

Public Participation Plan

Draft for Public
Review
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PLANNING THE WAY WE MOVE





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Disclaimer

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Title VI & Limited English Proficiency Statement

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its metropolitan transportation planning process on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, or economic status, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations. It is also the policy of the Transportation Council to ensure that all programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. Additionally, the Transportation Council will provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law	The federal transportation law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This law set federal transportation policy and funding from 2021 to 2026.
Capital Region	For this plan, the “Capital Region” refers to the Transportation Council’s 4-county planning area (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady), excluding the Town of Moreau and Village of South Glens Falls.
Environmental Justice	The just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment. All people are protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects and hazards, including those related to climate change and the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens.
Equity	For public participation, the resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that respond to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups.
Equity assessment	A systemic approach to identifying equity populations in an area of interest or study that serves as a basis to target and direct planning efforts.
Limited English Proficiency	Persons who speak English less than very well.
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	An organization designated by federal law and by the governor of each state for urban areas over 50,000 persons to carry out a metropolitan transportation planning process to receive funds from federal transportation programs. The Capital Region Transportation Council is an MPO.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	The 20+ year, long term plan for how the Capital Region will invest, manage, and operate the transportation system to reach economic, sustainability, and mobility goals. The plan directs how federal transportation funds will be spent in the region.
Planning Committee	The Policy Board’s delegated decision-making body to develop recommendations about transportation plans and programs on their behalf. The Planning Committee is usually the technical staff, like planners and engineers, for the government agencies and municipalities represented on the Policy Board.
Policy Board	The highest decision-making body of the MPO, is comprised of 25 voting members including local elected officials (or their designees) from four counties, eight cities, three towns and villages, and officials and transportation agency representatives from the New York State Department of Transportation, the Capital District Transportation Authority, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the New York State Thruway Authority, the Albany Port District Commission, and the Albany County Airport Authority.
Public Engagement	Two-way communication where the agency requests input from community members about an issue, problem, opportunity, or decision.
Public Involvement Plan	The planning activity-specific plan that details how the goals of the Transportation Council’s Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning process. It identifies the methods of outreach and engagement reflecting the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity.
Public Outreach	One-way communication that informs community members about an issue, problem, opportunity, or decision.
Public Participation	General communication with the public, including passive and active involvement from the public. Informing the public (outreach) and gathering input (engagement) are both forms of public participation activities.
Public Participation Plan	The Public Participation Plan is a federally mandated document that provides the baseline standards of how the Transportation Council will engage with the public and guide outreach activities.
Title VI	Short for “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987”, which states that entities like the Transportation Council may not exclude anyone, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, disability/handicap, or sex, from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.



Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATAC	Active Transportation Advisory Committee
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CDTA	Capital District Transportation Authority
CMP	Congestion Management Process
EAC	Equity Advisory Committee
FAC	Freight Advisory Committee
HSTAC	Human Services Transportation Advisory Committee
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NYSDOT	New York State Department of Transportation
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PPP	Public Participation Plan
ROSAC	Regional Operations and Safety Advisory Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
UPWP	United Planning Work Program

About the Capital Region Transportation Council

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving a region with over 850,000 residents in the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga (excluding the Town of Moreau and Village of South Glens Falls) and Schenectady. Under federal law, the Transportation Council is responsible for implementing a regional transportation planning process to support the development of a safe and efficient transportation system that offers mobility options for those that live, work, and play in the Capital Region.

More detailed information about the Transportation Council and how it operates is covered in the [Reference Guide to the Capital Region Transportation Council](#).

Executive Summary

The Capital Region Transportation Council developed this Public Participation Plan to state its guiding principles to public participation in the metropolitan transportation planning process. Drawn from both legal requirements and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement, they are realistic and are also aspirational. The Transportation Council will craft a public involvement process that is:

Continuous: Engagement should result in community contributions in the earliest stages of, and throughout, a project, study, or other planning activity. Community contributions should be part of an ongoing relationship outside of the specific planning activity.

Thorough: Engagement should be comprehensive, providing many options for how a person can be notified and get involved, with consideration for how an array of different modes of engagement can reach as broad an audience as possible.

Inclusive: Engagement should encourage diverse viewpoints and values to be integrated into the decision-making processes, incorporate community-initiated efforts into planning processes, proactively incorporate a broad representation of the community, and use engagement methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the community, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Effective: Engagement should *demonstrate* broad reach, representation, and contribution to the decision-making process. Engagement should be evaluated to assess effectiveness and bold, innovative, and/or creative strategies or methods are encouraged to improve efforts.

Public Participation in the Transportation Council Planning Process

To implement the goals of this plan, the Transportation Council will develop an activity-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each of its core planning activities outlined below. Each PIP will detail how the goals of this Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning activity. The PIP will also account for the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity and how the goals of this policy will be affected. The PIP will include [engagement methods](#) that are suited to the context and conditions of the planning activity.



The Transportation Council's core planning activities, which are a required function of the federally funded regional transportation planning process, have a [process to be officially adopted](#). Typically, the activity must be recommended by the Transportation Council's Planning Committee and adopted by the Policy Board. Leading up to adoption, the public will have the opportunity to review the documents under consideration.

Outreach & Meetings at the Transportation Council

The Transportation Council strives to use a variety of outreach methods to ensure timely, accessible, accurate, and complete information about its policies, programs, events, and activities, including press releases, our [website](#), [newsletter](#), email, and [social media](#).

Additionally, the public is welcome to participate at the [Policy Board](#), [Planning Committee](#), or [advisory committee](#) meetings. See our [calendar of events](#) for dates and times of upcoming meetings.

Ways the public can participate in these meetings:

- **Review meeting agenda and materials** posted on the Transportation Council website one week prior to the meeting.
- **View meetings** which are broadcast live, recorded, and made available on our YouTube Channel.
- **Submit written comments** by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Register to speak** during the public comment agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, also by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Request for aids, services, or reasonable accommodation** to attend the meeting in person, call (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org at least **48 hours** prior to the meeting.

Evaluation

To understand if the Transportation Council's public participation efforts are effective, it will [evaluate](#) activity-specific [PIPs](#) and conduct an [annual review](#) of overall participation efforts with both [quantitative metrics](#) and [qualitative objectives](#) that reflect on the how well the goals above were met and any lessons learned.



Introduction

What is the Public Participation Plan?

The Public Participation Plan is a federally mandated document that provides the baseline standards of how the Transportation Council will engage with the public and guide outreach activities. The Plan describes how the public can engage with the Transportation Council's decision-making bodies and how the public can get involved with Advisory Committees. It also addresses what strategies, procedures, and methods the Transportation Council could use to gather input on planning documents and proposed projects. Finally, it includes how the effectiveness of public participation will be assessed.

Who is "the Public" in Public Participation?

When the Transportation Council talks about involving the public, or refers to the "community," in transportation decision-making, who do we mean? The public includes anyone who resides, works, visits, has an interest in, or does business in an area potentially affected by transportation decisions. This includes individuals, community groups (i.e., neighborhoods, community-based organizations), government agencies, organizations, advocacy groups, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties. Any of these individuals and groups are welcome to engage in the metropolitan transportation planning process according to this plan.

Equity Integration

The Transportation Council understands equity in public participation to be when resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that responds to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups. Equitable public engagement is mindful of how power operates, and is reproduced, within engagement processes, institutions, and broader systems. It recognizes that the history of transportation planning has often excluded racial and ethnic minorities, people with low-income status, people who have a disability, seniors, people who do not drive their own personal vehicles, those with limited English proficiency, and those experiencing homelessness.

To apply this understanding, the Transportation Council is committed to integrating equity throughout all aspects of public participation. When crafting a Public Involvement Plan for any planning work conducted by or for the Transportation Council, it is expected that the answers to the following, non-exhaustive list of questions will determine the structure of public participation:

- What groups that have experienced historic and ongoing disadvantages are present in the area of interest? Who is missing from the conversation?
- What existing relationships exist, or can be forged, with community organizations in the area of interest, and how can they be involved at the earliest stages of the planning process, including shaping the public participation plan itself?
- What methods of communication will be effective at reaching the groups identified? What are the culturally aware and sensitive means to do so?
- What methods of participation will be effective and culturally informed to result in involvement? What specific barriers are faced in each method of participation and how will they be overcome?
- What structures are necessary to ensure public input will shape decision-making? How will input be presented and communicated to decision makers and the public?
- What forms of evaluation will be employed to determine effectiveness of outreach to disadvantaged groups?

The Transportation Council also recognizes integrating equity into its public participation processes requires continual evaluation, clarification, refinement, and/or experimentation and commits to such an iterative approach.

Requirements Framing Public Participation

The following legislation and executive orders provide a basic framework to build a Public Participation Plan for a federally regulated transportation agency like the Transportation Council. The Transportation Council understands these regulations to be a starting point, and not an end point, for the iterative development of its Public Participation Plan.

- **Civil Rights and Title VI:** The Transportation Council may not exclude anyone, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, disability/handicap, or sex (as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987), from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. The [Transportation Council's Title VI plan](#) has more details as to how these provisions relate to the organization.
- **Environmental Justice:** Pursuant to Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations), the Transportation Council considers its impact in all planning activities, including public engagement. This means ensuring that consideration and accommodation of low-income and minority populations are taken to ensure adequate representation and sensitive engagement. The Transportation Council's most recent [Environmental Justice/Title VI analysis](#) addresses how the organization is meeting this directive.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** Pursuant to Executive Order 13166 (Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency), the Transportation Council must ensure materials are available in native languages of residents in areas with a high concentration of limited English proficiency. The Transportation Council's LEP Policy is included in this document in [Appendix I](#). (Note: the Transportation Council is expecting to adopt an updated LEP Policy in March 2024)
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL):** The BIL puts an emphasis on early and continuous public engagement and outreach to underserved and underrepresented communities.
- **Tribal Consultation:** The combination of the BIL and state-level renewed emphasis on outreach to Native Nations encourages the Transportation Council to establish an ongoing relationship with those federally recognized Native Nations with historical presence in the Capital Region.
- **Disability:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that people with disabilities be involved with the development and improvement of transportation services and systems, including access to meetings, meeting sites, and information about and informing decision-making.

Public Participation Plan Goals

The goals of this plan are an articulation of the Transportation Council's guiding principles to public participation. Drawn from both legal requirements and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement, they are realistic and are also aspirational. While the Transportation Council expects to meet these goals in all its planning work, we also recognize that living up to the highest ideals embodied in these goals will be an iterative process of improvement.

Continuous: Outreach and engagement should result in community contributions in the earliest stages of, and throughout, a project, study, or other planning activity. Community contributions should be part of an ongoing relationship outside of the specific planning activity.

Thorough: Outreach and engagement should be comprehensive, providing many options for how a person can be notified and get involved, with consideration for how an array of different modes of engagement can reach as broad an audience as possible.

Inclusive: Outreach and engagement should encourage diverse viewpoints and values to be integrated into the decision-making processes, incorporate community-initiated efforts into planning processes, proactively incorporate a broad representation of the community, and use engagement methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the community, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Effective: Outreach and engagement should *demonstrate* broad reach, representation, and contribution to the decision-making process. Engagement should be evaluated to assess effectiveness and bold, innovative, and/or creative strategies or methods are encouraged to improve efforts.

Public Participation in the Transportation Council Planning Process

To implement the goals of this plan, the Transportation Council will develop an activity-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each of the core planning activities outlined below. Each PIP will detail how the goals of this Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning activity. The PIP will also account for the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity and how the goals of this policy will be affected. Core planning activities that will have a PIP include:

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan)
- Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- Air Quality Conformity Analysis (public participation activities likely included with those of the accompanying document, either the TIP or MTP)
- Environmental Justice/Title VI Analysis
- Public Participation Plan (PPP)

All studies funded by the Transportation Council, including regional-scale plans and studies that are part of the Community and Transportation Linkage Program, will also be expected to reflect the goals of this Public Participation Plan. These plans, developed with consultant assistance, will include public involvement plans that reflect the Transportation Council's public participation goals. All final study documents will include a public involvement summary and Transportation Council staff will conduct a public involvement evaluation after each study is complete.

Creating a Public Involvement Plan

The activity-specific Public Involvement Plan is a document that lays out the public outreach and engagement efforts to be carried out for core planning activities. The plan will describe the particular strategies, methods, and/or tactics that respond to the specific circumstances, contexts, processes, and structures under which a planning activity will be conducted.

Since these factors are necessarily different for each planning activity, each PIP will look different. For example, the MTP is very large in scale and scope, but the UPWP is much smaller in scale and scope. The PIPs for each should have a similar relationship. So, while no specific format is required by this plan, it should be clear what public outreach and engagement activities are happening at, and how each goal intersects with, each stage of the planning process. Public Involvement Plans shall also consider the requirements in federal law as stated in [23 CFR 450.316](#).

Implementing Public Participation Goals in a Public Involvement Plan

The guide on the following pages demonstrates how the Transportation Council, and anyone that conducts planning activities on its behalf, will consider how each goal can be realized throughout the planning process.

While this guide does note required actions, it is not intended to be exhaustive, a complete inventory, nor a step-by-step checklist, but rather a tool to facilitate meeting the goals of this Plan in the PIP (or scope of work for Community Planning/Linkage Program studies) of the planning activities of the Transportation Council.

Goal: Continuous

Policy: Public outreach and engagement should shape decision making throughout the planning process

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Public outreach and engagement opportunities are offered at key decision points throughout the planning activity such as purpose, needs, and vision statements or other frameworks that drive decision making; project, concept, policy, or recommendation selection; and document review.
- Communicate how public input shaped the planning process and possible outcomes back to the public.

Consider the following:

- Reach out to community members and organizations with existing (or establish new) relationships with the Transportation Council for input on scope. (Note that nonprofit groups or others interested in participating on a consultant team for a Transportation Council contract would not be eligible to participate if they assist in any way with the development of a planning study scope of work).
- Review previous planning studies, plans, or other data sources for indications of community concern impacting scope, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
- Establish communications with the Policy Board, Planning Committee, and advisory committees, as warranted, for input into the scope and as collaborators for ongoing outreach and engagement to their contacts, communities, and/or industries.
- Explore ways to incorporate public input into data collection, such as interactive mapping or other crowdsourcing data collection methods, if possible.
- Develop a strategy to ensure that public engagement efforts are shaping the vision(s), concepts, projects, etc. that are being considered as possible outcomes of the planning activity. While other constraining factors must always be appropriately weighted in generating possible outcomes, public input should be recognizable in the possibilities and decision-making.
- Identify opportunities to continue relationships with community groups, institutions, or members beyond the planning activity (add to newsletter distribution, attend meetings, inform about advisory committees).

Goal: Thorough

Policy: Public outreach and engagement should be comprehensive, reaching as broad an audience as possible

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Assess the range of interests and groups who may be impacted by the proposed study or plan and design the public involvement process based on how best to reach those groups and collect their input.
- Employ multiple modes of engagement (digital, in-person, mass media, social media, etc.) to maximize the number of people that will see and respond to outreach efforts, including a website to post information, updates, and opportunities for public engagement. The [following section](#) outlines some methods and considerations.

Consider the following:

- Supplement existing data sets, plans, studies with focus group meetings, institutional stakeholder outreach, or other methods if existing sources informing scope are ambiguous or are lacking in sensitive areas or topics.
- Consider that low-tech modes of outreach like flyering, mailings, postering, etc. have the benefit of connecting with a broad range of people, including those who may not have access to the internet or a reliable device that can connect to the internet. Use low-tech modes throughout the timeline of the public involvement process.
- Use creative methods that have the potential to reach people that do not usually participate in transportation planning.
- Use a variety of methods of engagement that allow for a broad understanding of the issues and tradeoffs being considered.
- Use language that is approachable to a wide audience and balances simplification and education on complex matters.
- Engage mass media via press release, in addition to digital media, to reach the broadest possible public.
- Develop summaries, visualizations (maps, StoryMaps, infographics, charts, graphs, etc.), and other materials that facilitate understanding of the materials under consideration and review.

Goal: Inclusive

Policy: Public outreach and engagement should consider diverse viewpoints and values in decision-making processes and use methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the public, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Translate any outreach and engagement materials that are meant for broad distribution or targeted to limited English proficiency populations and prepare for translation services at in person events (appropriate to the type of event), according to the Transportation Council's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Policy.
- Conduct an equity scan laid out in the [Transportation Council's Environmental Justice/Title VI Analysis](#) (for larger scale planning activities and community planning studies) that will identify disadvantaged populations and allow targeted outreach and engagement to ensure those populations do not bear disproportionately high and adverse effects in the planning process.
- Ensure methods are ADA accessible according to the Transportation Council's [ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan \(ADA Plan\)](#).

Consider the following:

- Consider how various methods are accessible to various communities and demographics, what methods are preferred by communities, and what methods might serve more than one group or community.
- Select a mix of in-person and web-based methods to accommodate those that may be challenged to attend meetings at a particular time and place (shift work, care obligations, physical limitation, social limitation, etc.) or those that may struggle to engage online (internet access issues, digital literacy, etc.).
- Call on ongoing relationships or conduct additional outreach and engagement in the scoping phase if needed to establish what methods are responsive and accommodating for the specific communities in the study area.
- Integrate, or otherwise account for, input from digital and in-person methods that does not privilege one form of input over another.
- Assess engagement and feedback received throughout the public involvement process to identify whether underserved populations are missing or underrepresented and conduct additional/alter targeted outreach and engagement if necessary.

Goal: Effective

Policy: Public outreach and engagement should demonstrate that it is meeting goals and contributing to the decision-making process. Evaluation is the means to understand effectiveness and identify improvements to the process.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Conduct an evaluation that, at minimum, considers the criteria outlined in the [Evaluation section](#) of this document, and possible considerations below.
- To the extent practicable, collect demographic information from participants to understand effectiveness of targeted outreach and engagement.

Possible considerations for evaluations:

- Review and comment on the extent to which public outreach and engagement was conducted in each phase of the planning activity and if there are opportunities for relationships to build, continue, or deepen with community groups and members.
- Review the equity scan to identify if it adequately identified disadvantaged groups, and if there could be improvements to such assessments in the future.
- Review and comment on the extent to which public input shaped each phase of the planning process, particularly key decision points (scoping, purpose statement or other frameworks, outcomes considered and selected, document review, etc.).
- Note if and how any publicly sourced data was collected and used in establishing existing conditions.
- Describe how the public outreach and engagement methods used were inclusive of, and responsive to, underserved communities.
- Note and describe when efforts fell short of expectation and what possible lessons can be drawn.

Engagement Methods and Considerations

Every planning activity-specific PIP will include engagement methods that are suited to the context and conditions of the planning activity. Further, every intersection of this Public Participation Plan's goals and planning phases of a particular planning process will have engagement methods that are more, or less, suited than others.

The following are possible methods to be employed by the Transportation Council, and some considerations to be taken into account for each type.

Meetings

This type of method is specific meetings that are organized for the purpose of gathering input for a specific planning activity. These meetings could include charrettes, poster sessions, open houses, or focus groups.

Considerations

- **Site selection**
 - Proximity to communities identified through the equity assessment to reach underserved populations
 - ADA accessibility
 - Accessibility by transit, walking, biking, and other non-vehicle modes of travel
 - Suitability of meeting type to the targeted community
 - Sensitivity in meeting type to power dynamics (ensuring a few people do not dominate discussion because of personality or position in the community)
 - Availability of wi-fi or other technologies
- **Notification**
 - Adequacy of lead time to allow community members to become aware of the meeting (minimum of 7 days)
 - Reach of various forms of notification (digital and analog media may reach distinct parts of the community)
- **Materials**
 - Ability to gather demographic data of attendees whenever possible
 - Access to internet on site and at home to determine what information to put on which handout materials (QR code card, info sheet, etc.)
 - Comprehensibility to a broad range of people
- **Language accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Policy
 - Availability of translated summary or other materials that are critical for understanding topics being discussed
 - Arrangement of translation services, if warranted

Tabling, Pop Up Events, and Community Events

These methods are in-person events that are smaller in scale than a meeting and typically result in one-on-one conversations. Tabling typically means that the Transportation Council will have representatives at a conference, farmers' market, or other preexisting event. Pop up events are similar to tabling but are Transportation Council organized and are located at places like bus stops, plazas, parks, or other public places. Community events are when the Transportation Council is invited to attend a community meeting or gathering where staff may give a presentation, lead a discussion, or simply be a participant to gather input.

Considerations

- **Selecting opportunities**
 - Proximity to communities identified through the equity assessment to reach underserved populations
 - ADA accessibility
 - Accessibility by transit, walking, biking, and other non-vehicle modes of travel
 - Opportunity to establish or deepen a relationship with a community-based organization
 - Potential reach of an event and/or location
 - Access to specific mode users or those that may not be reachable by traditional means of communication
 - Needed permits or approvals from municipalities, event sponsors, or roadway owners.
- **Materials**
 - Brevity, given the brief nature of most interactions
 - Access to internet on site and at home to determine what information to put on which handout materials (QR code card, info sheet, etc.)
 - Documentation of one-on-one or small group discussions
 - Data standardization for collating and analysis of input (i.e., how will one-on-one conversations be combined with survey results)
- **Language accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Policy
 - Availability of translated summary, handout, or other materials that are critical for understanding topics being discussed
 - Coordination with partners to understand need for translation services

Surveys and Virtual

These methods have a lot of potential to reach people as they do not necessarily require attendance at a particular place and time. Surveys are a straightforward, standardized, and usually simple means of collecting input from a wide range of people. Other forms of virtual engagement that mimic elements of in-person meetings could include virtual workshops, meetings, or presentations. There are also interactive tools like crowdmapping (a form of crowdsourcing) or multi-featured platforms that allow detailed input in forms that can be powerful.

Considerations

- **Demographics**
 - Targeting of appropriate methods to target demographics
 - Collection of standardized demographic data for appropriate comparison to American Community Survey/U.S. Decennial Census data in every method possible
- **Accessibility**
 - Suitability of method for visually and/or hearing impaired
 - Accommodation for those without reliable internet access, to the extent possible
- **Language Accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Policy
 - Availability of translated text, using translation tools and professional resources, where appropriate

Going Deeper

There are many creative, unique, and novel methods of public engagement. A few are listed below, though more can be found in the USDOT's [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#), among other sources. These methods could result in more or deeper engagement than more traditional methods. At the same time, many of these methods do not have long histories, so assessment of the specific context, conditions, and challenges of a planning activity must be taken seriously. Some examples of these methods follow with some considerations.

Considerations

- **Community liaison** – one or more people are hired by the Transportation Council, project sponsor, or consultant to be a local expert in the community to facilitate public engagement.

Can be effective if compensated reasonably for the time they will realistically put in, a liaison can be readily identified, and is trusted/known to the community(ies) targeted.

- **Demonstration projects** – the Transportation Council partners with a roadway owner to use low-cost materials to pilot a short-term design solution (using simple paint to outline a curb extension at an intersection) on a public street.

Allows for new or different designs to be trialed in the real world without much investment, allowing for adjustments, additions, or expedition of implementation with supportive partners, prior engagement and/or education with the community, monitoring and data collection during the project, and post demonstration engagement.

- **Guided audits** – transportation planners walk with community members, groups, and others to note and discuss what transportation infrastructure works in a study area, what does not, and what are possible solutions that make sense in that context.

Allows for a relaxed, wide-ranging discussion that can reveal challenges not previously considered and foster discussion between community members that could build consensus if care is taken to offer the opportunity to a wide range of groups. Include the disability community and advocates, facilitate discussion to be productive, and prepare materials to educate and direct conversation.

- **Curbside conversations** – similar to pop up events, but more casual (possibly involving a couch or other items to create a relaxed environment, with approval/permits as needed from the roadway or facility owner). Planners or community liaisons will engage with people on a sidewalk/pocket park/adjacent to a road, bridge, railroad, or other transportation facility to gather their thoughts on planning activities.

Can have similar advantages to pop ups, though the relaxed setting may bring in those that might not otherwise engage in transportation planning if care is taken to select a comfortable location, recruit community partners to create and staff the

space, plan for capturing and integrating the input, and having appropriate language resources on hand.

How Planning Activities Are Completed

The Transportation Council engages in many planning activities, some of which are central – or core - to its role in planning the federally funded transportation system and have a process to be officially adopted. The Community Planning/Linkage Program, on the other hand, leaves decisions on how to advance the project to the sponsoring community.

Core Planning Activities

All core planning activities require a recommendation from the Planning Committee of the Transportation Council and adoption by the Policy Board to become the official policy, plan, analysis, or program of the organization. The following are the core planning activities for the Transportation Council. Along with a brief description of the activity, information on how often the activity is conducted, the last time it was completed, the next scheduled completion, and the minimum number of days the draft document of the planning activity is to be available for public review.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) - The 20+ year, long term plan for how the Capital Region will invest, manage, and operate the transportation system to reach economic, sustainability, and mobility goals. Directs how federal transportation funds will be spent in the region.

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: September 2020

Next Scheduled Adoption: September 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - The multi-year program of transportation projects that funds the implementation of projects and priorities outlined in the MTP.

Frequency: Every 3 years

Last Adopted: September 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: June 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - The planning work that the Transportation Council will undertake and budget for the fiscal year.

Frequency: Every year

Last Adopted: March 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: March 2024

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Congestion Management Process (CMP) - Articulates a process for identifying, measuring, and addressing regional congestion and evaluating strategy effectiveness.

Frequency: Process update every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2028

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) - Plan for the transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low income via public transportation and human service transportation providers.

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2028

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Air Quality Conformity Analysis - The analysis of regional air quality and how new projects using federal funds will affect it under the Clean Air Act.

Frequency: Concurrent with adoption of MTP and TIP

Last Adopted: September 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: June 2025

Minimum Public Review: 30 days

Environmental Justice/Title VI Analysis - An evaluation of the Transportation Council's planning projects and programs to ensure that both positive and negative impacts of transportation planning are fairly distributed, and that Environmental Justice and Title VI populations do not bear disproportionately high and adverse effects.

Frequency: After adoption of the TIP

Last Adopted: January 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Public Participation Plan (PPP) - Articulates the baseline standards for outreach, public engagement, and communication for the Transportation Council's meetings and planning activities.

Frequency: Every 2 years

Last Adopted: April 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: March 2024

Minimum Public Review: 45 days

Community and Transportation Linkage Program Studies

The Community and Transportation Linkage Program is a Transportation Council funded program that partners with municipalities in the Capital Region to prepare community-based transportation studies and land use plans in alignment with the MTP. There are typically several Community Planning/Linkage Program studies underway at any time. Status information of current studies is presented at every Planning Committee and Policy Board meeting.

Once an individual study is completed, further action is at the discretion of the study sponsor. The Transportation Council has no further interaction with the study unless the municipality (or municipalities) or other sponsor requests to undertake additional feasibility studies. Planning studies with regional significance can be considered for specific inclusion in the MTP. If a study is to become part of the MTP, the study would be treated as if it were an MTP amendment, with a Planning Committee recommendation and 25-day public review necessary before Policy Board approval.

How are Adopted Documents Revised?

The documents of planning activities will often need to be revised in some way before their next adoption. The planning documents can be revised in technical or clerical ways, or in substantial ways that alter the original planning activity. While the specific definition of the revision terms can be found in each relevant planning activity document, generally:

- Administrative modification: a minor revision including minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates, etc. (ex. [TIP administrative modifications](#)) that does not require public review.
- Amendment: a revision that involves a larger change including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, a major change in design concept or design scope, etc. that does require public review.

The public will have the opportunity to review the revisions in proportion to the scale of the revision, according to the table below:

Activity & Revision Type	Transportation Council Staff/ Sponsor/NYS DOT	Planning Committee	Policy Board	Revision Review Period
MTP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days
TIP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Minor Amendment		x		7 days
Major Amendment		x	x	25 days
UPWP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days
PPP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days

Note: All revision types will include notification to the Planning Committee and/or Policy Board

For *this* document, the Public Participation Plan,

- Administrative Modifications will be limited to copy edits, clarifications, updating links or contact information, etc.
- Amendments will be larger changes to language that will alter the meaning of provisions in this document from its adopted intention.

Outreach & Meetings at the Transportation Council

Outreach Communication

The Transportation Council strives to use a variety of methods to ensure timely, accessible, accurate, and complete information about its policies, programs, events, and activities. Further, the Transportation Council will continually evaluate methods, scope, and scale of its communications for more innovative, effective, efficient, and accessible means.

- Press Releases – Releases communicate with local media outlets to cover events, meetings, announcements, or other activities that the Transportation Council deems appropriate. The Transportation Council will continually look for new press contacts, outlets, and relationships that appropriately advance a broader reach.
- Website – The Transportation Council maintains and updates a [website](#) that contains relevant information to its activities, events, meeting details and materials, participation opportunities, and documents for review. The website will strive to be relevant to events and activities that are upcoming and ongoing. The website will contain a calendar of events and meetings.
- Newsletter – The Transportation Council’s [newsletter](#) serves as a convenient means of connecting the public to upcoming and ongoing events, meetings, and activities. The newsletter will prioritize Transportation Council activities but may also note other relevant organizations’ activities.
- Social Media – To connect with a broader public, the Transportation Council maintains social accounts to share announcements, events, meetings, and participation opportunities. Currently, the Transportation Council can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- Email – The use of email to connect and inform the public regarding outreach and public participation opportunities will be targeted and limited, mostly meeting participants or other targeted stakeholders that have had contact with the Transportation Council.

Social Media Outreach and Engagement Policy

- Social media posts and content development will be the responsibility of the staff person(s) assigned by the Executive Director. The Executive Director will make a final determination on any items that may be questionable as related to this policy.
- The most appropriate use of Transportation Council social media is to provide relevant, timely, and informative content to the public.
- Information received by social media users in the form of comments, replies, direct messages, tags, or mentions will not be considered official public comments. This information will be treated as feedback and discussion and summarized, when necessary, for the Transportation Council Policy Board, Planning Committee, advisory committees, or planning activity.
- The Transportation Council will moderate conversation on its social media and delete comments that violate the stated terms for appropriate use to the extent practicable. Comments received containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:
 - Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments
 - Comments that threaten or defame any person or organization
 - Solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency
 - Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
 - Multiple off-topic posts by a single user
 - Repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users
- The Transportation Council will share articles, websites, or online information produced by other sources related to its projects and tasks. The Transportation Council shares these items as “information only” and does not endorse, support, or have responsibility for the accuracy of these items.

Transportation Council Public Meetings

The public is welcome to participate with the following public bodies of the Transportation Council at their meetings:

Policy Board

The highest decision-making body of the MPO, is comprised of 25 voting members including local elected officials (or their designees) from four counties, eight cities, three towns and villages, and officials and transportation agency representatives from the New York State Department of Transportation, the Capital District Transportation Authority, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the New York State Thruway Authority, the Albany Port District Commission, and the Albany County Airport Authority.

Meetings are usually held at 3pm on the first Thursday of March, June, September, and December.

Planning Committee

The Policy Board's delegated decision-making body to develop recommendations about transportation plans and programs on their behalf. The Planning Committee is usually the technical staff, like planners and engineers, for the government agencies and municipalities represented on the Policy Board.

Meetings are usually held once in those months when the Policy Board does not meet, usually on the first Wednesday at 9:30am.

Advisory Committees

Committees have been established by the Transportation Council's Policy Board to allow for professional and public input into the region's transportation planning process. They are ongoing forums led by Transportation Council staff open to anyone interested in participating. The current advisory committees are:

- Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) – Discusses topics related to bicycling, walking, micromobility (i.e., e-scooters, bike share, etc.), and other forms of active transportation.
- Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) – Discusses topics related to truck and rail freight.

- Regional Operations and Safety Advisory Committee (ROSAC) – Discusses topics related to congestion management, transportation system operations, security, and safety.
- Human Services Transportation Advisory Committee (HSTAC) – Discusses topics related to the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes.
- Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) – Discusses topics related to Environmental Justice and Title VI.

Advisory Committees usually meet quarterly, specifics can be found on our [calendar of events](#).

Ways the public can participate in these meetings:

- **Review meeting agenda and materials** posted on the Transportation Council website one week prior to the meeting.
- **View meetings** which are broadcast live, recorded, and made available on our YouTube Channel.
- **Submit written comments** by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Register to speak** during the public comment agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, also by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Request for aids, services, or reasonable accommodation** to attend the meeting in person, call (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org at least **48 hours** prior to the meeting.

Meeting Notice

Meeting dates will be published on the Transportation Council website at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Meeting dates shall also be published in the Transportation Council's newsletter, and social media outlets. Policy Board and Planning Committee meetings will also have a press release issued no less than a week prior to the meeting.

Evaluation

The fourth and final goal identified in this Plan is Effective. To understand if the Transportation Council's Public participation efforts are effective, it is vital to evaluate our plans, strategies, methods, and tactics.

Public Involvement Plans

Every planning activity-specific PIP will include an evaluation of the public outreach and engagement efforts employed during the planning activity after its completion. This evaluation will address:

- Overview of quantitative metrics and qualitative objectives,
- Discussion of goals met,
- Discussion of any goals not met and a best understanding as to why, and
- Lessons learned and/or suggestions for future improvement for planning activities.

Community Planning Studies

Transportation Council staff will complete a brief evaluation of public participation efforts conducted during the study based on the same criteria as above.

Annual Public Participation Evaluation

In addition to the evaluation of PIPs, the Transportation Council will evaluate its overall public participation efforts each year. The annual evaluation report will include:

- An analysis of the activity-specific public participation plans completed that year
- Overview of quantitative metrics and qualitative objectives for public outreach and engagement not related to a specific planning activity
- Discussion of goals met by overall public participation activities
- Discussion of any goals not met by overall public participation activities for the year and a best understanding as to why, and
- Lessons learned and/or suggestions for future improvement to this Plan or other structural changes.

The metrics and consideration outlined below are meant as a starting place for evaluation and the Transportation Council is committed to refining them to better reflect effectiveness of public outreach and engagement efforts.

Quantitative Metrics

While no set of metrics is comprehensive, the following metrics and goals are defined to establish a basis for comparison:

Activity Type	Quantitative metric
In-person events	Number of events by type Attendance Number of comments/responses and interactions
Surveys & comments	Number of survey responses Number of comments
Newsletter	Number of subscribers Number of opens and click throughs
Website	Number of unique page views/users
Press releases & media mentions	Number of press releases Number of media mentions
Social Media	Number of posts Number of new followers Number of impressions Number of users reached Engagement rate
Equity analysis of attendees & participants	Comparison of the demographics of the region/study area to that of the attendees and participants in public engagement activities based on voluntary survey responses.

Annual Goals

The Transportation Council sets the goal to meet or exceed each metric from the prior year, with consideration of the number and scale of the planning activities completed in each year. The exception will be the equity analysis metric, which will have the goal to meet or exceed the demographic proportionality for the region or study area.

Qualitative Objectives

While quantitative metrics are important, they often leave out information that is difficult or impossible to quantify. To attempt to define some of these more elusive aspects of public participation effectiveness, the following qualitative objectives should be addressed in the annual evaluation report:

- Public input had an impact on the outcomes of planning activities and processes,
- Adequate notice was given for events,
- Public input was considered throughout planning processes, and
- Relationships with equity communities were established, expanded, deepened, and/or continued.

The annual evaluation report should provide evidence that they have been achieved, progress has been made, or describe our best understanding as to why efforts fell short.

Appendix I: Limited English Proficiency Plan

The Transportation Council is working on updating its [Limited English Proficiency Plan](#). Upon completion it will appear here.