

TRANSPORTATION ADDENDUM TO THE METROPOLITAN COUNCIL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

Introduction

Public participation is an essential element of transportation planning in the Twin Cities metropolitan region. Because the region is growing and the people are changing, public participation will need to be more coordinated and deliberate. The Metropolitan Council's public engagement framework is outlined in [Thrive MSP 2040](#), the Met Council's [Public Engagement Plan](#), and the [Transportation Policy Plan](#). Together, these policy documents set the tone and give overall policy direction for public participation in transportation planning.

This Transportation Public Participation Plan establishes a framework for the region's stakeholders to influence both long-term transportation policy development and short-term transportation programming. It details the methods and strategies that the Met Council will use to engage the wide range of stakeholders, from policymakers, to business interests, to residents of the region. It also identifies specific ways those stakeholders can connect to the decision-making process for transportation in the Twin Cities region.

Federal regulations

This plan is also responsive to the guidance provided in federal law ([23 §CFR450.316](#)) requiring Metropolitan Planning Organizations to develop a participation plan that defines a process for providing community members and other affected parties with opportunities to participate in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

State coordination

This plan aims to coordinate efforts between the Met Council and the State of Minnesota in statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes. State and regional participation processes together should facilitate discussion and dialogue about transportation impacts on the natural and built environments.

State of emergency

In a state of emergency, like the COVID-19 pandemic, the Met Council will follow guidance from the State of Minnesota. If possible, meetings to conduct essential business will continue. Met Council facilities may be closed to the public and official business meetings may be conducted remotely, under Minnesota Statute, section 13D.021. Where possible, meetings will be streamed live and recorded. Alternatives will also be offered, when necessary. Public engagement and outreach may also switch to online and other contactless methods to provide public participation as the circumstances warrant.

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 Met 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.

Both state and federal law require the Met Council 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

Transportation stakeholder engagement

The Met Council strategically approaches public participation to meet the needs of the region. It is important to reach out to stakeholders from all backgrounds and perspectives to have well thought out policies that benefit everyone. Public participation is done holistically and comprehensively with the practice of collaboration and inclusion.

Partners in local and state government have a key role in helping to shape the work of the Met Council and are pulled in at early stages of engagement – especially to help plan and shape participation methods. Specific constituencies include:

- Transportation system users – including people who drive, ride bikes, walk, roll, and use transit
- Elected officials and staff of counties, cities, and townships. The state and its public agencies including the Minnesota Departments of Transportation, Public Safety, Health, and Human Services, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency and the Metropolitan Airports Commission,
- Freight interests including ports, shippers, and freight transportation services
- Business interests (employers and employees)
- Other transit agencies that provide service in the region
- Organizations that support the interests of and advocate on behalf of transportation in the region like corridor coalitions, the Suburban Transit Association, Transportation Management Organizations, bicycle organizations, and many more
- Organizations that focus on equity and social justice, representing people who have historically been underrepresented in transportation planning and policy including people of color and other racial and ethnic groups, people who have a disability, and people who have low incomes.

The Met Council will engage with local governments and other organizations that represent rural, suburban, and urban parts of the region related to land use and transportation system planning in those areas.

Engaging historically underrepresented groups

Those who have not been historically engaged in policy conversations with the Met Council will be intentionally included in engagement. Outreach activities will actively seek out the involvement of these communities to encourage involvement and feedback.

Historically underrepresented groups include, but are not limited, to “the elderly, citizens reentering public life after incarceration, people with limited access to the internet or with limited computer literacy, immigrants, homeless people, people with physical and mental disabilities, people with low incomes, people working several jobs or working during nontraditional hours, and people who are English-language learners. Moreover, rising levels of racial inequality and income inequality is a contributing factor to unequal access to public power (Holley 2016).

The COVID-19 pandemic may have expanded that list to include people who have had to take on additional child care, work, or schooling responsibilities to support their family and people who have lost their jobs, become food insecure, or become housing instable" (Urban Institute).

Building new relationships among these groups is an ongoing effort. At the same time, it is important to leverage established relationships to nurture long-lasting connections.

Outreach and engagement efforts need to be intentional and responsive to the needs of each group, meeting people where they are at 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. Also, whenever possible, engagement staff should be representative of the population they are engaging.

Tribal Outreach

The seven-county metropolitan area geographically includes property owned by two of the 11 federally recognized Tribal Nations in Minnesota – the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community and the Prairie Island Indian Community. Although, the Met Council also values the unique relationship with all tribal communities living in the Twin Cities metropolitan region, as well as those living outside the region who have a relationship with tribal land, and sacred or cultural sites that extend beyond the geographical boundaries of tribal-owned land.

In 2019, the Met Council adopted a government-to-government tribal relations policy in accordance with the [Governor Tim Walz's Executive Order 19-24](#) ordering identified agencies to establish a tribal consultation policy, which was codified into law during the 2021 special session. The rationale for such a policy is that meaningful and timely consultation with Minnesota Tribal Nations will facilitate better understanding and informed decision making by allowing for collaboration on matters of mutual interest and help to establish mutually respectful and beneficial relationships between Minnesota governments and Minnesota Tribal Nations.

The Tribal Relations Policy aims to recognize and support the unique status of the Tribal Nations and their right to existence, self-governance and self-determination, and to demonstrate a clear commitment to that sovereignty. It recognizes the unique legal relationship between the State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Tribal Nations, respects the fundamental principles that establish and maintain this relationship, and accords Tribal Governments the same respect accorded to other governments. The policy also designates a tribal liaison to assume responsibility for implementing the policy and serve as the point of contact for tribal nations.

Adoption of the policy formally establishes a responsibility for the Met Council to intentionally consult with Tribal Nations prior to decisions that impact those communities. The Met Council expects that council members, committee members, and staff respect the policy's principles at all phases of studying, planning, and developing regional projects, as well as providing essential services across the metro area.

This plan adopts the commitments to meaningful consultation expressed in the Tribal Relations Policy, and will help guide how the Met Council involves Tribal Nations in ongoing and future planning efforts.

Consultation

Consultation is a process of meaningful communication and coordination between the Met Council Chair and council members, and tribal officials before taking actions or making decisions that may affect tribes or tribal interests.

Government-to-government communication will be conducted in a timely manner by all parties, about a proposed or contemplated decision to:

- Secure meaningful tribal input and involvement in the decision-making process; and
- Advise the tribe of the final decision and provide clarification on the how decisions were reached.

Collaboration

Met Council staff are encouraged to collaborate with tribal staff when project plans and development directly impact tribal resources. Met Council staff should include all 11 federally recognized tribes in Minnesota in this outreach and give them the opportunity to choose to participate or not participate in any given process.

- Share and compare in a timely manner relevant plans, programs, projects and schedules with the related plans, programs, projects, and schedules of the other parties;
- Adjust plans, programs, projects, and schedules as needed to maintain transparency and accountability.

Coordination

Met Council staff are encouraged to engage and collect input directly from other tribal groups and members of tribes who have no official capacity within the federally recognized tribal communities about projects in and around the communities where they live, or around areas that hold cultural significance.

Engagement methods

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

For each plan, program or study, outreach staff or consulting groups will create an outreach and engagement plan that reflects the broader goals, strategies, and tactics of this Public Participation Plan and selects from the methods described below. A mixture of these strategies will be used in every effort, as is appropriate for the specific audiences and stakeholders.

Inform

Method	Description
Stakeholder analysis	Conduct a stakeholder analysis in order to understand those that are most affected or interested in the plan, program or study.

Method	Description
Background information	Create content for websites, fact sheets, presentations, and other materials
Newsletter	Create informational news articles for the website on projects, programs, plans and studies.
Media coordination	Coordinate media outreach to media outlets throughout the metro area, highlighting programs, plans, studies and projects throughout the region.
Special events	Plan and develop content to announce, highlight or kick-off an issue, discussion, project, initiative or news event.
Learning opportunities	Design open houses, meetings, tours, or receptions specific to locations that interest the public, or other experience to highlight an initiative, project or facility
Ongoing communications	Identify key issues, provide context, and communicate progress toward related policy goals to stakeholders

Consult

Method	Description
Met Council committees	Get feedback on plans, projects and studies through the Met Council and the Transportation Advisory Board, and their advisory committees.
Work groups	Convene work groups focusing on specific topics that can be made up of Met Council, Transportation Advisory Board, or advisory committee members.
Ad-hoc advisory committees	Create specific stakeholder or policy-maker advisory groups to guide the development of foundational plans.
Experts	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.
Local consultation	Gather information from local communities about their processes related to local and regional projects, including those submitted for funding through the Regional Solicitation.
Staff input	Conduct discussions among Transportation Planning and other related staff on policies, plans or studies whose work is shaped by the outcome.

Involve and collaborate

Method	Description
Social media	Use these to connect constituencies to planning efforts and promote

	involvement – both for two-way discussion and one-way push marketing.
Interactive engagement tools	Leverage online tools with abilities to crowdsource or generate surveys; interactive online maps and visualization which support features such as layering, videos, creating markers and providing feedback.
Surveys	Design and disseminate surveys through social media, electronic mailing lists, idea-gathering platforms and websites to ask questions and promote discussion spaces.
Forums	Host online or in person listening sessions, workshops, and conferences to feature policy aspects and promote topic-based policy discussions on plan content, elicit stakeholders' and communities' ideas and perspectives on regional issues, projects and initiatives.
Focus groups, small group discussions	Host focus groups or small-group discussions about issues, activities or public perceptions from stakeholders to gain more in-depth information.
One-on-one interviews	Conduct interviews with key stakeholders to help shape and inform policies, plans or studies, as well as further outreach and engagement opportunities.
Public comment	Publish draft plans or programs for public comment, compile feedback, and post responses.

Co-creation

Method	Description
Establish expectations	Be clear on how feedback gathered will be used to inform policies, plans, programs or studies.
Incorporate feedback	Update existing foundational planning documents to reflect lessons learned through engagement strategies.
Feedback from other activities	Incorporate any transportation-related feedback and guidance from other regional planning activities, including the regional development guide, and transportation corridor planning and implementation.q
Work plans	Include engagement guidance in work plan for the Transportation Policy Plan, and specific expectations for items funded through the Unified Planning Work Program.

Public comment periods and promotion

State and federal law require formal public comment processes for specific short-term and long-term planning efforts. The public comment period is designed to more formally involve people in the transportation planning process. These formal comment processes generally occur at the end of an effort, as a final opportunity to lend voice and feedback to decisions.

When a public hearing is involved in the process, it unfolds as follows:

- Met Council policy requires council action to set hearing dates at least 45 days before a public hearing occurs. State law requires 30 days notice, and this accounts for that time.
- State law requires a public comment process to remain open for 10 days after a public hearing. Public comment processes are never closed on a weekend day.
- A public notice is placed on the Met Council’s website, and in a newspaper of regional circulation to formally announce public meetings/hearings and how to comment.
- A notice of release is issued to the following major and niche outlets:
 - Major metro-wide circulation daily newspapers/related daily online news outlets
 - Public policy websites and news sites
 - All television stations in the metro area
 - All radio stations in the metro area
 - Online and printed publications with non-daily production schedules
 - Ethnic news organizations (newspapers, online sites, radio)
 - Other niche audience publications
- Other optional promotional activities are also used:
 - Social media channel posts
 - Email announcement to targeted audiences
 - Earned promotion through various partner organization newsletters, websites, and publication channels (typically community organizations that represent a specific, hard-to-reach or general audience).
 - Blurb announcement in the Met Council’s newsletter.
- Proactive engagement with key constituencies to assure they are aware and can participate in the process – this is broad for large-scale regional discussions and more targeted for specific, smaller-scale conversations.
- The Met Council collects public comment through the website, email, traditional mail, and recorded phone message. Spoken and written testimony is received through the public hearing.
- A report is created at the close of the process, and that information is shared publicly and with the Met Council for decision-making.

Key transportation plans and programs

Plans or program	Description	Public participation considerations
Transportation Policy Plan	<p>The Transportation Policy Plan sets policies and investment guidance for the regional transportation system, based on the goals and objectives in Thrive MSP 2040, the region’s development guide. The transportation plan is one of three major systems plans that result from Thrive MSP 2040. It also responds to federal planning guidance provided in the Moving Ahead for Progress of the 21st Century Act, known as MAP-21.</p> <p>The Transportation Policy Plan reflects a combination of technical analysis and policy discussion. The plan builds on Thrive MSP 2040 and its extensive public engagement process, on previous regional transportation plans, studies of significant regional transportation issues, discussion and feedback from policymakers throughout the region, and ideas and feedback from other regional stakeholders.</p>	<p>Every transportation-related planning study has an engagement component. That feedback and guidance also influences any updates to the regional transportation policy plan.</p> <p>The standard Met Council public comment/promotion process identified above applies to the Transportation Policy Plan update process.</p>
Regional Solicitation	<p>The Regional Solicitation is a process that allocates federal transportation funds to locally initiated projects to meet regional transportation needs. The Met Council, as Metropolitan Planning Organization, works with the Transportation Advisory Board to review and allocate these funds, using an objective, data-driven, transparent process. Project selected through the Regional Solicitation also end up in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Funds are typically awarded on a two-year cycle. Specific constituencies include the Minnesota Department of Transportation, counties, school districts, and cities in the region.</p>	<p>The Met Council will collaborate with the Transportation Advisory Board and its Technical Advisory Committee to engage communities more actively around the projects chosen through the Regional Solicitation process.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Gather information from local communities about their engagement processes related to projects submitted for funding through the Regional Solicitation. 2. Provide technical assistance for engaging local constituencies about projects. 3. Highlight completed projects funded through the Regional Solicitation process. The Met Council will use visualization techniques on its website. It will also create a standard template to highlight each project in a way that can be printed. 4. Explore and develop a public participation plan on projects selected through the Regional Solicitation.

Plans or program	Description	Public participation considerations
Transportation Improvement Program	<p>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 Met 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 Met Council and transit providers.</p>	<p>The standard Met Council public comment process applies to the Transportation Improvement Program with a 45-day comment process. A 21-day comment process is used for any proposed regionally significant amendments to the TIP.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Met Council will coordinate with Minnesota Department of Transportation to work toward a monthly opportunity to comment on any TIP amendment coming before the Transportation Advisory Board's Technical Advisory Committee. There will be an open opportunity to speak to the committee at its monthly meeting.
Unified Planning Work Program	<p>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 UPWP is a critical document in the planning and policy work of the Met Council as it also serves as the 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.</p>	<p>Each item identified in the work program will be evaluated for engagement opportunities as the project is scoped and before a work plan is in place.</p>
Air Quality Conformity Determination	<p>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.</p> <p>Therefore, transportation plans, projects, and programs are subject to air quality analysis.</p>	

Plans or program	Description	Public participation considerations
Transportation Public Participation Plan	<p>This Transportation Public Participation Plan establishes a framework for the region's stakeholders to influence both long-term transportation policy development and short-term transportation programming. It details the methods and strategies that the Metropolitan Council will use to engage the wide range of stakeholders, from policymakers, to business interests, to residents of the region.</p> <p>Plans for specific planning studies and related transportation planning efforts will also be created, consistent with this plan.</p>	

Evaluation of Effectiveness

Public participation in transportation planning is measured against the outcomes, goals and principles of Thrive MSP 2040, the Transportation Policy Plan and the Public Engagement Plan in order to evaluate their effectiveness and ultimately, their impact on how planning and policy will be shaped. Methods that satisfy these measurements are the ultimate goal of public participation in transportation planning.

The public participation activities for transportation planning should achieve the following outcomes:

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.

It's also important to note that evaluation and engagement are ongoing activities. Evaluation will take place after each effort – and aggregate review will take place semi- annually. Typically evaluation will take place through participant survey. Results are iterative and built into the next relevant engagement effort. While there are baseline measures of effectiveness and satisfaction with transportation efforts, the results of those measures should support the integration into future planning and participant ownership of the process, rather than merely using volume as a measure of success or reporting quantities of participants.

All public planning efforts are relevant to an audience. Public outreach and engagement efforts identify those key audiences and the methods that will be used to authentically convene and include voices from those audiences. Authenticity requires providing space for all feedback – whether perceived as positive or negative – to support the ultimate decision-making process. Relevance sometimes stirs controversy, and it is the role of government to provide opportunities for all viewpoints to be raised and included. Particularly where controversy exists, effectiveness will be measured in terms of whether the range of viewpoints were included and individuals felt respected and valued.

Authentic engagement is an evolving cycle that will lead to success when lessons are learned and the opportunity to foster involvement occurs. Below are some methods (which can either be qualitative or quantitative) for evaluating the effectiveness of public participation in transportation planning in order to achieve the goals stated above:

Goal/Outcomes	Policy	Method of Evaluation of Effectiveness
Consistency with overall vision, outcomes and goals	Thrive MSP 2040, Transportation Policy Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final reports that include data on the process of public participation • Case studies or project overviews are included in the Transportation Policy Plan to highlight the work that achieves these goals • Staff evaluation of data to compile a “lessons learned” narrative of the overall engagement method

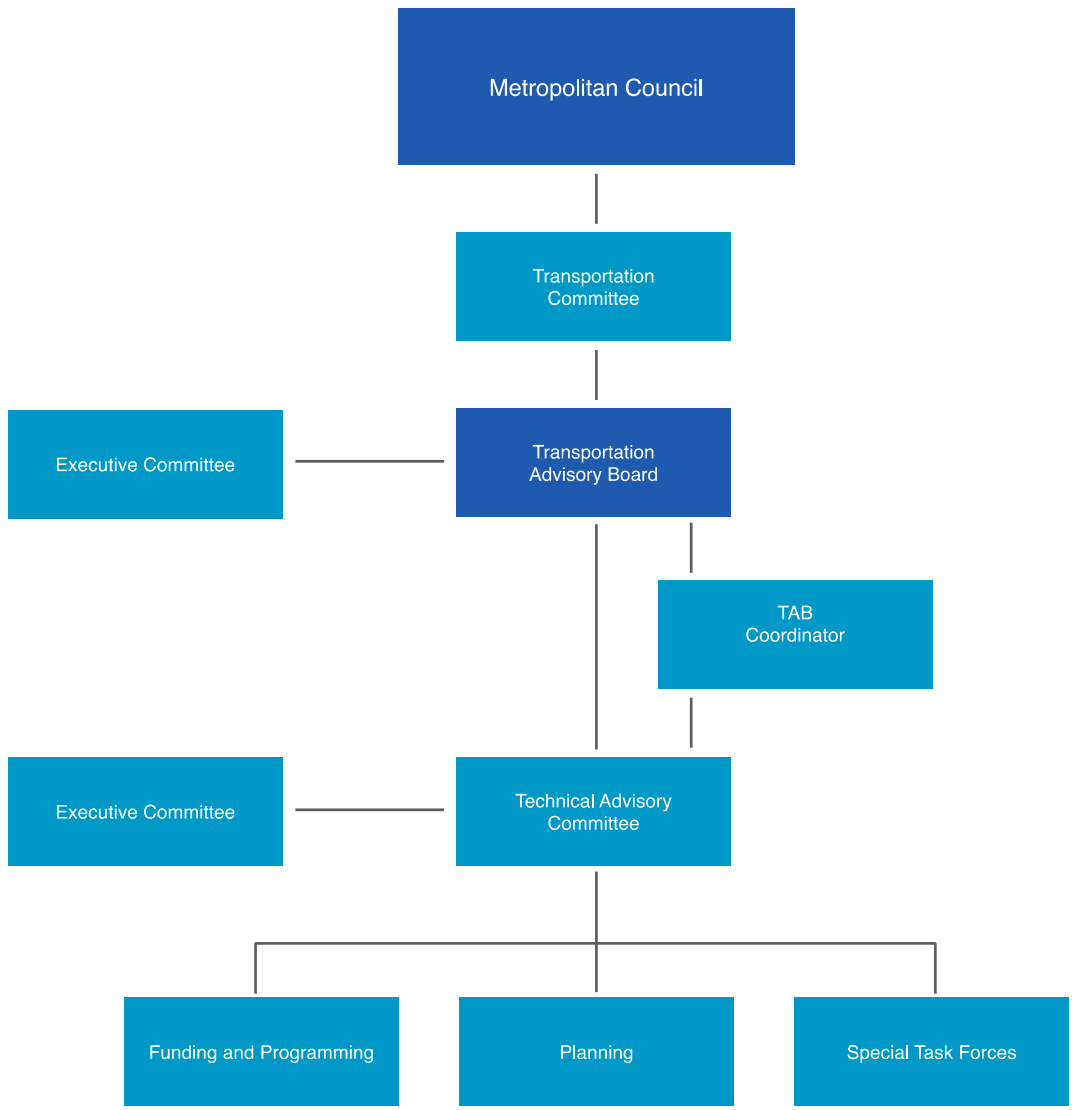
Goal/Outcomes	Policy	Method of Evaluation of Effectiveness
Engagement was executed using practices and principles that are collaborative in nature and includes many perspectives of the region	Thrive MSP 2040, Public Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Method engaged underrepresented communities throughout the region • All meetings are scheduled to meet the needs of community • Online engagement tools and other products are accessible to everyone
Building new relationships and leveraging existing ones	Thrive MSP 2040, Public Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing relationships with partners and stakeholders are deepened with the Met Council • New relationships are formed within transportation and other sectors
Augment and amplify outreach and engagement goals	Thrive MSP 2040, Public Engagement Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate outreach and engagement goals into public participation plans that are measurable and transferrable to other transportation policies
Stakeholders are integrated with deliberation in engagement	Transportation Policy Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local government, other planning agencies and community-based transportation organizations are involved in engagement planning and determining specific measures by creating work groups or subcommittees • Local government, other planning agencies and community-based transportation organizations take a more interactive role in facilitating and participating in participation and engagement opportunities

Other measures that may be used to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation are:

- 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)

Transportation advisory bodies

The Met 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 Met 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 Met Council’s standing committees, and/or provide expert advice.



2-25-2020

1. **Transportation Advisory Board (TAB):** The TAB works in conjunction with the Met 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 Met Council to represent non-motorized transportation, one member representing the freight transportation industry, two members representing public transit, one “citizen” representative from each Met Council district (for a total of eight), and one Met Council member. The TAB chair is appointed by the Met Council from among the 34 members. The TAB works closely with the Met Council, reviewing, commenting on and coordinating transportation planning and programming activities. A key responsibility of the Met Council’s TAB is to solicit and evaluate project applications for federal funding programs.
2. **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) to the TAB:** The TAC also works closely with the TAB and the Met 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

Other related advisory bodies

1. **Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee (TAAC):** The TAAC was created by the legislature and consists of 16 members including a chair appointed by the Met Council – seven members chosen by disability and senior groups in the metro area, and eight others, also selected by the Met Council, who represent districts that are combinations of the Met 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.

2. **Equity Advisory Committee:** In late 2015, the Met Council created an advisory committee to advise the Met Council on issues related to the equity commitments in Thrive MSP 2040 and other Met 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.

Connect with the Metropolitan Council

The Metropolitan Council is committed to an inclusive public engagement process that involves agencies, officials, local planning staff, businesses, organizations and residents of the region and providing appropriate forums for input and feedback.

Contact the Metropolitan Council

We welcome public involvement and encourage you to [contact us](#) with your questions or comments about regional issues or Met Council activities.

To keep up with news and events, or to access additional resources including project updates, meetings, reports, plans, and more, visit metro council.org.

[Sign up for email or text alerts.](#)

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