

Metropolitan Council
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN
for Transportation Planning and Programming

Introduction and Federal Requirement

Public participation is an essential element of planning in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. The region is growing and the people are changing. Because of these evolving factors, public participation will need to be more coordinated and deliberate. The Metropolitan Council's public engagement framework is outlined in *Thrive MSP 2040*, the Council's Public Engagement Plan, and the Transportation Policy Plan. Together, they set the tone and give overall policy direction for public participation in transportation planning. As the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, the Council is required to develop a Public Participation Plan to help shape the transportation policies for the region (23 §CFR450.316). The purpose of this document is to provide more specific information on the public participation approach and strategies for transportation planning and programming that are used in order to fulfill this requirement.

This Public Participation Plan is both influenced by long-term policy documents - including *Thrive MSP 2040*, the Council's Public Engagement Plan, and the Transportation Policy Plan - and influences long-term policy development reflected in those documents. The Public Participation Plan represents the more specific strategies and activities that will be used to support transportation planning efforts.

Transportation planning and programming include activities that are part of long-term policy development, and short-term funding and programming. This plan is intended to cover all of those aspects.

Policy Documents Guiding Public Participation

Thrive MSP 2040

With *Thrive MSP 2040*, the Council has not only laid out a foundation on how programs and services will be administered to maintain the region's growth and prosperity, but also how engagement supports this with an outcomes-based approach. Required by state law, the inception of *Thrive MSP 2040* underwent a rigorous vetting process by the public through a comprehensive public participation process. Efforts engaged a broad range of stakeholders, including community organizations and advocacy groups. The

result of this engagement are the five outcomes and three principles of *Thrive MSP 2040*:

5 Outcomes for the Twin Cities Region

- **Stewardship** advances the Council's longstanding mission of orderly and economical development by responsibly managing the region's natural and financial resources and making strategic investments in our region's future.
- **Prosperity** is fostered by investments in infrastructure and amenities that create regional economic competitiveness, thereby attracting and retaining successful businesses, a talented workforce, and consequently, wealth.
- **Equity** connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing, transportation, and recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change.
- **Livability** focuses on the quality of our residents' lives and experiences in our region, and how places and infrastructure create and enhance the quality of life that makes our region a great place to live.
- **Sustainability** protects our regional vitality for generations to come by preserving our capacity to maintain and support our region's well-being and productivity over the long term.

3 Principles to Guide the Metropolitan Council's Work

- **Integration** is the intentional combining of related activities to achieve more effective results, leveraging multiple policy tools to address complex regional challenges and opportunities.
- **Collaboration** recognizes that shared efforts advance our region most effectively toward shared outcomes.
- **Accountability** includes a commitment to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of our policies and practices toward achieving shared outcomes and a willingness to adjust course to improve performance.

The three principles are also significant to the Public Participation Plan in helping to guide regional transportation planning. Specifically, they are integrated throughout the participation plan to support the approach that:

- Reflects the interests and priorities of the diverse stakeholders of the Twin Cities transportation planning area – including residents, employers, policymakers, local government officials and staff, developers, and other interested stakeholders.
- Engages a cross-section of the transportation planning area's residents, including residents from all parts of the area and from a representative range of demographic characteristics (race/ethnicity/nationality, age, and income level).

- Transcends political differences and transitions by assuring robust participation by partners, stakeholders, and constituents.
- Promotes a regional approach to economic growth and competitiveness.

More information about *Thrive MSP 2040* can be found at

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/Planning/Projects/Thrive-2040/Thrive-MSP-2040-Plan.aspx>.

Public Engagement Plan

Among the new elements called out in *Thrive MSP 2040* is the need for a more inclusive approach to engaging community – both individuals and the broader community at-large. It calls for the Council to create and implement a Public Engagement Plan to establish principles and guidance for all Council outreach and engagement activities as a specific way to address equity in the region.

This Public Engagement Plan refocuses participation activities on the people of the region, rather than just the infrastructure we're planning for and building. It sets the tone for the Council on how to do business with the people throughout the region – namely the notion that the Council will come to the people, not make the people come to the Council.

Transportation planning is not only about transit, roads, infrastructure and government. It also involves people — the involvement of the individuals who use regional transportation programs and services, and experience the impact of the transportation system; the people who live, work and enjoy recreation throughout the region. By facilitating this change, the public is empowered to rightfully take ownership of their communities.

The Public Engagement Plan has influenced the nuances of the participation plan by reinforcing the Council's commitment to engagement in all of its regional planning and to support outcomes that are equitable for all the region's constituencies. A key purpose of the Council's engagement plan is to encourage change in how planning is perceived and shaped. The Council partners with people to jointly make decisions that impact the region.

Another critical component of the Public Engagement Plan is to cultivate new relationships, strengthen already existing ones and build trust throughout the region. A robust engagement plan fosters mutual respect and contributes to the overall perception of the Council's intentions and purpose.

The following principles are front and center when approaching outreach and engagement:

- Equity
- Respect
- Transparency
- Relevance
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Inclusion
- Cultural Competence

The principles within the Council's engagement plan provide guidance to public participation to ensure that the region's diverse communities are represented and included in a meaningful way. These principles are simultaneously guided by *Thrive MSP 2040*, the state required comprehensive regional plan.

For more information about the Public Engagement Plan, refer to <http://www.metrocouncil.org/About-Us/Publications-And-Resources/Public-Engagement-Plan.aspx>.

Transportation Policy Plan

The Transportation Policy Plan echoes the outcomes and principles that are outlined in *Thrive MSP 2040* and the Public Engagement Plan, and it serves as a building block for transportation planning for the metropolitan region. Participation from the public is essential to transportation planning and to the Transportation Policy Plan specifically. Together in partnership, the Council and the people of the region can build a transportation system that provides a strong foundation for access and efficiency, yet also encourages flexibility as the region continues to change and grow.

The Council is federally required to draft and adopt the Transportation Policy Plan which is the regional vision for planning and developing the region's transportation system. The Transportation Policy Plan is updated at least every four years. It lays out a course of action to maintain and enhance our existing facilities, better connect people and communities, and provide more transportation choices that will make the region stronger and a better place to live, through six goals:

- Transportation System Stewardship
- Safety and Security
- Access to Destinations
- Competitive Economy
- Healthy Environment

- Leveraging Transportation Investments to Guide Land Use

Guiding Principles

The following values and principles comprise the core of the participation plan and have helped shaped and guide both *Thrive MSP 2040* and the Public Engagement Plan.

- Regional planning and transportation planning are about people – we’re building better communities for all of our region.
- People, businesses, and the broader community have a stake in the region’s transportation decisions.
- Participation processes should facilitate discussion and dialogue about transportation impact on the natural and built environments.
- Participation in policy discussions and decisions should be meaningful and have impact in the appropriate contexts.
- Participation opportunities should be inclusive and assure groups traditionally underrepresented in regional policymaking are engaged.
- A variety of participation activities should be used to assure the process can be responsive to the needs of affected audiences and groups.
- Multiple methods will be used to capture public comments, including traditional methods (mail, phone) and emerging methods (email, online forums, and related opportunities).
- Information submitted will be summarized and communicated to participants and the general public, and its impact on the planning process will be tracked.
- When necessarily, public meetings will be scheduled at times and in locations that are accessible by transit riders and people with disabilities, to avoid potential conflicts with opportunities hosted by other units of government, in locations throughout the region to provide convenient/nearby access to the process, and at different times during the day and evening hours to accommodate a variety of work schedules.
- Opportunities will be promoted widely, both through the Metropolitan Council’s channels, and also through organizations and agencies partnering with the Council on various planning and outreach efforts.

Public participation includes a broad range of activities geared to inform stakeholders, interested parties, and the public about a topic and to provide opportunities for the public at-large, as well as specific stakeholders, to participate and engage in the processes used to create policies. Technology is increasingly used to connect with audiences, and the rapidly changing nature of technology means new methods and communications channels become available regularly. Processes will use technology

methods and capture emerging technologies when appropriate. However, technology will not replace in-person engagement methods.

Goals and Desired Outcomes

Not only does public participation help shape transportation policy, it also helps to strengthen it. To achieve this, the Council will set in place a plan that is representative of all regional needs, crossing over all demographics and geographies. The Public Participation Plan provides guidance to develop and implement transportation policies and programs that fit the varying needs of the region. The resulting transportation policies will address multi-modal options that encourage not only automobile usage, but also transit, biking and pedestrian alternatives. The key is to offer as many opportunities as possible for participating which will ideally result in the following:

- Providing a range of opportunities and venues for public participation, including in-person and online engagement.
- Identifying and engage key audiences and constituencies for transportation planning information and feedback.
- Connecting with a broad range of residents that is reflective of the demographics and geography of the region.
- Gathering input from identified audiences and constituencies regarding regional transportation policies and planning.
- Educating stakeholders and the general public about the Metropolitan Council's role in regional transportation policies and planning.
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Transportation Plans and Programs

In addition to the Transportation Policy Plan, this Public Participation Plan also applies to the following short-term plans and programs.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

The TIP is a staged, four-year, multimodal program of highway, transit, bicycle, pedestrian and transportation enhancement projects and programs proposed for federal funding throughout the seven-county metropolitan area. The TIP is a federally required document that reflects funding available and reasonably anticipated (fiscally constrained). The Metropolitan Planning Organization is required to prepare the TIP as a short-range programming document that complements the long-range transportation plan. The Council prepares the TIP in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The TIP includes federal funds allocated through the regional solicitation process, and federal formula funds programmed by the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Council and transit providers.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The Unified Planning Work Program is a federally required program that details and describes proposed transportation and transportation-related planning activities in the metropolitan area. The Unified Planning work Program also serves as the Council's application for transportation planning funds from the U.S. Department of Transportation. The UPWP is prepared annually and describes metropolitan-area transportation planning activities being undertaken by four agencies: the Metropolitan Council, the Minnesota Department of Transportation, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD)

The Federal Clean Air Act Amendments passed in 1990 stipulate that transportation plans, programs, and projects in non-attainment and maintenance areas must undergo an air quality conformity analysis. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency designates the seven-county metropolitan area and a developed portion of Wright County adjacent to the metropolitan area (along U.S. Highway 10 and I-94), as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide emissions. Therefore, transportation plans, projects, and programs are subject to air quality analysis.

Public Participation Strategies

The strategies identified below reflect commonly used public participation methods in transportation planning. Outreach and public involvement are valuable activities that can engage stakeholders, underrepresented constituencies and newer audiences in shaping the region-wide transportation system.

1. Creating background information for posting on web sites, and for use in fact sheets, handouts, and other materials.
2. Convening stakeholders around large topics of regional scale.
3. Sponsoring listening sessions, workshops or conferences to feature policy aspects and promote topic-based policy discussions on plan content.
4. Organizing and hosting social media events.
5. Designing and disseminating informal surveys – use social media, electronic mailing lists, idea-gathering platforms and websites to ask questions and promote discussion spaces
6. Offering forums, including online forums, to elicit stakeholders' and communities' ideas and perspectives on regional issues, projects and initiatives.
7. Developing special events to announce, highlight or kick-off an issue, project, initiative or news event.

8. Offering open opportunities to learn about the project, through open houses, meetings/tours/receptions specific to locations that interest the public, or other experience in order to highlight an initiative, project or facility.
9. Soliciting in-depth information by hosting focus groups or small-group discussions about issues, activities or public perceptions from stakeholders.

A mixture of several or all of these strategies will be used in every effort, as is appropriate for the specific audiences and constituencies. A specific plan of activities will be created for each effort that reflects the broader goals, strategies, and tactics of this Public Participation Plan.

Effort-Specific Strategies and Tactics

Transportation Policy Plan	
Public Participation Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Include any transportation-related feedback and guidance from other regional planning activities, including Thrive MSP 2040 and transportation corridor planning and implementation. Use this information in creating any public participation plans. 2. Create policymaker and elected officials technical advisory work groups; have representation from community voices (such as from community-based organizations and community leaders) as members of this group 3. Develop comprehensive outreach and engagement plan for the region <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use content and results from outreach and engagement plans created to support planning and research efforts identified in the Work Plan for the Transportation Policy Plan (given that these efforts are the foundation for policy contained in the TPP) • Conduct stakeholder meetings that target a broad swath within the community, transportation including businesses, council districts and community based coalitions; conduct one-on-one meetings if necessary • Partner with research groups, transportation experts and urban planners within government and the community to gather information and data on needs assessments and current trends • Performance-based workshops • Focus groups 4. Promote the plan with online information and notices, opportunities for public comment, media releases, public hearings

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Engage stakeholders and formal transportation advisory committees early in and throughout the process of preparing a draft plan for public review to provide guidance to the existing plan 6. Create specific stakeholder/policy-maker advisory groups to guide policy development in the plan 7. Identify key issues, provide context to them, and communicating progress toward related policy to stakeholders
Decision-making Roles	Technical Advisory Committee (Planning), Transportation Advisory Board, Equity Advisory Committee, Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Metropolitan Council

Transportation Improvement Plan	
Public Participation Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Investigate what engagement process works best for the Transportation Improvement Plan. Tactics include but are not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask applicants from the Regional Solicitation why a project was chosen to be included • Ask local agencies about project engagement at the local level • Recommend support for project engagement at local level and for TIP 2. Conduct in-depth discussions among Council Communications and MTS staff regarding engagement strategies for the Transportation Improvement Plan 3. Create a work group consisting of Technical Advisory Committee/Transportation Advisory Board members, members of partnering agencies and other key stakeholders with the purpose of developing an engagement plan during the next Regional Solicitation revision
Decision-making Roles	Minnesota Department of Transportation, Metropolitan Pollution Control Agency, Technical Advisory Committee (Funding), Technical Advisory Committee (Planning), Transportation Advisory Board, Metropolitan Council

Unified Planning Work Program	
Public Participation Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Work with the Minnesota Department of Transportation, Pollution Control Agency, Metropolitan Airports Commission and Transportation Advisory Board about the process of the Unified Planning Work Program; develop an outreach and engagement plan 2. Include guidance for anticipated engagement strategies for projects included in the work program. 3. Develop online tool to obtain feedback from the public on what priorities the Met Council as an MPO should include in their work plan. 4. After draft of budget and work plan is completed, open up for public comments
Decision-making Roles	Technical Advisory Committee, Transportation Advisory Board, Equity Advisory Committee, Metropolitan Council

Air Quality Conformity Determination	
Public Participation Strategies	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recruit air quality and environmental experts onto the Minnesota Interagency Air Quality and Transportation Planning Committee; identify key issues, providing context to them, and communicating progress toward related policy to stakeholders, interested parties, and the general public 2. Analysis 3. Conduct public comment
Decision-making Roles	Technical Advisory Committee (Planning), Transportation Advisory Board

Advisory Bodies

The Council's advisory bodies provide key opportunities for stakeholder participation. They allow members, representing a cross-section of key stakeholder groups in the region, to help shape regional transportation plans and policies. The Council appoints members of the general public, local elected officials, professionals with technical knowledge and experience, or representatives of statute-identified groups, according to the responsibilities of particular advisory bodies. Advisory bodies may conduct studies, recommend action to the Council's standing committees, and/or provide expert advice.

1. **Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)**: The TAB works in conjunction with the Council to distribute federal transportation funds and set regional transportation policy. The TAB consists of 34 members: 10 elected city officials; 1 member from each county board in the metropolitan area; the Commissioner of the Department of Transportation; the Commissioner of the Pollution Control Agency; one member of the Metropolitan Airports Commission; one member from the Suburban Transit Association; one person appointed by the Council to represent non-motorized transportation, one member representing the freight transportation industry, two members representing public transit, one “citizen” representative from each Council district (for a total of eight), and one Council member. The TAB chair is appointed by the Council from among the 34 members. The TAB works closely with the Council, reviewing, commenting on and coordinating transportation planning and programming activities. A key responsibility of the Council’s TAB is to solicit and evaluate project applications for federal funding programs from.
2. **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the TAB**: The TAC also works closely with the TAB and the Council. Composed of professional staff from city and county governments and the agencies involved in transportation in the seven-county region, the TAC provides technical expertise to the TAB. The TAC has two standing committees, the Funding and Programming Committee and the Planning Committee as well as ad hoc multimodal task forces
3. **Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC)**: The TAAC was created by the legislature and consists of 16 members including a chair appointed by the Council – seven members chosen by disability and senior groups in the metro area, and eight others, also selected by the Council, who represent districts that are combinations of the Council's 16 districts.

At least half TAAC members must be certified as eligible for paratransit services under the Americans with Disabilities Act and be active users of public transportation in the metro area.

4. **Equity Advisory Committee**: In late 2015, the Metropolitan Council created an advisory committee to advise the Council on issues related to the equity commitments in Thrive MSP 2040 and other Council equity-related policy issues. The ultimate goal of the committee’s work is to create more equitable outcomes for people who live and work in the Twin Cities region. The committee will provide advice to the full Metropolitan Council.

Measuring Success

As a key outcome of the *Thrive MSP 2040* effort, the public participation activities for transportation planning should achieve the following goals:

1. Provide policy details consistent with the overall vision included in the *Thrive MSP 2040* plan and the Transportation Policy Plan where relevant.
2. Employ practices consistent with the *Thrive MSP 2040* Outreach and Engagement Plan.
3. Build upon relationships and partnerships identified in the *Thrive MSP 2040* Outreach and Engagement efforts.
4. Support the key goals identified in the *Thrive MSP 2040* Outreach and Engagement Plan (as stated in this document).
5. Engage transportation stakeholders as identified in the Transportation Policy Plan.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative measures will be used to evaluate the success of the public participation activities:

- Number of people participating in public involvement activities
- Number and diversity of organizations participating in transportation planning efforts
- Number of individuals who participate in transportation-related online discussions; depth of participation in discussions (based on measurable activities)
- Percentage of county, city and township governments whose staff and/or policymakers participated in transportation planning efforts
- Earned media related to transportation planning efforts (and comparisons, as available)