

Draft Public Participation Plan



Draft for Public Review

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CAPITAL REGION
Transportation
Council

1 Park Place, Suite 101
Albany, New York 12205
Phone: (518) 458-2161
Fax: (518) 729-5764
Email: info@capitalmpo.org
Website: www.capitalmpo.org

Disclaimer

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Title VI and Nondiscrimination Policy 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, or national origin as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d). Additionally, the Transportation Council will provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The Transportation Council is also committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its transportation planning process on the basis of sex, age, or disability as protected by Section 162 (a) of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 (23 U.S.C. § 324), the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

If information is needed in another language, contact 518-458-2161 or send an e-mail to info@capitalmpo.org.

Si se necesita información en otro idioma, llame al teléfono 518-458-2161 o bien enviando un correo electrónico a info@capitalmpo.org.

如欲获得其他语言的相关信息，请联系：518-458-2161，或发送电子邮件至：
info@capitalmpo.org。

أو إرسال 518-458-2161 إذا كنت بحاجة إلى المعلومات بلغة أخرى، فيرجى التواصل مع الرقم
رسالة بريد إلكتروني إلى info@capitalmpo.org.



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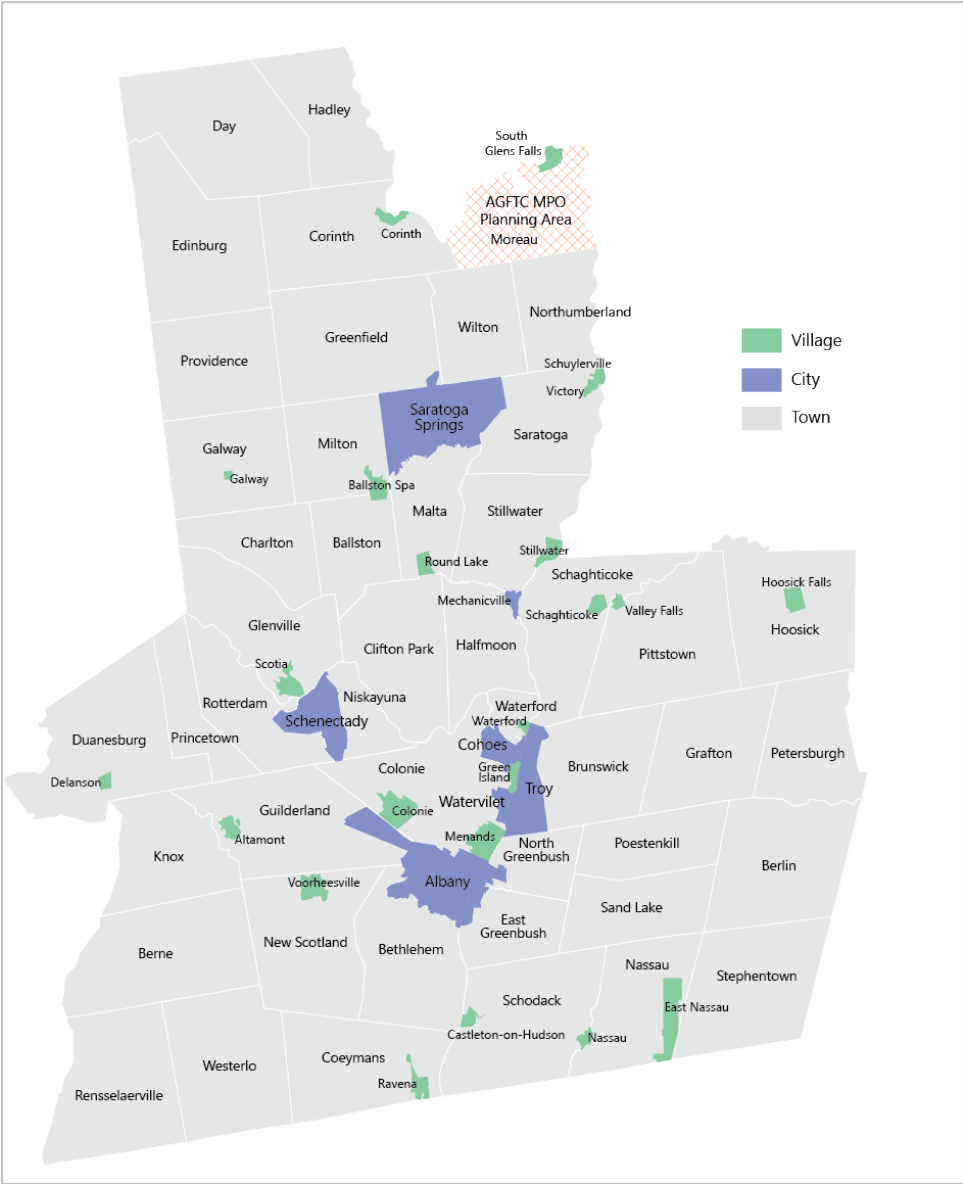
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About the Capital Region Transportation Council

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.

Transportation Council Planning Area Map



Glossary

Term	Meaning
Capital Region	The Transportation Council’s four-county planning area of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady, excluding the Town of Moreau and Village of South Glens Falls.
Crowdsourcing	The gathering of ideas, opinions, and comments to address a need or problem by enlisting the services of a large number of people via technology.
IIJA	The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) set federal transportation policy and funding from November 2021 through September 30, 2026.
Limited English Proficiency	Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language and have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English.
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 one of fourteen MPOs in New York State.
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 safety, mobility, access, livability, and resilience goals. The current plan is In Motion: The Plan to 2050.
Planning Committee	The Policy Board’s delegated decision-making body to develop recommendations about transportation plans, programs, and projects on their behalf. Members are 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, 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 Transportation Council requests input from community members about an issue, problem, opportunity, or decision, and community members share their thoughts, ideas, and feedback.
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”, the law prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, including all Transportation Council activities.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATAC	Active Transportation Advisory Committee
CDTA	Capital District Transportation Authority
CMP	Congestion Management Process
FAC	Freight Advisory Committee
HSTAC	Human Services Transportation Advisory Committee
IIJA	Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
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	Unified Planning Work Program

Executive Summary

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) developed this Public Participation Plan to articulate its guiding principles for public participation in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The methods identified are drawn from legal requirements, local knowledge, and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement. While the Transportation Council intends to meet these goals in all its planning work, achieving these goals will be an iterative process of improvement.

The Transportation Council is committed to a public participation process that is:

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 of 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.

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 and studies funded through the Community Planning/Linkage Program. 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, must go through 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. These methods include press releases, the Transportation Council's website, newsletter, social media, and email.

Additionally, the public is welcome to attend Policy Board and Planning Committee meetings and may actively participate in Advisory Committee meetings. Dates and times of upcoming meetings are available on the Transportation Council's website.

How the public can participate in these meetings:

- **Review meeting agendas 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 the Transportation Council's 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.
- **Requests for aids, services, reasonable accommodations, or oral interpretation** for Transportation Council public meetings can be made by calling (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 ongoing participation efforts and activity-specific Public Involvement Plans with both quantitative metrics and qualitative objectives that reflect how well the goals were met and any lessons learned.

Introduction

What is the Public Participation Plan?

The Public Participation Plan is a federally mandated document that guides outreach activities and provides the baseline standards for how the Transportation Council will engage with the public. 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 possible methods the Transportation Council will 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, non-profit 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.

Framing Public Participation

The Transportation Council strives to ensure opportunities and resources for public participation are distributed in a manner that is impartial, without favoritism or discrimination. To build a Public Participation Plan for a Metropolitan Planning Organization like the Transportation Council, the following serve as a starting point:

- **Title VI and Civil Rights:** The Transportation Council shall not exclude anyone from participation in, deny them the benefits of, or subject them to discrimination under any program/activity receiving Federal monies on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987). Other statutes designate additional legally protected classes, specifically age, sex, and disability (Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, 23 USC

Section 324, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/ADA of 1990, respectively). The Transportation Council's Title VI plan covers how these policies relate to the organization.

- **Traditionally Underserved:** Per federal regulations¹, the Transportation Council is committed to 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. Public engagement with traditionally underserved groups requires continual evaluation, refinement, and/or experimentation.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** The Transportation Council is committed to improving access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency². Languages that constitute 5% of the regional population or 1,000 people, whichever is less, will be provided with meaningful access to core transportation planning materials.
- **Tribal Consultation:** Per federal regulations³, the Transportation Council is encouraged 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) prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability. Title II of ADA applies specifically to all activities of state and local governments, including metropolitan planning organizations such as the Transportation Council, and requires that government entities give people with disabilities equal opportunity to benefit from all of the programs, services and activities that may be offered⁴.

Considering Underserved Groups

When crafting a Public Involvement Plan for any planning work conducted by or for the Transportation Council, it is expected that staff will begin by asking and seeking answers to the following, non-exhaustive list of questions:

¹ 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1)(vii) [https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/part-450/section-450.316#p-450.316\(a\)\(1\)\(vii\)](https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/part-450/section-450.316#p-450.316(a)(1)(vii))

² Transportation Council Limited English Proficiency Plan: https://www.capitalmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/LEP_Plan2023_022824_PB.pdf

³ 23 CFR 450.316 <https://www.gsa.gov/real-estate/section-106-of-the-national-historic-preservation-act> <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-23/section-450.316>

⁴ https://www.capitalmpo.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/CDTC_Self_Evaluation.pdf and <https://www.ada.gov/topics/title-ii/>

- What groups that have been traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems are present in the area of interest? Who might have missed out on past conversations?
- What 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 will be the most effective and culturally informed methods of communication to reach the groups identified?
- What methods of participation will be most 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 those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems?
- Considering the area of interest, the nature of the project, and the traditionally underserved groups present, who else can be consulted to help answer these questions?

Public Participation Plan Goals

The goals of this plan are an articulation of the Transportation Council's guiding principles for public participation. They are drawn from legal requirements, local knowledge, and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement. While the Transportation Council intends to meet these goals in all its planning work, achieving these goals will be an iterative process of improvement.

The Transportation Council is committed to a public participation process that is:

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 of 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.

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 creative strategies are encouraged to improve efforts.

Public Participation in the Transportation Council Planning Process

To attain the goals of this plan, the Transportation Council will develop a custom Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each of the core planning activities listed below. Each PIP will address how each goal 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, including challenges that affect attainment of each goal. The core planning activities that will have a PIP are:

- 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 may be coordinated with those of the TIP or MTP if occurring at the same time)
- Public Participation Plan (PPP)

All studies funded by the Transportation Council, including regional-scale plans and studies funded through the Community Planning/Linkage Program, are also expected to create a PIP specific to the context of each study. Final study reports 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 Public Involvement Plan will lay out the public outreach and engagement efforts to be carried out in support of the PPP's four goals. The plan will describe the particular strategies, methods, and/or tactics that respond to the specific circumstances under which the planning activity will be conducted. The PIP will also establish a schedule for each method and/or tactic to be deployed.

Since these factors are necessarily different for each planning activity, each PIP will look different. For example, the PIP for an MTP will be very large in scale and scope, but the PIP for the UPWP will be much smaller in scale and scope. While no specific format is required, a planning activity PIP should be clear as to what public outreach and engagement activities are happening at each stage of the planning process, and how

the goals of this Plan are being met. Planning activity PIPs, with the exception of the evaluation portion, should be completed as early in the planning process as is feasible.

Reaching 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 each goal in the development of a PIP for a planning activity.

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 of the planning activities of the Transportation Council.

Goal: Continuous

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will 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.
- Allow minimum public review of draft final documents as described in [Adoption of Planning Activities and Public Review](#).

Consider the following:

- Review previous planning studies, plans, surveys, or other data sources for indications of community concern impacting scope, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
- Explore ways to incorporate public input into data collection, such as interactive mapping or other crowdsourcing data collection methods, if possible.
- 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.
- Identify strategies to ensure that public engagement efforts help shape the vision(s), concepts, projects, etc. being considered as possible outcomes of the planning activity.
- Reach out to community members and organizations with existing relationships with the Transportation Council, or establish new relationships, 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).
- Identify opportunities to continue relationships with community groups, institutions, or members following completion of the planning activity (i.e., add to newsletter distribution, attend meetings, inform about advisory committees, etc.).

Goal: Thorough

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will reach as broad of an audience as possible through a variety of methods.

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 (i.e., 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, meeting notices, study updates, and opportunities for public engagement. The [engagement methods and communication section](#) outlines some methods and considerations.
- Develop summaries, visualizations (i.e., maps, StoryMaps, infographics, charts, graphs, etc.), and other materials that facilitate understanding of the materials under consideration and review, as appropriate to the activity.

Consider the following:

- Supplement existing data sets, plans, and 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.
- Engage digital and analog media via press release to broaden public outreach.
- Use a variety of methods of engagement that allow for a broad understanding of the issues and tradeoffs being considered.
- Use language that is accessible to a wide audience and balances simplification and education on complex matters.
- Throughout the planning process, employ low-tech modes of outreach (like flyering, mailings, poster, etc.) that 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.
- Provide draft documents to public libraries for in-person review, particularly those documents associated with core Transportation Council planning activities.
- Use creative methods that have the potential to reach people that do not usually participate in transportation planning.

Goal: Inclusive

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will enable diverse viewpoints and values in decision-making processes and use methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the public.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Comply with the [Transportation Council's Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\) Plan](#).
- Identify eligible LEP language groups at the sub-regional level for populations in, and adjacent to, study areas for community planning/linkage program studies to expand opportunities for the public to engage in the planning process.
- Ensure materials and meetings are ADA accessible according to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for Buildings and Facilities as well as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, at the AA level.

Consider the following:

- Call on ongoing relationships or conduct additional outreach at the beginning of the planning activity, if needed, to establish what methods are responsive and accommodating for the specific communities in the study area.
- Translate outreach and engagement materials, draft project documents, and other written materials, as appropriate for languages that constitute 5% of the study area population or 1,000 people, whichever is less, as described in the LEP Plan.
- Evaluate 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 (i.e., individuals with shift work, care obligations, physical limitations, social limitations, etc.) or those that may struggle to engage online (i.e., individuals with internet access issues, digital illiteracy, etc.).
- Integrate, or otherwise account for, input from digital and in-person methods that do not privilege one form of input over another.
- Assess engagement and feedback received throughout the public involvement process to identify whether traditionally underserved populations are missing or underrepresented and alter or conduct additional targeted outreach and engagement if necessary.

Goal: Effective

Policy: Evaluate efforts to assess their effectiveness in achieving broad reach, inclusion, and contribution to the decision-making 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.

Consider the following:

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

Engagement Methods and Considerations

Every PIP will include engagement methods that are suited to the context and conditions of its specific 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.

In-Person Meetings

In-person meetings are organized for the purpose of gathering input for a specific planning activity and could include open houses, poster sessions, charrettes (multi-disciplinary planning workshops), or focus groups.

Considerations

- **Site selection**
 - ADA accessibility is required for in-person meetings organized for projects receiving Transportation Council funding
 - Accessibility by transit, walking, biking, and other non-vehicle modes of travel
 - Proximity to traditionally underserved populations
 - Suitability of meeting type to the demographics of the study area
 - 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
 - Avoidance of locations that sell or provide access to alcohol or cannabis as their primary purpose
- **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 (i.e., QR code card, info sheet, etc.)
 - Comprehensibility to a broad range of people
 - Suitable for all ages
- **Language accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Plan
 - Arrangement of written translation and oral interpretation services, if needed

Tabling, Pop Up Events, and Community Events

These in-person events 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 located at places like bus stops, plazas, parks, or other public places. Community events provide an opportunity for the Transportation Council to give a presentation, lead a discussion, or simply be a participant to gather input.

Considerations

- **Selecting opportunities**
 - 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
 - Proximity to traditionally underserved populations
 - 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
 - Avoidance of locations that sell or provide access to alcohol or cannabis as their primary purpose
- **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 (i.e., 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 one-on-one conversations will be combined with survey results)
 - Suitable for all ages
- **Language accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Plan
 - Arrangement of written translation and oral interpretation services, if warranted
 - Coordination with partners to understand need for written translation and oral interpretation 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 with interactive elements that engage the audience. 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**
 - Appropriate marketing methods to reach target demographics
 - Collection of standardized demographic data for appropriate comparison to American Community Survey/U.S. Decennial Census data if at all practicable
- **Notification**
 - Reach of various forms of notification (different types of digital and analog media may reach distinct parts of the community)
 - Adequacy of lead time to allow community members to become aware of the virtual event (minimum of 7 days)
- **Accessibility**
 - Suitability of, and accommodations for, visually and hearing impaired, particularly with virtual engagement methods
 - Accommodation for those without reliable internet access, to the extent possible
- **Language Accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's LEP Plan
 - 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 methods are listed below and 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.

- **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 a liaison who is trusted/known to the community(ies) can be readily identified and compensated reasonably based on a realistic time investment.

- **Demonstration projects** – The Transportation Council can support projects implemented by other entities to use low-cost materials or to pilot a short-term design solution (for example, using simple paint to outline a curb extension at an intersection) on a public street.

Demonstration projects allow for new or different infrastructure elements to be tested without much investment and with expedition of implementation. They also allow for ongoing adjustments and additions. Additional engagement and/or education with the community, monitoring and data collection during the project, and post demonstration engagement are encouraged.

- **Guided audits or site visits** – 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 have appropriate language resources on hand.

Adoption of Planning Activities and Public Review

The Transportation Council engages in many planning activities, some of which are 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 core planning activities for the Transportation Council, including 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 are listed below.

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

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: September 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - The multi-year program of federally funded transportation projects that implements the priorities of the MTP.

Frequency: Typically, every 3 years; at least every 4 years

Last Adopted: 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 2026

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

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

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) - Identifies transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low income, provides strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

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 2025

Minimum Public Review: 30 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: Typically, every 3 years

Last Adopted: March 2024

Minimum Public Review: 45 days

Community Planning/Linkage Program Studies

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program, also known as the Community Planning/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 Linkage Program studies underway at any time. The status 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 inclusion in the MTP. If a study were to become part of the MTP, the study would be treated as if it were an MTP amendment.

How are Adopted Documents Revised?

Core planning activity documents will likely need revisions before their next adoption. Planning documents can be revised in technical or clerical ways, or in substantial ways that alter the original intent. The public will have the opportunity to review core planning document revisions in proportion to their scale, according to the following Public Review Guidelines for Core Planning Document Revisions.

Public Review Guidelines for Core Planning Document Revisions

Activity & Revision Type	Transportation Council Staff/ Sponsor/NYSDOT Concurrence	Planning Committee Approval	Policy Board Approval	Minimum Review Period
MTP Administrative Modification Amendment	x	x	x	N/A 20 days
TIP Administrative Modification Minor Amendment Major Amendment	x	x x	x	N/A 5 days 10 days
UPWP Administrative Modification Amendment	x	x	x	20 days
PPP Administrative Modification Amendment	x	x	x	N/A 45 days
Air Quality Conformity Administrative Modification Amendment	x	x	x	N/A 30 days
Other Core Planning Documents Administrative Modification Amendment	x	x	x	N/A 20 days

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

MTP Revisions:

- Administrative Modifications – Limited to copy edits, clarifications, hyperlink updates, etc. that do not require public review.
- Amendments – Changes to the core content of the MTP including alterations to project lists, funding assumptions, policy adjustments, etc. requiring public review.

TIP Revisions:

Changes to TIP project listings are defined in the adopted Transportation Council [TIP Administrative Modification & Amendment Guidelines](#). Changes to TIP document text outside of project listings may be revised as follows:

- Administrative Modifications – Limited to copy edits, clarifications, hyperlink updates, etc. that do not require public review.
- Amendments – Changes to the core content of the TIP document including funding assumptions, policy adjustments, etc. requiring public review.

UPWP Revisions:

- Administrative Modifications – Limited to copy edits, clarifications, hyperlink updates, minor budget revisions (those less than \$50,000), etc. that do not require public review.
- Amendments – Changes to the core content of the UPWP including addition or deletion of a planning task, changes in funding between planning tasks or grant budget shifts of \$50,000 or more, etc. requiring public review.

Public Participation Plan (PPP) Revisions:

- Administrative Modifications - Limited to copy edits, clarifications, updating hyperlinks 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.

Air Quality Conformity Revisions:

- Administrative Modifications - Limited to copy edits, clarifications, updating hyperlinks or contact information, etc.
- Amendments will be changes to project lists, particularly non-exempt transportation projects that affect air quality conformity, and larger changes to language that alter the meaning of 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 (www.capitalmpo.org) that contains relevant information on its activities, events, and meeting details, as well as materials, participation opportunities, and documents for review. 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 media accounts to share announcements, events, meetings, meeting recordings, and participation opportunities. Currently, the Transportation Council can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [YouTube](#).
- Email – The use of email to connect and inform the public regarding outreach and public participation opportunities will be targeted and limited, mostly to 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 from 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 for the Transportation Council's staff.
- 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, and 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 in the following Transportation Council meetings:

Policy Board

The highest decision-making body of the Transportation Council, 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 Planning Committee has been delegated decision-making authority by the Policy Board to develop recommendations about transportation plans and programs. The Planning Committee is usually the technical staff, such as planners and engineers, for the government agencies and municipalities represented on the Policy Board.

Meetings are usually held once per month in those months when the Policy Board does not meet, usually on the first Wednesday of the month.

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 and 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.

Advisory Committees generally meet quarterly. See the [calendar of events for specific meeting dates and times](#).

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 the Transportation Council 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.
- **Requests for aids, services, reasonable accommodations, or oral interpretation** for Transportation Council public meetings, can be made by calling (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: Measuring Effectiveness

The fourth and final goal identified in this Plan is Effective. To understand whether or not a public participation effort is effective, it is vital to evaluate the strategies, methods, and tactics employed by the Transportation Council.

Quantitative Metrics

The following metrics establish a basis for evaluating the effectiveness of public participation efforts. An assessment of these metrics will be included in an annual Public Participation Assessment report. The Transportation Council’s goal is to meet or exceed the quantitative metrics of the prior year, with consideration of the number and scale of the planning activities completed in each year.

Public Participation Assessment Metrics

Activity Type	Quantitative Metric
In-person events	Number of events by type Attendance by event Number of comments and/or interactions, if available
Surveys	Number of survey responses Number of open-ended survey responses received Number of submissions in crowdsourced surveys
Newsletter	Number of subscribers Number of opens and click throughs
Website	Number of unique page views/users Number of crowdsourced points, if applicable
Press releases	Number of press releases
Social media	Number of posts Number of followers Number of post impressions Average post engagement rate
Demographic analysis	Comparison of the demographics of the region/study area to that of the respondents to surveys and meeting attendees, based on voluntary survey responses.

Annual Public Participation Assessment Report

Transportation Council staff will assess its ongoing planning process and public participation efforts, including those of core planning activity and community planning/Linkage Program initiatives once completed, on an annual basis. The annual report will include:

- A discussion of the effectiveness of all core planning activity and community planning/Linkage Program PIPs completed that year.
- A discussion of the effectiveness of ongoing Transportation Council public outreach and engagement, not related to a specific planning activity.
- A summary of the [quantitative metrics](#) for each planning activity completed that year.
- A summary of the quantitative metrics for ongoing Transportation Council public outreach and engagement, not related to a specific planning activity.
- A discussion of the Goals that were not met by that year's overall public participation activities, and a best understanding as to why,
- Lessons learned and/or suggestions for future improvement.

The Transportation Council is committed to refining its public participation efforts based on the findings of the annual assessment.