



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** TPB Technical Committee  
**FROM:** Rachel Beyerle, TPB Communications Manager  
**SUBJECT:** Evaluation of TPB Public Participation Activities (2022)  
**DATE:** December 2, 2022

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In August 2022, TPB staff contracted Foursquare ITP to conduct an evaluation of the TPB's public participation activities. Foursquare conducted the study based upon a review of activities conducted between January 2019 and September 2022. Key engagement that took place over the period included focus groups, surveys, advisory committee activities, public comment opportunity, and communications/social media. The report acknowledges both opportunities and limitations that have resulted due to the coronavirus pandemic and its ensuing effects on virtual and in-person participation.

The Participation Plan Implementation Evaluation Report incorporates findings and recommendations for ongoing participation activities and includes observations on the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan update outreach and public comment periods. The evaluation, which took place September through November 2022, is timely in that the TPB has a new planner who will focus on public participation and committee engagement. In addition, the TPB Community Advisory (CAC) Committee is in the process of accepting applications for 2023-2024 term members. Finally, the evaluation provides helpful documentation in anticipation of the Federal Certification Review that is scheduled for March 2023.

The report will be discussed with key partners and stakeholders during December presentations to the TPB Technical Committee and the Citizens Advisory Committee. The report will also be shared with the Access for All Advisory (AFA) Committee in early 2023. In general, the evaluation is intended to serve as an internal reference and resource for TPB staff, who will use it when making public involvement decisions in the coming year and beyond.

The Evaluation Report addresses the following topics:

**Plans and Policies** introduces the TPB's existing plans and policies related to public participation, which provided the basis for how the participation activities were evaluated.

**Focus Group and Questionnaire Findings** summarizes the key findings from the focus groups that were conducted for the evaluation and CAC and AFA questionnaires.

**Documentation and Evaluation** documents the TPB's public participation efforts, including ongoing activities and activities related to the TPB's long-range plan. The activities are evaluated using rubrics based on TPB's existing plans and policies related to public participation.

**Recommendations** contains status updates to the 2019 recommendations and new recommendations.



# TPB Participation Plan Implementation Evaluation

## Task 4: Participation Plan Implementation Evaluation Report

November 21, 2022

Prepared for:



National Capital Region  
Transportation Planning Board

Prepared by:



FOURSQUARE ITP

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Background and Purpose

The National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB) contracted with Foursquare Integrated Transportation Planning, Inc. (Foursquare ITP) through ICF to conduct a review of the TPB's public participation implementation activities from 2019-2022. This report documents the research effort, findings, and recommendations from Foursquare ITP's evaluation.

## Report Structure

The report contains the following sections:

- **Section 2: Plans and Policies** introduces the TPB's existing plans and policies related to public participation, which provided the basis for how the participation activities were evaluated.
- **Section 3: Focus Group and Questionnaire Findings** summarizes the key findings from the focus groups and CAC and AFA questionnaires.
- **Section 4: Documentation and Evaluation** documents the TPB's public participation efforts, including ongoing activities and activities related to the TPB's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045. The activities are evaluated using rubrics based on TPB's existing plans and policies related to public participation.
- **Section 5: Recommendations** contains status updates to the 2019 recommendations and new recommendations.

## Research Approach

The research approach consisted of four main elements:

- **Material gathering and review:** Foursquare ITP gathered a variety of documents that address the TPB's participation policies and goals as well as documents and data which reflect the planning, execution, and evaluation of actual participation efforts.
- **Focus groups:** Foursquare ITP conducted four focus groups to gather feedback on the TPB's participation efforts over the last few years. The focus groups provided qualitative assessments of the successes, shortcomings, and recommendations for the TPB's public participation planning, execution, and evaluation.
  - **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** – Focus group took place during the regularly scheduled meeting on October 13, 2022.
  - **Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA)** – Focus group took place as a virtual call on October 13, 2022.
  - **TPB Technical Committee** – Focus group took place during the regularly scheduled meeting on October 7, 2022.
  - **Project implementation staff** – This focus group consisted of TBP staff who were involved in public participation activities over the last few years, plus consultants from ICF and PRR who were also involved. It took place as a virtual meeting on October 11, 2022.
- **Rubric evaluation approach:** The rubrics are where the participation activities were evaluated against the TPB's participation policies and goals. The report has two rubrics: one for ongoing participation activities and one for Visualize 2045 activities. The rubric criteria (displayed in the first column) are identical across the two rubrics.
- **Recommendations:** The recommendations consist of status updates to the 2019 recommendations and new recommendations.
  - Status updates for the 2019 recommendations, provided by TPB staff, include whether and how the recommendation has been carried out and to what degree; any notable accomplishments; and any barriers or conditions that have prevented it from being fulfilled.



- New recommendations are based on findings elsewhere in the report, and are divided into the same sections as the recommendations established in the 2019 evaluation:
  - ▣ Regarding the Purpose and Goals of Public Participation
  - ▣ Regarding Current Practices and Tools
  - ▣ Regarding New Strategies, Approaches, and Tools.

## Summary of Recommendations

The **Recommendations** section provides a detailed accounting of the recommendations while a summary of the recommendations is provided below. Recommendations are based on the **Focus Group and Questionnaire Findings**, the **Evaluation of Ongoing Activities**, and the **Evaluation of Visualize 2045 Activities**.

### REGARDING THE PURPOSE AND GOALS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

#### TPB's Participation Plan

- Consider editing the second Participation Plan policy goal to include “equitable access.”
- Consider editing the fifth Participation Plan policy goal to clarify that the TPB solicits input from the public on regionwide policy matters.
- Consider adding a section to the Participation Plan Staff Guide describing a process by which staff highlight changes or updates made to work products based on public input.
- Consistently share and promote the Participation Plan with consultants and staff working on public participation.

#### Clear and Open Access to Information and Activities

- Recommendations regarding language translation include:
  - Identify a professional translation vendor who understands technical transportation issues to assure accurate translation.
  - Identify high-profile documents and announcements (such as the executive summary of the long-range transportation plan or Tweets that announce public comment opportunities) that are candidates for translation into Spanish and other frequently spoken languages across the region.
  - Continually review and identify documents (e.g., reports, publications, memos) that could be summarized onto or converted to webpages on the TPB website for easier public access and easier automatic translation using the Google Translate widget.
- Provide up-to-date public meeting information on TPB website and event pages so that people can plan to participate and know what to expect.
  - If a meeting is virtual or hybrid, provide the meeting platform’s hyperlink and joining information in the location field of the event entry.
  - At the top of the meeting information, include a bulleted list of opportunities to provide comment for the given meeting (e.g., email, voicemail, live in-person comment), including whether live comments will be accepted.
  - Consider setting an expectation that TPB staff, to the best of their knowledge at the time, update meeting information on the TPB events page six weeks in advance of the meeting.
  - Explain the differences in public comment opportunities between virtual and hybrid meetings on the TPB website wherever public comment is referenced as a way for the public to get involved, including “[Getting Involved & Public Comment](#)” and “[TPB Comment Form](#).”

#### Gathering Input from Diverse Perspectives

- Balance the geographic distribution of opportunities for participation.
- Intentionally plan the logistics for participation opportunities to reach a diverse set of people with different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds:
  - Offer both pre- and post-incentives for taking surveys or participating in focus groups.

- Explore the feasibility of oversampling EEAs for surveys.
- Proactively provide accommodations like captioning, ASL or Spanish interpretation, etc.
- Always provide a virtual participation opportunity for meetings. Continue to not require that people turn their cameras on.
- Plan events to occur during a variety of times of the day and days of the week.

### Consideration and Response to Input

- Revise the CAC reporting mechanism at TPB meetings to enable more interactivity.
- Continue the practice of building an extra month into the long-range transportation plan schedule to allow the TPB a month to review and consider the comments rather than reading and accepting in the same meeting.

### Promoting a Regional Perspective

- Explain on the TPB website how the public can get involved at the local and regional level in the context of the regional transportation decision making process.
- As the original Citizens Guide was last published in 2008, update it to include the newer information provided in Chapter 1 of Visualize 2045. In addition, consider changing the name from “Citizens” to “Community” or another term (similar to how the term was removed from the CAC nomenclature).

### Equity Perspective

- Develop objectives and measures related to equity and track them to ensure that equity is woven into the vast array of TPB products and activities.

### Plain Language

- Implement procedures to ensure public-facing materials are written in plain language.
  - The TPB website, particularly web pages providing information about public participation and meetings, should be reviewed for plain language and updated accordingly.
  - The TPB’s social media posts should be written using plain language and avoiding acronyms without explanation.
  - The Participation Plan should be updated to include resources and examples of how to use plain language within the context of TPB’s work.

### Early and Continuing Participation

- Utilize the TPB Public Comment Notices listserv for all official public comment opportunities.
- Consider using the TPB Public Comment Notices mailing list to notify recipients about other opportunities to participate (such as surveys, events, etc.).

## REGARDING CURRENT PRACTICES AND TOOLS

### TPB Website

- Updates to the [Getting Involved & Public Comment web page](#):
  - The page calls on people to volunteer for the “Citizens Advisory Committee,” but details about the committee, including its name and length of term, need to be updated.
  - The page advises people to consider joining other “standing citizens committee(s)” but only the CAC is directly referenced. If there are no other committees of this nature, this statement should be removed.
  - The page advises people to participate in an ad hoc advisory group for a local or regional transportation study, but there is no information about how to follow up. Directing people to the listserv sign-up page could be appropriate here.
  - Add the AFA, in addition to the CAC, into the sidebar as a “Related Committee.”
- Updates to the [Public Involvement Process web page](#):
  - The title of this web page would lead one to believe that it describes the TPB’s public involvement process, but it is focused instead on describing the 2014 Participation Plan. Update the text of the page to describe

- more broadly how public input shapes what the TPB does.
- Update references to the Participation Plan to refer to the 2020 version instead of the 2014 version which is currently referenced.

### TPB News

- Update the Participation Plan and Title VI Plan to better reflect the frequency by which TPB News is published.

### Visualize 2045 Website

- Change the name of the “Requirements” webpage on the Visualize 2045 website to be “About the Plan”; on that page, add a new header for “Glossary” and add more terms to the list that already exists.

### Social Media

- Consider resuming live Tweeting TPB and Technical Committee meetings or revising the Title VI Program and Plan to remove reference to this.
- Promote the TPB’s social media accounts in more places, such as on the TPB website.
- Pay for boosted posts and ads on social media platforms to reach a wider audience.

### Advisory Committee Management

#### CAC AND AFA

- When members join, and on an annual basis, provide information about what TPB mailing lists are available for them to join and how to sign up.
- Produce an annual memo or presentation summarizing how CAC and AFA input has influenced or has been incorporated into TPB decisions or documents.
- Consider tracking other demographic data (such as age, languages spoken, and other elements that are mentioned in the Title VI Program) in the advisory committees’ membership and ask applicants more information to inform the selection process and evaluate the representation of each body.
- Consider identifying explicit opportunities for the advisory committees to provide meaningful advice to the TPB:
  - In ongoing consultation with the TPB Chair, discuss which matters taken up by the TPB could benefit from more input by either or both advisory committees.
  - Inform advisory committee members of TPB activities set to take place over the next year.
  - When information is shared with each committee, clearly state whether the purpose is solely to inform them or if the TPB seeks input from the committee receiving the presentation.

#### CAC

- Provide more information on the Community Advisory Committee web page about the committee’s purpose, how to get involved, when the next rotation of members will be, and what factors are considered when selecting new members.
- Expand the recruitment campaign for CAC membership.
- Provide opportunities for CAC members to join other TPB subcommittees and task forces.

#### AFA

- Provide more information on the Access for All Advisory Committee web page about how to get involved, when the next rotation of members will be, and when the AFA meets.

### Evaluating Participation Activities and Efforts

- Embed evaluation of public participation activities into project work plans.
- Use the evaluation within *Appendix H: Public Participation Summary: Public Outreach and the TPB Participation Plan* of the Visualize 2045 update as a model for future evaluation.
- Create a template document for staff to use in planning how they will evaluate participation activities.
- Track which materials were translated into which languages.
- Consider sharing the evaluation of public participation more transparently.



## REGARDING NEW STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND TOOLS

### Virtual and Hybrid Public Participation Opportunities

- Always provide a virtual option for regularly occurring committee meetings.
- Always enable live captioning as an option on virtual meetings so participants can turn it on if they want or need.
- When planning engagement for a plan update, such as the update of the long-range transportation plan, schedule a mix of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities.
- Consider updating the Participation Plan to include guidelines or policies regarding virtual and hybrid participation opportunities.



# 2. PLANS AND POLICIES

This section introduces the TPB’s existing plans and policies related to public participation: The 2020 update of the TPB Participation Plan, the 2021 updates to the TPB Title VI Program and Plan, and the MWCOG Accommodations Policy. These documents provided the basis for how the participation activities were evaluated.

## TPB Participation Plan (2020)

The 2020 TPB Participation Plan describes how members of the general public can participate in the work of the TPB. It also establishes a framework for TPB staff to ensure that they maximize the reach of the TPB’s public participation efforts to gather meaningful input to inform TPB plans, programs, and decisions.

The Participation Plan contains three guides:

1. **Public Guide** – Establishes “predictable” opportunities for the public to meaningfully participate in the work of the TPB.
2. **Staff Guide** – Helps TPB staff to determine the extent to which the public should be involved in TPB activities and asks questions that guide staff through planning such public participation.
3. **Federal Guide** – Educates all audiences on federal requirements for TPB public participation efforts.

## POLICY GOALS

The Participation Plan establishes five policy goals that articulate the desired outcomes of the TPB’s public participation efforts:

1. **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.
2. **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.
3. **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.
4. **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.
5. **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 Participation Plan also sets out five principles for engagement, which articulate TPB’s participation values. These principles support the policy goals outlined above and guide the TPB’s participation efforts toward “meeting people where they are.”

1. **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 Statement, and the TPB’s Equity

- Emphasis Areas (EEAs). It acknowledges past inequities and barriers to involvement and seeks to be more just.
2. **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.
  3. **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 process 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.
  4. **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.
  5. **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.

## TARGET CONSTITUENCIES

Recognizing the varying degrees to which TPB members or the public understand and engage in the regional transportation planning process, the Participation Plan establishes three constituencies for engagement, ranging from the general public to those who are actively involved in the work of the TPB. **Table 1** communicates the three constituencies for engagement by their interest in and knowledge of transportation planning and their knowledge of the TPB’s distinct role in the regional transportation planning process.

TABLE 1: CONSTITUENCY COMPARISON MATRIX

Constituency	Interest in Transportation Challenges	General Transportation Planning Knowledge	Knowledge of the TPB’s Role
Active Participants	x	x	x
Community Leaders	x	x	
General Public	x		

The constituencies for engagement are used in the Staff Guide section of the plan to help TPB staff determine how to engage with each group. Importantly, the Participation Plan recognizes that each constituency includes a diverse cross-section of the region’s population and that an equity perspective is necessary whether staff are engaging the most active participants or the least informed members of the general public.

## TPB Title VI Program and Plan (2021)

The TPB updated its Title VI Program and Title VI Plan in May 2021. The Title VI Program is a document required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). The Title VI Plan guides the TPB’s work to “ensure nondiscrimination in all programs and activities,” and addresses elements required by several federal agencies. Several aspects of the Plan and Program address Title VI considerations for public participation.

## TITLE VI PROTECTED AUDIENCES

The Title VI Plan states that the planning process specifically considers the “concerns of traditionally underserved communities.” The TPB maintains postal and email lists to community groups that represent Title VI protected groups and sends press releases to newspapers whose readership consists of Title VI protected groups: *Washington Hispanic* and *Afro-American*. When public notification of TPB activities (like public comment periods) is required by law or TPB policy, these newspapers are provided with the same announcement in the form of paid advertisements.

## ACCESSIBLE LANGUAGE

The following elements of TPB’s Title VI Plan and Program and the TPB Language Assistance Plan (part of the TPB’s Title VI Plan and Title VI Program) ensure that TPB communication can be understood by a variety of members of the public.



- TPB News, the TPB’s bi-monthly<sup>1</sup> blog, is to use plain language to reach audiences who do not have technical expertise in transportation planning.
- Any Spanish language newspaper to which TPB sends a press release is to receive a Spanish translation.
- Survey forms and web applications are to be provided in multiple languages.
- COG webpages are Google-Translate compatible, and key pages are to be translated by COG.
- Key documents are translated upon request.

## ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC MEETINGS

The following elements of TPB’s Title VI Plan and Program ensure that TPB meetings can be accessed by all members of the public:

- The TPB staff is to “live Tweet” monthly<sup>2</sup> TPB and Technical Committee meetings to allow members of the public to “follow along” even when they cannot be present.
- “Reasonable accommodations,” including translation and facilities, are to be provided for attendees with language needs or disabilities that impact their access to meetings, as described in the **COG Accommodations Policy** below.

## TITLE VI PROTECTED GROUP ADVISORY COMMITTEE PARTICIPATION

The Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) advises the TPB on issues of traditionally underserved communities, and the committee is to be made up of individuals from such communities.

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC), while less explicitly focused on underserved communities, is expected to reflect the Washington region’s diversity and a variety of perspectives. To support representation of individuals from Title VI protected groups, the CAC is to have clearer member expectations, provide more training for members, and select members based on demographics, community leadership, jurisdiction, and residence in an Equity Emphasis Area (EEA).

## COG Accommodations Policy

The COG Accommodations Policy stipulates that “reasonable accommodations” will be provided upon advance request for individuals with disabilities or with limited English proficiency so that they may access TPB programs, meetings, publications, and activities. Such accommodations include sign language interpretation, language translation, alternative material formats, facilities for those using wheelchairs, virtual meeting access, and other accommodations.

<sup>1</sup> While the TPB Language Assistance Plan states that TPB News is released bi-monthly, it is now a monthly email blog. In the past, it was released more frequently (averaging 1.8, 1.7, and 1.5 emails per month in 2019, 2020, and 2021 respectively).

<sup>2</sup> It has not been a practice for TPB staff to “live Tweet” since July 2021.

# 3. FOCUS GROUP AND QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS

Foursquare ITP conducted four focus groups to gather feedback on the TPB's participation efforts over the last few years. The focus groups provided qualitative assessments of the successes, shortcomings, and recommendations for the TPB's public participation planning, execution, and evaluation. The four focus groups were:

- **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** – Focus group took place during the regularly scheduled meeting on October 13, 2022.
- **Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA)** – Focus group took place as a virtual call on October 13, 2022.
- **TPB Technical Committee** – Focus group took place during the regularly scheduled meeting on October 7, 2022.
- **Project implementation staff** – This focus group consisted of TBP staff who were involved in public participation activities over the last few years, plus consultants from ICF and PRR who were also involved. It took place as a virtual meeting on October 11, 2022.

These groups were selected to reach a diverse set of stakeholders who represent both technical planning staff (the Technical Committee and TPB staff/consultants) as well as stakeholders who are closely connected to the public and represent their communities on TPB advisory committees (the CAC and AFA). As such, the feedback shared during the sessions represented a spectrum of perspectives, from people who are closely involved in agency transportation planning to those who are less experienced with the planning process and the TPB.

The methods of engagement during the focus groups consisted of a short slideshow presentation summarizing TPB's public participation efforts over the last few years and a virtual polling and facilitated discussion exercise. Two types of questions were asked as part of the virtual polling and facilitated discussion. There were agree/disagree questions asking participants to state how well they thought TPB's policy goals from the Participation Plan were achieved. There were also open-ended questions, some of which were asked to multiple groups and some of which were specific to each group.

The CAC and AFA were also sent questionnaires in advance of their focus groups which asked them about their perception of their committees and their roles within the broader TPB framework, as well as additional questions about their feedback and recommendations for public participation.

This section summarizes the key findings from the focus groups and CAC and AFA questionnaires.

## TPB Participation Plan Policy Goals

Focus group attendees were asked to state their level of agreement with statements describing the fulfillment of the TPB's policy goals from the Participation Plan. This section presents the quantitative results of these questions, as well as related discussion that ensued and related comments from the CAC and AFA questionnaires. **The charts depict vote totals across all four focus groups.**

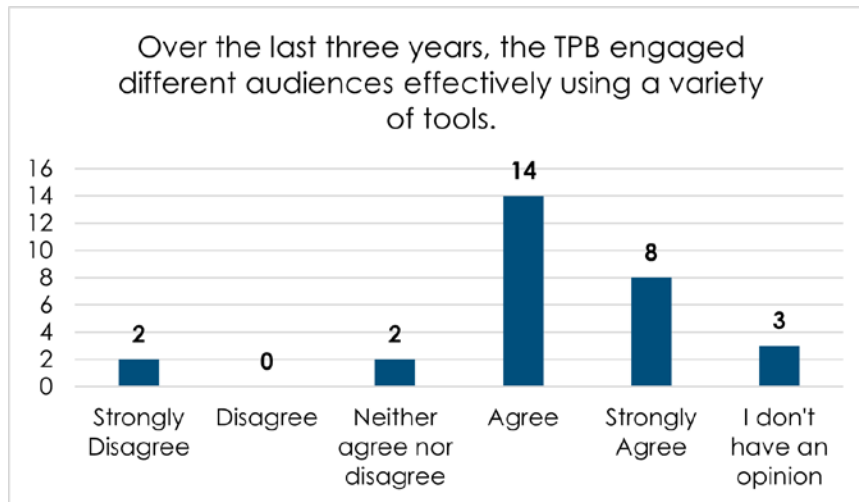
## EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT USING A VARIETY OF TOOLS

The first Participation Plan policy goal is:

**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.

Focus group participants were generally in agreement with this statement, with 22 out of 29 (76 percent) of respondents stating that they agreed or strongly agreed (**Figure 1**).

FIGURE 1: POLL QUESTION FOR EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT USING A VARIETY OF TOOLS



Throughout the discussion there were no recommendations or requests for improvement; all of the comments were positive. Some highlights from the focus group discussion, as well as from the CAC and AFA questionnaires, include:

- One respondent from the staff/consultant focus group noted that the Aspiration to Implementation posters were “on the unique side” and provided a good supplement to the surveys and focus groups.
- AFA members described the following participation elements as being successful:
  - Focus groups, with an appreciation for facilitators’ willingness to listen.
  - The focus on moving towards increasing array of transportation options in the area.
  - Addressing accessibility needs of people with disabilities and disadvantaged residents.

- CAC members described the following participation elements as being successful:
  - The outreach performed by the TPB and TPB staff, particularly through the Visualize 2045 update, including the 2018 forums and MetroQuest surveys. One member noted that they enjoyed the forum which was a combination of a public event and a CAC meeting. They wrote, “I found it valuable to go to a part of the city that I don't visit regularly to hear what people there were saying, and then to have a meeting connected with it.”
  - The July 2022 CAC meeting included breakouts with TPB officers, and the September 2022 CAC meeting included breakouts with the TPB’s DDOT, MDOT, and VDOT representatives. One member wrote, “I’ve also really appreciated the regional breakouts of late, where we get to meet with elected reps from our own jurisdictions.”
  - Webex streaming of TPB meetings, which has improved the remote participation experience.

*“I found it valuable to go to a part of the city that I don't visit regularly to hear what people there were saying, and then to have a meeting connected with it.”*

– CAC Member

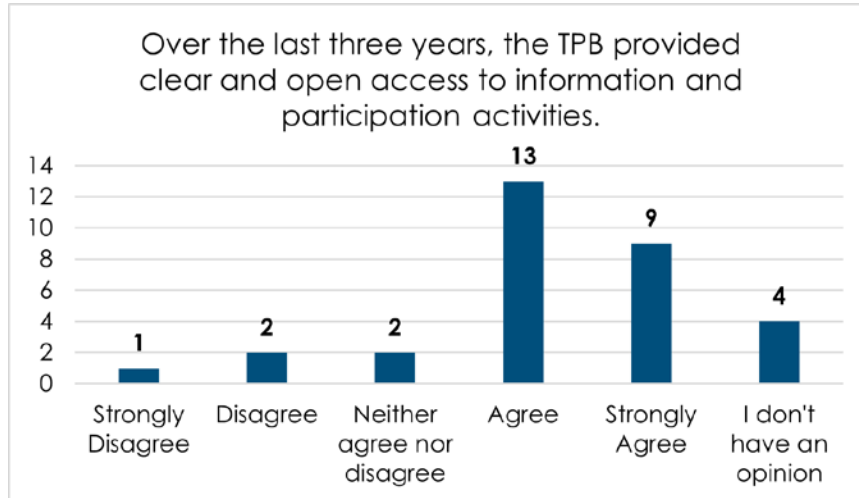
## CLEAR AND OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES

The second Participation Policy goal is:

**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.

Focus group participants were generally in agreement with this statement, with 22 out of 31 respondents (71 percent) stating that they agreed or strongly agreed (**Figure 2**).

FIGURE 2: POLL QUESTION FOR CLEAR AND OPEN ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES



Focus group discussion included identification of some shortcomings, including:

- A discussion among CAC members about the difficulties in disseminating information about the TPB and opportunities to participate, and how people need to know what they are looking for in order to find it rather than information being more commonly available/distributed.
- One CAC member noted that they had not seen the Visualize 2045 Aspiration to Implementation QR code activity (one of the methods for engaging the public for the long-range transportation plan update) near or in their community.
- One AFA member noted that before the focus group presentation about TPB's participation activities, they had not heard about these activities.
- In the staff/consultant focus group, the discussion centered around the availability of TPB materials and announcements in languages other than English. While the website can automatically translate, documents cannot as easily. Staff noted the need to find translators who understand technical transportation issues, to assure accurate translation.

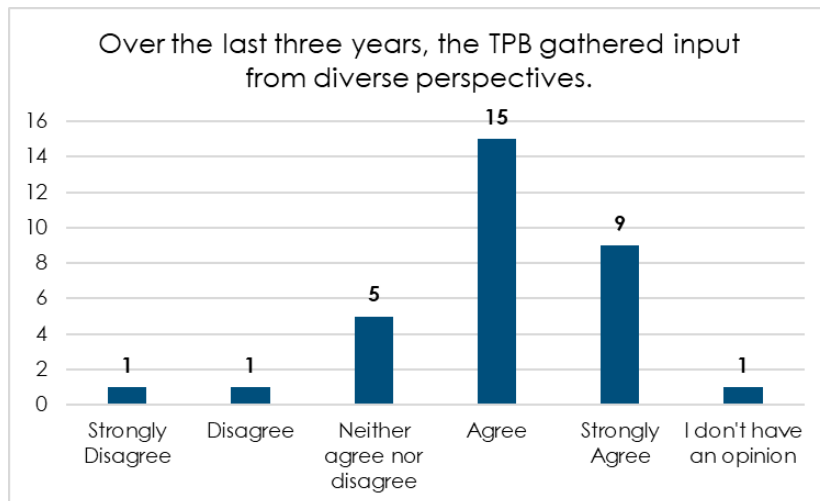
## GATHERING INPUT FROM DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES

The third Participation Policy goal is:

**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.

Focus group participants were generally in agreement with this statement, with 24 out of 32 respondents (75 percent) stating that they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" (**Figure 3**).

FIGURE 3: POLL QUESTION FOR GATHERING INPUT FROM DIVERSE PERSPECTIVES



Discussion in the focus groups and responses to the AFA and CAC questionnaires included praise for the TPB’s past and current efforts to engage diverse constituencies and also identified current gaps and suggestions for improvement. One bright spot noted by a Technical Committee member was that the TPB’s use of surveys provides participation access to more people compared to other types of outreach efforts which rely on recording comments of people who attend meetings.

One of the noted gaps was engagement opportunities across the region. An AFA member said there appeared to be more participation opportunities in Washington, DC, than in Prince George’s County, and noted that it would be helpful to have higher levels of outreach to Prince George’s County. In the questionnaire, one AFA member suggested “making sure that focus groups are held with more people in these categories in distinct locations throughout the region since each geographic area has its own unique challenges.” One Technical Committee member suggested that the TPB do targeted outreach to Equity Emphasis Areas (EEAs). One CAC member suggested that the TPB “partner with non-profit or civic groups to do ‘road shows’ in communities throughout the region, paying special attention to EEA locales.”

*“While difficult, so much more can be done as these are often the groups that require the most effort to reach and enable attendance at meetings, etc. Every effort must be made to get input from historically disadvantaged communities and [those with the greatest] need.”*  
 – Technical Committee Member

Multiple focus groups discussed the opportunity to provide materials, activities, and events in multiple languages as a way to be more inclusive.

AFA and CAC members discussed the importance of leveraging community organizations and other groups and people who have existing ties to people with different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds. One AFA member noted that sometimes people who are vulnerable are not connected to services because they have not been invited or made aware that services exist. Members of TPB committees who have relationships in the community can serve as community ambassadors to collaborate with them to share information and solicit input. Members of the CAC mentioned that TPB outreach could require less logistical effort when staff and committee members leverage existing community events and request to attend as partners or set up a booth rather than organizing standalone TPB outreach events. One CAC member noted that they found out about the TPB when a TPB staff member attended one of their local community meetings.

All four of the focus groups discussed how intentionally planning the logistics for participation opportunities can help reach a diverse set of people with different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, including discussions about:



- Offering both pre- and post-incentives for taking surveys.
- Oversampling EEAs for surveys.
- Proactively providing accommodations like captioning, ASL or Spanish interpretation, etc.
- Always having a virtual participation opportunity for meetings, to allow more people to participate without having to come in-person. Do not require that people turn their cameras on, as they may be on the move or otherwise unable to show their surroundings. Use social media and the TPB website to advertise the opportunity to participate virtually.
- Planning events to occur during a variety of times of the day and days of the week; when events are limited to the evening, attendance is limited to those who are not working, taking care of family members, etc.
- Formally inviting community organizations to provide input and encourage their community members to participate.

*“I think TPB has done an incredible outreach job of being more inclusive and meeting people where they are.”*

– AFA Member

## CONSIDERATION AND RESPONSE TO INPUT

The fourth Participation Policy goal is:

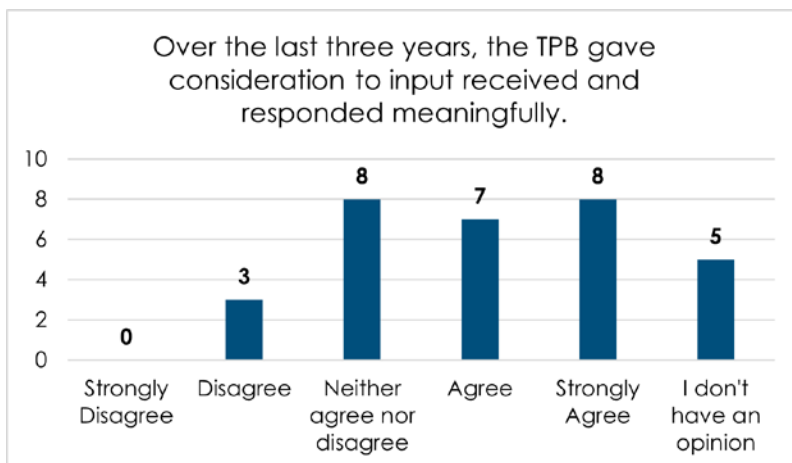
**Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully.** The TPB will give thoughtful consideration to how public input might affect its decisions and how input might improve TPB plans and products. The TPB will acknowledge the comments that were received and how they were considered.

Responses to this question were less overwhelmingly positive than responses to the other questions. While 15 out of 31 (48 percent) respondents agreed or strongly agreed, there were eight respondents who neither agreed nor disagreed, five who did not have an opinion, and three who disagreed (Figure 4).

Discussions in the focus groups centered around the ways in which the TPB solicits and incorporates public feedback meaningfully into its products and processes, with shortcomings noted by all the focus groups. One staff member noted a positive step for the consideration of public comments by the TPB, whereby TPB staff built an extra month into the Visualize 2045 schedule to allow the TPB a month to review and consider the comments rather than reading and accepting in the same meeting. One CAC member suggested that staff highlight “where things may have changed [in TPB reports, publications, documents, processes, or plans] based on public engagement so people feel like their time has had an impact.”

The CAC discussed dissatisfaction with how the TPB considers and takes action on the CAC meeting summaries and reports that the CAC provides to the TPB or at TPB meetings, with a general feeling that the TPB does not discuss them in a meaningful way; reports are read at the TPB meetings and rarely are there any questions or discussion for follow up. The CAC was pleased with the response to their request to have forums with jurisdictional representatives on TPB and respective DOTs.

FIGURE 4: POLL QUESTION FOR CONSIDERATION AND RESPONSE TO INPUT



The Technical Committee discussed the TPB’s role in the regional transportation planning process, including how it can be difficult for the comments received by the TPB to meaningfully shape projects because the TPB is somewhat removed from the project sponsor (typically a local or state government or a transit agency who has their own process to plan projects). Participants noted that by the time a project makes it into Visualize 2045, it has been around for a while, and it is difficult for the TPB to do anything beyond get more information from the project sponsor. The conversation then turned to discuss how the TPB looks for input on high-level policies that it sets, and how these are also open to public comment. One committee member noted that “The TPB has adopted policy priorities many times. The question has always been how those priorities affect local project development, which suggests a role for TPB comment that’s related to oversight/compliance with the priorities.”

*“It’s hard for TPB to respond meaningfully to comments when comments often focus on projects, but project development is more the role of local and state agencies. It’s rarely appropriate for public comment at TPB to overrule local processes.”*

*– Technical Committee Member*

## PROMOTING A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

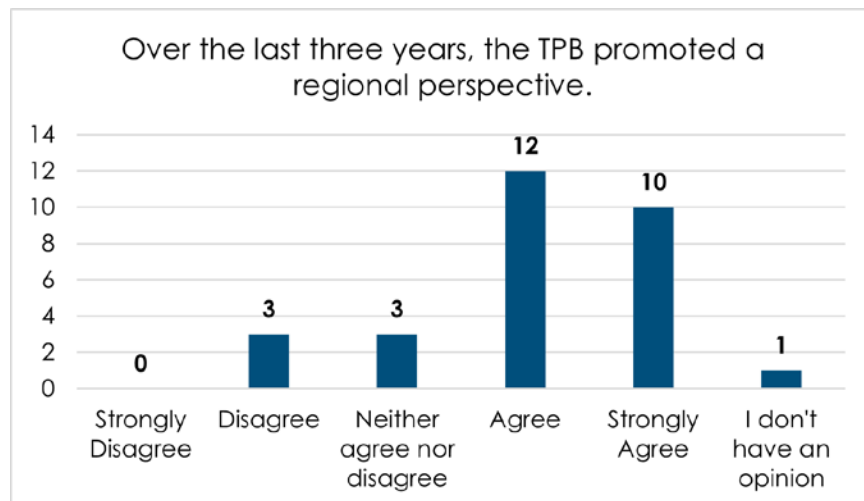
The fifth Participation Policy goal is:

**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.

Focus group participants were generally in agreement with this statement, with 22 out of 29 (76 percent) of respondents stating that they agreed or strongly agreed (**Figure 5**).

Little discussion ensued in the focus groups for this question. In the staff/consultant focus group, participants noted that the TPB received responses from a representative sample of the region via the Voices of the Region mailed survey, which enabled statistically significant analysis. Participants also noted the challenges of reaching the whole region; one tactic has been to try to “bring together different corners of the region” and another has been to “talk about the regional aspect more” as a regional body to “help frame the way people participate.”

FIGURE 5: POLL QUESTION FOR PROMOTING A REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE



## Other Topics

### ENGAGEMENT IN THE FUTURE: IN-PERSON, VIRTUAL, OR HYBRID?

TPB staff were particularly interested in understanding what stakeholders think should be done going forward in balancing participation opportunities that take place in-person or in a virtual or hybrid environment. Overall, there

was overwhelming support across all the focus groups for hybrid meetings and participation opportunities that provide virtual attendance as an option:

*I have a great appreciation for the hybrid format because it gives us a choice. I prefer to have the choice.*

– AFA Member

*I recommend a hybrid [format or option] so folks have a choice especially in light of some folks who may be more vulnerable due to health conditions.*

– AFA Member

*Offering hybrid participation opportunities is critical for many reasons. People who work can participate more easily, as can those for whom transportation to centralized locations may be difficult.*

– AFA Member

*Keep meetings hybrid. It facilitates attendance for those that may not be able to attend in person.*

– AFA Member

*Virtual opportunities offered a level of comfortability for the focus groups. There are some things that people can interact with in-person augmented with virtual and asynchronous engagement.*

– Staff/Consultant

*The hybrid model would be best for people who want to be in person & virtual for those people like me who prefer it, especially since I do not drive. I think the committee meetings should either stay online only or also offer a hybrid.*

– CAC Member

*Even when the pandemic finally ends as a risk, the ability to be hybrid is wonderful—especially if CAC members or other participants live far away.*

– CAC Member

Focus group participants also discussed tradeoffs between in-person and virtual participation:

*Admittedly hybrid meetings wherein attendees may participate either in-person or virtual can be very challenging - but I think this maximizes participation.*

– CAC Member

*Virtual opportunities can reach a large audience... In-person for meeting with people in different communities build relationships and trust.*

– AFA Member

*Keep mixing them up! Virtual options are honestly great in the evening. I love being able to join a meeting and still fix dinner, get things done, etc. But there's also huge value to in-person interaction.*

– CAC Member

*I value in-person meetings. [I] find it to be more engaging and easier to interact, however I think that hybrid or having a virtual option for any outreach effort is [the] best method for outreach to maximize public participation.*

– CAC Member

Focus group participants provided recommendations on planning and executing successful virtual and hybrid participation opportunities:

*Should be mostly virtual with some in person. Virtual comments should count equally with in person.*

– Technical Committee Member

*The key is to make them as interactive as possible for all participants (in-person and virtual).*

– CAC Member

*Have in-person [committee meetings] planned for once a quarter and be told ahead of time so that attendees could possibly plan to be in person.*

– CAC Member

*It would be helpful to reach out to local news sites to share information about opportunities for community input, since social media is not used by all.*

– CAC Member

## COMMITTEE ROLES AND EXPECTATIONS

The AFA and CAC focus groups and questionnaires contained additional questions about their committee roles and expectations that were not asked to the Technical Committee and the staff/consultant focus groups. Overall, AFA and CAC members said that the expectations of their role on their committee are clear. One AFA member asked if the role is available to be forwarded to other staff within their organization. Two CAC members noted that the expectation of roles may be more challenging for newer members to understand.

### What is working well now?

#### AFA

AFA members noted the following elements of the committee that they believe are working well now:

*The AFA meetings have been exceptionally informative with a wealth of information to share with [our] communities.*

– AFA Member

*AFA provides an "instant" source of participants for focus groups, as well as distribution to communicate critical activities occurring in the transportation realm.*

– AFA Member

*AFA provides a forum for stakeholders across all jurisdictions to gather and share information, [which] is invaluable. The meetings support sharing of best practices and promote networking across non-profits, local government, and the public.*

– AFA Member

*The AFA meeting is important in that it provides an opportunity for members to present on current activities and projects, and for guests to provide information of interest to participants. Please keep it going.*

– AFA Member

#### CAC

One CAC member noted that “expanding the demographic and geographic composition of the CAC was terrific, although the pandemic hindered participation more as the term went on.” Multiple CAC members were pleased with the meetings that were held with the TPB chairs and DOTs. A CAC member also noted the benefit of CAC members serving as ambassadors to their local communities to increase awareness of the TPB in general and how to get involved in the TPB’s planning process. CAC members were also appreciative of staff for pivoting to the virtual environment when the COVID-19 pandemic began and overall felt that the transition was successful, and the virtual meetings worked well.

### What could be improved?

#### AFA

An AFA member recommended inviting chambers of commerce and disability organizations to be involved with the TPB, specifically when there are opportunities for public comment. TPB staff noted that they have reached out to chambers of commerce in the past without much success; and that commissions for people with disabilities have been extensively involved in the AFA over time. An AFA member also noted that “it would be nice to have various presenters who reflect the demographic [makeup of the region].”

#### CAC

The CAC had a robust discussion about opportunities for improving aspects of the committee. One main theme was a disappointment and dissatisfaction with how the TPB reacts to CAC feedback. Concerns included:

- Lack of clarity on how the CAC’s input is considered by the TPB.
- A lack of communication between the TPB and CAC.



- A concern that the CAC is not taken seriously by the TPB.
- A feeling that the CAC lacks “teeth,” which contributes to the TPB acknowledging the CAC’s feedback less than they should.
- One CAC member noted that a TPB member was unaware of what the CAC was.

One CAC member made suggestions that could help address the issue of communication between the TPB and CAC. Although these suggestions would not solve the concerns of the CAC about not being taken seriously, they could help better manage expectations:

*“At times I struggled to understand what the COG, TPB, or the community really gets out of the CAC since there aren’t always clear questions/topics. There is a lot of jargon/inside baseball and sometimes limited ability to comment until something is fully baked. It would be helpful to divide the [CAC meeting] agenda based on how the CAC is supposed to engage, for instance: ‘topics for input’ vs. ‘informational topics’ so we know what is what.... Sometimes it’s not clear why a presentation is being given to the CAC, or what level of input the CAC can have. It’s important to have clear expectations about what is background/informational and what is for input. And, ideally, when there is a hot topic affecting the TPB, the CAC should have substantive discussions/input on that and not be focused on other topics. There have been times where the CAC wasn’t focused on the major issues affecting the TPB, and the mismatch made the CAC seem irrelevant/sidelined.”*

CAC members provided recommendations for how to improve recruitment for and the makeup of the CAC:

- Having CAC membership better represent the residents of the region.
- Advertising more robustly for the opportunity to serve on the CAC, including through Facebook, local organizations, partnering with local officials to spread the word, and at commuter rail stations.
- Recruiting for DC members through ANCs.
- Ensuring better representation from outer jurisdictions; jurisdictional representation could be based on population.
- Asking current CAC members to recruit a successor.
- Asking jurisdictional transportation agencies to sponsor recruitment.
- Provide a clearer “job description” of what it means to serve on the CAC.

Other recommendations that CAC members suggested for improving the CAC experience include:

- Providing more opportunities for CAC members to join other TPB committees and task forces, so that these groups can benefit from the perspective of a member of the public.
- Adding term limits for CAC members and having members removed if they do not attend enough meetings.
- Timing CAC term rotations in line with the Visualize 2045 updates so people can be part of the process from start to finish.
- Ensuring that CAC members are made aware of any upcoming or current public participation opportunity so they can promote the opportunities in their communities.
- Providing information to CAC members when they join, and annually, about the various email subscription opportunities the TPB offers so they can stay up to date.
- Improving the breakout room technology for virtual meetings.
- A report explaining where the CAC input has influenced or has been incorporated into TPB decisions or documents.
- A few members said nothing needed to change.

## USE OF PARTICIPATION PLAN

The TPB staff/consultant focus group was asked: “Is the TPB’s Participation Plan something you feel comfortable using to guide and evaluate your engagement work? What would you change about it?”

Consultants were not made aware of the plan by TPB staff and therefore did not use it in their work. Some TPB staff said they used the plan. The plan was referenced directly in the evaluation of public participation in Appendix H: Public Participation Summary: Public Outreach and the TPB Participation Plan of the Visualize 2045 update.

## OTHER SUGGESTIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Focus group participants were asked to provide suggestions for the approaches to planning and facilitating public participation that the TPB could or should do. The summarized recommendations are included in **Table 2**. In some cases, the TPB has already fulfilled or is fulfilling these recommendations on an ongoing basis, of which the commenter may have been unaware. In other cases, there may be specific reasons why certain types of activities or methods have not been done, especially more recently, due to the pandemic. These recommendations were taken under consideration for inclusion in the **New Recommendations** section of this report and will also be considered for the development of the recommendations to come in the final report.

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FROM FOCUS GROUPS AND QUESTIONNAIRES

Focus Group / Questionnaire Recommendation *	Details from Focus Groups Discussion / Questionnaires	Suggested by
Hold in-person pop-up events/roadshow events where TPB staff travel around the region sharing information about public participation opportunities.	Pop-ups could be held at existing events, such as community festivals, or they could be held at popular locations, like Metro stations, busy bus transfer facilities, libraries, colleges and universities, and public plazas.  These types of events may be most effective when there is a specific public comment opportunity that people can respond to on the spot, such as through a survey administered on tablets or through an activity where people can write on sticky notes or vote with stickers.	AFA, CAC
Piggy-back on existing local community meetings to share information about public participation opportunities.	Community meetings may be related to the TPB in a way; they may discuss a project that is or may end up in the long-range transportation plan, or they may discuss transportation, land use, or development more broadly. One CAC member mentioned that they learned about the TPB when a TPB staff member presented at a local community meeting. Depending on the type of meeting, staff could set up a table at the entrance, give a presentation, and/or provide handouts.  At these meetings there is already a captive audience, which is a huge benefit, as it requires less staff time and effort to gather people in one place. Going to meetings where members of marginalized groups gather could help reach these populations.	AFA, CAC
Target outreach efforts to focus on reaching communities with the greatest transportation needs and those that have been historically excluded from transportation planning.	Opportunities for participating in the TPB's public processes should be disseminated across the region, with particular focus on reaching communities of color, low-income communities, communities where languages besides English are frequently spoken, and communities where there are higher proportions of households with no cars.	AFA, Technical Committee
Target outreach efforts to reach drivers and residents in outer jurisdictions.	Sometimes it is harder to reach drivers compared to people using transit and active transportation. The posters used for the Aspiration to Implementation activity reached transit and active transportation users well, but not drivers. Consider placing posters in the future at more park & rides and at gas stations.	CAC, Staff / Consultants

Focus Group / Questionnaire Recommendation *	Details from Focus Groups Discussion / Questionnaires	Suggested by
Provide active and dynamic opportunities for feedback.	“There were some public sessions in 2021 where commenting was limited to using the chat boxes (and maybe even that was moderated). It gave the impression that COG/TPB was not really interested in public input.” – CAC Member	CAC
Present at local conferences that are attended by people who would be interested in participation opportunities with TPB.	Conferences could include the National Capital Area Chapter of the APA, Transportation Camp, and more. TPB staff could set up a table and/or give a presentation.	CAC
Expand the use of social media.	Expand beyond Twitter and Facebook to reach a broader audience, such as through TikTok, videos, and Reels. Websites and older forms of social media are losing out to newer types of social media.	AFA, Technical Committee
Use local public access TV stations to spread the word about participation opportunities.	Similar to how radio or print ads are used during public comment periods, expanding to local public access TV stations is another way to reach people across the region and to potentially reach new audiences.	AFA
Better advertise upcoming opportunities for public comment.	Distribute a list of upcoming public comment opportunities. Make more connections with local journalists so they write about events and are more in tune to press releases.	CAC
Create a Visualize 2045 app.	The app could serve as a platform to engage communities, enroll/enlist ambassadors, and provide for exchange of thoughts and ideas related to the plan.	CAC
Connect with regional partners so they can help spread the word about participation opportunities.	County or city websites and newsletters could include links to the TPB website and information about participation opportunities. More explanation could be provided on these websites, and on the TPB’s website, to improve the public’s understanding of relationships, processes, and decision-making.	CAC
Plan events at different times of the day and days of the week.	Different groups may be precluded from attending events on certain days of the week or at certain times. When planning a series of events, mix up the days of the week and times of day, in order to reach the widest audience possible.	CAC

\* In some cases, the TPB has already fulfilled or is fulfilling these recommendations on an ongoing basis, of which the commenter may have been unaware. In other cases, there may be specific reasons why certain types of activities or methods have not been done, especially more recently, due to the pandemic.

# 4. DOCUMENTATION AND EVALUATION

This section documents the TPB's public participation efforts, including ongoing activities and activities related to the TPB's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045. The activities are evaluated using rubrics based on TPB's existing plans and policies related to public participation.

## Ongoing Activities

On an ongoing basis, the TPB shares information with and seeks input from members of the public through regular meetings, committee involvement, websites, and social media. This section includes both documentation and evaluation of TPB's ongoing public participation opportunities.

### DOCUMENTATION OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES

#### Public Comment Opportunities

The TPB collects public comments to inform the work of the Board. Prior to the introduction of virtual TPB meetings, members of the public could either register to comment live or send their written comments to the TPB via email by noon the day before the relevant meeting. The first item on every board meeting agenda was an opportunity for public comment, where the public could either comment live or TPB staff could present previously submitted comments for the record.

Beginning with the March 2020 TPB meeting, public comment was restricted to pre-provided written comments that were compiled for review at the beginning of each meeting. The October 2022 TPB meeting was the first since the onset of the pandemic to accept live public comment. Going forward, the TPB will continue to accept pre-submitted comments for all meetings and provide the opportunity for live public comment only at in-person meetings.

#### At A Glance: Public Comment

- Seven public comments were made at TPB meetings in 2019; 56 in 2020; 825 in 2021; and 29 in 2022.
- The July 2021 meeting had the highest volume of public comments over the study period, with over 500 comments related to the I-270 toll lane project. Many comments were submitted as form emails via p2a.co, a program that facilitates organized emails from advocacy groups.
- There were 115 comments pertaining to Visualize 2045 shared at the April 2021. In 2022, TPB staff held all comments related to Visualize 2045 for review until the end of the long-range transportation plan comment period.
- The overwhelming majority of comments received in 2019-2021 were received in May 2021 and in July 2021 regarding the I-270 toll lane project.

#### Committees

The TPB maintains two advisory committees: the Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) and the Community Advisory Committee (CAC).



### ACCESS FOR ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AFA)

The AFA advises on policies and programs important to traditionally underserved communities, including people of color, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities. The AFA advises TPB staff each time the TPB updates the Coordinated Human-Services Transportation Plan (every four years). In addition to members of the public, many of the committee members represent organizations and agencies dedicated to these populations. The AFA meets roughly five to six times per year and is chaired by a member of the TPB.

### COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)

The CAC promotes public involvement, equitable representation, and independent community advice from a regional perspective. Since the last evaluation of the TPB's public participation activities, the CAC has changed its name from "Citizens Advisory Committee," and members now have two-year terms.

The CAC meets 11 times a year (monthly, except for in August) on the Thursday immediately prior to the TPB meeting (this coincides with the day that the TPB meeting materials are released). During meetings, TPB staff brief members on the TPB meeting agenda and provide an opportunity for discussion of TPB efforts and questions about the upcoming TPB meeting.

### Website

The [TPB's website](#) directs visitors to several pages containing information about the role of the TPB, news updates, opportunities to subscribe to TPB happenings, upcoming TPB meetings, and opportunities to get involved.

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: GETTING INVOLVED AND PUBLIC COMMENT

The [Getting Involved and Public Comment](#) webpage encourages members of the public to "express [themselves] for the record," promoting the opportunity to address the Board in-person at one of their monthly meetings. Separate from the opportunity to provide comments "for the record," the page encourages visitors to submit their comments in writing through the [TPB Comment Form](#).

The page calls on members of the public to volunteer for the Citizens Advisory Committee, but details about the committee (e.g., two-year terms) have not been updated since the restructuring that coincided with the renaming of the body from "Citizens Advisory Committee" to "Community Advisory Committee." While the page advises members of the public to consider joining other "standing citizens committee(s)," only the CAC is directly referenced.

The page also links to a 2008 publication entitled, "A Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region." The resource explains the various agencies and jurisdictions that are responsible for transportation in the region, and it describes opportunities for public involvement that align closely with the resources provided on the webpage. A more recent resource for the public, the TPB's 2020 Participation Plan, is linked toward the bottom of the page in a sidebar as a "publication."

The TPB Community Advisory Committee (CAC) is listed in a sidebar as a "Related Committee" but the Access for All Advisory Committee (AFA) is not listed. The AFA is mentioned as a way for people to get involved with the TPB in both the Public Guide of the 2020 Participation Plan and in the 2008 Citizens Guide.

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: SUBSCRIPTIONS

Members of the public who are interested in receiving emails from the TPB can sign up on the [Subscriptions](#) webpage or by accessing the [TPB News page](#) and selecting "digital subscriptions."

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: TPB COMMENT FORM

The [TPB Comment Form](#) webpage encourages users to use the online form (**Figure 6**), email, voicemail, or postal mail to send comments to the Board. The form also promotes the opportunity to address the Board in person at its regular meetings.

FIGURE 6: TPB PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

**TRANSPORTATION**  
**TPB Comment Form**

The Transportation Planning Board (TPB) is a public entity and is always interested in hearing about the concerns and interests of the residents of the National Capital Region.

Comments may be submitted by:

- Using the online form below (Please upload files for comments longer than 1,000 characters.)
- Sending an email to [TPBcomment@mwkog.org](mailto:TPBcomment@mwkog.org)
- Leaving a voicemail at (202) 962-3315 (messages can be up to 3 minutes long)
- Writing to the TPB Chair at:

National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board  
777 North Capitol Street NE, Suite 300  
Washington, DC 20002-4239

**TPB Meeting Public Comments**

Interested members of the public will be given the opportunity to make brief comments on transportation issues under consideration by the TPB. Any member of the public who wishes to address the board on the day of the meeting may do so by registering to attend and speak in person or by emailing a short statement to be relayed to the board at the meeting by noon on the day before the TPB meeting. In-person comments will be limited to no more than three minutes. Written comments should be no more than 375 words. Please email [TPBcomment@mwkog.org](mailto:TPBcomment@mwkog.org) with the subject line "Item 1 Virtual Comment Opportunity" or call 202-962-3315 to register attendance or to provide the emailed statement.

This comment is being submitted on behalf of:  
 An individual  A government body  A non-profit  A business

Name of Agency/Business/Organization

First Name \*

Last Name \*

Address 1

Address 2

State \*

City \*

Zip/Postal Code \*

Phone

E-mail \*

Would you like to subscribe to the TPB News email newsletter?  
 Yes  No

Subject

Comment:

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

[The Public Involvement Process](#) webpage is a subpage of the [Getting Involved and Public Comment](#) webpage. It introduces the 2014 Public Participation Plan and summarizes its purpose and policy goals. The Access for All Advisory Committee and the TPB Community Advisory Committee are listed in a sidebar as “Related Committees.”

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: ACCESS FOR ALL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The [AFA landing webpage](#) provides a brief introduction to the committee and the accommodations available for meeting attendees. The process for selecting AFA members is not disclosed nor is there information about how to become a member. The side panel provides a link to a list of committee members, information for the staff point of contact, and provides information for and links to upcoming AFA meetings.

### WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: COMMUNITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

While the information about the CAC is not updated on the [Getting Involved and Public Comment](#) webpage, the [CAC webpage](#) itself is updated with recent committee changes. A Microsoft Sway presentation (a presentation embedded on the webpage) outlines the purpose of the CAC and encourages the public to apply to serve on the committee. Like the AFA page, the CAC page’s side panel also provides a link to a list of committee members, information for the staff point of contact, and provides information for and links to upcoming CAC meetings

Prior to the start of the CAC member application period in Fall 2022, the link provided for members of the public interested in applying to be on the CAC led directly back to the same page (which is a non-user-friendly self-referential link); the page did not include eligibility information, the responsibilities associated with a position on the CAC, or application details. Once recruitment began in Fall 2022, interested applicants could fill out a Survey Monkey survey accessible on the CAC page to apply. The application asks applicants to answer demographic questions, list involvement in other organizations, describe their travel modes, and disclose their jurisdiction of residence.

## WEBPAGE SNAPSHOT: EVENT LOGISTICS

The [Meetings & Events](#) page is a one-stop shop for upcoming and previous meetings of the TPB and its subcommittees and advisory committees. Events can be filtered by year, committee, and type of event. A filter setting allows for automatic filtering based on the referring webpage. For example, users coming to the events page directly from the CAC page automatically see events relevant to the CAC (Figure 7).

While TPB meetings had been virtual for members of the public with no opportunity for live public comment since the beginning of the pandemic, the October 2022 TPB meeting marked the first live, in-person public comment opportunity since February 2020. Going forward, some TPB meetings will be in-person (as is the case for the November 2022 meeting), while others will be virtual (as is the case for the December 2022 meeting). In-person meetings will have an opportunity for live public comment for those who pre-register.

The November 2022 TPB meeting will take place in-person at MWCOG and provide an opportunity for live comment. The [event page](#) contains this information available for members of the public who wish to make a live public comment during the meeting:

*Interested members of the public will be given the opportunity to make brief comments on transportation issues under consideration by the TPB. Any member of the public who wishes to address the board on the day of the meeting may do so by registering to attend and speak in person or by emailing a short statement to be relayed to the board at the meeting by noon on Tuesday, November 15, 2022.*

*In-person comments will be limited to no more than three minutes. Written comments should be no more than 375 words. Please email [TPBcomment@mwkog.org](mailto:TPBcomment@mwkog.org) with the subject line "Item 1 Virtual Comment Opportunity" or call (202) 962-3315 to register attendance or to provide the emailed statement.*

The December 2022 TPB meeting [event page](#) does not currently contain information about how to provide public comment at the meeting. The only information provided about where and how the meeting will take place reads:

*Admittance to the Board Room is reserved for the Board members and alternates.*

For each meeting of the TPB and its subcommittees and advisory committees, TPB staff upload the agenda and agenda item attachments as PDFs. For CAC and AFA meetings, the link to the virtual meeting has been shared in the meeting agenda document rather than in the event information webpage for the meeting. AFA documents posted include accessible versions that allow for screen reading—these documents appear directly under each of the agenda item files as "Accessible Version."

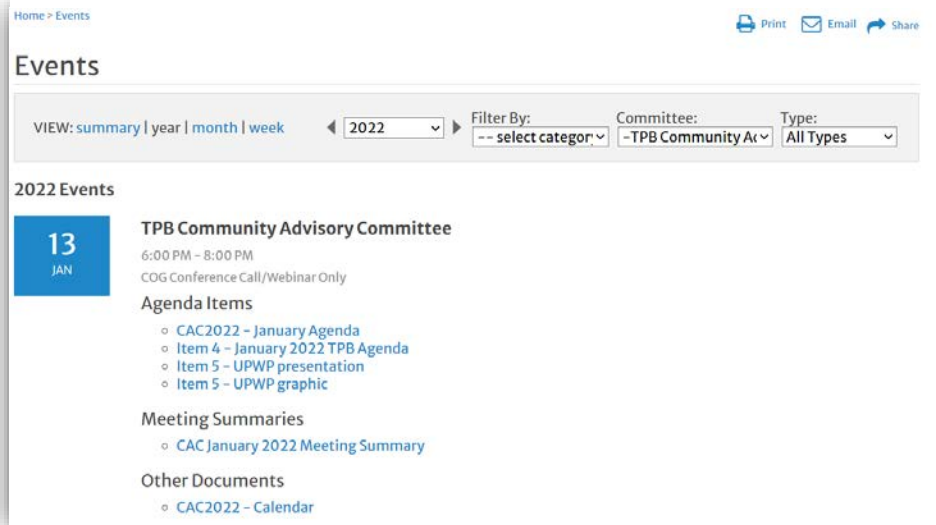
## TPB News (Newsroom Webpage and Newsletter)

The TPB's blog and email newsletter inform members of the public about the work of the TPB and about upcoming opportunities for public participation.

## TPB WEBSITE NEWSROOM

The MWCOG newsroom contains articles from [TPB News](#). Articles update members of the public about the happenings of the TPB, notably highlights from the monthly TPB meetings and ongoing initiatives of the TPB.

FIGURE 7: EVENTS PAGE AUTOFILTERED TO CAC MEETINGS



## TPB NEWS EMAIL NEWSLETTER

The TPB News email blasts are monthly collections of recent TPB News articles that draw subscribers to the MWCOG newsroom to read the articles in detail. In addition to linking directly to TPB News articles, the emails also link subscribers to registration opportunities for upcoming informational webinars and published plans of the TPB that may be of interest to the public.

These email blasts also provide a snapshot of upcoming events, and subscribers can find more information on meetings by clicking a link that provides access to the full calendar. The detailed event entries themselves are not directly accessible from the email.

Of note, some of the emails contain acronyms and technical language (e.g., “TIP,” “CMAQ”) without significant context.

### At A Glance: TPB News Emails

- TPB News is the largest email list operated by the TPB. The number of TPB News subscribers has increased from 1,434 in 2019 to 1,956 subscribers in 2022.
- TPB News mailings have declined in frequency since 2019, when roughly 1.82 mailings were sent per active TPB month. Roughly 1.71 mailings were sent per active month in 2020 and roughly 1.54 mailings were sent per active month in 2021. So far in 2022, TPB News has averaged about one mailing per month.
- The average open rate (the percentage of people who were sent the email who open it) of TPB News emails has mostly trended upward from 2019 to 2022 (25.5 percent in 2019, 23.1 percent in 2020, 28.1 percent in 2021, and 28.8 percent through July 2022). TPB’s open rate is in-line with the industry standard for government email lists (28.8 percent).<sup>3</sup>
- The average click rate of TPB News emails falls below the industry average of four percent, at closer to three percent over the past four years: 3.8 percent in 2019, 2.8 percent in 2020, 3.2 percent in 2021, and 2.9 percent in 2022.
- The rate of email forwards has increased from 8.7 percent in 2019 to 8.9 percent in 2020, 14.9 percent in 2021, and 18 percent in 2022, suggesting a higher level of organic sharing of TPB News to non-subscribers.

*Note: Partial-year data are available for 2020 and 2022 (May-December 2020 and January-September 2022); full-year data (11 months, excluding August when there are no TPB meetings) are available for 2019 and 2021. Where necessary for comparability, data is normalized over the number of months recorded each year, excluding August.*

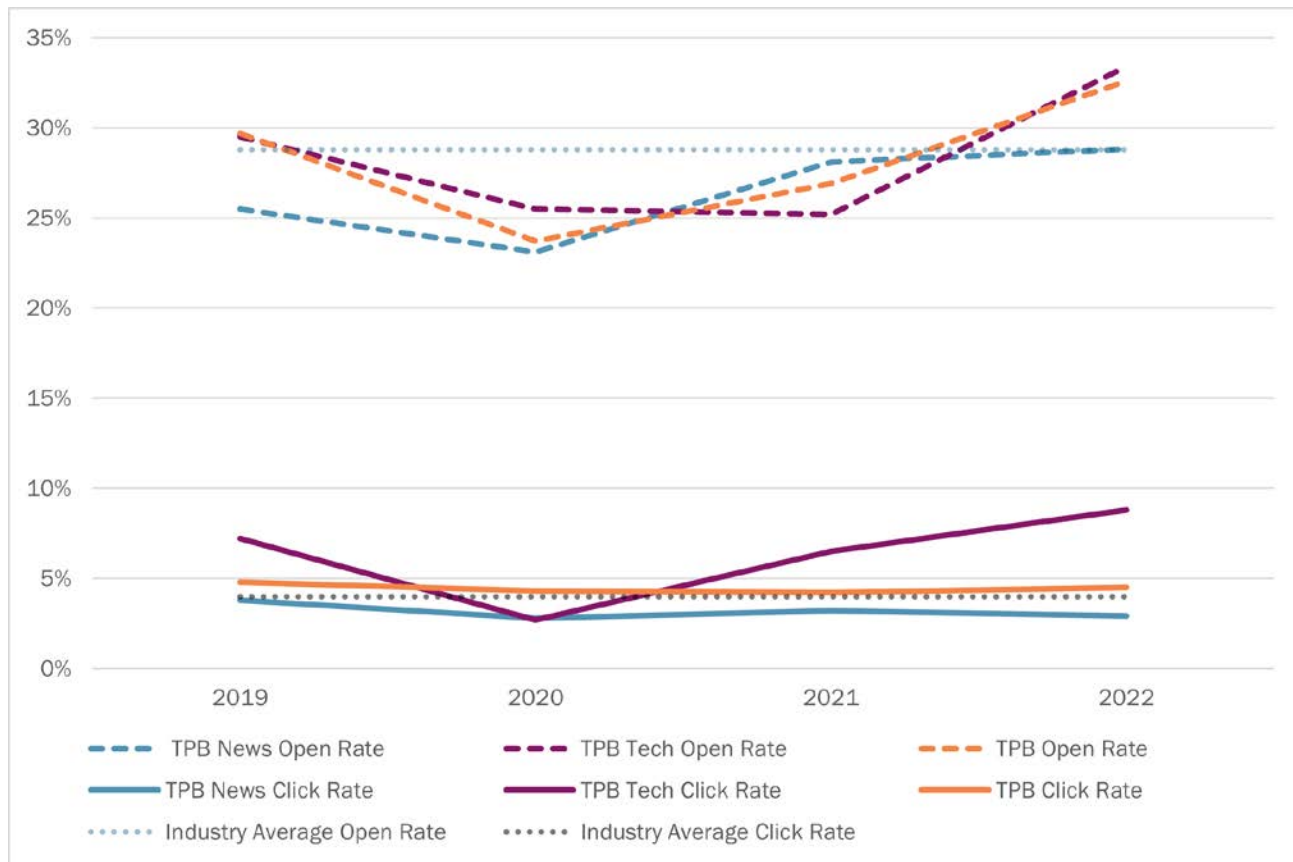
### Other Email Subscriptions

In addition to the TPB News email newsletter, TPB operates three other email lists. The TPB mailing list receives an email roughly once a month, sharing information in advance of TPB meetings; the TPB Technical Committee mailing performs a similar function and at the same frequency. The TPB Public Comment Notices mailing list is used to send out notifications of public comment opportunities, but it was not used in 2022, despite the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan update public comment period in April-May 2022. This list sent two notices in 2021 and one notice in 2020.

**Figure 8** shows key performance data for TPB’s mailing lists compared to the industry standard. As of September 2022, the TPB News, TPB Technical Committee, and TPB mailing lists meet or exceed the industry standard open rate.<sup>3</sup> Only the TPB News mailing list falls short of the industry standard click rate, suggesting that linked information may be less pertinent to the average TPB News subscriber than those on TPB’s other subscription lists due to higher interest in meeting materials. TPB and Technical Committee email contain time-sensitive links and logistical information for upcoming meetings targeted to committee members and the interested public, while the TPB News email blasts contain more general information and stories about regional transportation shared with a broader audience; the difference in click rate may be attributed to the different content of the emails and the audiences reading and interacting with the emails.

<sup>3</sup> Email Marketing Statistics and Benchmarks by Industry, Mailchimp (2022), <https://mailchimp.com/resources/email-marketing-benchmarks/>

FIGURE 8: TPB EMAIL LIST KEY PERFORMANCE DATA VERSUS INDUSTRY STANDARDS



### Social Media

The TPB has a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. While the TPB News email blasts contain links to the TPB’s Facebook and Twitter pages, the social media accounts are not promoted on the TPB website as a source of information for members of the public.

#### TWITTER

The TPB’s Twitter account ([@NatCapRegTPB](https://twitter.com/NatCapRegTPB)) directs followers to TPB News articles, publications, data, resources, and upcoming webinars and meetings. The TPB Twitter account often shares updates from jurisdictional accounts throughout the region. While it was a previous practice of the TPB, board meetings are no longer “live-Tweeted.” As of November 21, 2022, 1,439 accounts followed the TPB on Twitter.

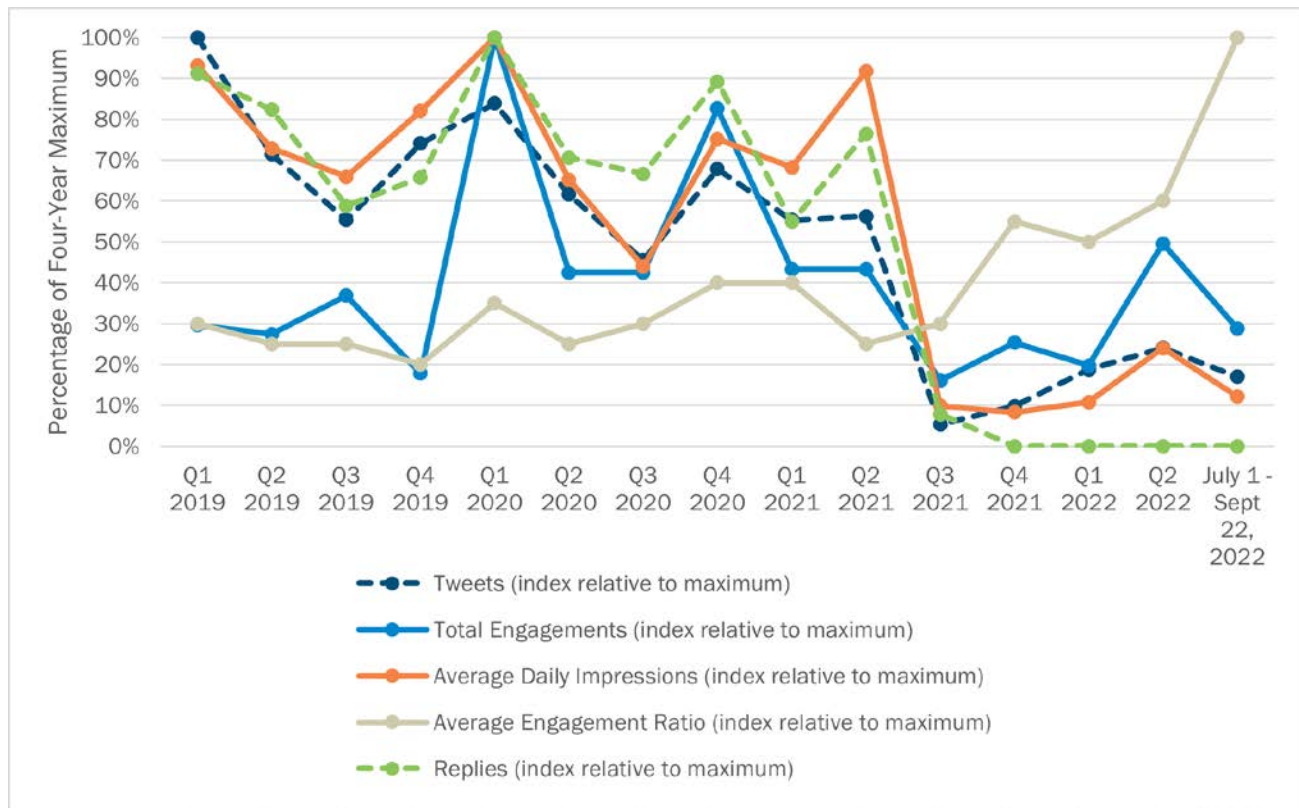
Figure 9 shows TPB’s Twitter metrics by quarter between 2019 and 2022 as a percentage of the maximum for specific measures (Tweets, total engagements, average daily impressions, average engagement ratio, and replies) over the last four years.<sup>4</sup> The maximum number of Tweets per quarter was 112 in Q1 2019; the maximum number of replies was 102 in Q1 2020; the maximum number of engagements was 678 in Q1 2020; the maximum average number of daily impressions was 842 in Q1 2020; and the maximum engagement ratio was two percent in Q3 2022.

Tweets from @NatCapRegTPB have decreased significantly since the beginning of 2019, from a peak of 112 Tweets per quarter in Q1 2019 to 21 Tweets per quarter in Q1 2022 (19% of the peak). While a loose relationship, total engagement with and average daily impressions of TPB Tweets trend with the volume of Tweets from TPB in a given quarter—as Tweets declined considerably due to the temporary loss of TPB’s transportation communications manager in July 2021, so too did daily impressions of TPB Tweets. While Tweet volume in 2021-2022 remained far

<sup>4</sup> Engagements are the number of interactions Twitter users make with TPB’s Tweets in a quarter, while average daily impressions represent the average number of times users saw TPB’s Tweets on a given day in a quarter. The Engagement Ratio is the number of engagements relative to the number of impressions in a given period.

below the levels of prior years, the proportion of impressions that resulted in user engagements with TPB Tweets actually rose to a four-year maximum. In other words, while considerably less users are seeing TPB on Twitter, the smaller group of users who do see TPB Tweets is interacting with them (i.e., clicking links, viewing attached media, liking, or retweeting) more than ever before. Of note, the TPB has not posted replies since Q3 2021, when it stopped live-Tweeting TPB meetings in threads. This also coincides with a lower level of impressions and a heightened engagement ratio.

FIGURE 9: 2019-2022 @NATCAPREGTPB TWITTER METRICS



## FACEBOOK

The TPB's Facebook presence is less active than its Twitter presence and has roughly one-third of its Twitter following. The TPB's Facebook posts often mirror its Tweets with the same text and images (**Figure 10**).

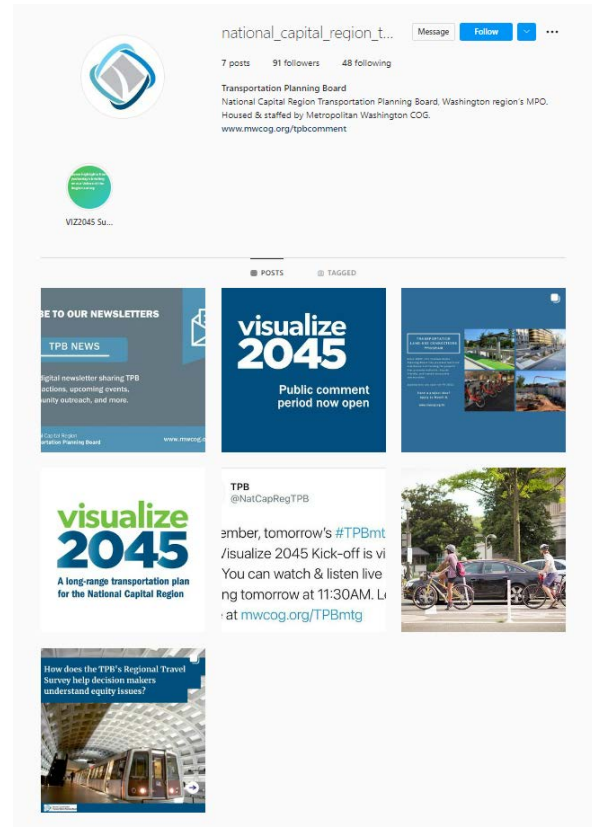
FIGURE 10: MIRRORED POSTS ON TWITTER (LEFT) AND FACEBOOK (RIGHT)



## INSTAGRAM

The TPB's Instagram profile has less than 100 followers, posted a total of seven times since its start in 2020, and is generally updated less frequently than the TPB's other social media platforms (**Figure 11**). TPB last posted to the account in March 2022, the only time it posted this year.

FIGURE 11: @NATIONAL\_CAPITAL\_REGION\_TP Instagram Account



## EVALUATION OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Table 3 is the rubric that evaluates TPB’s ongoing participation activities against the TPB’s participation policies and goals.

TABLE 3: EVALUATION OF ONGOING ACTIVITIES

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 1</b>  <b>Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Members of the public can submit comments to the TPB via voicemail, online form, mailed letter, or email. In-person meetings allow members of the public to provide live comment.</li> <li>■ The TPB posts information to its Facebook and Twitter accounts about recent reports, ongoing activities, and opportunities for public participation. All of the TPB’s social media presence is currently earned (unpaid) as the TPB does not pay for sponsored content.</li> <li>■ As a result of the pandemic, the TPB moved to virtual meetings. Now that meetings have resumed occurring in-person, the TPB is continuing to offer virtual options for members of the public to stay informed about the TPB through regular board meetings.</li> <li>■ The TPB website provides information about the TPB and shares information about opportunities for engagement.</li> <li>■ Individuals interested in being more involved in the efforts of the TPB can apply to serve on the AFA (as a member of the public or representative of a partner organization) or apply to be a member of the CAC. One example of a variety of tools/methods used to engage the CAC included when CAC members attended meetings with TPB state DOT representatives and the TPB chairs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 2</b>  <b>Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The TPB does not yet have public-facing information that makes it clear whether future meetings are in-person or virtual, which may make it difficult for members of the public to know the most appropriate method for providing comment for consideration by the Board.</li> <li>■ The website does describe the application process for the AFA. Under regular operation the same can be said for the CAC; the CAC webpage did not post information about how to join the committee until the beginning of the current application period.</li> <li>■ While the AFA offers alternative formats for many of its meeting materials, CAC and TPB meetings (along with other subcommittees of the TPB) generally post presentations and PDFs with graphics that may not have alternative text; that may not be easily read with a screen reader; or that cannot be easily translated into other languages members of the public.</li> <li>■ Public-facing material and communication should be shared in plain language. Much of the time it is, but there are instances where it could be improved. See the <b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 2</b> evaluation for more information.</li> </ul>



Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 3</b></p> <p><b>Gather input from diverse perspectives.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The AFA and CAC, as advisory committees to the TPB, have specific purposes in helping the TPB gather input from diverse perspectives. The AFA is purpose-built for influencing engagement with diverse populations and the CAC connects the TPB to the region’s diverse communities.</li> <li>■ When selecting new members for the CAC, TPB staff and existing CAC membership are expected to follow guidelines that promote geographic and demographic diversity. More detailed evaluation for these guidelines in practice, and the diversity of the AFA membership, can be found in the <b>Title VI Program</b> evaluation.</li> <li>■ Ongoing opportunities for public participation are not promoted in ways to target outreach to reach a wide swath of the region beyond people who are already somewhat engaged with the TPB. This includes social media, the website, TPB News, and TPB and committee meetings.</li> <li>■ Providing different options for participation allows for broader reach to more diverse communities. With virtual participation possible for TPB and committee meetings over the course of the pandemic, this has broadened the reach of committee meetings for those in-the-know.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 4</b></p> <p><b>Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ At each TPB meeting, comments are presented live and summarized for the record in the TPB meeting minutes. On some occasions where the TPB receives many comments about a particular subject, staff may provide the comments in full, in writing, along with a summary memo.</li> <li>■ Typically, the TPB does not respond to input received via public comment at the monthly TPB meetings.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 5</b></p> <p><b>Promote a regional perspective.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The TPB’s publication “A Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region” describes the interplay between local and state jurisdictions and the TPB. It clearly describes the different roles of various transportation planning bodies in the region and how members of the public can appropriately focus their input and feedback. This information is not directly readable on the website on the public participation webpages; however, the <a href="#">TPB Roles and Responsibilities Page</a> does state: “The TPB does not exercise direct control over funding and does not implement projects, but it does perform a range of activities that promote an integrated approach to transportation development.”</li> <li>■ The TPB’s online presence, including through TPB News and its social media accounts, promotes a regional perspective.</li> </ul>

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 1</b>  <b>Equity perspective</b> – 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 Statement, and the TPB’s Equity Emphasis Areas. It acknowledges past inequities and barriers to involvement and seeks to be more just.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ CAC members may be selected to serve based on their residence in an Equity Emphasis Area; this is an intentional effort to include members of the public who come from areas with higher concentrations of people of color and/or low-income residents.</li> <li>■ TPB’s advisory committees provide varying time-of-day logistics, which provides more options to people who may wish to serve. AFA meetings are held during the day (12:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.), which is geared more toward members of the committee who may participate as part of their job or volunteer role in a community organization. CAC meetings are held in the evenings from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m., which is intended to accommodate people who work during the day.</li> <li>■ AFA meeting materials are often provided in alternative formats (plain text Word documents) for those who require them. Meetings of the CAC and of the TPB do not typically offer similar materials.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 2</b>  <b>Plain language</b> – 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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plain language is effectively used in some instances, and in other cases is not. This evaluation includes an analysis using the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test through Microsoft Word.<sup>5</sup> The “Getting Involved &amp; Public Comment” page scored 44 for reading ease (out of 100)—the higher the score, the easier it is to understand, with the target score between 60-70. Average sentence length and average number of syllables per word are the key factors in the reading ease score. In addition, the webpage received a grade level score of 10.7 (between tenth and eleventh grade-level in the U.S. school system)—target grade level scores for public consumption lie between 7.0 and 8.0 (seventh to eighth grade-level level). This analysis demonstrates that TPB’s public-facing introductory information to public participation opportunities may be somewhat difficult for members of the public with lower levels of education or English fluency to comprehend.<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 3</b>  <b>Early and continuing participation</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The TPB provides regular opportunities for public input at every monthly TPB meeting, although the evaluation for <b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 2</b> demonstrates that information about how to participate may not always be readily available.</li> <li>■ The TPB and Technical Committee mailing lists provide information on a monthly basis for people interested in the ongoing work of each of the bodies.</li> <li>■ The TPB Public Comment notice email list has not been active in 2022, which may have been a missed opportunity inform listserv members about opportunities to provide input on the long-range transportation plan.</li> </ul>

<sup>5</sup> Flesch, Rudolf (1979), *How to Write Plain English*, <https://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~wstarbuc/Writing/Flesch.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Microsoft, [https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2#:~:text=number%20of%20words\)-,Flesch%2DKincaid%20Grade%20Level%20test,of%20approximately%207.0%20to%208.0.](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2#:~:text=number%20of%20words)-,Flesch%2DKincaid%20Grade%20Level%20test,of%20approximately%207.0%20to%208.0.)

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 4</b>  <b>Timely response</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ This evaluation included a test of TPB’s ongoing opportunities to provide public input. When a person submits a comment to the Board through email, they receive an automatic response thanking them for their input and informing them that their feedback will be summarized for the TPB and posted as part of the meeting materials. If a person submits comment via the online comment form, they do not receive a similar confirmation email. There is not an automatic response to comments made on TPB’s comment phone line, but callers are prompted to leave their phone number or voicemail so that TPB staff can return their voicemail. Callers are not briefed on the next steps for their public comment or how it will be presented to the TPB on the voicemail line.</li> <li>■ At each TPB meeting, public comments received during the past month are presented and summarized for the record in the TPB meeting minutes. On some occasions where the TPB receives many comments about a particular subject, staff may provide the comments in-full, in writing, along with a summary memo.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 5</b>  <b>Clarity of Purpose</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The evaluation of this principle for engagement ties closely to the evaluation of <b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 5</b>. As a body, the TPB serves a more nuanced and less outwardly straightforward role than local or state government agencies do, and by its nature, the public interacts less frequently with the TPB than they do their own local or state government agencies. These conditions provide a challenging environment for the TPB to provide clear direction to the public about the purpose of certain public participation opportunities. Given the circumstances, the TPB sends clear messages about the regional perspective and regional policy aspects of public participation opportunities. There is less clarity provided to the public when they are asked to comment on plans which contain specific projects that may impact their daily lives but for which the TPB lacks the ability to influence the details.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Title VI Plan</b>  <b>Providing Language Access and Services</b> based on the Title VI Language Access Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To the best of the evaluation team’s knowledge at the time of publication, the TPB fulfilled the requirements of the Title VI Language Access Plan, including the availability of Google Translate on the TPB website and the offer to translate select materials upon request.</li> <li>■ The Google Translate widget is found in the footer at the bottom of the website. While it is available on every page of the website, due to its location and low-profile, the option to translate the pages might not be obvious to all users. Additionally, while a helpful feature of the site, Google Translate does not offer the level of precision that would be provided by a professional translator, especially for technical content.</li> </ul>

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Title VI Program</b>  <b>Efforts to Encourage Participation by Traditionally Underserved Communities on Committees</b> based on the Title VI Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The CAC’s updated (2020) guidelines for membership selection and participation were designed to encourage participation by people representing traditionally underrepresented communities. Launched in early 2021, the inaugural re-structured CAC term is still in-effect at the time of this writing, and membership of the committee slightly overrepresents the region’s white and Black populations, while underrepresenting the region’s Hispanic or Latino and Asian populations.</li> <li>■ The AFA’s membership guidelines place less emphasis on recruiting members from traditionally underserved communities than the CAC guidelines do. Nonprofit and government agency representatives who work to further equity and accessibility may not necessarily reflect the characteristics of the people who they serve in their roles. As of May 2021, 63.6 percent of AFA members were white, compared with 44.0 percent of the metro Washington region population.</li> <li>■ While listed as underrepresented populations in the Title VI Program, neither the CAC nor AFA maintains data on the membership of people with disabilities or limited English proficiency.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Fulfillment of COG Accommodations Policy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To the best of the evaluation team’s knowledge, at the time of publication, the TPB fulfilled the requirements of the COG Accommodations Policy by offering to provide accommodations upon request, as required.</li> </ul>

## Visualize 2045 Activities

As part of the TPB's 2022 update to its long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, the TPB sought input through several media ranging from the federally required public comment periods to a robust, statistically representative survey of members of the public. The challenges associated with the pandemic led to some new strategies for gathering public input, including a series of posters placed throughout the region with QR codes and the implementation of virtual focus groups. This section includes both documentation and evaluation of TPB's Visualize 2045 public participation opportunities.

### DOCUMENTATION OF VISUALIZE 2045 ACTIVITIES

The TPB's long-range transportation plan, Visualize 2045, consisted of several methods for gathering feedback from the public.

#### Voices of the Region

"Voices of the Region" is the suite of public engagement efforts spearheaded by the TPB to gather input for the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan. The initiative gathered public opinion on regional transportation issues through a statistically representative survey, virtual focus groups, and the Aspiration to Implementation QR code activity. Unlike the previous update of Visualize 2045, the TPB did not seek feedback through a regional survey that was open to all members of the public.

#### PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

As part of its outreach for the 2022 update of its long-range transportation plan, the TPB deployed a survey to a random selection of 22,333 residents in the Washington region. The survey was open from September 22, 2020, to November 2, 2020. A total of 2,407 members of the public completed the survey and the survey results were weighted to form a regionally representative dataset.

#### FOCUS GROUPS

The second phase of Voices of the Region consisted of 11 focus groups which reached 112 members of the public. These focus groups were held virtually and targeted geographic and demographic cross-sections of the region's members of the public, specifically selecting participants from populations historically underrepresented in the transportation planning process.

#### ASPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION (QR CODE ACTIVITY)

The Aspiration to Implementation activity was the final portion of the Voices of the Region outreach for the 2022 update of the long-range transportation plan. More than 40 posters were strategically placed at locations related to each of the TPB's seven Aspirational Initiatives. Questions were geared toward each poster's strategic location with seven different surveys that aligned with each of the seven initiatives. The TPB received 428 responses, or about 10 responses per poster on average.

#### Virtual Open Houses and TIP Forum

The TPB hosted two Virtual Open Houses on April 6 and April 7, 2022, directly after the launch of the public comment period on the draft of the Visualize 2045 update. TPB staff held the virtual events to share information about the draft plan update and to field questions from the public. A week later, on April 14, the TPB hosted a virtual forum on the 2023-2026 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with presentations from representatives of Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT), Virginia DOT (VDOT), District DOT (DDOT), and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) on their organizations' respective inputs to the 2023-2026 TIP.

While promoted on social media and the Visualize 2045 website, these events were not included in the TPB Events page on the COG website.

#### Public Comment

The public was invited to participate in two public comment periods via the Visualize 2045 comment form, by email, by phone, or by postal mail. TPB staff grouped public comments received by theme and responded to the

themes in a memo that was approved by the TPB following the closure of the periods. In some cases, TPB staff coordinated acknowledgement and response from agencies like MDOT so that the agency’s response could also be included in the appendix to the plan update.

The TPB held two federally required comment periods in April 2021 and April 2022:

- April 2 – May 3, 2021: The TPB requested public comment on the constrained element of the long-range transportation plan and on the FY 2023-26 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TPB received 163 emails, 65 form submissions, one voicemail, and 11 letters.
- April 1 – May 1, 2022: The TPB requested public comment on the Air Quality Conformity Analysis, 2022 Update to Visualize 2045, and the FY 2023-26 TIP. The TPB received 483 emails, 34 form submissions, no voicemails, and one letter.

**NEWS ADVERTISEMENT**

As is federally required for updates to an MPO’s long-range transportation plan, the TPB posted notices of public comment periods for the Visualize 2045 update. In addition to its classified ad in *The Washington Post* (Figure 12), the TPB also posted an ad in *The Afro American* and a Spanish-language ad in the *Washington Hispanic*.

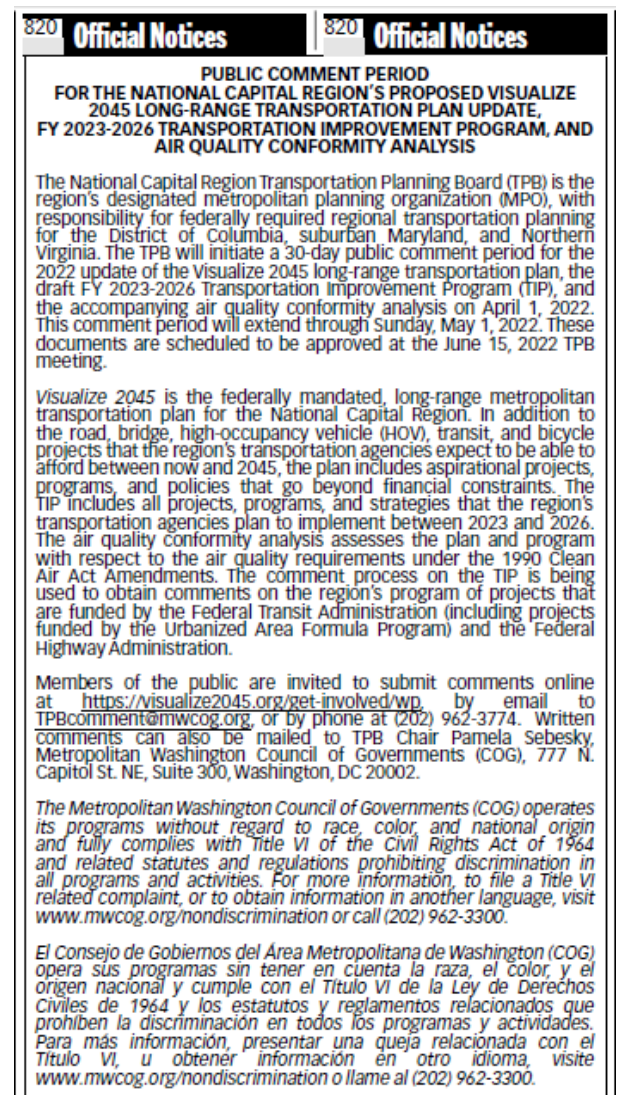
The ads directed readers to provide their public comment via email, postal mail, phone, or web form. The web form’s link was unique to each publication to allow the TPB to track the number of clicks originating from each respective classified ad. The referral links from the newspaper classified advertisements did not produce significant traffic to the “Get Involved” webpage.

**Social Media**

The TPB’s social media presence played several roles in public participation related to Visualize 2045:

- The TPB Tweeted four times from April 2, 2021, to May 3, 2021, and ten times from April 1, 2022, to May 1, 2022, encouraging members of the public to provide input during the public comment periods for the long-range transportation plan or attend a virtual open house.
- The TPB’s Twitter account also provided updates on the Visualize 2045 update process and virtual open house schedules.

FIGURE 12: MARCH 31, 2022, PUBLIC NOTICE OF VISUALIZE 2045 PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD IN THE WASHINGTON POST



## Visualize 2045 Website

A central location for information related to the long-range transportation plan, the [Visualize 2045 website](#) hosts webpages that give access to the (now approved) long-range transportation plan update, federal requirements for the plan, TPB goals for the plan, an ArcGIS Story Map of TPB's Voices of the Region outreach, progress made toward TPB goals, and ways for the public to get involved.

### At A Glance: Visualize 2045 Website

- Users visited the Visualize 2045 website 254 times on April 1, 2022, the first day of the 2022 public comment period. This was the highest number of visits to the Visualize 2045 website during the analysis period (March – October 2022).
- The “Get Involved” page received the most views on that day, with 239 views.
- Traffic remained elevated through April on weekdays during the comment period relative to other months during the analysis period.

### REFERRALS

- The greatest number of users (45 percent) visited the site by direct link (i.e., typing “visualize2045.org” into their browser or clicking the link in an untraceable file like a PDF).
- Roughly 34 percent of users found the site through a referral from another website.
- Around 22 percent of users visited visualize2045.org through mwcog.org.
- 2.5 percent of users accessed the site via ggwash.org.
- 1.7 percent of users accessed the site via Twitter.
- 1.6 percent of users accessed the site via Facebook.
- 1.2 percent of users accessed the site via virginia.gov.
- Around 13 percent of users found the site through a Google search.

The top three pages that received the most page views during the analysis period were:

- Visualize2045.org home page.
- Draft Plan page.
- Get Involved page.

## Ambassador Program and Committee Involvement

To get the word out regarding Visualize 2045, TPB created materials for distribution to stakeholders, particularly those serving on advisory committees like the CAC and AFA. Committee members received materials and a presentation summarizing the resources available. The “Ambassador Kit” consisted of:

- Shareable links to the Visualize 2045 website
- Social media hashtags
- Talking points and draft language for distribution
- Public comment information
- Sample social media posts
- Social media graphics.



## EVALUATION OF VISUALIZE 2045 ACTIVITIES

Table 4 is the rubric that evaluates TPB’s Visualize 2045 participation activities against the TPB’s participation policies and goals.

TABLE 4: EVALUATION OF VISUALIZE 2045 ACTIVITIES

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 1</b>  <b>Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The outreach effort for Visualize 2045 used a variety of tools: focus groups, public survey, and the Aspiration to Implementation QR code activity. TPB staff selected a representative sample from the general public to provide input via the public survey. QR code posters were placed throughout the region to capture input from anyone who saw the posters and wanted to engage. For members of the public hoping to gain more detailed information, the TPB hosted virtual open houses and a TIP forum with opportunities to learn more about Visualize 2045 and ask questions of TPB staff.</li> <li>■ Utilizing existing connections to community leaders and involved members of the public as a conduit, Ambassador Kits helped to spread information about participation opportunities out to various community members and committees, including the AFA, CAC, jurisdictional PIOs, the Technical Committee, and the TPB.</li> <li>■ Social media was used as a tool for sharing plan information and information about opportunities to engage.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 2</b>  <b>Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The public survey was available to take in English and Spanish. Plan documents were not widely translated. The Visualize 2045 website has a Google Translate widget that is not currently operational. Spanish- and English-language newspaper ads were placed for public comment periods.</li> <li>■ The TPB use newspaper ads and social media to notify the public about the public comment periods for Visualize 2045. Survey respondents also received postcards notifying them about the public comment period.</li> <li>■ The QR Code activity required participants to have seen the signage, in-person, limiting the reach of this engagement opportunity.</li> </ul>



Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 3</b></p> <p><b>Gather input from diverse perspectives.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The statistically representative survey was mailed to randomly selected people throughout the region, providing an asynchronous opportunity for the TPB to systematically collect feedback from more people, rather than relying on members of the public who are already tuned in to the TPB’s activities.</li> <li>■ The people invited to participate in the focus groups and the representative survey were intentionally chosen in order to construct a geographically and demographically diverse sample. EEAs were oversampled in order to develop a statistically significant representative sample of the region’s diverse population.</li> <li>■ Pre- and post-incentives were used: a one-dollar bill in the invitation letter as a pre-incentive for the survey and a chance to win a \$100 gift card as a post-incentive for participating in the QR code activity (seven winners were selected at random, one for each of the aspirational initiatives). Participants were paid to participate in the focus groups.</li> <li>■ The selection of locations that the QR code posters were placed was based on the presence of transportation infrastructure/projects which reflected the seven aspirational initiatives, and not based on an effort to reach diverse constituencies. In addition, all posters were in English.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 4</b></p> <p><b>Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ TPB staff compiled and summarized comments received during the Visualize 2045 public comment. Appendix I of Visualize 2045 outlines the TPB’s acknowledgement of each comment “theme” and provides either a response from TPB or agency staff or a written confirmation that the comments have been passed along to the TPB and the members’ technical agencies.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 5</b></p> <p><b>Promote a regional perspective.</b> 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Visualize 2045 references regionwide goals such as climate change prevention and quality of life, priming people to think about the plan from a regional perspective. Activities like the Aspiration to Implementation activity may have asked respondents about regional initiatives at discrete locations throughout the region, but the questions asked for their feedback on both local and regional initiatives.</li> <li>■ The TPB makes clear that Visualize 2045 is a regional plan. The regional perspective was promoted on social media channels, newspaper ads, and on the website.</li> </ul>

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 1</b></p> <p><b>Equity perspective</b> – 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 Statement, and the TPB’s Equity Emphasis Areas. It acknowledges past inequities and barriers to involvement and seeks to be more just.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ TPB staff intentionally sought input from members of historically underrepresented communities through the mailed survey and focus group.</li> <li>■ Focus groups were held virtually with no expectation of camera availability or internet access, removing barriers to participation.</li> <li>■ While the survey and one focus group were available in Spanish, the QR code activity, social media promotion, and public comment notices (outside of the ad in the Washington Hispanic) were provided in English.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 2</b></p> <p><b>Plain language</b> – 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</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Plain language is effectively used in some instances, and in other cases is not. The Visualize 2045 Ambassador Kit contained several template Tweets and talking points for community leaders to pass on to their community members. Some of the language is technical in nature or presents the names of documents and plans with minimal context for an average member of the public. Common acronyms and technical terms used in the Ambassador Kit and on TPB social media that could be confusing or unclear out of context to members of the public include “Air Quality Conformity analysis,” “TIP,” and “Financial Constraint.” When paired with visuals and afforded more space for context, the Visualize 2045 website provides the necessary information for members of the public to understand terms such as these; the <a href="#">Requirements</a> page defines terms that may be less obvious to the general public, like “Financial Constraint” and “Air Quality Conformity,” using several paragraphs to do so. However, the Requirements page is not clearly labeled as a resource for understanding these technical terms and was one of the less-visited pages throughout the 2022 update process. In addition, many documents that explain less intuitive concepts and the purpose of Visualize 2045 are PDF documents that are not accessible to those requiring a language other than English.</li> <li>■ This evaluation includes an analysis using the Flesch Reading Ease and Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level test through Microsoft Word.<sup>7</sup> The introductory paragraph on the home page of the Visualize 2045 website received a reading ease score of 7.0 (out of 100, with higher scores being easier to read and a target score of 60-70) and a grade level of 16.7 (meaning the language is accessible to people with a college degree/starting an advanced degree). Average sentence length and average number of syllables per word are the key factors in the reading ease score. The target grade level score for public consumption lies between 7.0 and 8.0 (seventh to eighth grade-level in the U.S. school system). The Ambassador Toolkit scored 23.9 for reading ease and a grade level of 14.0. This analysis demonstrates that some of the Visualize 2045 public-facing materials are shared using complex language that may not be easily understood by members of the public with lower levels of education or English fluency.<sup>8</sup></li> </ul>

<sup>7</sup> Flesch, Rudolf (1979), *How to Write Plain English*, <https://pages.stern.nyu.edu/~wstarbuc/Writing/Flesch.htm>

<sup>8</sup> Microsoft, [https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2#:~:text=number%20of%20words\),Flesch%2DKincaid%20Grade%20Level%20test,of%20approximately%207.0%20to%208.0](https://support.microsoft.com/en-us/office/get-your-document-s-readability-and-level-statistics-85b4969e-e80a-4777-8dd3-f7fc3c8b3fd2#:~:text=number%20of%20words),Flesch%2DKincaid%20Grade%20Level%20test,of%20approximately%207.0%20to%208.0).

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 3</b>  <b>Early and continuing participation</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Paid newspaper advertisements notified the public about public comment opportunities in the days leading up to the public comment periods. In 2022, the ads were published six days ahead in the <i>Afro American</i>, one day ahead in the <i>Washington Post</i>, and on the first day of the public comment period in the <i>Washington Hispanic</i>.</li> <li>■ The TPB Tweeted and sent TPB News emails about opportunities for public comment during the public comment period. However, as noted in the ongoing activity evaluation, the TPB did not utilize its public comment notice email list in 2022.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 4</b>  <b>Timely response</b> – 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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ TPB staff compiled and summarized comments within a month for review by the TPB.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 5</b>  <b>Clarity of Purpose</b> – 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.</p>	<p>The TPB’s Visualize 2045 public participation efforts had clear goals and objectives within the broader context of plan development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The statistically representative survey randomly sampled the region’s population, specifically ensuring participation from all of TPB’s jurisdictions and oversampling TPB’s EEAs. The purpose of the survey was to understand how different populations experience transportation in the metropolitan Washington region.</li> <li>■ Focus groups specifically targeted demographic and geographic attributes to understand how different populations experience transportation in the metropolitan Washington region.</li> <li>■ The public comment periods provided opportunities for the public to provide open-ended input on materials related to Visualize 2045.</li> <li>■ Open houses and the TIP forum were not designed to solicit feedback. Rather, these events sought to inform the public of the long-range transportation plan and the opportunity for public comment.</li> <li>■ TPB staff and consultants synthesized reports for each of the activities that solicited input from the public, which were then made available to the TPB, other community leaders, and the public.</li> </ul> <p>TPB staff and consultants intended for the Aspiration to Implementation QR code activity to gather input from the public by placing signs throughout the region to prompt participation. As referenced in the evaluation for <b>Participation Plan Policy Goal 2</b>, this provided limited opportunity for participation, as members of the public could only provide the intended feedback if they happened to see a sign and understood the purpose of the QR code activity.</p>

Evaluation Factor	Evaluation
<b>Title VI Plan</b> <b>Providing Language Access and Services</b> based on the Title VI Language Access Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To the best of the evaluation team’s knowledge, at the time of publication, the TPB fulfilled the requirements of the Title VI Language Access Plan in its planning for Visualize 2045 outreach efforts. However, the Visualize 2045 site’s translation feature is not operational and only offers English text.</li> </ul>
<b>Title VI Program</b> <b>Efforts to Encourage Participation by Traditionally Underserved Communities on Committees</b> based on the Title VI Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The TPB intentionally engaged populations that are historically underrepresented in TPB decision-making in the long-range transportation plan update by oversampling residents of Equity Emphasis Areas and building focus groups targeting historically underrepresented groups who interact with the region’s transportation systems in various ways.</li> </ul>
<b>Fulfillment of COG Accommodations Policy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ To the best of the evaluation team’s knowledge, at the time of publication, the TPB fulfilled the requirements of the COG Accommodations Policy by offering to provide accommodations upon request, as required.</li> </ul>

# 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

This section contains two different types of recommendations: status updates to the 2019 recommendations and new recommendations.

## Status Updates to Recommendations from 2019 Participation Plan Implementation Evaluation Report

The 2019 evaluation of the TPB's implementation of public participation contained a series of recommendations. In the following tables, TPB staff provide status updates on these recommendations, including whether and how the recommendations have been carried out and to what degree; any notable accomplishments; and any barriers or conditions that have prevented them from being fulfilled:

- **Table 5: Status Updates to 2019 Recommendations Regarding the Purpose and Goals of Public Participation**
- **Table 6: Status Updates to 2019 Recommendations Regarding Current Practices and Tools**
- **Table 7: Status Updates to 2019 Recommendations Regarding New Strategies, Approaches, and Tools.**



TABLE 5: STATUS UPDATES TO 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING THE PURPOSE AND GOALS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>1. Update the Participation Plan.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Streamline the content in the plan, when possible.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The existing plan provides useful information but contains a lot of text. It may be useful to make the plan more actionable by creating tables or checklists that will allow you to more quickly assess how well activities are serving the different constituencies.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Use Visualize 2045 successes as a model for how to improve strategies.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Define the most successful strategies from the long-range plan and use these more often in reaching out to the public and interest groups.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. Clarify the role of public engagement                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. When are you informing versus when are you seeking public input?</li> <li>ii. How is public input used when it is gathered? What are the feedback loops? (Goal #4)</li> </ul> </li> <li>d. Clarify tiers of public to engage and how they should be engaged (Goal #1)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. “Involved” public refers to the Advisory Committee members and “others.” Should clarify who “others” includes – does that include advocates?</li> <li>ii. Identify strategies to develop knowledge of the “informed” – community leaders, opinion leaders working at the local level.</li> <li>iii. Magnify an appropriate role for “interested” parties, some of whom may have more knowledge of transportation issues than may be assumed.</li> </ul> </li> <li>e. Define timelines                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Plan for ways to reach out more than 1-2 weeks in advance of public open houses and forums – consider a 2-3 week minimum.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>The 2020 Participation Plan was designed with this recommendation in mind. While providing a policy overview for public engagement, it primarily serves as a staff resource for designing, implementing, and evaluating public participation activities. Among other things, the Plan’s Staff Guide provides a workflow that lays out a series of questions for staff to ask themselves as they start a new activity.</p> <p>The TPB’s public involvement experiences with the 2018 Visualize 2045 update served as the starting point for the design of public engagement for the 2022 update. For the 2018 update, staff learned the importance of conducting a range of activities to reach different kinds of people in different ways; for the 2022 update, efforts were made to replicate those strategies, although outreach had to be tailored to pandemic conditions. Among other things, we determined we wanted to conduct public opinion research through a large representative sample of addresses—which is something we did in both 2017 and in 2021. But we also knew that we wanted to conduct open outreach for anyone to provided contributions. Because we could not conduct public forums during the pandemic as we did in 2018, we decided to conduct open outreach in 2021 through posters featuring QR codes.</p> <p>In conducting outreach, we have sought to be clear that outreach will be used to inform the plan.</p> <p>For example, the invitation letter to participate in the Voices of Region opinion survey said, “through your participation, the transportation needs, behaviors, and preferences of people like you will be represented in future planning activities.” The input received through all three Voices of the Region activities (survey, focus groups, and QR code outreach) was prominently woven into the final Visualize 2045 plan document.</p> <p>In contrast, the TIP forum, conducted in April 2022, was explicitly designed to inform the public about the contents of the draft plan, which was largely completed at that stage and unlikely to change.</p> <p>The 2020 Participation Plan renamed the three levels of constituencies to make their meanings more explicit. They are now called “Active Participants,” “Community Leaders,” and the “General Public.” With these straight-forward labels, the types of outreach and the individuals who might be included in these groups was much easier to describe in the new Participation Plan.</p> <p>Staff has been more deliberate about providing advance notice, although public events were quite limited during the pandemic. As we begin to conduct more in-person outreach, we should keep this recommendation in mind. For the April 2022 virtual forums, which took place on April 6, 7, and 14, postcards were received in mailboxes around March 30 and social media promotion began on March 29.</p>

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>2. Undertake a campaign to clarify the TPB's role. (Goal #5)</b></p> <p>a. During Visualize 2045, TPB Board members were very effective at getting the word out about meetings. Cultivate their assistance in disseminating this information as well.</p> <p>b. Provide fact sheets with infographics that are easily shareable by TPB members, to non-profit orgs, or others.</p> <p>i. Could start with a fact sheet about "What is the TPB? What is COG? Why should you care about what we're doing?"</p> <p>ii. Consider the need to tailor for different audiences.</p> <p>c. Social media campaign</p> <p>i. Consider using informal polling or other interactive ways to get people involved</p> <p>d. Email/mail campaign</p> <p>e. Visits to transportation committees at the jurisdictional level throughout the region.</p>	<p>Because long-range transportation planning is the core activity of the TPB and the primary vehicle by which the TPB's role is felt throughout the region, TPB staff made a deliberate decision to focus recent public involvement activities on the update of Visualize 2045. For this outreach, staff repeatedly sought to use TPB members as conduits for outreach and information dissemination, including providing them with the Ambassador Kit and asking them to spread the word about Visualize 2045. In the future, the TPB may determine it would be beneficial to conduct a campaign to clarify the TPB's role, although the purpose of such outreach may again be linked to the update of the long-range transportation plan.</p> <p>Fact sheets and infographics were developed for the update of Visualize 2045 and for TPB's focus areas.</p> <p>Social media used for outreach for Visualize 2045 sought to explain the role of the TPB and its long-range transportation plan. In the future, staff may determine it would be helpful to use social media in a more interactive way.</p> <p>Staff used email lists extensively to seek input and share information about the Visualize 2045 update.</p> <p>Based on invitations received, TPB staff met with various jurisdiction-level committees during the update of Visualize 2045. In 2019, TPB staff met jurisdictional staff to discuss the implementation of the 2018 plan and opportunities for the plan update in 2022. In addition, TPB staff regularly attend meetings with WMATA (Washington Metropolitan Area Transportation Authority, or Metro), the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority (NVTA) Regional Jurisdiction and Agency Coordinating Committee (RJACC), the MDOT (Maryland Department of Transportation) CAV (Connected and Autonomous Vehicles) Working Group, and other transportation committee meetings in the region.</p>
<p><b>3. Revisit the Participation Plan on a regular basis.</b></p> <p>a. The current plan calls for an annual evaluation. As a way to meet this requirement, consider conducting an annual survey to all members, committees, interested members of the general public, etc., to gauge successes and improvements needed.</p>	<p>Given staff capacity challenges in 2021, the annual evaluation did not occur. Staff plan to conduct such an evaluation in 2022 that may include a survey to gather input on what has worked and what has been less effective.</p>

TABLE 6: STATUS UPDATES TO 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING CURRENT PRACTICES AND TOOLS

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>4. Hire at least one additional communications staff member dedicated to the TPB.</b></p>	<p>A communications program manager was hired at the beginning of 2022. This position is more senior than previous communications staff and thus, this new staffer is already more involved in strategic communications planning.</p>

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>5. Consider whether an expanded regional coordination role may be fitting. (Goal #5)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Coordination is needed in the region and the TPB is a natural fit for this role. The TPB can help people stay informed and involved about local projects.</li> <li>b. Help to inform public about local plans and processes so they can provide input before the plans and projects come to COG/TPB. This can help to address frustration related to the public not having influence on local projects by the time they are included in a TPB document.</li> <li>c. If this is a role the TPB wants to take on, consider (as a short-term step) updating and advertising the Transportation Planning Hub. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Ask TPB members to provide updated information.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>As the role of the TPB continues to change, public involvement activities will also evolve. However, project development has not typically been within the bailiwick of regional planning and focusing on local and state planning is not part of the TPB's core mission of regional planning.</p> <p>Chapter 1 in Visualize 2045 explains the regional planning process in Chapter 1. TPB staff also explained the TPB's role in the virtual open houses.</p> <p>TPB staff determined that the Hub website required too much maintenance and was not essential to the TPB's core mission of regional planning.</p>
<p><b>6. Improve public participation related to Board meetings and the TIP Forum. (Goal #2)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Consider ways to streamline the public comment process at Board meetings. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Suggesting that the public register ahead of time, and bring 65 copies of their comment, may make this process seem more onerous than it needs to be, which could deter many people from participating.</li> </ul> </li> <li>b. Allow enough time to provide access via alternative formats, if requested. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. The existing Accommodations Policy states that the TPB requires up to seven business days to process requests. However, TPB materials are released six days before each meeting, and materials for most other meetings are provided a week in advance. This makes it difficult for those requesting alternate formats to review materials prior to the meetings, for example, and thus to provide comments on those materials at the meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>c. For key meetings, including the TIP forum, consider returning to the practice of sending postcards or other invitations.</li> </ul>	<p>In-person public comments did not take place during the pandemic and only resumed in October 2022. Speakers are no longer asked to bring copies. Because of the challenges of organizing and conducting hybrid meetings, current policy still asks in-person speakers to register one day ahead of time.</p> <p>The Accommodations Policy is periodically reviewed for consistency. Reasonable accommodations are provided upon request per the policy outlined in the 2020 Public Participation Plan and the COG/TPB website.</p> <p>In 2020 and 2022, the TPB sent postcards to advertise the TIP Forum. In 2022, people who participated in the Voices of the Region survey were added to the mailing list. The 2022 postcard included information about the public comment period, virtual open houses, and TIP forum. Postcards were also available at the TPB Technical Committee meeting.</p>
<p><b>7. Clarify the expectations and role of each Committee.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Assess how representative CAC members are related to the "interested public" and consider ways to bring in more diverse perspectives. (Goal #3)</li> <li>b. What are the expectations of each member? (e.g., Should they be reaching out to their communities?) Work with each jurisdiction regarding roles, expectations, skills needed for CAC members.</li> </ul>	<p>The CAC was restructured in 2021. The new recruitment process was designed to get more diverse applicants and members for the new committee. Currently, the Title VI Program tracks the race and ethnicity of committee members.</p> <p>Staff took extra time in 2021 to orient CAC members and clarify their roles. Staff will seek to improve those efforts for the next committee, which will serve a two-year term in 2023-2024.</p>



2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>8. Evolve Committee processes and structures. (Goal #1)</b></p> <p>a. Recruit a Board member to participate on the CAC, as with AFA, to provide a direct link to the TPB and elevate the input of that Committee.</p> <p>b. Provide outreach materials that can be easily disseminated. Visualize 2045 flyers provide a good precedent for this.</p> <p>c. Inform committee members about regional/local/state projects that are ongoing, so that they can provide comments in a timely manner.</p> <p>d. Bring in local representatives to share information about projects and processes at the local level, so committee members have better information about how they can weigh in on those efforts.</p> <p>e. Respond in writing to questions from committee members.</p> <p>f. Bring in experts to build the base of knowledge in committees, especially at the beginning of each new Committee year.</p> <p>g. At each meeting, be clear about the issues for which you are seeking input, and why.</p>	<p>Staff determined that it might not be appropriate to include a TPB member on the CAC. However, in recent years, board members have participated more extensively on the committee. In the summer of 2022, the TPB officers were invited to a CAC meeting that featured state-based breakout sessions.</p> <p>Because of the pandemic, handouts were not extensively used in recent years. However, the Visualize 2045 Ambassador program did provide short written materials, which were disseminated electronically. In addition, Visualize 2045 materials, such as flyers, social media graphics, and template language were made available as downloads on the Visualize 2045 website. The TPB also produced a series of animated videos and infographics.</p> <p>Focusing on local and state project development is not part of the TPB’s core mission of regional planning, and therefore we have not emphasized projects with the CAC and AFA.</p> <p>Staff have sought to include local and state planners more extensively in CAC and AFA meetings. For example, in 2020, a session with state DOT representatives provided CAC members the chance to talk about how state transportation planning is coordinated with MPO planning. Again however, while local and state planning is certainly relevant, the TPB should stick to its mission of regional planning as much as possible.</p> <p>TPB staff has not received questions from CAC members that required answers in writing.</p> <p>CAC meetings often feature subject-matter experts who help expand the committee’s base of knowledge. At the beginning of 2021, staff experts provided a series of briefings on the Visualize 2045 update.</p> <p>Staff consistently ask questions at the meetings to elicit comments for the CAC’s monthly report to the TPB. In the future, staff should continue to seek ways to make the solicitation of input more explicit, as the CAC has expressed that this remains an issue.</p>
<p><b>9. Evolve social media practices. (Goal #2)</b></p> <p>a. More people have Facebook accounts than Twitter accounts but the TPB’s Facebook following is much smaller. Consider ways to increase activity on Facebook – live streaming of forums, etc.</p> <p>b. Consider ways to expand into other social media venues (e.g., Instagram).</p> <p>c. To make it easier for COG and other partners to disseminate information about TPB meetings, reports, etc., provide consistent, leadership-vetted social media messaging. This could happen via a weekly email, for example.</p>	<p>TPB staff is exploring boosted or paid ad video options or including non-paid staff-created video for Tweets and Facebook posts. An initial use of video would be for Community Advisory Committee member application period promotion.</p> <p>TPB has an Instagram account and has had discussions about LinkedIn. Due to staff resources and time, the Instagram account has not been used to its full potential.</p> <p>TPB staff coordinate social media with the COG Office of Communications. While not all posts or tweets are vetted due to the time-sensitive nature of social media, there is monthly to twice-monthly discussion about what to feature or share</p>

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>d. Try to reach new people to avoid a social media “echo chamber.”               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Grow the number of messaging ambassadors on social media to reach more people and new audiences. Provide messaging that indicates how the TPB’s activities might be of interest to these groups.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>TPB staff will continue to identify ways to expand outreach; however there has not been a focused effort in 2022 to grow the number of messaging ambassadors beyond social media ambassador outreach during the Visualize 2045 public comment period. Paid social media ads/boosting may also make a difference here.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>e. Consider ways to increase the information shared on Twitter:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. TPB meetings are live-Tweeted and this strategy has been used at other events. Continue to use this method of sharing information as events are happening.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>TPB staff have moved away from live tweeting TPB meetings due to staff constraints, size of audience, and consideration of benefit vs. staff resources. TPB will consider live tweeting for important events, key discussions, or plan approvals. It is not anticipated that regular live tweeting will resume for most TPB meetings.</p>
<p><b>10. Keep all levels of constituencies updated on long-range plan implementation progress, using successful strategies from Visualize 2045 as a guide. (Goal #2)</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Keep people (public, advocacy groups, etc.) engaged after long term planning processes – how are recommendations being implemented? Consider highlighting a single topic or “theme” around which to structure the fact sheets or infographics mentioned above.</li> </ul>	<p>TPB staff conducted follow-up on the 2018 version of Visualize 2045 in a variety of ways. Fact sheets, infographics, and short videos on the Aspirational Initiatives were developed to help the public understand the purpose of these strategies. TPB staff also conducted site visits to discuss implementation activities associated with the Aspirational Initiatives and wrote a summary of these findings. The “Aspiration to Implementation” activity (QR code outreach) in 2021 displayed posters around the region, informing people about improvements (e.g., trails or BRT) that were examples of good ideas that were featured in the region’s long-range transportation plan. The posters had QR codes that allowed residents to let the TPB know whether and how these initiatives had made a difference in their daily lives.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Use Visualize branding and report style.</li> </ul>	<p>The 2022 update of Visualize 2045 featured refreshed and more consistent branding.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. Keep local, state, regional committees, etc., reminded about initiatives and progress.</li> </ul>	<p>Staff conducted a series of two-hour meetings with all the TPB’s jurisdictions to brief them on the Aspirational Initiatives and promote their implementation.</p>
<p><b>11. Take a leadership role in providing regional transportation education opportunities. (Goal #5)</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Hold forums beyond just during long-range plan – more than every 4 years.</li> </ul>	<p>Because of the pandemic, no in-person public forums have been held in recent years. To inform regional planning and in preparation for development of the long-range transportation plan, the TPB conducted two webinar series that were open to the public—one on connected and automated vehicles and another on resiliency.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>b. Bring back the Community Leadership Institute as an annual event.</li> </ul>	<p>Because of the pandemic, the Community Leadership Institute has not been conducted since 2019. TPB staff hope for the program’s renewal in the near future.</p>
<p><b>12. To prepare for the next long-range plan update, consider gauging how the public felt about the branding and outreach efforts through a survey.</b></p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. It would be good to assess how the public felt about the branding and how well it caught on – could ask in surveys, via social media, etc.</li> </ul>	<p>Because our region is so immense and capacity for outreach is limited, staff determined that a broad survey of outreach activities would not be practical. Staff has sought however to use the CAC and AFA for assistance in assessing the effectiveness of past outreach.</p>
<p><b>13. Take on even more of a regional transportation research and data leadership role. (Goal #5)</b></p>	

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p>a. Build on the buzz that the TPB draws when releasing congestion information, etc.</p>	<p>Understanding the popularity of data, TPB staff aggressively shared information about the public opinion survey conducted in 2020. The information from this research was particularly resonant with the public and the media because the transportation impacts of the pandemic were so unclear at that time.</p>
<p><b>14. During the next long-range plan update, plan for ways to:</b></p>	
<p>a. Improve outreach lead time about meetings and other comment opportunities.</p>	<p>Staff extensively advertised opportunities to comment on various stages of the long-range transportation plan. Unfortunately, in-person public meetings were not conducted because of the pandemic.</p>
<p>b. Hold formal public comment periods earlier in the planning process, if possible.</p>	<p>The TPB will continue to conduct formal public comment period before the Board approves the project inputs for the air quality conformity analysis of the constrained element of the long-range transportation plan.</p>
<p>c. Make it clear why participation is needed (clear for the public, TPB members, and internal stakeholders).</p>	<p>The TPB's Public Participation Plan clearly says that public input makes our plans better and makes the implementation of our plans more likely. Public involvement is not just a federal requirement. We seek to explain these underlying purposes as much as possible in our outreach activities. See the evaluation of the Participation Plan Principle for Engagement 5 (Clarity of Purpose) in the Visualize 2045 evaluation rubric for more information.</p>
<p>d. Consider rethinking the TPB's open house strategy – did you reach enough people to warrant the cost? Are there alternate ways of sharing the same information (e.g., online forums, printed and emailed newsletters, etc.)?</p>	<p>Because of the pandemic, we did not conduct in-person open houses for the recent plan update.</p>
<p>e. Provide facilitator training for forums or other small-group discussions, to ensure consistency in question delivery and knowledge about key issues.</p>	<p>Staff underwent facilitator training to conduct focus groups in the winter of 2021 as part of the Voices of the Region outreach. This training significantly increased the quality of the input received.</p>
<p>f. Make it clear that meetings such as those of Task Forces or similar groups are open to the public.</p>	<p>During the pandemic, meetings were conducted virtually and typically were live-streamed.</p>
<p>g. Look for ways to include more members of the public on advisory Task Forces or other groups.</p>	<p>Task forces have not been formed recently. Staff will keep this recommendation in mind for the future.</p>
<p>h. To provide education prior to surveys (to obtain better-educated opinions), consider providing a set of information pages at the beginning of a survey, or an informational paragraph with a chart at the beginning of each question (where relevant).</p>	<p>Consistent with this recommendation, the QR code outreach activity used an online survey that provided background information about the Aspirational Initiatives so that respondents could provide better informed input.</p>
<p>i. Utilize multiple survey phases – visioning, feedback on draft recommendations.</p>	<p>Public engagement was woven into all stages of the recent update to Visualize 2045. The survey, focus groups, and QR code outreach were spaced out over a period of two years and were integrated into the development of all phases of the plan.</p>
<p>j. Go out to other ongoing meetings to get input (take iPads with surveys, etc.).</p>	<p>Because of the pandemic, this recommendation could not be implemented. However, staff will consider using this approach in the future. In past years, TPB outreach did include visits to meetings organized by external groups and we found such outreach to be very effective.</p>

TABLE 7: STATUS UPDATES TO 2019 RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING NEW STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND TOOLS

2019 Recommendation	Status Update
<p><b>15. Consider development of a series of videos to educate about the TPB as well as ongoing and one-off activities. (Goal #5)</b></p>	
<p>a. These videos could be shared via social media, TPB News, etc.</p>	<p>A series of videos, along with infographics, was developed to help the public quickly grasp key concepts underlying the Aspirational Initiatives and the long-range transportation plan. The videos, which were short and visually appealing, were featured on social media, at online meetings, and on the TPB website. Other videos were recorded and made available on the Get Involved webpage.</p>
<p><b>16. Meet with member jurisdictions and other related groups to coordinate efforts and grow a group of messaging ambassadors. (Goal #5)</b></p>	
<p>a. Coordinate directly with transportation committees in regional jurisdictions.</p>	<p>Staff conducted a series of two-hour meetings with all the TPB's jurisdictions to brief them on the Aspirational Initiatives and promote their implementation.</p>
<p>b. Initiate regular appearances at state and local DOT, Metro, etc., meetings.</p>	<p>TPB staff regularly attend meetings of key organizations and agencies in the region, such as WMATA and the Northern Virginia Transportation Authority. On an invitation-basis, staff frequently provide briefings to local and state meetings. TPB leadership and planning staff conducted a series of "site visits" in each jurisdiction in 2019 and 2020.</p>
<p>c. Coordinate with TPB members regarding project schedules and engagement processes to reduce confusion related to overlapping planning projects in the region, and to reduce the chance of overlapping meetings.</p>	<p>In a region as large and complex as ours, coordinating schedules will remain a key challenge. TPB staff continually strive to maintain strong lines of communications with our members to reduce confusion. We also intentionally co-hosted the TIP/DDOT STIP meetings to this end.</p>
<p>d. Consider using these meetings to request assistance with recruitment of CAC members.</p>	<p>We regularly seek assistance with CAC recruitment, including emails and announcements at meetings. To target under-represented groups and places, staff has also contacted staff at member jurisdictions on an individual basis.</p>
<p><b>17. Foster discussions about regional and local efforts to define narratives and build an understanding of issues. (Goal #5)</b></p>	
<p>a. Consider an annual conference or speaker series.</p>	<p>Given staff constraints, we have not directly implemented this recommendation, but will consider it for the future. We do, however, conduct regular workshops and peer exchange events on specific topics, including bike/ped planning.</p>
<p><b>18. Make efforts to educate people about transportation issues from a younger age.</b></p>	
<p>a. See the Urban Land Institute's UrbanPlan model for high schools as an example.</p>	<p>We have long been considering the possibility of conducting education with young people. In past years, staff preliminarily investigated the possibility of conducting a version of the Community Leadership Institute in schools, but we encountered challenges in finding a school that would be open to the program. Among other things, we were advised that school curricula and students' lives in general are often very time constrained. Last year, staff did conduct a workshop with students that could potentially provide a basis for future work with young people. We will continue to consider this recommendation.</p>

## New Recommendations

New recommendations are based on the **Focus Group and Questionnaire Findings**, the **Evaluation of Ongoing Activities**, and the **Evaluation of Visualize 2045 Activities**.

The new recommendations are divided into the same three main sections as in the 2019 evaluation, to allow TPB staff to track progress more easily on all of the recommendations following the delivery of this evaluation:

- Regarding the Purpose and Goals of Public Participation
- Regarding Current Practices and Tools
- Regarding New Strategies, Approaches, and Tools.

### REGARDING THE PURPOSE AND GOALS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

#### TPB's Participation Plan

These recommendations relate to the makeup and use of the TPB's Participation Plan.

- The second goal in the Participation Plan currently provides important guidance for TPB staff to ensure that the public has easy access to information on how they can participate. To further incorporate the theme of equity into the Participation Plan, and to make this goal even more robust, **consider editing the second Participation Plan policy goal to include “equitable access.”** The goal currently reads:

*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.*

- Consider editing the first sentence to read: “Provide clear, open, and equitable access to information and participation opportunities.” The second sentence already refers to “tailor[ing] information to be accessible to more constituencies,” which describes the mechanism by which the goal of providing equitable access could be implemented.
- The fifth policy goal in the Participation Plan did not generate much discussion during the focus groups, which was potentially due to the goal being unclear or difficult to measure/assess. TPB staff should **consider editing the fifth Participation Plan policy goal to clarify that the TPB solicits input from the public on regionwide policy matters.** It currently reads:

*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.*

- Consider adding a sentence following the first sentence, to read: “Solicit input and facilitate discussion on regionwide policy matters.” The addition helps clarify that the TPB solicits input from the public on regional matters at a policy-level, which can help manage expectations and clarifies the role that the public will be playing.
- **Consider adding a section to the Participation Plan Staff Guide describing a process by which staff highlight changes or updates made to work products based on public input.** This could apply broadly to a variety of different products, such as edits and updates to a document or changes in policies or procedures. This will help members of the public feel like their input and the time they took to share it have had a meaningful impact.
- **Consistently share and promote the Participation Plan with consultants and staff working on public participation.** Staff used the Participation Plan to varying degrees during the recent Visualize 2045 update and consultants were not made aware of it. Certain aspects of the Participation Plan have not been fulfilled, including an annual evaluation.



## Clear and Open Access to Information and Activities

These recommendations relate to the execution of the second policy goal from the Participation Plan. The policy goal reads:

*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.*

The recommendations are:

- Multiple focus groups discussed the opportunity to provide materials, activities, and events in multiple languages to be more inclusive. In the staff/consultant focus group, the discussion centered around making TPB materials and announcements available in languages other than English. While the website can automatically translate, documents cannot as easily. **Recommendations regarding language translation include:**
  - Identify a professional translation vendor who understands technical transportation issues to assure accurate translation.
  - Identify high-profile documents and announcements (such as the executive summary of the long-range transportation plan or Tweets that announce public comment opportunities) that are candidates for translation into Spanish and other frequently spoken languages across the region.
  - Continually review and identify documents (e.g., reports, publications, memos) that could be summarized onto or converted to webpages on the TPB website for easier public access and easier automatic translation using the Google Translate widget.
- Provide up-to-date public meeting information on the TPB website and event pages so that people can plan to participate and know what to expect. As soon as logistical information for a given meeting is approved, update the event entry on the TPB website with the meeting's format, location, and types of opportunity for public comment.
  - If a meeting is virtual or hybrid, provide the meeting platform's hyperlink and joining information in the location field of the event entry, so that people do not need to dig into the meeting materials to find this information.
  - At the top of the meeting information, include a bulleted list of opportunities to provide comment for the given meeting (e.g., email, voicemail, live in-person comment), including whether live comments will be accepted.
  - As meeting logistics may be fluid even following approval of meeting format, consider setting an expectation that TPB staff, to the best of their knowledge at the time, update meeting information on the TPB events page six weeks in advance of the meeting.
  - Explain the differences in public comment opportunities between virtual and hybrid meetings on the TPB website wherever public comment is referenced as a way for the public to get involved, including "[Getting Involved & Public Comment](#)" and "[TPB Comment Form](#)."

## Gathering Input from Diverse Perspectives

These recommendations relate to the execution of the third policy goal from the Participation Plan. The policy goal reads:

*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.*

The recommendations are:

- **Balance the geographic distribution of opportunities for participation** across the region between the need to have proportional representation (e.g., the number of events in a jurisdiction is based on their proportion of the regional population) vs. the need to intentionally reach out to communities that have been historically excluded from the transportation planning process (e.g., plan more events focused on reaching communities in EEAs). TPB's limited resources should be distributed to both reach a wide swath of the region and to also target communities who have been historically underreached by transportation agencies, which can happen via thorough and intentional planning processes for all outreach efforts.
- **Intentionally plan the logistics for participation opportunities to reach a diverse set of people with different racial, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds:**
  - **Offer both pre- and post-incentives for taking surveys or participating in focus groups** that are designed to increase participation from low-income communities and people of color.
  - **Explore the feasibility of oversampling EEAs for surveys** instead of or in addition to current practices which oversample jurisdictions with higher concentrations of low-income communities and people of color.
  - **Proactively provide accommodations like captioning, ASL or Spanish interpretation, etc.**
  - **Always provide a virtual participation opportunity for meetings**, to allow more people to participate without having to come in-person. **Continue to not require that people turn their cameras on**, as they may be on the move or otherwise unable to show their surroundings. Use social media and the TPB website to advertise the opportunity to participate virtually.
  - **Plan events to occur during a variety of times of the day and days of the week**; when events are limited to the evening, attendance is limited to those who at that time are not working, taking care of family members, etc.

### Consideration and Response to Input

These recommendations relate to the execution of the fourth policy goal from the Participation Plan. The policy goal reads:

*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.*

Some of the focus group discussions centered on how this goal overpromises the extent to which the TPB will use public input to influence decision- and plan-making. The goal does not need to be revised, as it remains an important priority to be responsive to the public. Rather, the TPB can be clearer and more forthcoming about the input they receive and they take it into consideration. The recommendations are:

- The CAC discussed dissatisfaction with how the TPB considers and acts on the CAC meeting summaries, with a general feeling that the TPB does not discuss them in a meaningful way; reports are read at the TPB meetings and rarely are there any questions or discussion for follow up. **Revise the CAC reporting mechanism at TPB meetings to enable more interactivity.** For example, the CAC Chair or staff representative could share a short presentation with key discussion points that the CAC has discussed at their recent meeting, followed by questions prompting TPB members to engage in a brief discussion.
- **Continue the practice of building an extra month into the long-range transportation plan schedule to allow the TPB a month to review and consider the comments rather than reading and accepting in the same meeting.**

### Promoting a Regional Perspective

These recommendations relate to the execution of the fifth policy goal from the Participation Plan. The policy goal reads:

*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.*



The recommendations are:

- **Explain on the TPB website how the public can get involved at the local and regional level in the context of the regional transportation decision making process.** Capture the most relevant points from “A Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region” on the TPB website so people can better understand where their input is most appropriate and will be most effective. This information could appear on the [Getting Involved & Public Comment web page](#) and could be linked to from other pages, including the public comment form.
- The information from “A Citizens Guide to Transportation Decision Making in the Washington Metropolitan Region” was updated for incorporation into Chapter 1 of Visualize 2045. **As the original Citizens Guide was last published in 2008, update it to include the newer information provided in Chapter 1 of Visualize 2045. In addition, consider changing the name from “Citizens” to “Community” or another term (similar to how the term was removed from the CAC nomenclature).**

### Equity Perspective

This recommendation relates to the execution of the first principle for engagement from the Participation Plan. The principle for engagement reads:

*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 Statement, and the TPB’s Equity Emphasis Areas. It acknowledges past inequities and barriers to involvement and seeks to be more just.*

The recommendation is:

- Part of the TPB Equity Statement resolution says, “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.” **Develop objectives and measures related to equity and track them to ensure that equity is woven into the vast array of TPB products and activities.**

### Plain Language

These recommendations relate to the execution of the second principle for engagement from the Participation Plan. The principle for engagement reads:

*Plain language is one of the Participation Plan’s Principles for Engagement: “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.”*

The recommendations are:

- **Implement procedures to ensure public-facing materials are written in plain language.**
  - **The TPB website, particularly web pages providing information about public participation and meetings, should be reviewed for plain language and updated accordingly.**
  - **The TPB’s social media posts should be written using plain language and avoiding acronyms without explanation.** If the posts are pre-scheduled, they should be reviewed for plain language. If the posts are more “live,” the person posting should be familiar with plain language usage and have experience writing social media posts in plain language.
  - **The Participation Plan should be updated to include resources and examples of how to use plain language within the context of TPB’s work** (many are available from <https://www.plainlanguage.gov/>). While the Participation Plan currently identifies parts of the planning process where it is important to strive to use plain language, more concrete guidance could make it easier for staff to carry this out.



## Early and Continuing Participation

This recommendation relates to the execution of the third principle for engagement from the Participation Plan. The principle for engagement reads:

*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 process 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.*

The recommendations are:

- **Utilize the TPB Public Comment Notices listserv for all official public comment opportunities.** No emails were sent using this listserv in 2022, despite the Visualize 2045 long-range transportation plan update public comment period that took place in April-May 2022.
- **Consider using the TPB Public Comment Notices mailing list to notify recipients about other opportunities to participate (such as surveys, events, etc.)** if that does not violate the terms by which people signed up.

## REGARDING CURRENT PRACTICES AND TOOLS

### TPB Website

The TPB website is an important source of information for the public to learn about the TPB itself, find documents and publications, and to learn about upcoming meetings and other opportunities to engage. The following recommendations pertain to updates on the TPB website.

- **Updates to the [Getting Involved & Public Comment web page](#):**
  - The page calls on people to volunteer for the “Citizens Advisory Committee,” but details about the committee, including its name and length of term, need to be updated.
  - The page advises people to consider joining other “standing citizens committee(s)” but only the CAC is directly referenced. If there are no other committees of this nature, this statement should be removed.
  - The page advises people to participate in an ad hoc advisory group for a local or regional transportation study, but there is no information about how to follow up. Directing people to the listserv sign-up page could be appropriate here.
  - Add the AFA, in addition to the CAC, into the sidebar as a “Related Committee.”
- **Updates to the [Public Involvement Process web page](#):**
  - The title of this web page would lead one to believe that it describes the TPB’s public involvement process, but it is focused instead on describing the 2014 Participation Plan. Update the text of the page to describe more broadly how public input shapes what the TPB does.
  - Update references to the Participation Plan to refer to the 2020 version instead of the 2014 version which is currently referenced.

### TPB News

This recommendation pertains to how frequently TPB News is published and how this is characterized in the Participation Plan and Title VI Plan:

- **Update the Participation Plan and Title VI Plan to better reflect the frequency by which TPB News is published.** Both documents currently state that TPB News is published twice per month, which has not been the practice for the last few years. Updating these documents will provide the public with a more accurate expectation of how frequently TPB News is published.

## Visualize 2045 Website

This recommendation pertains to the Visualize 2045 website:

- **Change the name of the “Requirements” webpage on the Visualize 2045 website to be “About the Plan”; on that page, add a new header for “Glossary” and add more terms to the list that already exists.** The [Requirements](#) page plays an important role in defining terms that may be less obvious to the general public, like “Financial Constraint” and “Air Quality Conformity.” However, the Requirements page is not clearly labeled as a resource for understanding these technical terms and it was one of the less-visited pages throughout the 2022 update process. Changing the name of the page to a more general and welcoming name may generate more interest and ultimately better inform the public; likewise for adding more technical terms to the glossary and naming it as such.

## Social Media

Social media allows the TPB to reach a wide audience, whether through its existing followers or by other means such as being shared by external/partner accounts and paying for additional reach. Recommendations for social media are:

- **Consider resuming live Tweeting TPB and Technical Committee meetings or revising the Title VI Program and Plan to remove reference to this.** The Title VI Program describes these as activities the TPB regularly does; either these activities should resume, or the language should be removed from the next Title VI Program update (the Title VI Plan references live Tweeting for TPB meetings only). TPB staff should weigh the benefits (e.g., communication and transparency with the public) with the costs (e.g., staff time) of resuming the live-Tweeting and determine how best to proceed.
- **Promote the TPB’s social media accounts in more places, such as on the TPB website.** The TPB News email blasts contain links to the TPB’s Facebook and Twitter pages, but the social media accounts are not promoted on the TPB website as a source of information for the public. One place to consider adding the social media information is the [Getting Involved & Public Comment web page](#).
- **Pay for boosted posts and ads on social media platforms to reach a wider audience.** Paying for ads or boosted posts would widen the reach of the TPB on social media. Geographic areas and affinity groups can be targeted through advertising which can be effective to reach underrepresented areas or groups.<sup>9</sup>

## Advisory Committee Management

### CAC AND AFA

- **When members join, and on an annual basis, provide information about what TPB mailing lists are available for them to join and how to sign up.** Some members expressed that they were unaware of the listservs available, and they did not know how to sign up.
- **Produce an annual memo or presentation summarizing how CAC and AFA input has influenced or has been incorporated into TPB decisions or documents.** This would provide tangible feedback for advisory committee members to understand how they have helped influence the TPB and planning process over the last year.
- **As the TPB already does with regard to race and ethnicity, consider tracking other demographic data (such as age, languages spoken, and other elements that are mentioned in the Title VI Program) in the advisory committees’ membership and ask applicants more information to inform the selection process and evaluate the representation of each body.**
- **Consider identifying explicit opportunities for the advisory committees to provide meaningful advice to the TPB:**
  - **In ongoing consultation with the TPB Chair, discuss which matters taken up by the TPB could benefit from more input by either or both advisory committees.**
  - **Inform advisory committee members of TPB activities set to take place over the next year** so members can have enough advance notice to research the initiatives and provide beneficial input that could reasonably be incorporated into TPB work when appropriate.
  - **When information is shared with each committee, clearly state whether the purpose is solely to inform**

<sup>9</sup> For more information about Facebook targeted ads: <https://www.facebook.com/business/ads/ad-targeting>. For more information about Twitter targeted ads: <https://business.twitter.com/en/advertising/targeting.html>.

them or if the TPB seeks input from the committee receiving the presentation. Members noted that clarifying this would help them better understand what is being asked of them and also help them better manage their own expectations.

## CAC

- Provide more information on the [Community Advisory Committee web page](#) about the committee's purpose, how to get involved, when the next rotation of members will be, and what factors are considered when selecting new members.
- Expand the recruitment campaign for CAC membership. This could include using existing social media channels and paying for boosted posts or ads or utilizing jurisdictional PIOs and other regional contacts to spread the word about the opportunity.
- Provide opportunities for CAC members to join other TPB subcommittees and task forces. These groups can benefit from the perspective of a member of the public. At the beginning of each CAC term, TPB staff can present about the existing subcommittees and task forces and explain opportunities for CAC members to join.

## AFA

- Provide more information on the [Access for All Advisory Committee web page](#) about how to get involved, when the next rotation of members will be, and when the AFA meets.

## Evaluating Participation Activities and Efforts

The Participation Plan contains a section on evaluation (“How will you measure the effectiveness of your efforts?”) within the Participation Workflow within the Staff Guide. TPB staff have noted that evaluations of public participation activities are sometimes not conducted in a timely manner or at all. These recommendations aim to help TPB staff standardize the evaluation process.

- Embed evaluation of public participation activities into project work plans. This can be done by including time and resources for interim and/or final evaluations in project work statements before an effort that will involve public participation begins. When procuring consultant assistance, the requests for proposals or statements of work can include a task for consultants to perform interim and/or final evaluations, which will result in the evaluation being folded into the consultant's work plan, schedule, and budget.
- Use the evaluation within *Appendix H: Public Participation Summary: Public Outreach and the TPB Participation Plan of the Visualize 2045 update* as a model for future evaluation. It included a robust evaluation of participation techniques against the Participation Plan.
- Create a template document for staff to use in planning how they will evaluate participation activities, as a supplemental document to the Participation Plan. This could be in the form of a Word or Excel document that is partially populated but that staff would need to tailor to their activity based on the guidance in the evaluation section of the Participation Plan.
- Track which materials were translated into which languages as part of the evaluation process.
- Consider sharing the evaluation of public participation more transparently. Evaluations will likely happen in closed-door sessions with staff, but Appendix H is a particularly successful evaluation because it is very transparent to the public.

## REGARDING NEW STRATEGIES, APPROACHES, AND TOOLS

### Virtual and Hybrid Public Participation Opportunities

While not completely new, virtual and hybrid options for public participation have become more common at the TPB over the last few years. The following recommendations pertain to virtual or hybrid opportunities for public participation.

- Always provide a virtual option for regularly occurring committee meetings, with live streaming capabilities with video and screen sharing.
- Always enable live captioning as an option on virtual meetings so participants can turn it on if they want or need.



- **When planning engagement for a plan update, such as the update of the long-range transportation plan, schedule a mix of in-person and virtual engagement opportunities.** Providing people options to participate will allow more people to participate in ways and at times that work well for them.
- **Consider updating the Participation Plan to include guidelines or policies regarding virtual and hybrid participation opportunities,** using these recommendations as a starting point.