

MID-REGION METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES



2018



Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization
Mid-Region Council of Governments
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How to Make a Public Comment

- ✓ *Send by mail to:* MRMPO, 809 Copper Avenue NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102
- ✓ *Email:* mrcog@mrcog-nm.gov (for general transportation comments);
mtpcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for MTP-related comments); and
tipcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for TIP-related comments)
- ✓ *Call:* (505) 247-1750; *fax:* (505) 247-1753

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I. INTRODUCTION

This document establishes the public participation procedures used by the Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) for developing the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) as well as other planning products and documents for the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA). It establishes MRMPO's procedures for outreach and also provides information about how interested parties can participate in the regional long-range transportation planning process. The document provides an overview of the metropolitan transportation planning process (see Appendix A), a description of the outreach methods, strategies, and techniques used by MRMPO, the public participation guidelines MRMPO follows, and the ways in which the public and stakeholders can participate in the planning process.

The Public Participation Procedures document has been updated to include new methods, approaches, and techniques that will be used by MRMPO for outreach purposes going forward, which are guided by an overall approach that favors going to where people are rather than asking them to come to us to hear their thoughts. The new approach also emphasizes increasing efforts to reach underrepresented groups, increasing overall engagement through the use of new methods, and focusing more on gathering feedback rather than presenting information.



Participation plans for specific products are sometimes produced, for example, for MTPs. Such plans and outreach activities will adhere to the procedures described in this document. Federal requirements for metropolitan transportation planning, including for participation by interested parties, are outlined in the federal surface transportation infrastructure law, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and codified in Title 23 Part 134 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 134). The FAST Act mandates that the public participation programs of metropolitan planning processes shall include a "...proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing participation of the public in developing plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs)." Methods and procedures described in the *Public Participation Procedures* (PPP) document adhere to federal requirements. This updated document replaces MRMPO's previous Public Participation Procedures document.

MRMPO's Outreach Approach, New Techniques, and Goals

MRMPO has an overarching goal of providing effective outreach to engage as many members of the public and stakeholders as possible, putting particular focus on reaching out to populations underrepresented in the planning process (e.g., low-income, minority, and young adults). To help accomplish the goal, MRMPO continually assesses and refines its outreach approach and methods as needed. The objectives of MRMPO's public participation activities are to increase engagement through new methods, to increase efforts to reach underrepresented groups, and to put more effort to going where people are as opposed to having them come to where we are. MRMPO strives to provide clear and thorough information to the public, to solicit as much feedback and comment from the broadest cross-section of the public possible, and to increase awareness of MRMPO as the coordinating body for the regional long range transportation planning process that must be continual, comprehensive, and cooperative (the "3C Process").



Actively listening to participants in the transportation planning process is a priority of the organization. In outreach efforts, MRMPO's focus has shifted from *presenting* information to *gathering* information, opinions, thoughts and ideas from the public, agency members, and stakeholders, and integrating that feedback where possible.

II. MRMPO OUTREACH METHODS, STRATEGIES, AND TECHNIQUES

MRMPO endeavors to attract as much participation in the transportation planning process as possible. In addition to the activities described above, MRMPO continually refines its outreach approach and methods. For the upcoming MTP update (*Connections 2040*), the organization will try new outreach methods and assess their effectiveness and refine approaches as necessary. New methods MRMPO anticipates using include: greater use of email notifications and distribution of information to community, government and professional networks; hosting fewer formal public meetings and instead putting more effort toward attending and presenting at other groups' and organizations' meetings; increasing the visibility and awareness of the MTP by attending community events and setting up tables at popular community locations (e.g., grocery stores) to distribute

information and/or gather feedback; greater use of online surveys and opportunities to comment through the use of social media and/or new technology and online forums; hosting meetings that are more focused on obtaining feedback rather than providing information; and using videos to reach a broader audience. MRMPO will provide more systematic summaries of information obtained from outreach activities to let participants know they were heard and that their input was integrated where possible.

The following section describes the methods, strategies, and techniques MRMPO may employ to achieve its outreach objectives.

Methods

MRMPO may use the following methods to obtain feedback from the public and stakeholders:

Formal Public Meetings

- *Public Meetings* – These meetings provide formal public input opportunities on issues of regional interest. In accordance with state law, MRMPO publishes notices advertising public meetings in the local newspaper and on its website. MRMPO may also issue news releases and use other advertising methods such as ads in print, radio, and/or social media, email “blasts,” promoting/advertising at community events, or posting information about the meetings on other organization and member agency websites and social media pages and newsletters to promote participation at public meetings.



- *Committee Meetings* – MTB and TCC meetings are always open to the public and allow for public comment. Committee meetings are listed on the MRCOG website, advertised in the newspaper, and listed in MRMPO’s newsletter. They are held at the MRCOG building located at 809 Copper Avenue NW, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87102. The building is ADA compliant and is accessible via several major transit routes.

Surveys

Online and in-person surveys have been used to inform previous Metropolitan Transportation Plans. Surveys are one technique by which entire populations, rather than vocal minorities, can present their viewpoint.

Online surveys are a low-cost approach to gather opinions from a broad cross-section of the population, though care must be taken to ensure that the population responding to the survey matches the population being surveyed. If this is not the case, this should be noted.

At public meetings, mini-surveys are sometimes used to gather the sentiment of the assembled group. Survey results can be compared to other groups that have taken the survey and the entirety of respondents more generally. Results may also be aggregated for all respondents. This has proved a useful way of making public meetings more engaging and ensuring feedback is received by as many participants as possible. MRMPO has electronic “voting clickers” that can be used for this purpose.



Workshops

Workshops can include meetings or a series of meetings designed to share information on a topic of regional interest or importance and gather feedback from participants. MRMPO’s workshops can provide technical assistance to local communities, help increase public awareness of MPO activities, and promote public involvement. They can be especially useful for gaining more in-depth perspectives from participants due to their more focused approach. MRMPO records public responses and additional questions/concerns for later use by staff or the MTB.

Open Houses

MRMPO may hold open houses at various locations over the span of several hours to provide increased opportunity for interested parties to learn and leave feedback about a certain topic or product (e.g., a draft MTP) in a more informal setting and with the chance to speak more directly with staff. In the past, open houses have been held at the MRCOG Board Room and various community facilities in Sandoval and Valencia Counties.



Focus Groups

Focus groups help solicit in-depth information about issues, activities, or public perceptions from small groups of stakeholders. Often held in series, focus groups allow MRMPO to obtain detailed information and responses by asking questions that may build upon knowledge discovered during the course of the meetings or prior public interaction.

Key Person Interviews

MTB members or MRMPO staff may meet individually with designated opinion leaders, such as Chamber of Commerce officials or members, mayors, advisory body members, non-profit agency representatives, religious leaders, business owners or individual constituents potentially impacted by an MTB decision.

Civic Events and Community and Agency Meetings

MRMPO can bring outreach and educational materials to community events (e.g., farmers markets, fairs) and service locations, especially those locations where members of traditionally underserved communities may frequent (e.g., grocery stores in low-income neighborhoods).

MRMPO can also provide updates on topics of interest to groups (i.e., city councils, other elected bodies, neighborhood associations) hosting meetings in the region. MRMPO will endeavor to attend other agencies' key public meetings for transportation projects so that members of the public attending can have access to someone who can provide a regional view and MRMPO staff can gain insight about public concerns.



“Pop-Up” Events and other innovative, eye catching events

MRMPO can host less formal “pop-up” events where planners set up a booth at various places (coffee shops, libraries, etc.) to disseminate information and/or collect feedback from the public. These can be helpful in reaching a different audience and for providing a less formal and more approachable environment.

Social Media and New Technology

MRMPO staff uses social media to engage the public in its planning products and activities. Staff will explore the use of new technologies and internet-based tools as they become available to increase the number of



ways people can provide input. This may include interactive maps to collect feedback, Twitter, greater use of Facebook, etc.

III. MAJOR PRODUCTS OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS AND BASIC OUTREACH PROCEDURES THAT GUIDE THEIR DEVELOPMENT

MRMPO’s public outreach efforts for the following key products are described in this section.

- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- The Transportation Improvement Program
- Public Participation Procedures
- Title VI Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

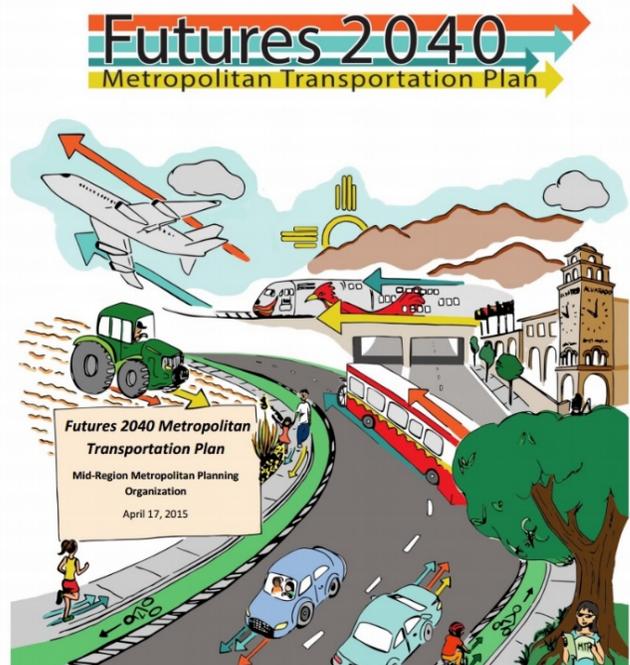
Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan is the primary planning document for the AMPA. As such, public outreach is critically important to the document. The MTP involves the most comprehensive and sustained outreach effort undertaken by MRMPO staff.

Development of the MTP is divided into three general stages: (1) goals, existing conditions, and needs; (2) analysis and evaluation of strategies to meet the needs identified and achieve the goals stated; and (3) final selection of projects to be included in the MTP, and MTP document development and approval. Each stage of MTP development contains its own element of public participation. Public feedback is especially sought in the first stage when input can more easily inform the development of the plan. Feedback is sought in the second stage to help weigh in on strategies, approaches, and trade-offs. In the third stage, input is usually sought on the initial and final drafts of the plan.

Inevitably there is some overlap between the stages, and comments are never rejected as being out of turn. However, at each stage, input is solicited to maximize public impact on the planning process. At all stages, use of visualization to the extent possible (e.g., charts, graphs, maps, and forecasts) are shared at public meetings, on the MRCOG website, and through other communication channels (e.g., social media, newsletters, email).

At a *minimum*, public participation for Metropolitan Transportation Plans includes:



- Public meetings in Sandoval, Bernalillo, and Valencia counties, at locations accessible to transit and persons with disabilities;
- Outreach to the public, stakeholders, local and tribal governments, and neighborhood coalitions (for example, member agencies and tribal governments are invited to participate on committees and MTP meetings, they receive updates through emails and other means, and MRMPO can attend—and present as appropriate—at local agency and Tribal government meetings. In addition, tribes in the north, central and south areas of the AMPA will be contacted and asked if they would like MRMPO to present there;
- Press releases to news media in advance of the formal public comment period preceding adoption of the Plan and public notification of formal comment periods published;
- Information related to the plan and participation opportunities (e.g., a draft plan available for public comment) posted to the MRCOG website and included in MRMPO’s electronic newsletter and social media sites (i.e., Facebook and Twitter) and sent via email to persons in the MTP contacts database.

Significant written and oral comments received on the draft MTP as a result of the public involvement process are summarized, analyzed, and reported on as part of the final plan. If the final transportation plan differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan shall be made available.

Amending the MTP

Amending the MTP can take the form of additions to the list of federally eligible or regionally significant projects or removals from that list, revised population and/or traffic forecasts, or major revisions to funding projections.

MRMPO makes every attempt to anticipate all regionally significant or potentially federally funded projects in the MTP, but in the event that a project must be added to the MTP, MRMPO staff will initiate participation to accommodate the revision. At a minimum, MRMPO will designate a minimum 30-day public comment period and send out press releases to the local media on the proposed change(s) to the MTP. In addition, at least one public meeting will be held (in conjunction with either the MTB or other committee meeting) where the public may provide comment to the staff and/or the Board and committee members present. Areas most directly affected by the proposed change to the MTP may be specifically targeted through the media, public meetings, and direct mail.

Deletions from the MTP for outer-year projects (i.e., those not programmed in the TIP) can be made at the next revision of the MTP, since the MTP will be revised before the TIP programming period ends.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a short-range (six year) plan that programs funding, particularly federal funding, for transportation projects in the region. MRMPO seeks public input for the development of the TIP. TIP projects must be consistent with the MTP and reflect the priorities the public establishes in that



document. This section will describe public participation methods for TIPs adopted at the same time as the MTP, TIPs adopted in intervening years, and TIP amendments. For a complete reference on the TIP development process, please refer to MRMPO's *TIP Policies & Procedures* document (found on the MRCOG website). The public participation process established in this document is not a substitute for participation and analysis required of member agencies when designing and implementing projects contained in the TIP.

TIPs Adopted Simultaneously with the MTP

MRMPO updates the Metropolitan Transportation Plan every four to five years, as required in Title 23 Part 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23CFR450). Projects in the TIP are consistent with the MTP and its goals, and relevant comments received on the MTP are used to inform the TIP as well. This process typically occurs late in the MTP development cycle. By having the TIP formal comment period and the MTP formal comment period occur simultaneously, the public may respond either to the programming question or short-term necessity of a given project, or its inclusion in the MTP in the first place. By scheduling TIP participation alongside MTP participation, both the MPO's resources and the public's participation is maximized. The policy board and staff may consider the comment in the context of the MTP or TIP, or both.

TIPs Adopted Separately from the MTP

In years when there is not an MTP adoption (and, hence no MTP public participation), MRMPO staff engages the public in a standalone participation effort. Elements of TIP public participation for TIPs adopted in non-MTP years include, at a minimum: press releases to local media in the entire Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area; notice of comment period posted on the MRCOG website and included in the MPO newsletter and Facebook page; a public comment period of no less than 30 days; and at least one public meeting at a location easily accessible by public transportation. Outreach to various interest, advocacy, and neighborhood groups in the Metropolitan Planning Area may also occur, as well as other outreach methods to broaden participation.

Written and oral comments received on the draft TIP as a result of the public involvement process will be summarized, analyzed, and a report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final TIP. If the final TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised TIP shall be made available.

TIP Amendments

TIP amendments occur most often on a quarterly basis. Occasionally the TIP will need to be modified sooner than the next quarterly session, in which case an out-of-cycle amendment may be made.

In all cases of a TIP amendment, the amendment is discussed at posted and advertised meetings of the Transportation Coordinating Committee and the MTB (both of which are open to the public, and whose meetings are advertised in the local newspaper of record and on the MRCOG website). In addition, a public comment period of no less than 15 days is held. All proposed and adopted modifications to the TIP, including administrative modifications, are posted on the MRCOG website.

Annual Listing of Obligated Projects

MRMPO produces an annual listing of obligated projects as part of the TIP process and per federal requirement. The listing is a record of projects delivered in the previous year. The list is made available on MRCOG's website.

Public Participation Procedures Document

Per 23CFR450.316, initial or revised participation plans such as this document (*Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Participation Procedures*) must go through a 45-day public comment period.

At a minimum, public participation activities for updates to the *Public Participation Procedures* will include:

- A minimum 45-day formal comment period
- Notice posted on MRCOG's website and included in MRMPO's newsletter and Facebook page; notice posted in the newspaper
- Public adoption of the *Public Participation Procedures* by the MTB at an MTB meeting (during which time public comments on the document may be made)
- Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA and posted on the MRCOG website

Title VI Plan

The Mid-Region Council of Governments and Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization Title VI Plan documents MRCOG's policy to insure that no person "shall, on the ground of race, color, national origin, or sex be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or otherwise be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

The major elements of the MRCOG Title VI Plan are:

- Data collection
- Annual Title VI Report
- Annual Review of the Title VI Plan
- Dissemination of information related to the Title VI Program
- Resolution of complaints

These topics are addressed in detail in the MRCOG Title VI Plan. 'Communications and Public Involvement' is one of the designated program areas in the MRCOG Title VI Program. The purpose of this program area is to ensure that MRCOG seeks input from historically disadvantaged groups and responds to their input.

Transportation Planning and Programming is a separate program area in the MRCOG Title VI Plan. The Title VI Plan describes how considerations of Title VI legislation are made throughout MRCOG's planning and programming activities.

Public participation in development of the MRCOG Title VI Plan shall, at a minimum, include opportunities to comment upon any proposed revisions at MTB meetings. Comments can also be submitted via email, mail, or phone: (mrcog@mrcog-nm.gov; attn. Title VI Coordinator, 809 Copper Ave. NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102; or 505-247-1750; or by fax, 505-247-1753). The MTB will approve Title VI Plans after a minimum 45-day public comment period (notice of which is posted on the MRCOG website).

The Title VI Plan will also be posted on the MRCOG website and comments on it shall be included in the Annual Title VI Report which is incorporated in the Annual Performance and Expenditure Report (APER).

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the work plan and budget all MPOs are required to develop. MRMPO's UPWP covers two consecutive federal fiscal years. The current UPWP is posted on the MRCOG website. MRMPO provides a 30-day public review and comment period when draft UPWPs are developed and before they are adopted by the Board. Notice of the comment period is posted on the MRCOG website and will be announced in its newsletter.

IV. MRMPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

Public participation activities are used to obtain information, identify public sentiment, and inform the public about how to participate in the transportation planning process as well as about specific plans, products, and findings. The tools and methods used to inform and involve the public may vary depending on the groups targeted and the decision at hand.

Public participation is designed to provide the public and stakeholders with meaningful access to key decisions. The stakeholder groups shall at a minimum include those described in [23CFR450.316\(a\)](#)¹. These stakeholder groups are organized to varying degrees and thus different approaches are required to involve them. In the past, MRMPO has reached out to neighborhood group coalitions in pursuit of geographic diversity; brought advocacy groups “to the table” to assist directly in planning activities for bike and pedestrian facilities; met with representatives of freight carriers and shippers; and has formed ad hoc committees composed of agency staff, representatives of advocacy groups, and MRMPO staff. In addition, MRMPO has solicited comment from chambers of commerce, service groups, and university students.



MRMPO staff leads outreach efforts and encourages public participation by:

- Providing easily accessible and comprehensive information
- Informing affected or interested parties about ways they may participate
- Identifying and testing new methods and approaches to increase public participation
- Implementing public participation strategies and project-specific outreach plans
- Considering and responding to public comment and incorporating when and where possible
- Providing a clear purpose and objectives for feedback sought
- Informing the MTB of public sentiment

Public Notice

MRMPO informs the public about its public meetings and opportunities for comment, as well as project milestones and outcomes of key meetings. The MRCOG website hosts working drafts of the MTP and TIP as appropriate, and solicits comments from the public and stakeholders on the website

¹ Each [metropolitan planning organization](#) shall provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as a carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan. (<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/23/134>)

via email links. Public meeting notices are published a minimum of 72 hours in advance, with the agenda items or topics for discussion included. Public meeting notices include statements that MRMPO will reasonably accommodate people with disabilities or who may need special accommodations.

MRMPO provides notices on its website and newsletter, in the newspaper, and by mail and/or email of opportunities to provide comment on the MTP and TIP. The notices include, at a minimum, the following information:

- Name of the event/subject of meeting
- Sponsoring organization
- Action to be taken and by whom (if applicable)
- Day, date, time and location of meeting
- Brief summary of the proposed action or plan
- Start and end dates for public comments (if applicable)
- Where and how to obtain copies of the plans or materials, and how to provide comments
- A designated contact for more information
- Offer to provide accommodations for people with disabilities or people who need special accommodation with advance notice

Opportunity to Comment on Substantial Revisions

Should the MTP or TIP be substantially revised from the form in which it was last presented to the public, MRMPO staff will ensure that the public have adequate notice and time to comment on the revisions. Individual project revisions do not normally constitute substantial revisions, however, revisions that apply broadly to the Plan (such as those regarding air quality) would.

Substantial revisions to this document require a public review and comment period of no less than 45 days.

Access to Information

MRMPO provides all of its publications and other pertinent information on the MRCOG website. MRMPO continually tries to provide more of its data on the website in as an accessible manner as possible. Upon request, other information not included on the website may be provided. MRMPO staff are also available to help member agencies or members of the public access and explain information. MRMPO distributes copies of draft and final MTPs to the main area libraries and electronic copies to clerks of local and tribal governments in the region.

Electronic Formats

Most if not all MRMPO-developed publications are made electronically available and posted to the MRCOG website. Below is a list of example materials available electronically on the MRMPO website:

- The current *Metropolitan Transportation Plan* (entire document, appendices, maps, and resolutions), including the Long Range Transportation Systems (LRTS) Guide
- The current Transportation Improvement Program with amendments and Administrative Modifications
- TIP Policies and Procedures
- Public Participation Procedures
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Intelligent Transportation Systems Regional Architecture

In addition, the MRCOG website as well as the MRMPO Facebook page, to a lesser extent, are used as venues for public comment. Dedicated email addresses for comments on the TIP and MTP are made available on the MRCOG website to solicit and accept comments.

Visualization Techniques

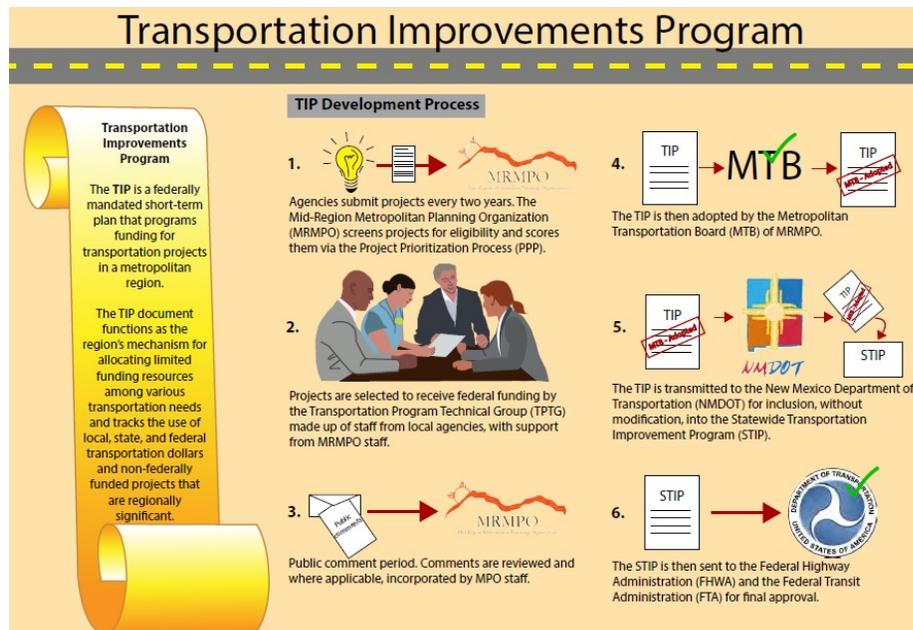
MRMPO provides a variety of information to help participants understand analysis, concepts, or outcomes related to complex regional transportation plans and projects. MRMPO staff will typically use one or more of the following techniques to help the public and stakeholders understand issues:

- Aerial photographs, alone and with mapping overlays
- Maps
- Renderings or photo simulations of proposed projects
- Photographs of existing projects comparable to those proposed
- Scenario planning graphics, including graphs, charts, and maps
- Videos
- PowerPoint presentations
- Display boards that explain or summarize a concept with text and/or graphics



- Graphs, tables, and charts (including “info graphics”) that show various types of information including socioeconomic and demographic data; safety; usage statistics; and financial information.

Materials are made available for review at public meetings and other events and can be provided upon request.



Meeting Accessibility

MRMPO provides a variety of opportunities for face-to-face and interactive public meetings at ADA-accessible venues. Public participation activities range from public meetings of the MTB to informal events such as open houses and information booths at community events.

To the greatest reasonable extent, MRMPO holds its public meetings at times and places convenient to the public and stakeholders. To encourage maximum participation, MRMPO typically considers:

- Locations easily accessed by transit riders
- Holding meetings at ADA-accessible locations
- Holding meetings in different areas of the region
- Holding meetings at varying types of venues, such as schools and community centers, libraries, etc.
- Partnering with community or service organizations, transit providers, or other government agencies to promote or host participation events
- Holding meetings outside of traditional business hours
- Holding meetings on different days of the week and/or at different times of the day and also holding some meetings of longer duration (e.g., open houses) to maximize potential attendance
- Offering online participation methods for those who cannot attend meetings in person
- Avoiding potential conflicts with participation opportunities hosted by other units of government in the region
- Attending and presenting information at meetings of other groups and organizations
- Hosting “pop-up” events to present information and/or gather feedback at various places such as cafés, farmers markets, and grocery stores
- Providing special accommodations at meetings upon request (e.g., Spanish and sign language translation)

Open Meetings Act

MRMPO complies with the State of New Mexico Open Meetings Act² (known as a “sunshine law”). The policy board of the MPO, the Metropolitan Transportation Board, adopts an Open Meetings Resolution each June that includes the meetings scheduled for the upcoming fiscal year. The Open Meetings Act requires that public business be conducted in full public view, that the actions of public bodies be taken openly, and that the deliberations of public bodies be open to the public. Also, a public body must make the agendas of regular and special meetings available to the public at least 72 hours in advance of meetings and post the agendas on the public body’s website if one is maintained.

Explicit Consideration of and Response to Comments

MRMPO receives comment from stakeholders and the general public in multiple formats, including testimony, postal mail, email, phone call or voice mail, social media, and on forms provided for written comments. All comments are responded to in the manner in which they were received. For instance, comments received by mail are provided a mailed response, emailed comments an email response, and so forth. In addition, printouts or photocopies of all comments, or a summary of comments, on the MTP and TIP, and staff response to them, is included as part of the final MTP or TIP submittal to the MTB. All comments are considered and included when and where appropriate. Follow-through demonstrating that public input was considered is sent/posted as routinely as possible.

Considering Traditionally Underserved Populations

MPOs are required to provide consideration of the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households, in an effort to ensure the requirements of Title VI and Environmental Justice orders have been met during the planning process.

MRMPO actively attempts to engage representatives of groups traditionally underserved in the regional transportation planning process and provide enhanced participation opportunities to encourage people who belong to underrepresented groups to share their perspectives. MRMPO staff has used or will use some of the following techniques to reach underserved populations and may try other methods to see which are most effective:

- Participate in community events to build relationships, e.g., UNM’s “Transportation Day” and the Muertos y Marigolds Parade in the South Valley.
- Prepare culturally-sensitive outreach materials and meeting plans, that includes elements such as:
 - Use of appropriate language
 - Use of graphics that appeal to target groups (e.g., a photo of a project from a local area)

²

<http://www.nmag.gov/uploads/files/Publications/ComplianceGuides/Open%20Meetings%20Act%20Compliance%20Guide%202015.pdf>

- Incorporation into publications of people of diverse cultures, ages, abilities, and economic status
- Demonstration of respect for cultural sensitivities and prohibitions
- Translation of certain printed materials into Spanish and a contact person (who speaks Spanish) provided for Spanish speakers. Also, translation at meetings or for certain key documents will be offered upon request.
- Work to build MRMPO’s contacts database to include community organizations and/or businesses and individuals that represent low-income and minority populations
- Monitor/observe which groups are not participating and adjust outreach approaches to better reach those groups
- When possible, hold public meetings in communities with concentrations of environmental justice populations

MRMPO adheres to the MRCOG Title VI Plan, which guides MRCOG’s compliance with Title VI regulations. Title VI ensures that no person is excluded from participation in or denied the benefits of, or be subject to discrimination, in the receipt of MRCOG and MRMPO services or programs on the basis of race, color, national origin or any other characteristics.

Coordination with Statewide Transportation Planning

MRMPO works with the New Mexico Department of Transportation’s General Office and District 3 to ensure that its planning efforts are consistent with the Statewide Transportation Plan.

Periodic Review of Effectiveness of Participation Efforts

In effort to evaluate the effectiveness of MRMPO outreach efforts, benchmarks will be recorded for outreach activities undertaken by MRMPO. The benchmarks to be used in upcoming outreach efforts are included in Appendix D: Public Participation Benchmarks.

To increase participation, MRMPO works on identifying barriers and lessening or removing them where possible. These barriers are always kept in mind and occasionally revisited to help inform MRMPO’s outreach approaches. Potential barriers to public participation—as well as potential ways to address those barriers (not exhaustive)—include: lack of awareness; information not presented clearly or engaging way; perception that input does not matter; and lack of options for providing feedback and getting involved.

V. OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE

This section describes how the general public and stakeholders can participate in the regional long-range transportation planning process.

- **Metropolitan Transportation Board meetings:** The MTB sets policy direction, supports public involvement initiatives, and considers public feedback when making key decisions. The MTB meets once a month at the MRCOG building, on the third Friday of the month. The meetings are always open to the public, and the public can make comments at meetings. To do so, a commenter must call or email bthomas@mrcog-nm.gov or 505-724-3616 at least one day before the meeting or arrive at the meeting at least five minutes early so that the meeting organizer knows that time for public comment is requested. Public notification of MTB meetings is provided at least three days prior to each meeting. Anyone requiring special accommodations is requested to notify MRCOG at 505-247-1750 or email bthomas@mrcog-nm.gov seven days prior to the meeting. Meeting dates are posted on MRCOG's website.
- **Transportation Coordinating Committee meetings:** The TCC acts as a technical advisory body to the MTB for project and policy decisions in the AMPA. It makes recommendations to the MTB on behalf of the agencies implementing projects and participating in the regional transportation planning process (note that implementing agencies bear full responsibility for fulfilling their own public participation and environmental justice requirements for projects as outlined in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)). TCC meetings are open to the public, and the public can make comments at those meetings. To do so, a commenter must call or email bthomas@mrcog-nm.gov or 505-724-3616 at least one day before the meeting or arrive at the meeting at least five minutes early so that the meeting organizer knows that time for public comment is requested. Public notification of TCC meetings is provided at least three days prior to each meeting. Anyone requiring special accommodations is requested to notify MRCOG at 505-247-1750 or email bthomas@mrcog-nm.gov seven days prior to the meeting. Meeting dates are posted on MRCOG's website.
- **Submitting comments and feedback:** MRMPO staff always accepts public comment. Comments are collected in various ways. At meetings, comment forms are often distributed, surveys are disseminated, and comments can be sent or emailed to MRMPO. To foster participation, MRMPO staff leads outreach efforts and encourages public participation by providing easily accessible information, informing affected or interested parties about ways they may participate, identifying and testing new methods

How to Make a Public Comment

- ✓ *Send by mail to:* MRMPO, 809 Copper Avenue NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102
- ✓ *Email:* mrcog@mrcog-nm.gov (for general transportation comments); mtpcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for MTP-related comments); and tipcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for TIP-related comments)
- ✓ *Phone:* (505) 247-1750; *fax:* (505) 247-1753

and approaches to increase public participation, considering and responding to public comment, and informing the MTB of public sentiment. Comments are always considered and incorporated when and where possible. Comments can be submitted anytime in writing and sent to MRMPO, 809 Copper Ave., NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102; submitted via email to mrcog@mrcog-nm.gov (for general transportation comments), mtpcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for MTP-related comments), or tipcomments@mrcog-nm.gov (for TIP-related comments); submitted over the phone (505) 247-1750; or submitted via fax (505) 247-1753.

- **Attending public meetings and workshops:** Attending public meetings is a good way to learn more about the planning process and specific plans and programs. They also are a good way of providing feedback and making sure your voice is heard. Meetings and workshops are publicized in the following ways: posted on the MRCOG website; announced in MRMPO's monthly e-newsletter, *Travel Times*; posted on MRMPO's Facebook page; advertised in local papers; and publicized via press release, email "blast," and mailing.



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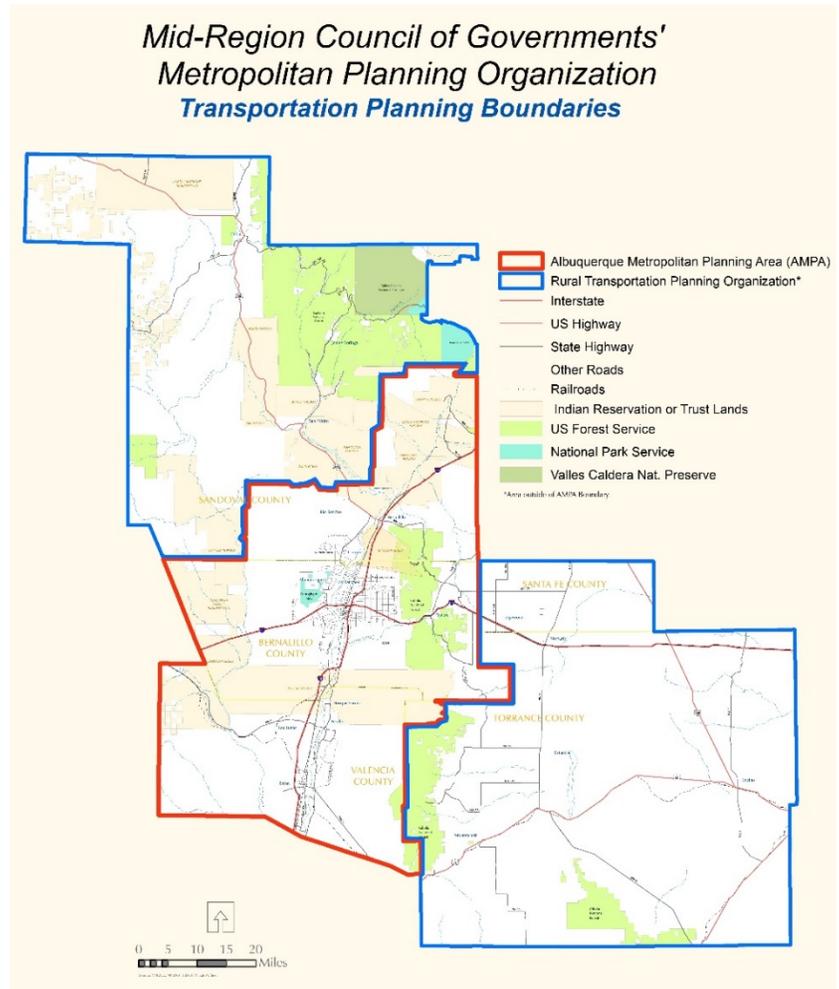


- **Signing up for MRMPO's e-newsletter, Travel Times, following the MRMPO Facebook page, and requesting that your email address be added to the MTP contacts database** (by emailing tcok@mrcog-nm.gov or calling 505-724-3627) all help in tracking the progress of plans and participating the planning process. The MRMPO Facebook page is found on Facebook by searching @MidRegionMPO. Information on how to go about doing all of these is provided on MRCOG's website, on the Public Participation page for the MRMPO.

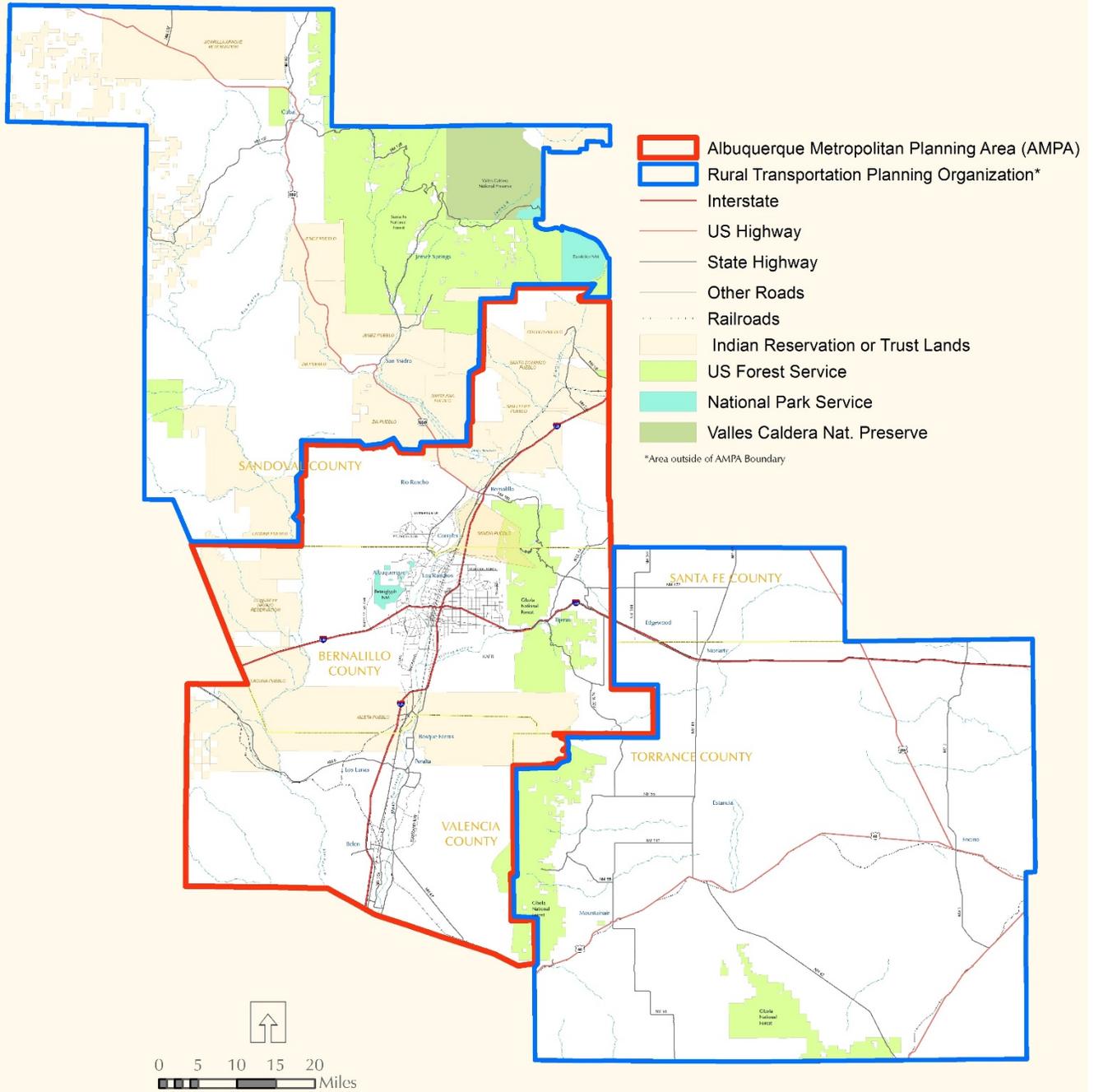
Appendix A: Overview of the Metropolitan Planning Process

Federal law requires every urbanized area with a population over 50,000 to have a designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to qualify for receipt of federal highway and transit funds. In urbanized areas with a population over 200,000, a Transportation Management Area (TMA) shall be designated. The Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area (AMPA) is the designated TMA (see a full-size map on the following page). The Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) is an association of local governments in the vicinity of Albuquerque and central New Mexico. The Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO) is a division of the Mid-Region Council of Governments (MRCOG) and is an intergovernmental forum that provides for the discussion of local and regional transportation issues and for the development of transportation policies and programs. As the designated metropolitan planning organization

(MPO), MRMPO is responsible for surface transportation planning in the AMPA. This includes developing the twenty-year Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the short-term Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) of funded projects. To that end, MRMPO staff work with stakeholders and the public, as well as local agencies, tribal governments, the New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT), local transit providers, as well as other agencies and organizations. MRMPO is committed to carrying out a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process (referred to as the “3C process”). The process is accomplished under the direction of the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) of the Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area which serves as the governing body of MRMPO.



Mid-Region Council of Governments' Metropolitan Planning Organization Transportation Planning Boundaries



Appendix B: Code of Federal Regulations, Title 23, Section 450.316 “Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation”

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

(viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process

required under the EPA transportation [conformity](#) regulations ([40 CFR part 93](#), subpart A), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing [metropolitan transportation plans](#) and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including [State](#) and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO(s) shall develop the [metropolitan transportation plans](#) and TIPs with due [consideration](#) of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title [49 U.S.C. Chapter 53](#);

(2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under [23 U.S.C. 201- 204](#).

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO(s) shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO(s) shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under [§ 450.314](#).

Appendix C: MRMPO Committees

As shown in the organization chart to the right, there are several committees that either directly or indirectly report to the MTB. These committees are described below. The MTB and TCC meetings are open to the public. Other committees listed are interagency committees.

Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) – The MTB is the policy making body of MRMPO and is responsible for all transportation policy decisions and planning products of the MPO. Elected officials from the local jurisdictions serve on the MTB.

Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) - This committee provides technical advice to the Metropolitan Transportation Board. The committee reviews items that are scheduled to come before the board and provides recommendations from a technical viewpoint. The TCC membership is composed of technical, staff-level representatives from each of the local member agencies and the New Mexico Department of Transportation. The TCC has four standing committees. They are the Transportation Program Technical Group (TPTG), the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Subcommittee, the Congestion Management Process (CMP) Committee, and the Roadway Access Committee (RAC).

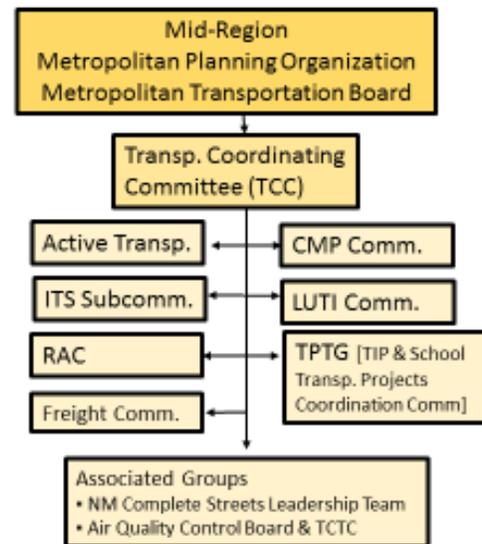
The **Transportation Program Technical Group (TPTG)** is a working group that provides advice to the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) regarding the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the long range system maps for the urban area. The TPTG uses a set of evaluation criteria to develop the draft Transportation Improvement Program prior to its release for public review and comment. The TPTG also reviews and makes recommendations on quarterly TIP amendments and comments on proposals to amend the long range transportation system maps when the maps are updated. The TPTG membership is drawn from technical staff from the various local agencies and the New Mexico Department of Transportation.

The **Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Subcommittee** coordinates ITS stakeholder activity and makes recommendations to the Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC). The TCC then makes recommendations to the Metropolitan Transportation Board. ITS Subcommittee meetings are **inter-agency** meetings between federal, state, and local stakeholders.

The **Congestion Management Process (CMP) Committee** works on congestion management activities including the development of and revisions to the Project Prioritization Process that is used to evaluate projects for inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program. The Congestion Management Process is a federally mandated process that helps planners identify congested travel corridors and recommends strategies to increase transportation efficiency and provide additional options for the traveling public.

The **Land Use and Transportation Integration Committee (LUTI)** is comprised of transportation and land use planning and development professionals. Members of the committee work to advance coordinated land use and transportation planning in the region.

MRMPO Committees Structure



The **Active Transportation Committee** provides advice and recommendations on ways to improve the health and safety of people walking, biking, and using transit, including people with special needs.

The **School & Transportation Projects Coordination Committee** provides a “clearinghouse” for discussion of proposed transportation projects and school construction projects to enable early coordination of design efforts related to vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle and transit elements impacted by proposed school facility projects and school property impacted by proposed transportation projects.

The **Freight Committee** provides advice and recommendations on efforts to coordinate regional freight planning and development to ensure that freight activity across the region is safe, efficient, and effective in supporting economic activity.

The **Roadway Access Committee (RAC)** provides recommendations to the TCC on the AMPA’s roadway access policies and procedures including permitted access locations, types of access that may be allowed, and the procedures used to modify access on roadways designated as limited access facilities. The RAC is comprised of member agency staff from the region.

Appendix D: Public Participation Benchmarks

OUTREACH ACTIVITY	BENCHMARK
Number of attendees at public kickoff meeting for MTP	
Number of community events attended during MTP outreach	
Number of other groups' and organizations' meetings attended	
Number of survey responses collected	
Number of different zip codes of survey respondents	
Number of map comments/edits made to interactive map	
Number of MTP initial draft commenters	
Number of MTP final draft commenters	
Number of new Facebook followers	
Number of new Twitter followers	
New techniques tried (number and describe)	
Outreach efforts performed aimed at underrepresented groups (number and describe)	
Number of pop-up meetings hosted	
Number of presentations given at Tribal locations	
Number of presentations given to groups representing low-income or minority groups	
Number of TIP comments received	
Number of TIP meetings held	

Appendix E: Abbreviations Used in this Document

23 CFR 450: Title 23 Part 450 of the Code of Federal Regulations

ADA: Americans with Disabilities Act

AMPA: Albuquerque Metropolitan Planning Area

FAST Act: Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act

MPA: Metropolitan Planning Area

MPO: Metropolitan Planning Organization

MRCOG: Mid-Region Council of Governments

MRMPO: Mid-Region Metropolitan Planning Organization

MTB: Metropolitan Transportation Board

MTP: Metropolitan Transportation Plan

NEPA: National Environmental Policy Act

PPP: Public Participation Procedures

TCC: Transportation Coordinating Committee

TIP: Transportation Improvement Program

TMA: Transportation Management Area

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