



2023
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCEDURES





How to Make a Public Comment

- ✓ **Send by mail to:** MRMPO, 809 Copper Avenue NW, Albuquerque, NM 87102
- ✓ **Email:** mrcog@mrcog-nm.gov
- ✓ **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 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, how MRMPO tracks and evaluates the effectiveness of its outreach methods and public participation goals, and the ways in which the public and stakeholders can participate in the planning process.

The *Public Participation Procedures* (PPP) document has been updated to include new approaches that will be used by MRMPO for outreach purposes going forward. The PPP is guided by an overall approach that favors going to where people are rather than asking them to come to us and ensures that systemic equity is integrated into all efforts. This update emphasizes increasing efforts to reach underrepresented groups, increasing overall engagement, focusing more on gathering feedback rather than presenting information, and updating outreach and engagement methods to reflect current best practices.

Federal requirements for metropolitan transportation planning, including for participation by interested parties, are outlined in the federal surface transportation infrastructure law, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and codified in Title 23 Part 134 of the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 134). The BIL mandates that the public participation programs of metropolitan planning processes shall include a

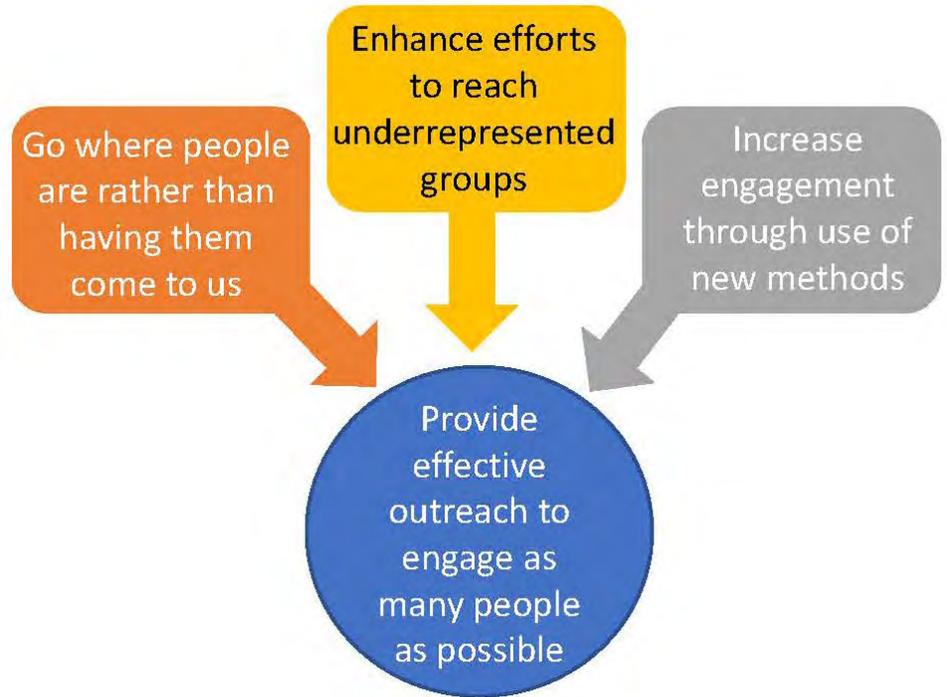
"...proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing participation of the public in developing plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs)" (23 CFR 450.316). Methods and procedures described in the *Public Participation Procedures* document adhere to federal requirements including Title VI. This updated document replaces MRMPO's previous Public Participation Procedures document produced in 2018.



II. OUTREACH GOALS AND APPROACH

MRMPO has an overarching goal of providing effective outreach to engage as many members of the public and stakeholders as possible. 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 us. 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.

MRMPO’s Overall Outreach Goals and Objectives



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. This means making a commitment to meaningful public involvement as a two-way process. The USDOT defines meaningful public involvement as **“a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, program, or plan when possible.”**¹ This process can and should be utilized at every stage of the public involvement process.

By understanding the demographics of a community and building strong relationships with members from the community, it is more likely that effective outreach can take place. In turn, using this as a foundation can produce results that lead to understanding the wants and needs of community, hearing from a broad representation of the community, understanding the effectiveness of the engagement tools used in that community, and utilizing the input from the community in the planning process.

¹ *Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making*, U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022.

III. OUTREACH METHODS AND TOOLS

Many lessons were learned from the most recent MTP update (*Connections 2040*), which was nearing completion during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic, MRMPO had to quickly pivot to more innovative methods of engagement that relied on the use of virtual public outreach. Many of these tools produced such promising results that they have now been adopted as best practices for outreach by practitioners worldwide, and they will remain a permanent part of MRMPO’s public involvement toolbox. MRMPO will continue to use these techniques as well as try new outreach methods and assess their effectiveness and refine approaches as necessary.

MRMPO anticipates:

- making greater use of virtual public engagement
- putting more effort toward attending and presenting at other groups’ and organizations’ meetings
- increasing the visibility and awareness of the MPO and its products by attending community events to distribute information and/or gather feedback
- hosting meetings that are more focused on obtaining feedback rather than providing information
- continuing to use videos and online tools and new technologies to reach a broader audience
- providing summaries of information obtained from outreach activities to let participants know they were heard and how their input was used

MRMPO Meaningful Public Involvement Tool



Objectives for outreach and engagement can vary depending on the product or phase of a project, and therefore, so should the methods used. MRMPO’s Spectrum of Community Engagement, shown below, is designed to assist with employing the appropriate outreach tools based on the level of engagement that is intended.

MRMPO Spectrum of Community Engagement



	<u>INFORM</u>	<u>CONSULT</u>	<u>COLLABORATE</u>
GOAL	Let Public Know about Transportation Planning Efforts	Get Feedback on Transportation Planning	Provide a seat at the table when developing plans
WHEN THE COMMUNITY IS INCORPORATED	At the end of the process when decisions have been made	At the beginning of the process Once a draft is complete	At the beginning, and throughout with follow up regarding how their input is used
ENGAGEMENT TOOLS <i>(virtual tools)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertising • Newsletter • Brochures/Flyers • Social Media • Webpages • E-communications • Videos 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surveys & Polls (in-person or online) • Open Houses (in-person or online) • Key Person Interviews • Public Meetings & Comments • Online Forums 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus Groups & Working Groups (in-person or online) • “Pop-up Events” and participatory planning tools that incorporate feedback. • Identify Public Liaisons. • Social media live • Video conferences • Working sessions (in-person or online)
ROLE OF COMMUNITY	Audience	Advisor	Stakeholder
ROLE OF AGENCY	Decision-makers	Planners	Leaders
ROLE OF EQUITY	Minimal	Targeted	Integrated
ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE	Fast	Specific	Continuous

Source: Adapted from International Association of Public Participation

Engagement Tools

The various engagement tools that may be used throughout outreach are described below:

Advertising

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 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 who may need special accommodations.

MRMPO provides notices on its website and in its newsletter, in the newspaper, and by mail and/or email of opportunities to provide comment on the MTP and TIP.

Other forms of advertising that can be used include: news releases, 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.

Newsletter and e-communications

Travel Times is MRMPO’s quarterly electronic newsletter which has over 750 subscribers. MRMPO publishes articles about the work, research, and activities of the MPO. MRMPO also uses the newsletter to keep readers informed of opportunities to get involved and provide input on MPO products. If needed, special mailings can be sent to subscribers and MPO contacts’ email accounts using the same software used to send out newsletters.

Brochures/flyers/postcards

These are used to help succinctly inform the public of what MRMPO does or of any current outreach efforts or special events. These can be mailed or distributed at events or posted/placed in community facilities.

Social media

MRMPO uses social media to engage the public in its planning products and activities and as an additional way to provide continual engagement with the public. Staff keeps an eye on new technologies and internet-based tools as they become available to increase the number of ways people can provide input. This may include online and interactive methods to collect feedback, virtual public involvement advances, etc.

Webpages

MRMPO develops content for the MRCOG website (www.mrcog-nm.gov) that includes data, plan documents, other work products, maps, contact information, meeting dates, committee information, opportunities to comment, and more. MRMPO endeavors to post ample and well-curated content to be as useful, transparent, and accountable as possible. The website is a powerful and key tool for MRMPO in disseminating information.

Surveys/polls

Surveys are developed and distributed by MRMPO to help gather feedback from the public and sometimes targeted stakeholders as well. Surveys are one technique by which people who are less likely to speak up in public meetings can be reached. Surveys are made available online and in hard copy format. They are often offered in Spanish depending on the survey.

Surveys are effective at increasing access to participation. One method that can be used to produce surveys that optimize diverse and equitable engagement is to use the MRMPO Meaningful Public Involvement Tool (see page 4). By understanding the wants and needs of a community, surveys can be designed that help decrease barriers and provide an opportunity for informed participation.

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 as much as possible. If this is not the case, this should be noted.

Polls can be given in virtual meetings to gather feedback on the fly. 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.

Public meetings and comments

Public meetings solicit formal public input on issues of regional interest. In accordance with state law, MRMPO publishes notices advertising public meetings in the local newspaper and on its website and may also publicize meetings in other ways. Public meetings can either be in-person, virtual, or offered in a hybrid format where attendees have the option of



participating either way. While hybrid meetings seem to have the most potential to present technical difficulties, they do offer certain benefits such as lowering barriers to participation (such as reaching persons who don't have transportation, may not have childcare, or experience other challenges to participating in person).

Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) and Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) meetings are always open to the public and allow for public comment. Committee meeting times 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 and can also be

attended virtually via Zoom. The MRCOG building is ADA compliant and is accessible via several major transit routes.

Open houses (in person and virtual)

MRMPO may hold open houses at various locations (including online) 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 as well as on Facebook live.

Virtual online forums (or Virtual Public Involvement)

When in-person meetings are not feasible, virtual public involvement (VPI) has evolved to supplement community engagement strategies. By enabling individuals to participate in a more convenient, cheap, and easily accessible format, VPI tools improve and expand the reach of public engagement initiatives. Numerous



online resources and virtual tools also offer interactive and graphic formats that improve the public's and stakeholders' comprehension of proposed projects and plans. With the use of VPI in appropriate contexts, MRMPO can effectively involve more people earlier in the process, thereby reducing unforeseen project delays, and using staff time and resources more efficiently.

Focus groups and working 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 meetings or prior public interaction. Focus groups can be effective ways of targeting specific communities or groups.

Pop-Ups

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 can be helpful in reaching a different audience, especially from ones that have not been heard from as much, and for providing a more approachable environment.

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.



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. Meeting with key stakeholders offers a whole range of potential benefits for the communities they represent and MRMPO. By meeting and empowering various stakeholders MRMPO may help in facilitating the process to align the goals of the traveling public and specific transportation plans or programs, promote transparency, build trust, and identify further outreach plans and methods that may produce positive results for communities.

Community and Agency Meetings and Events



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 endeavors 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 greater insight about public concerns.

IV. MAJOR PRODUCTS OF THE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

MRMPO is responsible for producing several key products which are listed below. This section describes the public outreach efforts involved in their development.

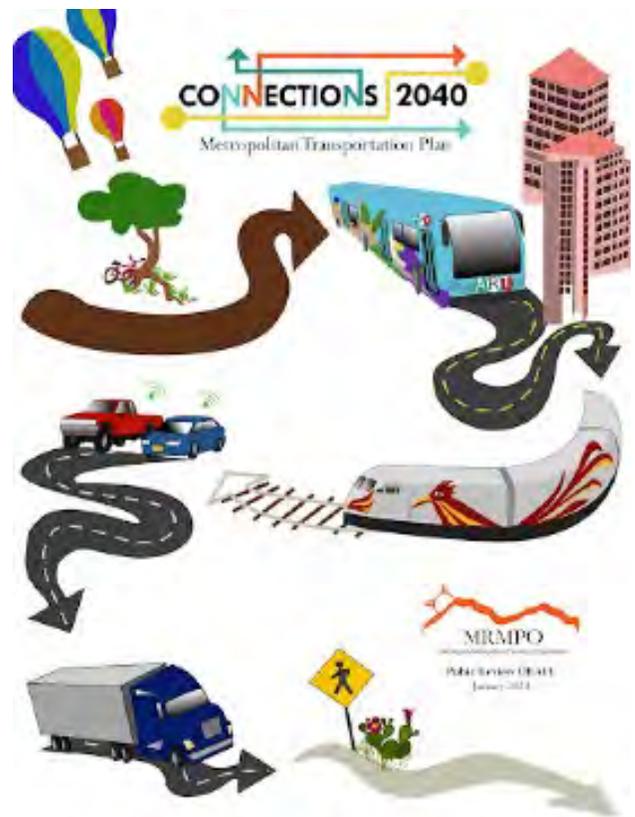
- The Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- The Transportation Improvement Program
- Public Participation Procedures
- Title VI Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the long-range transportation planning guide for the AMPA. As such, public outreach is critically important to the plan. The MTP involves a 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. See an example of how these phases look when integrated into the MRMPO Spectrum of Community Engagement (Appendix E).

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 and community;
- Press release(s) to news media in advance of the formal public comment period preceding adoption of the Plan and public notification of formal comment periods published;
- 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 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

The MTP may be amended if there are additions to or removals of projects from the MTP project 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 may *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 goals and objectives established in that

document. This section will describe public participation methods for TIPs adopted simultaneously as the MTP, TIPs adopted in intervening years, and TIP amendments. Please refer to MRMPO's TIP Policies & Procedures document (found on the MRCOG website) for a complete reference on the TIP development process.



2024-2029 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

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 also used to inform the TIP. 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, 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 are maximized. The policy board and staff may consider the comment in the context of the MTP, TIP, or both.

TIPs Adopted Separately from the MTP

In years when there is no 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 may 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.

TIP-related outreach may include new methods such as online Story Maps and increased opportunities provided to the public to comment on proposed TIP projects.

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 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, then 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 23 CFR 450.316, 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:

- Notice posted on MRCOG's website and included in MRMPO's newsletter and Facebook page; information published in the newspaper
- Public adoption of the *Public Participation Procedures* by the Metropolitan Transportation Board (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 Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and posted on the MRCOG website

Title VI Plan

The MRCOG and MRMPO Title VI Plan documents MRCOG's policy to ensure 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

'Communications and Public Involvement' is a designated program area in the MRCOG Title VI Program. This program area aims to ensure that MRCOG seeks input from historically disadvantaged groups and responds to their input. These topics are addressed in detail 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 the 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.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GUIDELINES

This section outlines the Federal guidelines required for public outreach. The tools and methods used to inform and involve the public may vary depending on the community in question and what level of participation is most appropriate for the plan or project that needs feedback. 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.

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 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 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
- Offer to provide accommodations for people with disabilities or people who need special accommodation with advance notice

¹The 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. (<https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/chapter-I/subchapter-E/part-450/subpart-C/section-450.316>)

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

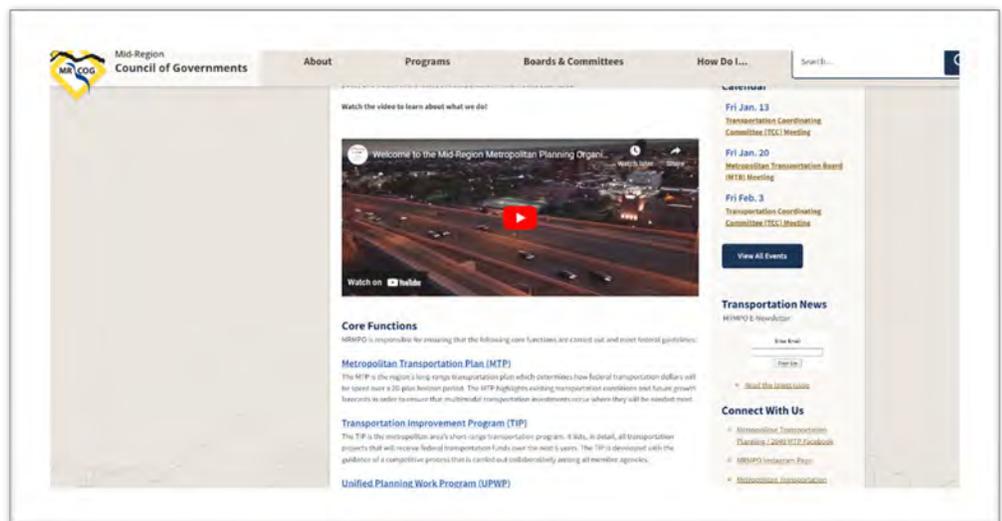
MRMPO provides all publications and other pertinent information on the MRCOG website. MRMPO continually tries to provide more of its data on the website in the most accessible manner as possible. Upon request, other information not included on the website may be provided. MRMPO staff are also available to help member agencies or members of the public access and explain information. MRMPO distributes copies of draft and final MTPs to 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 MTP (entire document, appendices, maps, and resolutions), including the Long Range Transportation Systems (LRTS) Guide
- The current TIP 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, 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.



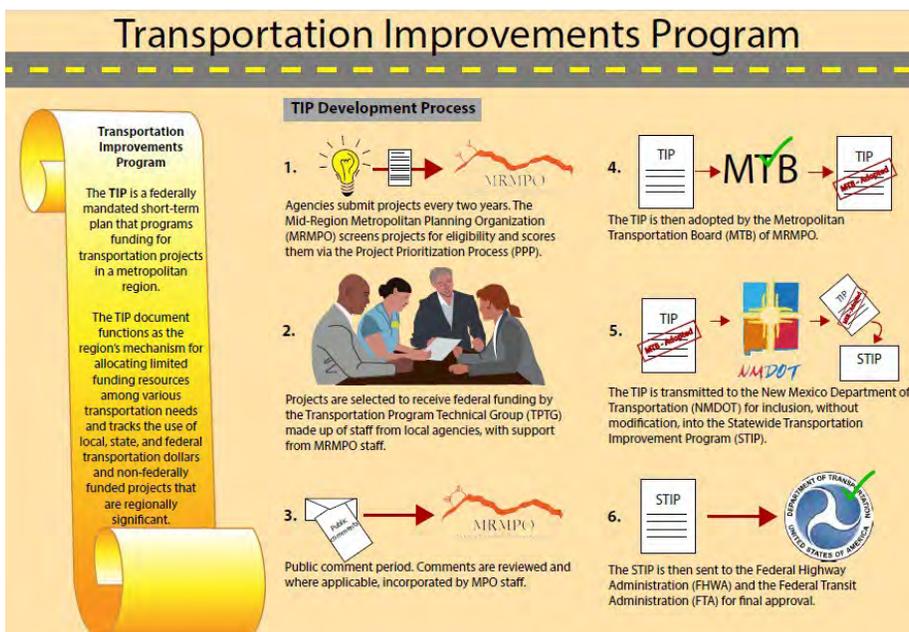
Visualization Techniques

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:

- Interactive online maps
- Print and online static maps
- Illustration of existing land use and proposed development
- 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.

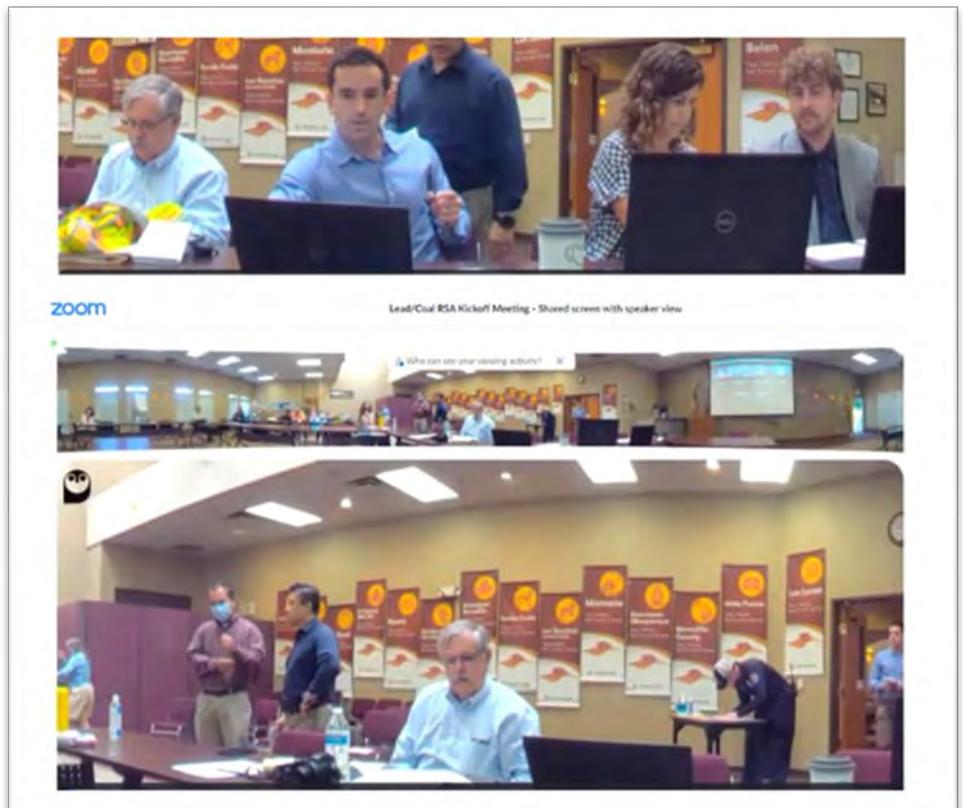


Meeting Accessibility

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. Events may be in person, offered remotely, or be a mix of both (hybrid).

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
- 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. Comments are responded to in the manner in which they were received (for comments where a response is possible). 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 in the Plan. Follow-through demonstrating that public input was considered is sent to participants and posted on the MRCOG website.

Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations

MPOs must incorporate the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, plans, policies, and infrastructure into the transportation planning process. In addition to being good planning practice, this ensures the requirements of Executive Order 12898- Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations are met.

Understanding the effects of unequitable transportation planning and decision making is crucial towards addressing historical deficiencies. MRMPO staff have identified best practices to reach underserved populations:

- Work to build relationships with community organizations and/or businesses and individuals that represent low-income and minority populations
- 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)
 - Incorporation into publications of people of diverse cultures, ages, abilities, and economic status
 - Demonstration of respect for cultural sensitivities and prohibitions

² <http://www.nmag.gov/uploads/files/Publications/ComplianceGuides/Open%20Meetings%20Act%20Compliance%20Guide%202015.pdf>

- 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.
- Participate in community events to build relationships
- Monitor/observe which groups are missing from the process and adjust outreach approaches
- When possible, hold public meetings in communities with concentrations of low income/high poverty populations
- Share with communities and other stakeholders the impact of their involvement and input on plans, projects, and policies

Integrating equity into outreach and engagement efforts is not a one-size-fits-all approach. Different communities may respond to varying approaches. Therefore, it is necessary to have a diverse set of tools.

To increase participation, MRMPO works on identifying barriers and lessening or removing them where possible. Potential barriers to public participation include:

- lack of awareness
- information not presented clearly or in an engaging way
- a perception that input does not matter
- lack of options for providing feedback and getting involved
- lack of time or resources to participate

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.

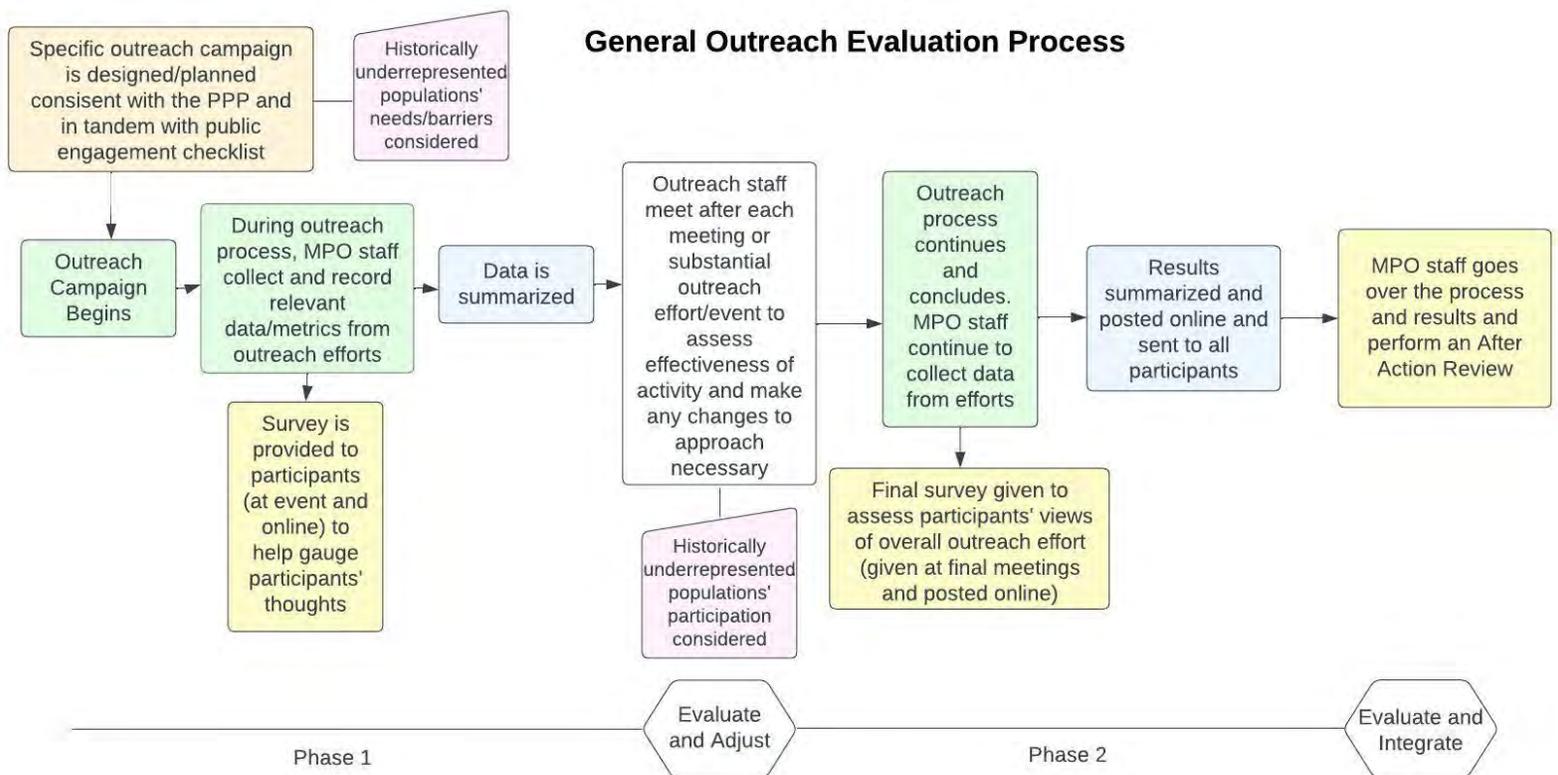
Coordination with Statewide Transportation Planning

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.

VIII. EVALUATING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION EFFORTS

Continuous outreach and assessment are critical to the success of any efforts to attract and sustain public engagement, particularly meaningful public engagement. Evaluation should assess not just the immediate outcomes of public engagement activities, but also the long-term effects of public involvement on the planning process. Meaningful community involvement is more than just public education; it is the rightful opportunity for the community to shape what happens in their region.

In order to monitor and assess how well MRMPO’s outreach efforts are working, MRMPO is building off its previous efforts of collecting public participation benchmarks and has developed a new evaluation process for public outreach. The ultimate goal of the evaluation process is to inform outreach efforts of MRMPO to help make them as effective as possible. Outputs and outcomes of outreach will be monitored, evaluated, and reported on (see Appendix F for some of the tools that will be used to prepare for outreach and gather information on performance). Reports on effectiveness will be published to the MRCOG website on MRMPO’s page on Public Participation Procedures. A graphic illustrating the general outreach evaluation process that will be used by MRMPO is shown below.



Internal audits that assess the effectiveness of various outreach methods and outcomes will be performed by MRMPO staff during outreach initiatives. The intent is to identify successes and shortcomings in outreach efforts and to change approaches as necessary and, importantly, to gauge participation from marginalized and historically disenfranchised communities. At the conclusion of the campaign, results will be summarized, sent to participants, and posted online on the same webpage as the Public Participation Procedures are posted³. After the process has concluded, MRMPO staff will go over the process and the results of the evaluation to perform an internal *After Action Review*. This will help the staff fine tune and improve approaches for future outreach campaigns.

³ At the time of this publication, the location of the Public Participation Procedures document on the MRCOG website is as follows:
<https://www.mrcog-nm.gov/577/Public-Participation-Procedures>.

IX. FORMAL AVENUES TO PARTICIPATE AND STAY CONNECTED

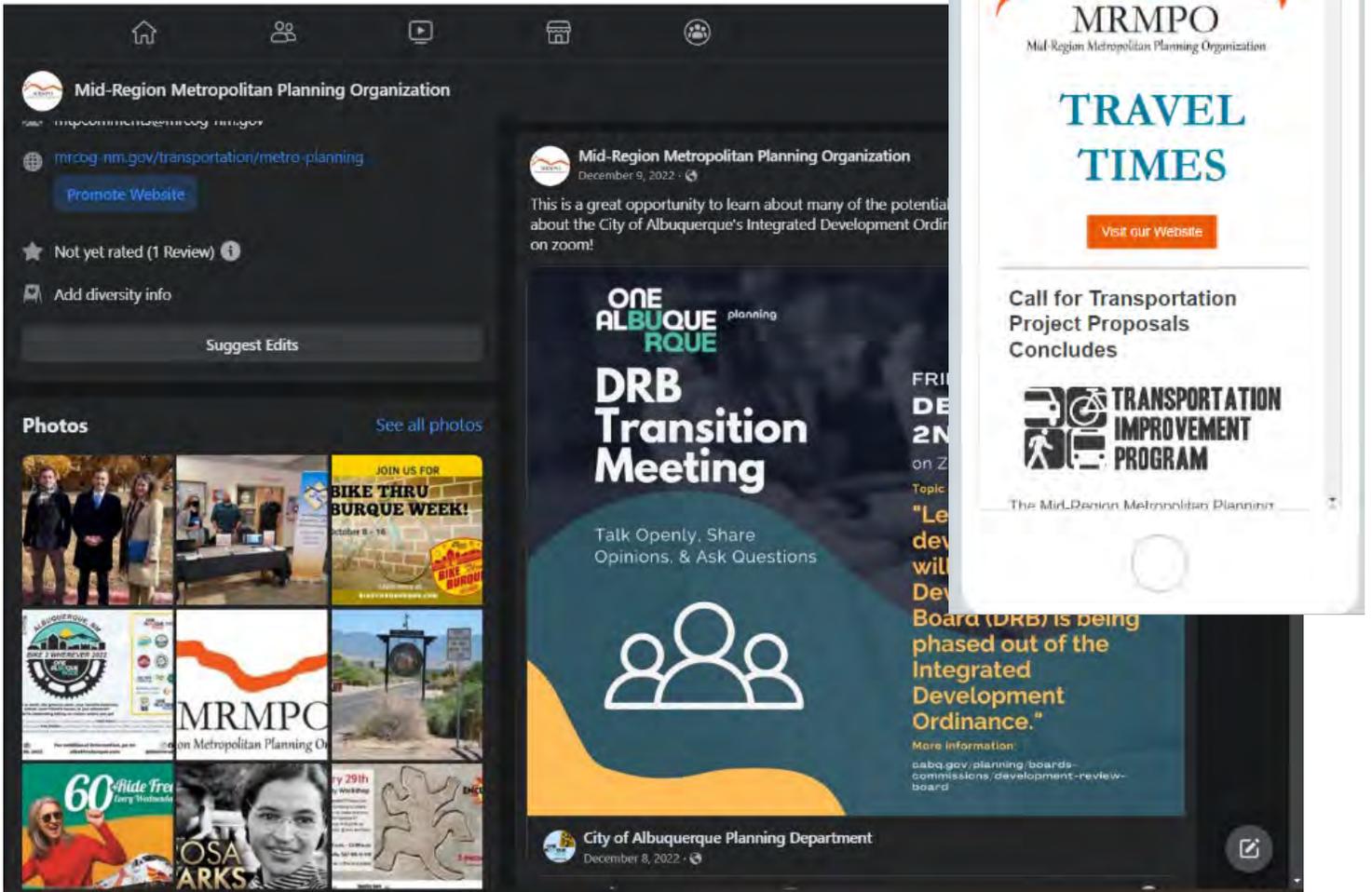
This section describes how the general public and stakeholders can participate in the regional long-range transportation planning process.

Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB) 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 cpmerlo@mrcog-nm.gov or 505-724- 3651 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 505-724-3651 or email cpmerlo@mrcog-nm.gov seven days prior to the meeting. Meeting dates are posted on MRCOG's website.

Transportation Coordinating Committee (TCC) 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 cpmerlo@mrcog-nm.gov or 505-724- 3651 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 505-724-3651 or email cpmerlo@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. 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.

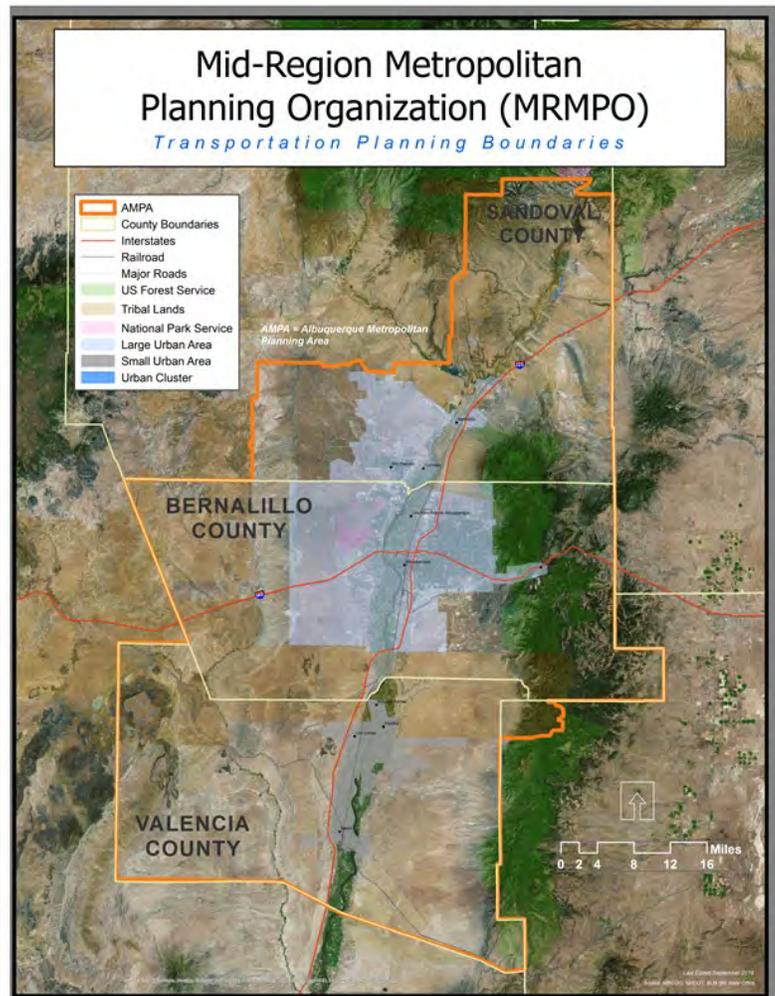
Signing up for MRMPO’s e-newsletter, Travel Times, following the MRMPO Facebook page, and requesting that your email address be added to the MTP contacts database: These actions all help in tracking the progress of plans and participating the planning process. The MRMPO Facebook page is found on Facebook by searching @MidRegionMPO. Information on how to go about doing all of these is provided on MRCOG’s website, on the Get Involved page for the MRMPO (<https://www.mrcog-nm.gov/576/Get-Involved>).



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.



Appendix B: Code of Federal Regulations

Title 23, Section, § 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](#).

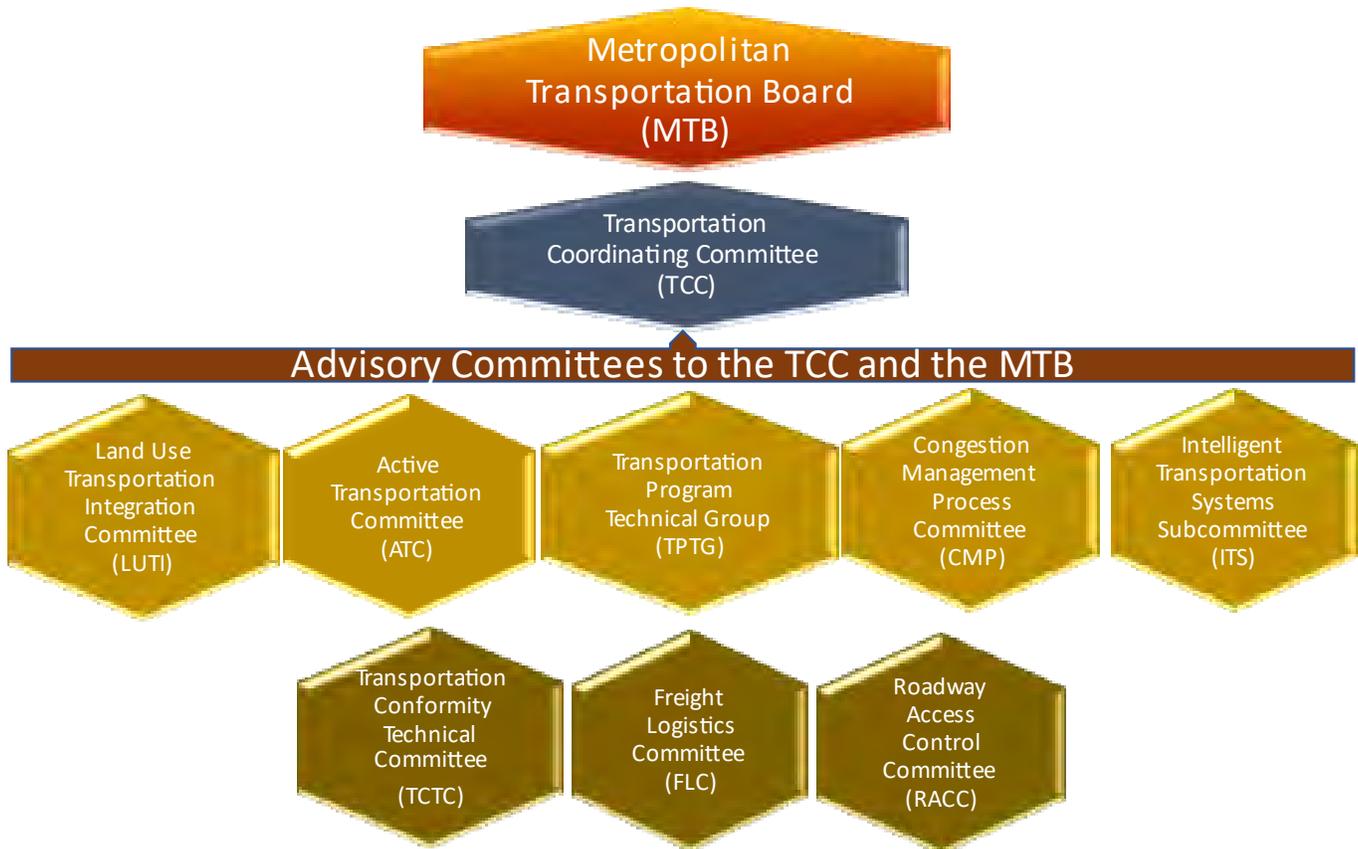
(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO(s) shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the [metropolitan transportation plan](#) and the TIP.

(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 below, there are several committees that either directly or indirectly report to the Metropolitan Transportation Board (MTB). These committees are described below. The MTB and TCC meetings are excellent opportunities to provide public comment. Other committees listed are interagency committees. The committees listed in the bottom row are technical groups that meet as needed.



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 **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 as well as scenario planning.

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 **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 **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 **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 **Transportation Conformity Technical Committee (TCTC)** only meets when the AMPA is in air quality non-conformity status. As the region is now in attainment for air quality, the Committee does not currently meet.

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: Abbreviations

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

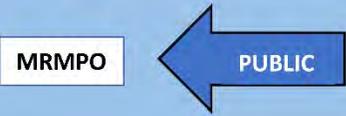
TMA: Transportation Management Area

VPI: Virtual Public Involvement

Appendix E: Example of Spectrum of Community Engagement Used for MTP Outreach

Phases of Outreach for MTP



	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>INFORM</p> <p>Kickoff</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>COLLABORATE</p> <p>Draft 1</p> </div>	<div style="text-align: center;">  <p>CONSULT</p> <p>Draft 2 (final)</p> </div>
GOAL	To inform the public about the MTP and the transportation planning process.	Engage the public and targeted communities in developing transportation strategies for the future.	Present the final draft of the MTP and solicit further comments.
HOW THE COMMUNITY IS INCORPORATED	General Information	General and Targeted Participation	General Consultation
ENGAGEMENT TOOLS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation - Introduction • MTP Overview 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation – Initial Findings • Specific Feedback <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Scenarios ○ Strategies ○ Performance Measures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation – Final Document • General Public Comment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Budget ○ Projects
ROLE OF COMMUNITY	Audience	Stakeholder	Advisor
ROLE OF AGENCY	Planners	Facilitators	Decision-makers
ROLE OF EQUITY	Minimal	Targeted	Integrated
ENGAGEMENT TIMELINE	Fast	Continuous	Specific

Appendix F: Tools for Guiding and Evaluating the Effectiveness of Outreach

Outreach Checklist

Outreach and Engagement Checklist		
<i>The Public Engagement components consistent with the Outreach Evaluation Process and the PPP listed below should be considered</i>	<i>Check the box if component was used</i>	Remarks
Identify purpose of engagement		
Identify target area		
Identify target audience(s)		
Identify stakeholders and partners		
Identify appropriate engagement and visualization techniques		
Identify effective communication strategies for target audience		
Identify resources and available timeframe		
Build strong relationships		
Create a public engagement plan		
Monitor and evaluate the engagement process using MRMPO evaluation process		
Evaluate outcome		
Report on the process and outcome to appropriate stakeholders and decisions makers		
Ensure transparency, and equity throughout engagement process		
Seek feedback on the process from participants		
Information was provided on how feedback was integrated or not integrated into the plan		
Variety of methods were used to gather input		
Multiple methods of advertisement/promotion were used		
Accessibility of process and products were considered and provided		
Levels of community engagement decided on?		
Steps taken to ensure that impacted and underrepresented communities are included? List or describe.		

Measurements of Effectiveness

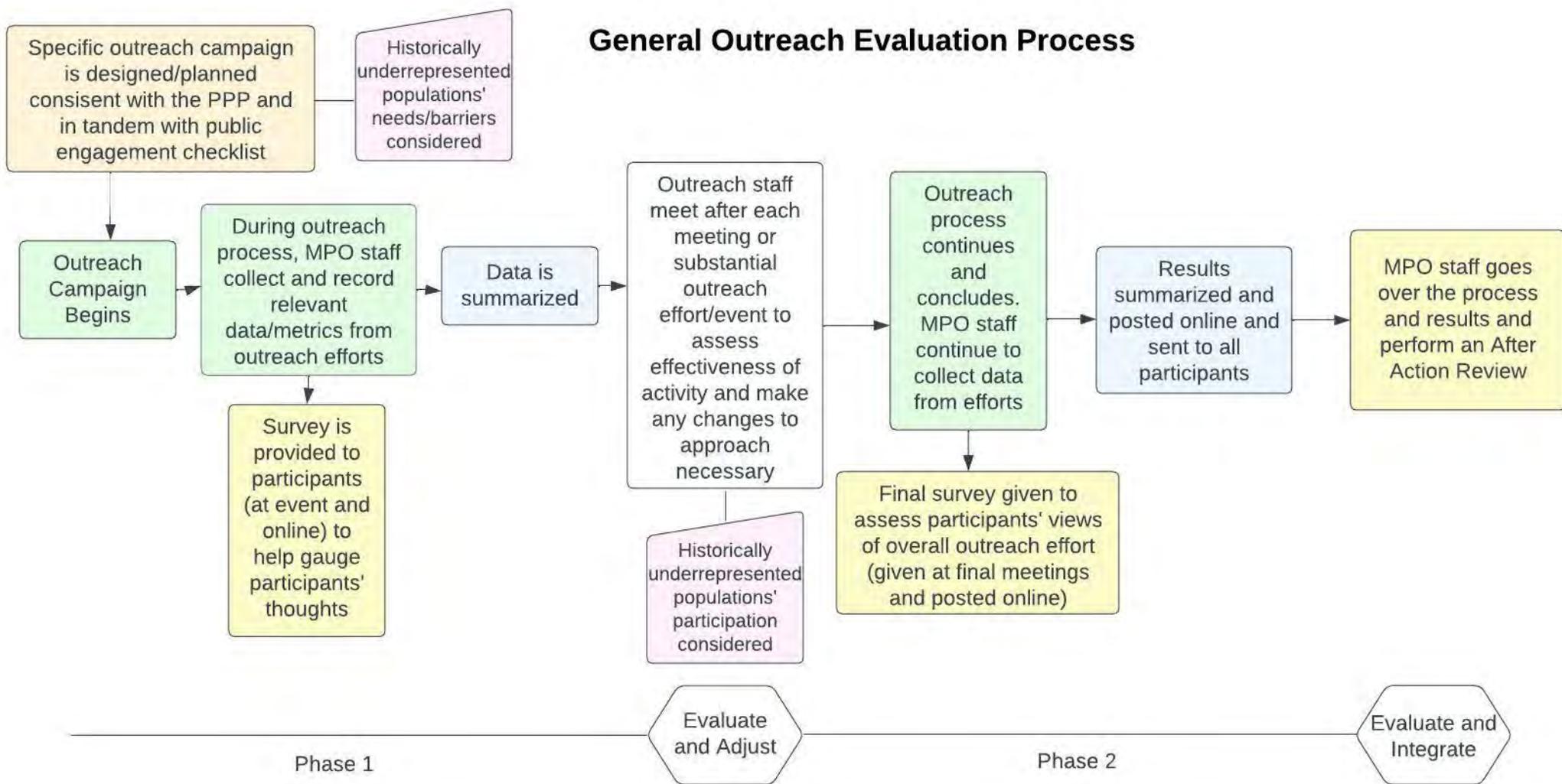
Outreach Measurements of Effectiveness Matrix

Quantitative Outputs*	Goal	Result	Goal met?	Method of Measurement	Remarks	Indicator of Importance**
Total number of people who attended all public meetings				Count of attendees		Inclusion
Number of project website hits				Website visit data		Inclusion
Number of community events attended during outreach				Staff count		Inclusion
Number of other groups' and organizations' meetings attended				Staff count		Inclusion
Number of survey responses collected				Survey data		Accessibility
Number of different zip codes of survey respondents				Survey data		Inclusion
Number of map comments made on interactive map				Map data		Accessibility
Number of draft commenters (public and agency)				Comments logged and counted		Inclusion
Number of Facebook followers at beginning and end of campaign				Number of followers recorded at beginning and end of campaign		Accessibility
Number of video views				Video views (recorded by YouTube)		Accessibility
Number of outreach efforts performed aimed at underrepresented groups				Count of efforts specifically aimed at unerrepresented groups		Targeted Engagement
Qualitative Outcomes*	Goal	Result	Goal met?	Method of Measurement	Remarks	Indicator of Importance**
Did most participants feel they had adequate notice of a public engagement activity?				Survey		Transparency and Clarity
Did most participants feel their input was valued?				Survey		Influence and Impact
Did input received affect the plan or outcomes? How so?				Staff review		Influence and Impact
Did most people feel public involvement opportunities start early enough and was of sufficient length?				Survey		Timing
Were any complaints received about the accessibility of the process or products?				Staff reporting		Accessibility

*Outputs are and outcomes are recommended engagement metrics from the U.S. DOT's "Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-making" document. According to the document, "Outputs of an engagement activity can be assessed as soon as the activity is complete and are easily observable," and "Outcomes describe the changes in the planning process resulting from the outputs of an engagement activity."

**Six key indicators important to the success of a community engagement effort according to the TRB project for the NCHRP on Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Involvement

General Outreach Evaluation Process



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