

Public comment periods will be governed by the following procedures:

- For federally **required plans and programs**, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan (called Visualize 2045), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Public Participation Plan, associated air quality conformity analyses, and other documents, the following procedures are conducted, per federal requirements, at a minimum:
 - The length of public comment periods will be as follows:
 - A period of at least 45 days prior to the approval of the Public Participation Plan;
 - A period of at least 30 days prior to the approval of all other federally required plans and programs.
 - Development and consideration of written responses to comments received.
 - The TPB shall provide an additional opportunity for public comment if the final Long-Range Transportation Plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the TPB and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.
 - When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft Long-Range Transportation Plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final Long-Range Transportation Plan and TIP.
- For **major regional plans and policy** documents that are not specifically governed by federal requirements, the following procedures are followed:
 - Public comment period of at least 30 days prior to the approval of documents.
 - Development and consideration of written responses to comments received.
 - The TPB shall provide an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final plan or policy document differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the TPB and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.

- For other Action Items before the TPB, the following participation procedures will be conducted at a minimum:
 - Materials will be posted electronically (on the TPB website and announced by email notification) six days before the TPB meeting.
 - Materials will be reviewed at the TPB Technical Committee by representatives from regional jurisdictions.

ONGOING OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMENT

For other items and activities, the TPB provides an opportunity for public comment via mail, email, and on the TPB website. The TPB also provides access to documents in advance of all meetings to provide an opportunity to comment.

To ensure that reasonable public access is provided to technical and policy information used in the TPB process, members of the public will be invited to review reports and other technical information (other than proprietary software or legally confidential data).

The TPB will encourage dissemination of information through the following means:

- Post all publicly available TPB documents on the TPB website, and otherwise seek opportunities to make suitable reports and technical information available through the TPB website.
- Distribute relevant reports and technical information free of charge at meetings of the TPB and its committees and subcommittees.

OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS

The TPB will invite members of the public to participate in the review of technical work programs and analysis through attendance at meetings of the TPB Technical Committee and other TPB subcommittees, and at regular monthly meetings of the TPB.

To provide opportunities for public participation at these meetings, the TPB will use the following methods:

- A period of time will be dedicated at the beginning of each TPB meeting for public comment on transportation issues under consideration by the TPB and provide follow-up acknowledgment and response as appropriate.
- At least one formal public meeting will be conducted during the development process for the TIP.
- When possible, all meetings will occur at the MWCOG offices located at 777 N. Capitol St NE. These facilities are ADA-compliant, provide assisted hearing technology, and are accessible by fixed-route transit.

- Meetings may also be hold online, or in a hybrid in-person / online format. When a meeting has an online component, information needs to be made available describing how the public can join the meeting and documentation provided before or during the meeting needs also to be available online. Such online meeting opportunities may become particularly necessary in times of national crisis, such as the pandemic of 2020.

APPENDIX B: FEDERAL LAW & REGULATIONS

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATIONS

Federal law requires each metropolitan region with a population of more than 50,000 residents to designate a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) to develop transportation plans for the region. MPOs must develop long-range transportation plans and transportation improvement programs through a performance-driven, outcome-based approach to planning. The law also requires each MPO to create a participation plan for providing the public a reasonable opportunity to be involved in the transportation planning process.

United States Code, 23 U.S.C. 134, 23 U.S.C. 150, 49 U.S.C. 5303; Code of Federal Regulations, 23 CFR §§450.310, 450.316

TRANSPORTATION LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS

Section 134 of title 23, United States Code, amended by the federal transportation reauthorization act, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, includes provision for public participation in the development of a transportation plan. The FAST Act requires participation by interested parties, specifically:

Each metropolitan planning organization shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan.

23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6)(A).

Federal regulations elaborate on the FAST Act's public participation requirements and define the requirements for a public participation plan:

- (a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
 - (1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:
 - (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

- (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
 - (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
 - (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
 - (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
 - (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
 - (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
 - (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
 - (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
 - (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.
- (2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.
- (3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.
- (b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:
- (1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
 - (2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and
 - (3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 201-204.
- (c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

- (d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.
- (e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under §450.314.

Code of Federal Regulations, 23 CFR §450.316.

TITLE VI: NONDISCRIMINATION IN FEDERALLY FUNDED PROGRAMS

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments (Title VI) prohibit excluding people from participating in or being discriminated in any federally funded program or activity on the basis of race, color, or national origin. Other federal laws further expand legal protection from discrimination, including the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973, the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disability Act of 1990.

Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. 200

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Executive Order 12898 in 1994 reinforced the provisions of Title VI and expanded its provisions to environmental justice for the environmental and health conditions in minority and low-income communities. Executive Order 12898 provides:

Each federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations (1994).

PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Executive Order 13166 requires improved access to federal programs for people who are limited in their English proficiency. The order requires federal agencies to provide assistance to federal fund recipients to provide reasonable access to those users of federal programs with limited English proficiency.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Person with Limited English Proficiency (2000).

APPENDIX C: TPB EQUITY RESOLUTION

TPB R1-2021
July 22, 2020

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD
777 NORTH CAPITOL STREET, NE
WASHINGTON, DC 20002

RESOLUTION TO ESTABLISH EQUITY AS A FUNDAMENTAL VALUE AND INTEGRAL PART OF ALL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD'S WORK ACTIVITIES

WHEREAS, the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) has been designated as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Washington Metropolitan Area by the Governors of Maryland and Virginia and the Mayor of the District of Columbia; and

WHEREAS, the work of the TPB has been guided by its policy documents starting with the TPB Vision statement through the Visualize 2045 Aspirational Initiatives, which emphasize multi-modal, affordable, and safe mobility options to promote prosperity, accessibility, livability, and sustainability throughout the region, as espoused in COG's Region Forward Vision; and

WHEREAS, the TPB Vision, adopted in 1998, embraced equity as a key principle by, among other things, calling for a transportation system that would "provide reasonable access at reasonable cost to everyone in the region"; and

WHEREAS, the TPB in 2017 identified Equity Emphasis Areas, which are geographically defined places in the region with high concentrations of minority and low-income populations that should receive focused attention for transportation analysis and planning, at both the regional and local levels; and

WHEREAS, the TPB as part of its long-range plan development, uses the Equity Emphasis Areas as part of an Environmental Justice analysis to examine the impacts of the region's transportation investments on minority and low-income population groups; and

WHEREAS, the TPB promotes transportation projects and programs in disadvantaged communities by giving focused attention to programs including TPB's Equity Emphasis Areas, Transportation/Land Use Connections and Transportation Alternatives; and

WHEREAS, the TPB seeks the input of traditionally underserved population groups through its Access for All Advisory Committee and its Citizens Advisory Committee; and

WHEREAS, the TPB believes equity is a fundamental value defined as the commitment to promote fairness and justice in the development and implementation of projects, programs and policies, achieved when all people are fully able to participate in the region's economic vitality, contribute to its readiness for the future, and connect to the region's assets and resources, and;

WHEREAS, the TPB member governments and agencies are increasingly committing to intentionally consider equity when making policies or delivering programs and services; and

WHEREAS, the TPB condemns inequitable treatment of any group of people, on any basis, and reaffirms its commitment to equity in all aspects of transportation planning and programming; and

WHEREAS, the TPB recognizes the history of racism in our country and how it has led to current day disparities in education, job attainment, housing, healthcare, and transportation access, as well as disproportionate incarceration rates for Black and Brown members of our communities, among other negative impacts; and

WHEREAS, the TPB recognizes that racial inequities have become institutionalized in the policies and practices of many agencies, governmental and otherwise; and

WHEREAS, the TPB condemns racial discrimination and inequity and commits to being non-racist, and significantly, also commits the TPB to actively oppose racism;

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING BOARD THAT:**

The TPB and its staff commit that our work together will be anti-racist and will advance equity including every debate we have, and every decision we make as the region's MPO; and

The TPB affirms that equity, as a foundational principle, will be woven throughout TPB's analyses, operations, procurement, programs, and priorities to ensure a more prosperous, accessible, livable, sustainable, and equitable future for all residents; and

We recognize past actions that have been exclusionary or had disparate negative impacts on people of color and marginalized communities, including institutionalized policies and practices that continue to have inequitable impacts today, and we commit to act to correct such inequities in all our programs and policies.

Adopted by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board on July 22, 2020

APPENDIX D: ACCOMMODATIONS POLICY

It is the policy of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG) to provide equal access for individuals with disabilities and those with limited English skills to programs, meetings, publications, and activities. Reasonable accommodations will be provided by COG upon request with reasonable advance notice. Reasonable accommodations may include translation services, modifications or adjustments to a program, publication, or activity to enable an individual with a disability or someone who does not speak English to participate. Examples include:

- Providing sign language interpreters or other language translation services. COG will make reasonable efforts to accommodate requests. This assumes COG is given adequate time to secure those services and services in a particular language are available within the requested time period;
- Providing meeting materials in alternative formats (such as translated materials in languages other than English, large print or electronic copies);
- Providing tables that are suitable for people using electric wheelchairs;
- Alerting security staff that persons with disabilities will need assistance to the meeting room;
- Alerting garage attendants that a person with a disability will need accessible parking spaces;
- Offering individuals, the ability to participate in meetings through conference calls and other accommodations, as necessary.

Meetings and Events

Translation services in sign language and languages other than English are available upon request with reasonable advance notice for meetings that are open to the public. Other accommodations, such as special seating requirements, can also be arranged. Please allow up to seven (7) business days to process your request. COG will make reasonable efforts to accommodate requests. This assumes COG is given adequate time to secure those services and services in a particular language are available with the requested time period.

Publications

Most publications are available on the website. Alternative formats of publications, including translated documents, are also available upon request. Please allow up to seven (7) business days to process your request.

Advance Notice Requested for Interpreting or CART Services

An individual needing a sign language interpreter, translator, or Communication Access Real-time Translation (CART) service to participate in a meeting or event should request the interpreter service at least seven (7) days in advance of the event. If the event is more than 12 interpreting hours, such as a two day conference, COG asks that the request be made 14 days in advance. Late requests will be handled based upon the availability of service(s).

To make a request:

Phone: (202) 962-3300

TDD: (202) 962-3213

Email: accommodations@mwkog.org

To read the Accommodations Policy in different languages, visit (mwkog.org/accommodations/). It is available in the following languages:

Spanish – Español

French – Français

Korean – 한국의

Vietnamese - tiếng Việt

Amharic - አማርኛ

Chinese -中国

We welcome comments on how to improve accessibility for users with disabilities. Please email us with suggestions.

Finding Alternative Formats of COG Publications

Publications can be found on the COG website in a variety of ways:

ON THE DOCUMENTS PAGE

Visit the Documents page to view publications in a variety of ways, including alphabetical and chronological order.

ON COMMITTEE PAGES

If you are looking for an agenda, report, letter, presentation, or other document from one of COG's committees, visit the Committees page. This page links to individual committees where you can find publications and meeting materials associated with that committee.

BY SEARCH

The search box found in the website header allows you to find publications using a variety of categories.

For additional assistance in finding specific publications, email the Office of Communications or call (202) 962-3300.