Houston-Galveston Area Council

Public Participation Plan







Public Participation Starts With You

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Transportation Policy Council
Metropolitan Planning Organization
Galveston ★ Harris ★ Liberty ★ Montgomery ★ Waller ★ Brazoria ★ Chambers ★ Fort Bend

Resolution

No. 2026-17

ADOPTING THE UPDATED PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE HOUSTON-GALVESTON METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA.

WHEREAS, The Public Participation Plan serves as a guide for Houston-Galveston Area Council's transportation public involvement process. It is part of a regional effort to ensure a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated process among stakeholders to provide opportunities for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional transportation plans and programs;

WHEREAS, the Transportation Policy Council adopted the current Public Participation in 2019 and it has not been updated since;

WHEREAS, the Public Participation Plan has been updated with principles and goals for public engagement, inclusive public participation strategies to reflect virtual methods for engagement, and updates to amendment processes for the Regional Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program;

AND, WHEREAS, A 45-day public comment period was from April 20th-June 3rd, 2026 along with an in-person public meeting at the H-GAC office on May 20, 2026. The updated Public Participation Plan documented all comments received and provided a response to those comments. The updated Public Participation Plan will be posted on the H-GAC website for the public to view upon approval.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TRANSPORTATION POLICY COUNCIL OF THE HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL THAT:

1. THE TRANSPORTATION POLICY COUNCIL APPROVES OF THE UPDATES TO THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN; AND
2. THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN IS HEREBY ADOPTED UPON APPROVAL.

PASSED AND APPROVED, this 24th day of July 2026, at a regularly called meeting of the Transportation Policy Council for the Houston-Galveston Metropolitan Planning Area.

APPROVED:

Hon. Justin Beckendorff, Chairman
Transportation Policy Council

ATTEST:

Hon. Sally Branson, Secretary
Transportation Policy Council

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Executive Summary

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for an eight-county region (Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller). This Public Participation Plan (PPP) ensures an open, accessible, and continuous public involvement process for regional transportation planning. The plan outlines how residents, stakeholders, and partner agencies can engage with the process of developing and updating core Metropolitan Planning Organization documents and decisions that shape the region's multimodal transportation system. The PPP outlines the MPO's core documents, amendment and public comment processes, goals for effective and meaningful public engagement, and the strategies used towards those goals.

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is an annual codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. The outline of this Public Participation Plan adheres to 23 CFR § 450.316 –Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

What is an MPO?

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) serve as the policy board of organizations tasked with carrying out transportation planning for metropolitan areas. All urbanized places with populations over 50,000, as defined by the United States Census, are required to have a Metropolitan Planning Organization. Metropolitan Planning Organizations representing urbanized areas of more than 200,000 people are also designated a Transportation Management Area (TMA). Metropolitan Planning Organizations' primary responsibility is to carry out a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process that produces plans and programs for all modes of transportation and support the vision and goals of the Metropolitan Planning Organization.

Federal/State Requirements and Policies

Federal statutes and regulations provide general guidelines for public involvement processes and procedures. These requirements assist H-GAC in carrying out its mission in an open process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access and input to key decisions, and support for early and continued public participation. Please see Appendix B for a listing of these requirements and policies, including:

- Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act
- Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended)
- Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments
- 23 CFR §450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation
- 23 CFR §450.324 Development and content of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- 23 CFR §450.326 Development and content of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

What is H-GAC?

The Houston-Galveston Area Council (H-GAC) is a voluntary organization of local governments that consists of a 13-county service area and is governed by a Board of Directors. The Houston-Galveston Area Council also serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the eight-county Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) that includes Brazoria, Chambers, Fort Bend, Galveston, Harris, Liberty, Montgomery, and Waller Counties and the 134 cities within them. The Metropolitan Planning Area encompasses two Transportation Management Areas designated by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): the Houston-Galveston Transportation Management Area and the Woodlands-Conroe Transportation Management Area. The Houston-Galveston area consistently ranks as one of the largest and fastest growing metropolitan regions in the nation with a population of 7.2 million people, which is projected to increase to 10.6 million by the year 2045.

Transportation Teams

The Transportation Department is managed by a Chief Transportation Officer who reports to the Transportation Policy Council Executive Committee. Under the Chief Transportation Officer, there are two Assistant Directors who oversee a total of seven teams:

Table 1: Transportation Department Teams

Team	Areas of Expertise
Administration	Administration, Meeting Coordination and Support, and Finance.
Air Quality and Clean Vehicles	Air Quality Planning, Clean Vehicles Program, Regional Clean Cities Coalition, Transportation Conformity, and Regional Air Quality Planning Advisory Committee.
Metropolitan Planning Organization Programs	Travel Demand Management, Congestion Management, Transit Planning, Regional Incident Management, Title VI & Language Access, and Safety Programs.
Project Delivery	Project development, delivery, and collaboration with project programming.
Project Programming and Development	Project Programming, Transportation Improvement Plan development, and performance measures.
Regional Multimodal Planning	Regional Transportation Plan, Active Transportation, Freight, Resilience, Safety, and other region-wide topics.
Subregional Transportation Planning	Thoroughfare Plans, Mobility Plans, Corridor Studies, and similar subregional planning efforts.

Transportation Policy Council

The Transportation Policy Council (TPC) provides policy guidance and overall coordination of the transportation planning activities within the eight-county Metropolitan Planning Organization region. The Transportation Policy Council consists of members representing cities, counties, and agencies in the eight-county region.

The Transportation Policy Council oversees and approves the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Congestion Management Process (CMP), Public Participation Plan, and reviews the geographic service area of the Metropolitan Planning Area and revises the geographic area and membership if necessary. The Transportation Policy Council recommends projects or studies to be implemented by Metropolitan Planning Organization staff or others; advises and directs the Houston-Galveston Area Council Board Of Directors (BOD) on transportation planning programs and issues; approves region-wide transportation plans and promotes their adoption and implementation at the various levels of government; and serves as a forum for public discussion relating to transportation planning in the Metropolitan Planning Area. The Transportation Policy Council also oversees the Regional Strategic Transportation Fund (RSTF) and develops and oversees policy implementation and procedures for the use of those funds in accordance with all applicable state and federal laws.

Meetings

Generally, the Transportation Policy Council meets on the fourth Friday of each month at the Houston-Galveston Area Council offices at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027 – Conference Room 2B. The meetings are open to the public and streamed live at https://www.h-gac.com/live. The agenda items are posted on the H- GAC website at https://www.h-gac.com/transportation-policy-council/meeting-agendas. Fifty-one percent (51%) or more of the total Transportation Policy Council voting membership constitutes a quorum for the transaction of business at all meetings.

All Transportation Policy Council meetings adhere to the regulations set forth in Chapter 551 of the Texas Government Code and will follow the procedures outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order*.

Procedures for Public Comments

Public Comments on Agenda Items

Public Comments related to agenda items are allowed at the start of the meeting before the business section of the agenda. Persons requesting to provide comments are asked to sign up at least five minutes before the start of the meeting and comments are limited to three (3)

minutes. A person may not reserve time to appear more than once per meeting. Persons wishing to address more than one agenda item may do so during their allotted time.

An agenda and sign-up sheet are made available at the meeting place at least fifteen (15) minutes prior to the start of the meeting.

Other Public Presentations

Other public presentations not related to business indicated on the agenda must be submitted to the Chairperson twenty-one (21) days in advance of the regular meeting and are added to the agenda at the Chairperson's discretion. If approved as an agenda item, the presentation is limited to ten (10) minutes.

Requests to deliver such a presentation should be submitted in writing to:

Chairperson
Transportation Policy Council
Houston-Galveston Area Council
P.O. Box 22777
Houston, TX 77227

Written Comments

The Transportation Policy Council welcomes written comments relating to agenda items or other regional transportation planning concerns. For written comments exceeding three (3) standard 8 ½" x 11" pages, twenty-five (25) copies must be provided. Written comments should be sent to the Transportation Policy Council Chairperson at the address above.

Invited Comments

The Chairperson may at any time during the meeting invite comments from the audience.

Information Required

The following information is required of all persons making either oral or written comments:

1. Full Name
2. Affiliation (if applicable)
3. Mailing Address
4. Agenda Item(s) or topic to be addressed

Technical Advisory Committee

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) reviews the work of the metropolitan transportation planning process, provides advice on methods of planning and implementation, and works

with staff to develop and evaluate policy options and recommendations to the Transportation Policy Council. The TAC assists with regional coordination and performs necessary technical, planning, and policy review of the metropolitan planning organization activities and products including the Unified Planning Work Program, Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other transportation planning activities.

The Technical Advisory Committee may create standing committees, ad hoc committees, and work groups (collectively called technical subcommittees) to assist in carrying out its functions. The Technical Advisory Committee is composed of elected officials, professional employees of entities that implement or operate modes of transportation in the metropolitan planning area, and other at-large members with an interest to reflect the modes of transportation affected by transportation policy decisions and ensure transportation planning decisions are considered in their broadest context. The Technical Advisory Committee meets on the third Wednesday of every month at the Houston-Galveston Area Council offices at 3555 Timmons Lane, Houston, TX 77027 – Conference Room 2B. The meetings are open to the public and streamed live at https://www.h-gac.com/live. The agenda items will be posted on the H-GAC website at https://www.h-gac.com/technical-advisory-committee/meeting-agendas-and-minutes.

The Transportation Policy Council oversees two additional advisory subcommittees, which follow *Robert's Rules of Order*, and are: the Transportation Safety Committee (TSC) and the Greater Houston Freight Committee (GHFC).

- Transportation Safety Committee – The committee's purpose is to promote information-sharing, establish safety goals and performance measures, coordinate safety efforts across the region's jurisdictions, and identify policy issues concerning safety. Agendas and meeting minutes can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/transportation-policy-council/transportation-safety-committee/agendas-and-minutes.

- Greater Houston Freight Committee – The GHFC is a public/private collaborative committee dedicated to the advancement of the freight industry's priorities, strategies, and solutions in the Greater Houston area. The committee seeks to increase economic competitiveness while reducing congestion through travel information and technology. The committee shares information, makes recommendations, and responds to the inquiries of the Transportation Policy Council. More information can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/freight-planning/greater-houston-freight-committee.

Metropolitan Planning Organization Core Documents

The Transportation Policy Council is responsible for approving the core documents of the Metropolitan Planning Organization: the Regional Transportation Plan, Ten Year Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program and Public Participation Plan. Additionally, federal regulations require Metropolitan Planning Organizations with a population of 200,000 or more to implement a Congestion Management Process (CMP) in conjunction with their transportation planning activities. Because the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has designated the Houston-Galveston-Brazoria (HGB) area a non-attainment area for the pollutant ozone under the Clean Air Act (CAA), the Metropolitan Planning Organization must coordinate its transportation planning process with the process of developing plans that work to demonstrate the attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards and bring the region into attainment.

Federally Mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization Documents

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Regional Transportation Plan is a fiscally constrained strategic planning document that guides major transportation investments through a twenty-year planning horizon and is updated every four years. The Regional Transportation Plan may also be referred to as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The Regional Transportation Plan describes the Metropolitan Planning Organization's transportation vision, goals, and planning strategies. Five goals aligned with the Vision, along with associated desired outcomes and an array of Performance Measures that are used to understand the rate of progress towards each goal. It also describes the current conditions and desired future transportation system. The current and forecasted population and jobs that use the system are presented, followed by summaries of analyses completed to determine compliance with regulatory areas: incorporating the needs of a diverse population, fiscal constraint, and conformity with national air quality standards. The recommendations are summarized by corridor and by regional investment program where applicable.

For more information on the amendment and public comment processes, see the Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities chapter. The Regional Transportation Plan can be found at: https://www.h-gac.com/regional-transportation-plan.

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TEN-YEAR PLAN

In accordance with House Bill (HB) 20, passed by the 84th Texas legislature in 2015, every Metropolitan Planning Organization must develop a 10-year plan to specify how certain transportation funding allocated to the Metropolitan Planning Area will be utilized. The 10-year transportation plan is consistent with and prioritizes projects from the Regional Transportation Plan while the first 4 years of the plan must be consistent with the

Transportation Improvement Program. As directed by HB 20, the 10-year plan must consider and address congestion, safety, the effect of a project on economic development opportunities for area residents, available funding, air quality, and the project's impact on underserved communities.

For more information on the amendment and public comment processes, see the Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities chapter. The Ten-Year Plan can be found at: https://www.h-gac.com/ten-year-plan/

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Each Metropolitan Planning Organization is required by federal law (23 CFR § 450.326) to develop a Transportation Improvement Program, which is a staged, four-year program of surface transportation improvement projects that are either proposed for federal funding or for which federal approval is required, along with the list of regionally significant projects to be implemented with non-federal funds. The Transportation Improvement Program provides assurance that the federally supported transportation system is being adequately operated and maintained nationwide. Inclusion in the Transportation Improvement Program is a major milestone in the project development process as it indicates there is regional consensus on the value of a project and approval for it to receive federal funding. Although the Transportation Improvement Program covers four years of project programming, the schedule of projects is updated every two years, in coordination with the federal fiscal calendar.

The Transportation Improvement Program contains a detailed description of every included project, documents the costs at each project phase, and is financially constrained for each Federal Fiscal Year (FY). Since it is designed to implement the goals, strategies, and priorities of the approved long-range transportation plan, the Transportation Improvement Program must be consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan. Moreover, when a planning region is designated a "non-attainment" or a "maintenance" area under the federal air quality standards, the Transportation Improvement Program must meet the requirements of the Clean Air Act by conforming to the State Implementation Plan (SIP) to reduce pollution.

Inclusion within the Transportation Improvement Program document is not a guarantee that a project will be implemented because unanticipated obstacles may affect funding, impact project readiness, or upset sponsorship arrangements. The Transportation Policy Council adopted Transportation Improvement Program is not a final project implementation schedule as federal regulations permit revisions to the document after it has been adopted to add new projects, delete dormant projects, or to advance or delay projects in the schedule as circumstances necessitate.

The four-year Transportation Improvement Program is developed by the Houston-Galveston Area Council in cooperation with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), local

government entities, and local transportation agencies. The multi-year/multimodal project list is the product of a comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing regional transportation planning process and consists of projects identified as priorities for the Houston-Galveston metropolitan region.

For more information on the amendment and public comment processes, see the Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities chapter. The Transportation Improvement Plan can be found at: https://www.h-gac.com/transportation-improvement-program.

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

The Unified Planning Work Program describes all anticipated planning activities for the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Updated annually or biannually, it includes a description of tasks and budgets for the following Federal Fiscal Year (October 1 to September 30). The Unified Planning Work Program, in accordance with 23 CFR Part 450.334 and 450.22, describes the regional transportation plans and programs carried out in the eight-county Metropolitan Planning Organization region:

- Development of Core Documents of the Metropolitan Planning Organization;
- Continuous and one-time planning activities related to safety, freight, transit, subregional areas, corridors, active transportation, air quality, data and modeling, and livable centers; and
- Special planning activities.

The Unified Planning Work Program is developed by the Houston-Galveston Area Council in cooperation with Federal, state and local government agencies, transportation providers, shippers, and carriers of goods, and the residents of the region.

For more information on the amendment and public comment processes, see the Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities chapter. The Unified Planning Work Program can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/unified-planning-work-program.

CONGESTION MANAGEMENT PROCESS

The congestion management process (CMP) serves as a systematic process that contributes to safe and effective integrated management and operation of the multimodal transportation system. The process includes:

- Developing congestion management objectives
- Establishing measures of multimodal transportation system performance
- Collecting data and system performance monitoring to define the extent and duration of congestion and determine the causes of congestion

A congestion management process is required in metropolitan areas with population exceeding 200,000, known as Transportation Management Areas (TMAs). The congestion management process must be developed and implemented as an integrated part of the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The congestion management process informs and feeds into the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The process, if executed, allows for informed decision-making and assists with greater stewardship of public funds by helping Houston-Galveston Area Council analyze projects with an eye towards congestion reduction.

For more information on the amendment and public comment processes, see the Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities chapter. Information about the congestion management process can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/congestion-management.

Public Participation Plan

The Public Participation Plan serves as a guide for Houston-Galveston Area Council's transportation public involvement process. The plan ensures an open planning process that supports early and continued public involvement, timely public service, and full public access to information regarding key transportation decisions by documenting specific goals, strategies, and responsibilities for public participation in the metropolitan planning process. It is part of a regional effort to ensure a continuing, comprehensive, and coordinated process among stakeholders to provide opportunities for broad-based participation in the development and review of regional transportation plans and programs.

The Public Participation Plan provides the public with an understanding of the transportation planning process and the core functions of the Metropolitan Planning Organization, which includes developing the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, the Regionally Coordinated Transportation Plan, and the Unified Planning Work Program.

The Public Participation Plan is designed to promote understanding and participation in the regional transportation planning process. There are many opportunities for the public to comment on transportation plans, programs, and projects. The Houston-Galveston Area Council uses this document to facilitate and encourage the public to become more involved in developing a better transportation system for the region.

Principles for Public Engagement

The following principles guide the public engagement plan and processes:

- Serve the region by providing meaningful, substantive, and accessible opportunities for all residents, public agencies, and elected officials to help shape the region's future.
- Build trust with people that have been traditionally marginalized or underserved by existing transportation systems by ensuring they are represented in the planning decision-making process and that their needs and views are considered.
- Collaborate with the public through innovative, creative, and dynamic public participation opportunities for meaningful feedback.
- Be accountable and transparent by informing the public, public agencies, and stakeholders of opportunities for public feedback and outline how Houston-Galveston Area Council will respond to and incorporate that feedback.
- Ensure alignment and compliance with federal and state plans, policies, and guidelines through careful and ongoing review and evaluation of plans.

To ensure that the Houston-Galveston Area Council is following the guiding principles laid out above, goals have been created to direct all public engagement processes, as listed below:

Goals

1. Seek out and engage all communities in the MPO service region, especially those who may face challenges accessing transportation services.
2. Review projects to verify potential adverse effects of the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program do not significantly harm communities in the region on the basis of race, color, or national origin.
3. Provide early and timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.
4. Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities with sufficient time for public review and comment on key decisions, including opportunities to comment on proposed adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program and any necessary amendments.
5. Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means such as the Internet or social media platforms.
6. Make information on transportation projects and programs available in a variety of formats, mediums, and languages to reach a larger audience, especially those who may not use or have access to the Internet or social media platforms.
7. Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times; in keeping with Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility and multi-modal accessibility standards.
8. Employ advanced visualization techniques and innovative communication tools to engage the public and stakeholders in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
9. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of plans and programs, including the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, and Public Participation Plan.
10. Coordinate with the statewide and regional transportation planning involvement and consultation processes.
11. Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in this Public Participation Plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

By adhering to these goals, the Metropolitan Planning Organization's plans and initiatives will accomplish the guiding principles of the Public Participation Plan.

Communication Tools, Tactics, and Opportunities

The Houston-Galveston Area Council's Government and Outreach Affairs Department carries out much of the public engagement activity at the agency and the Metropolitan Planning Organization works closely with the department's teams to carry out meaningful and effective public engagement efforts. This chapter goes into detail on the Houston-Galveston Area Council's amendment and public comment processes as well as the policies and strategies for public outreach, which are aligned with the plan's goals, as well as all applicable Federal and State requirements and policies as detailed in the Appendix.

Core Documents Amendment and Public Comment Processes

Houston-Galveston Area Council's core documents must follow prescribed amendment and public comment processes. These processes can be found in the tables below.

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Regional Transportation Plan has Administrative Modifications, Amendments, and Updates. Table 2 outlines the types of revisions, their definitions, and the approval process for each revision.

Table 2: Regional Transportation Plan Amendment and Public Comment Processes

Regional Transportation Plan – Responsibility for Approval			
Type of Revision	Technical Advisory Committee	Transportation Policy Council	Federal Highway Administration
Administrative Modification			
Minor revision that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. - Does not require public review and comment, fiscal constraint analysis, or conformity determination (Approval by TAC, TPC, FHWA not needed.)	--	--	--
Amendment			
Revision occurring between scheduled periodic updates that involves a major change to a project including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope.	Recommend	Approve	Approve

- Requires public review and comment - Requires redemonstration of fiscal constraint - Requires conformity determination (if needed)			
Update			
Updating the RTP through a periodic comprehensive review, required every four years, due to non-attainment status. - Requires public comment and review - Requires a 20-year horizon - Requires redemonstration of fiscal constraint - Requires conformity determination	Recommend	Approve	Approve
Opportunity for Public Review and Comment			
I. Adoption of the RTP	A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.		
II. Revision of the RTP			
(A) Administrative Modifications	Administrative Modifications do not specifically require public involvement prior to MPO action but are provided for public review through TPC meeting documentation.		
(B) Amendment	A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.		
(C) Updates	A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.		

METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION TEN-YEAR PLAN

Currently, there is no standard amendment or public comment process for the Ten-Year Plan.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The table below outlines the amendment and public comment processes for the Transportation Improvement Program. Some types of changes can be made administratively

with MPO staff processing and TxDOT approval; Amendments and Major Amendments require Technical Advisory Committee and Transportation Policy Council approval.

Administrative Modifications are minor revisions that would not substantively affect the context and intent of the project. Common examples of minor revisions include change in cost or clarification of project description without affecting the type of project. These administrative modifications require approval as depicted in Table 3 and generally does not require public comment.

An Amendment is a proposed revision with the potential to affect a significant portion of the region's traveling public. Common examples include significant changes to the let schedule that would move the project into or out of the TIP years, significant cost increase, etc. Amendments require approval as depicted in Table 3 and are subject to public notice and opportunity for comment.

While revisions to the TIP are typically made at the request of project sponsors, in no case will a revision be proposed without prior notification to the sponsor.

The following tables detail how proposed revisions to the TIP are acted upon.

Table 3: Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Process

Transportation Improvement Program Amendment Process - Responsibility for Approval				
Type of Revision	MPO Staff	TxDOT Districts	Technical Advisory Committee	Transportation Policy Council
I. Adoption of the TIP	--	--	Recommend	Approve
II. Revision of the TIP				
(1) Addition or Removal of Projects and Phases listed in TIP/STIP*				
(a) Addition or removal of any project;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(b) Addition or removal of a project's phase less than $5.0 million;	Process	Process	--	--
(c) Addition or removal of a project's phase equal to or over $5.0 million;	--	--	Recommend	Approve

(d) Combining two or more existing projects or phases;	Process	Process	--	--
(e) Splitting a project into two or more projects;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(f) Carry over of a funded project or project phase from a previous TIP cycle;	Process	Process	--	--
(g) Modifications to the TIP Appendix D (Projects going through environmental review) and J (Statewide Programs - Grouped CSJs)	Process	Process	--	--
(h) Other.	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(2) Scope and Cost Change				
(a) Less than or equal to 25% of phase or less than $1 million;	Process	Process	--	--
(b) Over 25% of phase and more than $1 million;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(c) Scope change necessitating a recalculation of system level air quality conformity of non-exempt project;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(d) Other significant scope changes;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(e) Other minor scope changes.	Process	Process	--	--
(3) Fund Source Change				
(a) Addition or removal of federal or state funding allocated to the MPO for project selection;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(b) Change between federal or state fund sources allocated to the MPO for project selection;	Process	Process	--	--
(c) Any other fund source change.	Process	Process	--	--
(4) Schedule Change				

(a) All affected phases are contained within the four years of the TIP before and after the schedule change;	Process	Process	--	--
(b) Any other schedule change.	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(5) Sponsor Change				
(a) Change between Sponsors	Process	Process	--	--
(6) Transportation Development Credits (TDC)				
(a) Addition of new TDCs equal to or greater than 1 million to a project listed in STIP;	--	--	Recommend	Approve
(b) Increase TDCs equal to or greater than 1 million to a project listed in STIP;	Process	Process	--	--
(c) Removal of TDCs from a TIP/STIP listed project.	Process	Process	--	--
* Project proposed to be programmed with Category 5 - Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality funds must receive concurrence from TxDOT Districts.				
All revisions requiring TPC approval are referred to as TIP Amendments or Major Amendments.				
All revisions approved by MPO and TxDOT Districts are referred to as Administrative Modifications.				
**** A Major Amendment is a revision to the TIP where:*** *(a) A scope change is proposed that would necessitate a re-demonstration of system level air quality conformity of non- exempt project.* *(b) A cost change is proposed that would require the delay of another project beyond the 4 years of the TIP;*				

Table 4: Transportation Improvement Program Public Comment Process

Opportunity for Public Review and Comment	
I. Adoption of the TIP	Public meetings and a public comment period of not less than 30 days will be held prior to Transportation Policy Council (TPC) adoption of the TIP. Additional opportunities for public review are provided informally throughout the TIP development process.
II. Revision of the TIP	

(A) Administrative Modifications (MPO)	Administrative Modifications do not specifically require public involvement prior to MPO/TxDOT Districts action but are provided for public review through TPC meeting documentation.
(B) TIP Amendments (TPC)	Amendments to the TIP are provided for public review through TAC and TPC meeting documentation.
(C) Major Amendments (TPC)	Major Amendments to the TIP will be noticed on the H-GAC website at least 30 days prior to TPC action and require a public meeting and a public comment period of not less than 10 days be held. Additional comments may be provided at TAC and TPC meetings.

UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM

A 30-day public comment period is observed prior to the adoption of the Unified Planning Work Program. Public outreach activities for the Unified Planning Work Program are documented in the Unified Planning Work Program appendices.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

As stated in 23 CFR 450.316, a minimum comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent possible.

Public Participation Policies and Opportunities

The following sections go into detail on how the Metropolitan Planning Organization approaches public engagement and the various methods used to engage with the public.

Strategies for Outreach to All Communities

TARGET AUDIENCES AND STAKEHOLDERS

Knowing your target audience helps structure effective public involvement and communication strategies. Reaching specific populations requires clear, tailored messaging. The Metropolitan Planning Organization has shown strong outreach success with parts of the region. To better serve all communities and individuals, the Metropolitan Planning Organization is considering how best to engage with communities that may be hard to reach. By identifying these groups, Houston-Galveston Area Council can craft messaging and outreach efforts to engage them more effectively.

Engagement Strategies

The Houston-Galveston Area Council uses a variety of tools and tactics to ensure information is available to all.

Visual Aids: Creating infographics and visual content to help those with limited literacy or language barriers better understand key messages.

Partnerships with Local Organizations: Collaborating with trusted community organizations to enhance credibility and reach underserved populations.

LANGUAGES OTHER THAN ENGLISH

The Houston-Galveston Area Council strives to provide access to all within our planning area by accommodating varying language needs. Houston-Galveston Area Council identifies the primary languages spoken in the project area and ensures services match these needs. Houston-Galveston Area Council's approach includes:

Multilingual Materials: Creating informational materials in languages commonly spoken within target communities, ensuring non-English speakers can access critical information.

Interpreter Services: Offering oral interpretation at events and through digital platforms to help those who aren't proficient in English or require American Sign Language (ASL). Houston-Galveston Area Council recommends having interpreters and meeting materials for the top languages in the study area and providing a qualified ASL interpreter at all public meetings when a request for interpreting services is made. Houston-Galveston Area Council also prioritizes securing internal interpreters before outsourcing.

These communication strategies aim to engage our target audiences through thoughtful methods, ensuring everyone can participate and benefit from the agency's initiatives. Ongoing collaboration with subject matter experts will help refine these tactics and adapt to the evolving needs of the region's growing population.

Department of Justice (DOJ) among other federal agency interpretation of national origin discrimination under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d, et seq.) guide recipients of federal financial assistance to take reasonable and necessary steps to ensure that persons with limited proficiency in the English language have meaningful access to the organization's federally assisted programs, activities, and services. Houston-Galveston Area Council's language access plan outlines the agency's responsibilities towards the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) population and defines a process for providing language assistance services to those individuals that need and request them. The Language Access Plan can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/getmedia/291c656d-bc1f-456b-b1f0-93cecc506d13/New-Language-Access-Plan-2024.

IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT

Houston-Galveston Area Council creates varying public participation opportunities by offering a mix of in-person, virtual, and hybrid formats to engage various community members. Houston-Galveston Area Council regularly holds meetings in different community locations to gather input and encourage discussion. These meetings include:

- Community Meetings and Events: Hosting interactive sessions in local settings that encourage participation and direct engagement. These include:
    - Public Meetings
    - Public Hearings
    - Open Houses
    - Workshops
    - Advisory Groups
    - Listening Sessions
    - Board/Council Meetings
    - Community/Subcommittee Meetings
    - Education/Outreach events
- Public Meetings: Organized large-group meetings with presentations and project information, allowing attendees to ask questions and provide written or oral comments.
- Public Hearings: Legal meetings where the public can ask questions and provide written or oral comments.
- Workshops: Public forums where participants work on specific topics to provide input.
- Open Houses: Informal sessions where community members can drop in, learn about projects, and give written or oral feedback.
- Stakeholder Meetings/Advisory Groups/Focus Groups: Targeted events for specific groups to discuss issues or initiatives.
- Board/Council Meetings: Gatherings of appointed representatives addressing priority issues.
- Committee/Subcommittee Meetings: Smaller groups that work together to identify solutions and recommendations. Houston-Galveston Area Council hosts regularly scheduled committee meetings that are open to the public, and comments are invited. Regular and special meetings of the Transportation Policy Council, Technical Advisory Committee, Regional Transportation Plan, Regional Safety Council, and the Regional Air Quality Planning Committee are usually held once a month and the schedules are posted on the Houston-Galveston Area Council website. Live streaming is available for monthly meetings of the Transportation Policy Council on the day of the meeting and livestreamed meeting archives are available for review after the date of each meeting.

- **Education/Outreach:** Fairs, presentations, and meet-and-greet events to inform and engage the public.

VIRTUAL ENGAGEMENT

- **Webinars:** Online sessions offering project information and real-time Q&A and feedback.
- **Surveys and Polls:** Digital platforms to gather community opinions on specific topics.
- **Social Media Outreach:** Using platforms like Facebook and Instagram to share updates and encourage participation.

HYBRID ENGAGEMENT

- **Combined Meetings:** Offering in-person and virtual options to maximize accessibility.
- **Live Streaming:** Broadcasting in-person events online for remote participation.
- **Interactive Tools:** Using technology like polling apps and chat features during hybrid meetings to facilitate real-time interaction.

Traditional Media

Houston-Galveston Area Council regularly updates key media outlets on Houston-Galveston Area Council activities, distributing news releases and media alerts to announce public meetings and comment periods for major amendments to the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, Public Participation Plan, and other significant plans.

- Legal notices and other paid advertisements for public meetings are submitted to the Houston Chronicle for publication a minimum of 30 days prior to the end of the public comment period for all regional transportation plans and programs. Notices may also be submitted to the Texas Register, appropriate local community publications, and local newspapers in each jurisdiction for all public meetings.
- Amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program frequently occur between Transportation Improvement Program updates. Public meetings and a 30-day public comment period are held prior to the adoption of Transportation Improvement Program Amendments and the Transportation Improvement Program Update.

Houston-Galveston Area Council's Outreach and Government Affairs department works with reporters to generate stories about transportation activities, respond to inquiries, provide briefings, and prepare staff for interviews.

Additionally, Houston-Galveston Area Council secures advertisements in local radio stations (traditional and streaming), newspapers (print and online), and billboards throughout the

region. These ads are typically in English, Spanish, and other widely spoken languages, such as Vietnamese and Mandarin.

Online Engagement

HOUSTON-GALVESTON AREA COUNCIL WEBSITE

The Houston-Galveston Area Council website provides current information about transportation planning activities. Included on this website is a listing of upcoming meetings. Agendas, meeting materials, and meeting minutes are added to the website as soon as they are available. Final documents, draft documents, or portions of draft documents under review by the public are made available when feasible. The website provides an opportunity for the public to provide input and formal comments on an ongoing basis through email links.

NEWSLETTERS

The *Regional Focus* newsletter and customized emails share information with mass audiences. Houston-Galveston Area Council uses email to distribute major transportation work products and updates to recipients including elected officials, local governments, transit agencies, economic development councils, and other interested parties.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Houston-Galveston Area Council provides a Public Outreach Inbox (publiccomments@h-gac.com) for comments submitted via email and through public comment forms, websites, and meeting registers.

Social Media

ENGAGEMENT ACROSS PLATFORMS

Houston-Galveston Area Council uses Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, X, and YouTube to communicate with various audiences. Custom content is tailored to each platform and audience, utilizing organic and paid promotional posts. Paid ads allow Houston-Galveston Area Council to target specific audiences based on demographics, zip codes, age ranges, and key interests.

Diverse and Targeted Audiences

Houston-Galveston Area Council emphasizes a comprehensive approach to public outreach by posting in multiple languages.

Public Information and Education:

- Informative Posts: Announcing meetings, workshops, and events with clear calls to action.
- Educational Series: Providing regular updates on the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, community meetings, and surveys.

- **Interactive Visuals:** Using infographics, interactive videos, and quick guides to simplify project information.

Accessibility

All images and videos include alt text, captions, and translations where necessary. Houston-Galveston Area Council also reminds the public of alternative participation methods like phone calls or attending in-person or hybrid meetings for those without reliable internet.

Measuring Engagement: Houston-Galveston Area Council tracks engagement through likes, shares, and comments to gauge community interest and adjust strategies as needed.

Project Specific Public Engagement

Project-specific Public Input Plans (PIPs) are created for each of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's planning studies. These PIPs provide a guiding framework for the project team to carry out meaningful and effective public outreach with the community and stakeholders.

Generally, PIPs may include:

- Study Area Overview
- Study Area Demographics
- Target Audiences
- Community Stakeholders
- Public Engagement Objectives
- Outreach Opportunities
- Engagement Strategies and Tools
- Stakeholder Engagement Strategies
- Public Engagement timeline
- Public Outreach Process Evaluation

Each project has a Steering Committee that is established to guide the plan's development and process; the specific size, makeup, and structure of the steering committee is established based on the appropriateness to the project. The steering committees are comprised of stakeholders from local governmental organizations in the study area that have implementation authority and are usually non-elected officials and staff. These steering committees represent cities, counties, transit agencies, water districts, Independent School Districts (ISDs), the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), or even Tax Increment Reinvestment Zones (TIRZ)s.

Steering Committees may include:

- City Managers
- Public Works Staff
- City Planners
- County Precincts
- Transit Agency Staff
- Police Departments
- Fire Departments
- Parks Staff
- TxDOT Planners

The PIPs also identify other stakeholders that may not be represented on the steering committee. Stakeholders would be individuals or groups in the study area that would benefit from or be impacted by proposed improvements but are not part of an official agency with implementation authority for the project recommendations. Other community stakeholders may include:

- General Public
- Historically disadvantaged and marginalized populations
- Neighborhood Associations and Groups
- Community Organizations
- Local Elected Officials
- School Officials

Online Public Engagement Website

Houston-Galveston Area Council uses online engagement platforms to host project-specific websites where the public can learn about the project, leave feedback, and sign up for project updates. The websites have several useful tools for public engagement, such as surveys, interactive mapping, and forums. Project documents can also be published on these websites.

Public Participation Plan Evaluation

Generally, the Public Participation Plan should be updated every four years to align with the Regional Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. At that time, Houston-Galveston Area Council will do a comprehensive review and evaluation of the plan and update as needed to ensure it is meeting the guiding principles and goals of the plan. Houston-Galveston Area Council may also gather input for evaluation of the Public Participation Plan through mailed and online surveys, focus groups, individual interviews, comment cards, emailed comments, and a toll-free voicemail number at 1-855-363-2516. A minimum public comment period of 45 days will be provided before the revised Public Participation Plan is adopted by Houston-Galveston Area Council. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the Internet to the maximum extent practicable.

However, the Houston-Galveston Area Council will also conduct ongoing evaluation of its public engagement efforts and strategies. Each of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's regional and subregional plans must demonstrate how documented outreach efforts and public feedback was incorporated into the plan. The effectiveness of the public engagement efforts must be evaluated at the end of each planning process to determine the success of these outreach strategies or find opportunities to improve future engagement. The Metropolitan Planning Organization will collect data for public engagement documentation and evaluation that may include:

- Number of meeting notices distributed through email
- Number of and type of meetings held
- Days and times of public meetings
- Quantity of media coverage
- Number of Houston-Galveston Area Council mailings and notices
- Number of languages used
- Number of attendees at public meetings
- Number of underserved communities reached
- Number of relevant, substantive survey responses received
- Number of Public Comments received through other means such as comment cards, emails, phone calls, online forums, interactive maps, etc.
- Quantity of educational material available including project listings, presentations, fact sheets, contact sheets, handbooks, etc.
- Number of visitors to website
- Public notices for public engagement opportunities

The data listed above may also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Public Participation Plan.

Houston-Galveston Area Council is committed to providing varying meaningful and effective public outreach opportunities for all people living within the region. By using the principles and goals put forth in this plan, the Metropolitan Planning Organization will be able to reach a large audience and solicit meaningful feedback from the public that will be incorporated into the Metropolitan Planning Organization's plans and programs.

Appendix A – Public Comments Received

ID	Comment	Response
1	The Transportation Policy Council is urged to expand the current limitations for Administrative Amendments of existing projects to the TIP, particularly those not funded from funding sources allocated to the Metropolitan Planning Organization for project selection. One of the primary categories of this funding would be transit formula funding. PROGRAMMING OF FEDERAL TRANSIT FUNDING Each year, the Federal Transit Authority identifies transit funding for Large (over 1 million persons) and Smaller(over 200,000 persons) Urbanized Areas as well as small urban and rural areas of each state. With multiple funding categories, designated agencies for each of these areas must cooperatively develop a program of projects describing the use of this funding. If within the boundaries of a Metropolitan Planning Organization, these funds must also be programmed with in the local and state TIP. Importantly, these funds have federal time limits for their programming, obligation in a grant, and expenditure. Transit formula funds are largely used to sustain existing services including the maintenance and replacement of equipment and facilities. Apart from METRO, many transit agencies also depend on transit formula funding to defray a portion of their transit operating costs. Therefore, the time needed to access this funding may be vital to successful, uninterrupted delivery of essential transit service. RECOMMENDED CHANGES EXPANDING ADMINISTATIVE APPROVALS FOR TRANSIT FORMULA FUNDED PROJECTS Expanding the ability of federal transit project to be amended administratively would reduce the normal three-month period for local approval to one to two months and expedite in a similar manner approval in the State TIP. It is also important to note that a request for administrative amendment may be withheld by either the MPO Director or the Houston District Director of Transportation Planning should either feel that full review by the Transportation Policy Council is warranted. PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ADMINISTRATIVE AMENDMENT PROCEEDURES - Support all changes shown to (1) Addition or Removal of Projects and Phases as shown in the draft Public Participation Plan. - Support proposed changes to (2) Scope and Cost with the following recommendations for transit funded projects: o (a) Less than or equal to 50% of the project Phase or less than $5 million o (b) More than 50% of the project Phase or more than $5 million - (3) Fund Source Change, Add the following language to (c) o (c) Transit formula fund changes between transit funding categories (Sec. 5307, 5310, 5311, 5337, 5339, etc.) may be approved administratively subject to an amended Program of Projects from the Designated Transit Recipient. o (c) Transit formula funding amounts may be increased or decreased administratively subject to an amended Program of Projects from the Designated Transit Recipient. - (6) Transportation Development Credits. o (a) For transit formula funded projects, the addition of new TDCs equal to the amount required as a result of an administrative amendment otherwise approved under this policy may also be approved administratively. NOTE: this is consistent with the adopted Transportation Development Credits Policy and Procedures page 4, paragraph two which states: " 5. Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Sections 5307, 5310, 5311, 5339 and other formula funded projects will be exempt from requirements. TDCs will be separate and proportional to transit funding appropriations. " Thank you for your consideration of these comments.	Thank you for your comment. The updated Public Participation Plan (PPP) expands current limitations to administrative amendments for existing projects to the TIP, which include increasing administrative thresholds for funding and TDC changes. Currently, changing the funding category for an MPOID is an administrative amendment. That will not change with the updated PPP. The proposed PPP recommends increasing the administrative threshold to $1 million from $500k. This would address the vast majority of transit formula funded amendments for funding increases or decreases. The proposed PPP recommends an administrative threshold of $1 million new TDCs, which encapsulates the match for the vast majority of transit formula funded projects. Staff relies on the sponsor to submit TDC applications with correct TDC match amount.

Appendix B – Federal Regulations and Policies

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act

The FAST Act explicitly adds public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs to the list of interested parties that an Metropolitan Planning Organization must provide with reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan. [23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6)(A)]

The FAST Act continues to encourage Metropolitan Planning Organizations to consult with officials responsible for other types of planning activities. These include freight transportation providers, It adds to the list of such activities tourism and the reduction of risk of natural disasters. [23 U.S.C. 134(g)(3)(A)]

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA)

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), or the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) was signed into law on November 15, 2021. The IIJA replaced the FAST Act as the basis for Federal Highway Administration programs and activities through 2026, but continued many of the FAST Act's policies regarding Metropolitan Planning Organizations. The BIL allows Metropolitan Planning Organizations to use social media and other web-based tools to encourage public participation in the transportation planning process. [§ 11201(a)(3); 23 U.S.C. 134(i)(6)(D)]

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964

49 CFR, Part 21 states that "no person in the United States shall on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from the participation in, or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal Financial assistance." Houston-Galveston Area Council's Title VI Coordinator is responsible for initiating and monitoring Title VI activities, preparing required reports, and other responsibilities as required by Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 200, and Title 49 CFR Part 21.

Houston-Galveston Area Council developed a Language Access Plan (LAP) to ensure it continues to meet the language assistance needs of the population with limited English proficiency (LEP), also known as English language learners (ELL), that reside or work within its planning region, in compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The LAP can be found at https://www.h-gac.com/getmedia/291c656d-bc1f-456b-b1f0-93cecc506d13/New-Language-Access-Plan-2024.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (as amended)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates involving the community, particularly those with disabilities, in the development and improvement of services. Houston-Galveston Area Council fully complies with these requirements through its ADA plan and policies by making meeting room facilities accessible with wheelchair ramps, room and floor numbers posted in Braille, and restrooms and elevators that are wheelchair accessible.

Houston-Galveston Area Council facilitates public participation in transportation activities by people with disabilities using the following guidelines:

- Meetings, public hearings, and formal events are held in facilities accessible by persons with disabilities.
- Public notices of meetings and events include a notice of accommodations for individuals who are disabled. Such accommodations will be provided by request with a minimum 24-hour notice.
- Persons needing to arrange for ADA accommodations at Houston-Galveston Area Council meetings and events may call 713-627-3200 within 24 hours of the event.

In collaboration with transit stakeholders, Houston-Galveston Area Council can provide transportation for individuals with disabilities to attend public meetings and events at the Houston-Galveston Area Council offices.

Executive Order 13175 – Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments

Executive Order 13175 states that "in formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes." American Indian tribes have expressed an interest in the eight-county Metropolitan Planning Organization planning region, even though there are no tribal governments located in the region. As a result of a request by the tribal leaders, the Metropolitan Planning Organization will actively seek to keep tribal governments informed of major decisions affecting their geographic area. The Metropolitan Planning Organization will continue to communicate with Native American Indian tribal leaders on an ongoing basis to identify issues of common concern.

23 CFR §450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation

(a) The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of

transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the Internet;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program;

(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

(viii)Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the Metropolitan Planning Organization and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and,

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a

summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and Transportation Improvement Program.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the Internet to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs, the Metropolitan Planning Organization should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and Transportation Improvement Programs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;
2) Governmental agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and,
3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 201-204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the Transportation Improvement Program.

(e) Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under §450.314.

23 CFR §450.324 Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan

(j) The Metropolitan Planning Organizations shall provide individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program,

vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the transportation plan using the participation plan developed under §450.316(a).

(k) The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall publish or otherwise make readily available the metropolitan transportation plan for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.

23 CFR §450.326 Development and content of the Transportation Improvement Program (Transportation Improvement Program)

(b) The Metropolitan Planning Organization shall provide all interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed Transportation Improvement Program as required by § 450.316(a). In addition, in nonattainment area TMAs, the Metropolitan Planning Organization shall provide at least one formal public meeting during the Transportation Improvement Program development process, which should be addressed through the participation plan described in § 450.316(a). In addition, the Metropolitan Planning Organization shall publish or otherwise make readily available the Transportation Improvement Program for public review, including (to the maximum extent practicable) in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web, as described in § 450.316(a).