

II. GOAL, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

This chapter defines the goals, objectives and policies that govern the implementation of public involvement for MPO transportation planning. These document the commitment on the part of the MPO to pursue courses of action that will ensure effective and continuing public involvement. The suite of techniques that may be called upon to implement the policies are discussed in Chapter III.

Chapter IV (Evaluation of Public Participation Plan) of this document deals with evaluation—and includes approaches to measuring whether public involvement tools meet the objectives under each goal. The Public Participation Plan will be reviewed periodically as directed by MPC, but not longer than every four years, using the measures in Chapter IV.

Goal: Citizen Involvement in Regional Transportation Issues

Establish widespread understanding and support for regional transportation programs through development of an environment in which citizens, agencies and other interested parties in the metropolitan area are actively involved in meaningful and effective dialogue.

Definition/Intent: Transportation infrastructure and services exert a large effect on the community through land use, mobility of citizens and goods, and expenditure of large amounts of public funds. Decisions made at all levels of government (city, county, state, and federal) are often coordinated by the MPO in resolving issues and developing infrastructure in the region. The process can be quite complex and timelines can vary from 1 to 20 years. Citizens who are educated and knowledgeable about transportation issues are better able to provide guidance on the relative importance and priorities of proposed transportation system changes. Further, an effective two-way communication between policymakers and the public will enhance the credibility of plans and will lead to both citizen and legislative support of proposed programs. An effective public involvement process also will ensure that no one group of citizens is adversely affected.

References: Based on Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21, 49 United States Congress (USC) Chapter 53, Section 5303), Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450.212(a) and 450.316(b)(1)), Title VI of the Civil Rights ACT of 1964, Oregon Transportation Plan Policy 4N, Statewide Planning Goals 1 and 12, Oregon Public Meetings Law, and Eugene/Springfield Metropolitan Area General Plan Regional Transportation Plan (TransPlan).

Objective 1: Provide citizens with information to increase their awareness of transportation issues, encourage their involvement in resolving the issues, and assist them in making informed transportation choices.

Definition/Intent: This objective supports and stresses the need for early and continuing public participation in transportation planning, programming, and implementation. It also supports a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to key decisions. To understand and support transportation policies, residents need reliable information and opportunities to participate in the further development and implementation of the various plans. Achievement of this objective ensures compliance with federal requirements and also makes the MPO process consistent with Statewide Planning Goal 1 (Citizen Involvement). This objective is a part of the MPO Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Policy 1.1. Ensure that information describing transportation planning processes is readily and publicly accessible. Make available contact information, calendars, announcements, meeting agendas, publications, and work products online, at the MPO office, at public libraries, and, upon request, by mail. Translation tools are available on the MPO website and translation of key public involvement products is available upon request.

Policy 1.2. Hold public meetings, when feasible, at a site convenient to citizens and other interested parties potentially affected by a transportation planning action. Have staff available to provide general and project-specific information at a central location at the request of community groups.

Policy 1.3. Ensure that broad cross-sections of the public, including traditionally underserved households such as minority, non-English speaking, and low-income, are notified when opportunities for public input are approaching. Maintain a minimum contact list and expand that list to include specific target audiences, when appropriate to the planning action. Use a facilitator or translators, as needed, to ensure that all populations have a voice.

Policy 1.4. Provide adequate public notice of opportunities for public involvement. Publish and update a timeline with clearly indicated decision points, priority actions, and milestones of each MPO transportation planning activity for which public input is desired. Make this timeline available both on the website and, upon request, by mail or email to a list of interested parties. Explain the basis for decisions, such as criteria or policies. Public notice shall be made as far in advance as feasible in each situation.

Policy 1.5. Inform the public and other interested parties whenever feasible through web notices and an electronic email database of opportunities for public participation in transportation planning activities of other city, county, or state agencies that affect regional transportation planning. Use visualization techniques such as an interactive map on the MPO website to describe plans and programs, and demonstrate the relationship among projects, plans, and regional transportation planning.

Policy 1.6. Maintain updated information about MPO programs and projects through a website that is coordinated with other MPO partners, such as KeepUsMoving.info (KUMI).

Objective 2: Ensure that the decisions made in the MPO transportation planning programs are consultative, and are clearly explained and documented in a manner accessible to all interested public.

Definition/Intent: This objective expresses the intent to foster a meaningful public process in which citizens' input is considered along with staff recommendations. The process by which public input is given and accepted will be defined and provide reasonable time to allow for consideration by the public. The decision-making process will be transparent in that staff will respond to all public comments, and the reasons for the decisions will be clearly explained and documented. The intent of this objective is that the process exceeds the requirements of the Oregon Public Meetings Law.

Policy 2.1. Solicit citizen input through public hearings, public meetings, and through written, email, or faxed communication submitted during public review and comment periods.

Policy 2.2. Give explicit consideration of all significant written and oral comments gathered through the public involvement process and interagency consultation. Make this testimony and response publicly available in a timely fashion to inform and provide opportunities for further citizen response. For the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), include a summary, analysis, and report in the final plans. Provide a time period between the end of the public comment period and the meeting at which the Metropolitan Policy Committee (MPC) makes a decision on the product sufficient for input to be discussed and revisions to be made prior to adoption.

Policy 2.3: Comments received from the public during a formal public comment period will be forwarded to the MPO policy board.

Policy 2.4: Comments addressed to the MPO received outside a formal public comment period will be reviewed by staff, who will respond as appropriate. These comments will be posted to the MPO website and notice will be provided to the MPO policy board and/or the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC).

Policy 2.5. All meetings of the MPO policy board and the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) are open to the public. Make available to the public all records pertaining to the decisions made by these bodies through: the MPO website; by mail upon request (at cost); or, when appropriate, for review in public buildings such as public libraries, city and county planning offices, Chambers of Commerce, and recreation centers.

Policy 2.6. Schedule meetings and hearings of the MPO policy board and Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) to allow the best opportunity for attendance by the public.

Objective 3: Ensure that the public involvement process provides full and open access to MPO decision-making.

Definition/Intent: This objective expresses the need to ensure that the methods and techniques used to involve the public in regional transportation planning issues are effective in that all groups of citizens and, in particular, those who may be affected by the proposed actions, are represented during the planning process. This objective recognizes that different techniques are needed to reach different groups of citizens, and that techniques currently used to promote and encourage citizen involvement may not always work. By tracking various performance measures the best techniques for attracting and involving citizens can be determined.

Policy 3.1: Evaluate the response to public involvement techniques including analysis of the region's population, income, language preference, ethnic status, and other demographic factors. Periodically, adjust strategies to improve performance, not to exceed four years between evaluations.

Policy 3.2: Review the Public Participation Plan (PPP) periodically, not to exceed four years, and adopt revisions as necessary. A 45-day comment period shall be provided before adoption or revision of the plan. Provide public notice as far in advance as feasible in each situation.

Policy 3.3: Ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the MPO decision-making process.

- a. Seek participation and comment from all segments of the public. In accordance with the federal transportation act (the latest being MAP-21), "provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan using the participation plan developed under §450.316(a)."
- b. Encourage citizens to provide new information and articulate priorities.
- c. Help citizens understand tradeoffs so that they may debate the merits of alternatives.

Excerpt from the 2015 Public Participation Plan

- d. Convey information about transportation planning in language and in a context that is understandable to the lay citizen.
- e. Keep acronyms and abbreviations to a minimum in information prepared for the public.
- f. Provide understandable background information to help citizens understand the tiers of transportation planning and how they can best be engaged in planning the regional system.
- g. Define the role of regional planning in identifying regional priorities, obtaining federal funding, and facilitating project sharing between jurisdictions.
- h. Include in the design of public forums methods that enable people with disabilities to provide input, including assistance in completing such written items as comment forms, evaluation forms, and surveys.