

PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT

Transportation Addendum to the Metropolitan Council Public Engagement Plan



METROPOLITAN
COUNCIL

August 2022

The Council's mission is to foster efficient and economic growth for a prosperous metropolitan region

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The Metropolitan Council is the regional planning organization for the seven-county Twin Cities area. The Council operates the regional bus and rail system, collects, and treats wastewater, coordinates regional water resources, plans and helps fund regional parks, and administers federal funds that provide housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income individuals and families. The 17-member Council board is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the governor.

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Public comment overview

This comment report summarizes comments received for the Transportation Addendum to the Metropolitan Council Public Engagement Plan. The draft addendum was released for public comment on May 25, 2022, and comments were accepted through July 11. During that time, the plan was available on the Metropolitan Council’s website and through printed copies as requested.

The Met Council proactively promoted availability of the comment draft. The Council hosted a public meeting on June 25 at the beginning of the Transportation Committee meeting.

The following report includes a table that summarizes the comments received, the individual or agency that made the comment, the staff response to the comment.

Nine commenters participated – both individuals, local governments, and representatives of organizations. We logged 18 comments.

People engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web pages – 110 unique visitors • Facebook reach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post 1 257 users ○ Post 2 55 users ○ Post 3 48 • Facebook engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post 1 5 ○ Post 2 2 ○ Post 3 0 • Twitter engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Tweet 1 5 ○ Tweet 2 2 ○ Tweet 3 2
Stakeholders involved	9
Meetings/interactions	Transportation committee public meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 speaker
Interest groups and agencies engaged	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MN 350 • Carver County
Methods used	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web announcement and web page notice • GovDelivery email announcement • Facebook • Twitter • Public hearing
Comments received through	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online form • Email • Public hearing

The Metropolitan Council can provide a written record of all comments made by letter, email, online, or on the phone on request.

Outreach and Engagement Themes

Public comments produced the following themes:

- Maintain a virtual option to attend Met Council and advisory committee meetings and provide public comments
- Provide transparency in public comments and how they do or do not impact Met Council decisions; shift from public engagement to community influence
- Promote public comment periods on Met Council assets including onboard transit and platform digital advertising
- Recognize public comments and public engagement from locally adopted transportation plans and planning processes

How to Use this Document

The following table summarizes the comments received, who made the comment, and the staff response to the comment. There is an index of all comment contributors with an identifying number attached. Many people made similar comments, so a generalized summary of comments is preceded by the identifying number of the people or groups who made the comment.

1. To find the comments of an individual or group, follow these steps:
2. Look for an individual or group name on the List of Commenters table.
3. To the left of the name is their commenter identification number.
4. Hold down the “control” key on the keyboard and hit the “F” key at the same time.
5. Type the commenter identification number and hit the Enter key.
6. Your document software will identify all the comments that were made by that commenter.

Commenter Number	Commenter Name	Organization
1	Kevin Kangas	
2	Susan Beverley	
3	Kelly Rae Craven	
4	Stephanie Willis	
5	Cody Preisler	
6	Adrianna Jereb	MN350
7	Gayle Degler	Carver County
8	Eric Berger	
9	Abigail Johnson	
10	Antifa CEO [twitter handle]	

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Commenter number
<p>Historically underrepresented groups in decision-making</p>	<p>“Include historically underrepresented groups in decision-making. Page 3 of the Transportation Addendum notes that “Outreach and engagement efforts need to be intentional and responsive to the needs of each group, meeting people where they are and communicating in understandable ways. Traditional methods of collecting data like surveys and public comment periods are embedded in white culture and may not be the best strategies to engage historically underrepresented groups.” What strategies is the Council adopting to reach historically underrepresented groups? This part of the Public Engagement Plan needs clarification.”</p> <p>“I also hope that you will make a special effort to reach out to minority groups. This would include extra resources and non-traditional methods aimed at engaging these groups in dialogue with the Met Council.”</p>	<p>The Metropolitan Council Transportation Planning Team has two projects under contract that will include historically underrepresented groups in decision-making.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Equity Evaluation of Regional Transportation Investment will engage the Met Council and Transportation Advisory Board in a discussion and evaluation about how transportation planning and investment decision-making occurs in the region and use an equity lens and evaluation process to determine where and how the planning and engagement processes can be changed to make the system more representative and transportation investment decisions more equitable. Specific recommendations and actions for improving equity in the regional planning and decision-making process will be developed, prioritized, and identified for implementation. During 2021 a work scope will be developed with input and engagement of equity populations and a consultant selected and hired to begin the overall work, with the anticipation that most of the project work will continue into 2022. This process will also coordinate with the work of MnDOT in its Advancing Transportation Equity Initiative to select and utilize equity metrics and select metrics. This study helps to fulfill the TPP regional goal of Healthy and Equitable Communities. 2. This year, the Metropolitan Council initiated a master contract with three consultants to provide outreach and engagement services on an as-needed basis for a 2-year period. These consultants will plan, design, and facilitate outreach activities designed to engage Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Hispanic, low-income, and other traditionally underrepresented communities in transportation studies that may include equity, safety, climate change, transportation attitudes and needs, travel demand management, and transportation policy goals." 	<p>Public hearing</p> <p>Email</p>	<p>6, 8</p>

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Commenter number
<p>Virtual option to attend Met Council and advisory committee meetings and provide public comments</p>	<p>“PLEASE consider to have more regular interactivities. PLEASE consider live streaming &/or video recording at least of Met Council staff, including a recap of feedback as well as the Transportation Addendum to the Public Engagement Plan.”</p> <p>“Keep a virtual option for all public hearings and Council meetings. Virtual meetings are more accessible and for many people are the only accessible option - including for people with disabilities, who cannot risk COVID exposure, or without reliable transportation. It is difficult for many people to take the time out of their day to make it to a public meeting, and having to travel is an additional barrier.”</p> <p>“I hope that you will have a virtual option for all public hearings and Council meetings. It can be time consuming for a person to travel to attend a meeting in person. Also, since COVID is still a risk factor, virtual meetings are safer.”</p>	<p>The Met Council offers multiple ways to engage with Council meetings in accordance with Minnesota’s open meeting law. People are encouraged to attend meetings where possible. For those who cannot attend meetings, many meetings are live-streamed or recorded for future viewing, and meeting agendas and minutes are available online.</p> <p>https://metro council.org/Council-Meetings/UpcomingMeetings.aspx.</p> <p>The public can offer in-person comments on items not on the agenda during the public comment portion of Met Council or Committee of the Whole meetings. Public comments are also taken at many standing and advisory committee meetings. At those meetings that accept public comments, the public can address agenda and non-agenda items. Some advisory committee meetings that are not governed by the open meeting law for the immediate future continue to meet virtually. The public may also e-mail comments for any Met Council meeting to public.info@metc.state.mn.us. For individuals who have a disability and request a reasonable modification to engage during Council meetings, the Met Council considers those requests on a case-by-case basis. For public outreach and engagement to gather specific feedback on a policy, plan, study, or program, virtual meetings remain one of the tools in our outreach and engagement toolbox.</p>	<p>Online form</p> <p>Public hearing</p> <p>Email</p>	<p>4, 6, 8</p>
<p>Recognize public comments and public engagement from locally adopted transportation plans and planning processes</p>	<p>Request to recognize public comments and public engagement outcomes from locally adopted transportation plans and planning processes in the context of regional plans. Local agency engagement efforts are more robust, comprehensive, and inclusive compared to regional planning efforts. These plans and associated public comments should be incorporated into regional transportation planning processes.</p>	<p>The region has 180 local communities along with 7 counties and other governmental entities such as watershed districts. Each agency can and should be implementing public engagement as part of its decision-making processes, planning and project work. It is difficult for the Council to stay apprised of all the ongoing public engagement opportunities and feedback being received by our regional partners. That being said, this comment points to a need to develop a data base or regional repository where local entities could input comments received on specific plans, issues, or projects. This will be a suggestion we take forward to determine whether any other regions have developed a process for creating such a data base and potential benefits and costs of a shared data base.</p>	<p>Email</p>	<p>7</p>

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Commenter number
Advertise public comment periods on Met Council transit assets	<p>Advertise to transit riders: use ad space on buses, trains, and at stops to let people know about public hearings.</p> <p>People should not have to be signed up for email newsletters to know that the Met Council is having public meetings. Many people do not have internet access or do not know where to sign up for newsletters so it can't be the only way the Council shares information.</p>	<p>Transit advertising is one of many revenue streams for funding the transit system. In speaking with Metro Transit, our best opportunities to use transit advertising include the digital screens, where available at transit stations, and interior advertising cards on buses. Transit shelters and light rail interior advertising is currently and typically sold out. Bus exteriors are also in high demand and require a much longer lead time for creative.</p>	Public hearing	6
Provide transparency in public comments and how they do or do not impact Met Council decisions	<p>Be transparent about how public comments do or do not impact Council decisions, especially when there's little public engagement. The Transportation Addendum references state and federal laws that require the Council to hold and publicize public comment/engagement opportunities, but nowhere in the evaluation of effectiveness does the plan include getting or using community input as key to effectiveness. The Council should keep comment periods open until comments are received, and the Council should be responsible for generating engagement and reporting how community input is used. For example, last year during the Council's 2022 budget review, MN350 was the only organization to submit a comment on the draft budget. Ours was the only comment, written or given in person, on the entire 1.2 billion dollar budget. This is not sufficient - the Council's public engagement processes are not reaching the community and are not including the people affected by Council decisions.</p>	<p>The Met Council's public comment periods are typically open 30 to 45 days dependent upon the document. We widely advertise the opportunity for public comment using a variety of methods and this should allow adequate time for those interested in responding. The public comment report provided after the public comment period will specifically indicate a response and any changes made to a document in response to the comment. Transportation comments have resulted in specific changes to documents and often the comments are used in future discussions to indicate what we have been hearing about our planning policies and processes overall. We highly value public comment and seek to receive it while also recognizing that we need to keep decision making processes moving.</p>	Public hearing	6
Build community influence	<p>Shift from "public engagement" to community influence. Our communities should have the opportunity to do more than engage with the Council. We should have influence in these decisions, which dramatically affect our daily lives. Using again the example of the Council's budget process - we know that the Council begins internal work on the annual operating budget months before the draft is released for public viewing. The opportunity for public comment comes too late in the process for the community to have influence on what's in the budget, even though it's our tax dollars, our water fees, and our</p>	<p>The Metropolitan Council Transportation Planning Team has launched two studies that will proactively leverage community influence to directly shape the 2050 Transportation Policy Plan that will be completed in 2024.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Transportation Attitudes and Needs Assessment will examine residents' attitudes around transportation issues. Research methods will include one-on-one interviews and focus groups that will support qualitative research into people's perceptions, understandings, and experiences, and will help in designing a potential 	Public hearing	6

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Committer number
	transit fares that fund the Council's operations. We need the Council to shift its perspective towards including communities in decision-making.	<p>broad-based attitude survey. This study helps to fulfill all the policy plan's regional goals by better understanding regional transportation needs and attitudes regarding the regional transportation system.</p> <p>2. A Transportation Policy Plan Goals Review, Engagement and Update will assess progress on the overall transportation vision, goals, and objectives in the policy plan and facilitate a regional conversation on revising those goals and objectives. It will also specifically reassess the regional approach to congestion mitigation and overall mobility in lieu of the COVID-19 pandemic and changed travel behaviors. This study will leverage analysis from other studies or Met Council research staff to shape an effective conversation among regional stakeholders about shared values and the role of transportation in the region's future vision. This study will update all the region's transportation system goals for inclusion in the 2050 policy plan.</p>		
Staff contacts Met Council website	Create a staff contact page on the Council website. It's difficult to get in touch with staff at the Met Council and at Metro Transit or know who to reach out to about specific issues or with specific questions.	The Metropolitan Council currently has a 'Contact us' page that links to key contacts across the divisions of Metropolitan Council. https://metrocouncil.org/About-Us/Contact.aspx . We also strive to include a contact name at the bottom of transportation pages to reach a specific person. For example, https://metrocouncil.org/Transportation/Performance/Travel-Behavior-Inventory/Transit-On-Board-Survey.aspx . At this time, we do not include a full staff directory online but may consider its usefulness as we complete a new content strategy for the Met Council website over the next year.	Public hearing	6
Display web content for the Transportation Addendum to the Metropolitan Council Public Engagement Plan	How about distributing your content in a way that's useful on small screens? Nothing about your site or this document is useable on mobile. And there's no technical reason for this document to be a fixed-format PDF; it's just text.	The Met Council is currently implementing a new content strategy for the Transportation Planning section of the website. Public participation is in the final section that is being reworked. We will work to put more usable content directly on web pages as we complete the rework of this final section.	Twitter	9
Review and revise the public comment process	Request to review and revise the public comment process where comments are typically formally accepted at the same meeting as documents are adopted. The	There are often processes where considerable comments are received and the comment responses contain proposed changes in response to the comments. When this occurs, we	Email	7

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Commenter number
	process should allow for staff and technical committees to thoughtfully review public comments with an opportunity for comments to impact or to be incorporated as part of document adoption.	agree that the comments and suggested changes should be brought forth sequentially and not at the same meeting. This process does specifically occur with the public comment on Transportation Policy Plan updates. For other public comment processes, if we do not receive significant input or have suggested changes to proposed documents it is appropriate to keep the document moving through the adoption process. In addition, the technical committee process allows for technical comment. The Transportation Advisory Board and Met Council are the primary entities responsible for considering the public comment received.		
Increased local government and elected official representation	Request for increased representation from local governments and local elected officials with accountability and connection to the public in regional planning efforts.	The region has long standing processes, committees and related memberships associated with our transportation planning processes. Local governments are well represented specifically on the Transportation Advisory Board, its Technical Advisory Committee, and its sub committees. TAB membership is specifically included in state law. We welcome specific suggestions for the committees where local government representation is not adequate.	Email	7
Light rail	Please, please, please stop dumping money into these wasteful and extremely costly light rail projects and help relieve congestion on the roadways where the real transportation issues are. Please, I implore you. Thank you.	Comment forwarded on to the light rail project office community engagement team.	Online form	1
Express bus service	I would like to see an express bus at the intersection of TH7 and TH 41 to downtown Minneapolis. There is no bus service in this area right now. I would also like express bus service along highway 5 in the western suburbs as there is no transit along this highway right now.	Comment forwarded on to Metro Transit Customer Service.	Online form	5
Request to comment	I would like to participate in the meeting as I am a member of an underrepresented class - elderly!	Comment noted	Online form	2

Topic	Unique comments	Response	Source	Committer number
Northstar Commuter Rail	<p>Bring back Northstar to its full schedule. Many who want to ride it now, including myself, can't because it no longer works with our schedule.</p> <p>Bring back some of the event trains as well.</p> <p>Advertise it like you did in the beginning so people will know it is a viable option again -- and quit threatening to close it down! Why would anyone want to ride it, if they know they can't count on it in the future?</p>	Comment forwarded on to Metro Transit Customer Service.	Online form	3
Metro Mobility	<p>PLEASE consider if not already done & feasible, contact all Metro Mobility consumers of such. Also, any medical insurance companies whom contract Paratransit providers & those with whom they interact. I am a client of both. There's quite antiquated procedures now absurdly furthermore so restricting those with limited options of some semblances of independence when assumptions prohibit some people from becoming recipients based merely on if live in an area that has surrounding public transit route they must rebuttal without accepting identification cards forms from Metropolitan Council one must have for using Paratransportation.</p> <p>In addition to any entities which provide medical &/or neighborhood support for patients & community members, ESPECIALLY those with any disability in addition to whomever is among eligibility process working with government officials, their employees ... EVEN at driver's safety courses & department of motor vehicles branches issuing placards, ETC. PLUS, collegiate enrollees, military enlisted &/or Veterans their families & rural residents living beyond extension service of Metro Mobility's Transit Link.</p>	Comment forwarded to Metro Mobility Customer Service Center.	Online form	4



390 Robert Street North
St Paul, MN 55101-1805

651.602.1000
TTY 651.291.0904
public.info@metc.state.mn.us
metro council.org

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