

# Public Participation Plan

2019

PREPARED BY:

**Overcoming Barriers**

**Strengthening Connections**

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Grand Forks - East Grand Forks  
Metropolitan Planning Organization

**Ensuring Opportunities**

**Planning One Community**

**Presented for  
Consideration to the  
Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Executive Policy Committee**

Warren Strandell	Polk County Commission
Michael Powers	East Grand Forks Planning and Zoning
Bob Rost	Grand Forks County Commission
Jeanie Mock	Grand Forks City Council
Marc DeMers	East Grand Forks City Council
Al Grasser	Grand Forks Planning and Zoning
Chair Clarence Vetter	East Grand Forks City Council
Ken Vein	Grand Forks City Council

**Prepared by:  
Metropolitan Planning Organization  
Staff**

Earl Haugen	Executive Director
Terri Kouba	Senior Planner
Peggy McNelis	Executive Assistant
Neha Patel	Intern

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## OVERVIEW

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization (GF/EGF MPO) developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP) to define principles and strategies for public involvement throughout the transportation planning process. Since 1991, public participation in transportation planning has had a broader scope. Through the years, federal law has been continuously reauthorized with continued, and strengthened, the public involvement standards of transportation planning entities. To guide the preparation of this PPP, the GF/EGF MPO adopted this mission statement:

**To make public participation an integral element of all transportation planning activities.**

To ensure compliance with this statement, this Public Participation Plan has the following goals:

- To provide a proactive public involvement process
- To provided complete information associated with transportation planning and programming
- To provide timely public notice; and
- To provide full public access to key decisions.

These goals support early and continuing involvement of citizens, public agencies, transportation agencies, operators of major transportation systems, and other interested parties affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects. The PPP will foster an intermodal approach to transportation planning, in that all modes of transportation are considered.

In March 2006, the MPO received a completed FHWA review including recommendations and commendations of all ND MPOs and the state DOT. Other reviews occurred in 2011 and 2015. Each FHWA review is a key basis for updates of the PPP.

## **GRAND FORKS/EAST GRAND FORKS METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (GF/EGF MPO)**

Established in 1982, the GF/EGF MPO is the federally assisted metropolitan planning organization serving the City of Grand Forks in Grand Forks County, North Dakota; and the City of East Grand Forks in Polk County, Minnesota (Figure 1). The GF/EGF MPO is responsible for fulfilling the federally and state mandated planning requirements needed in order for the Grand Forks/East Grand Forks area to receive federal funding for federal transportation facility construction projects and transit operation.

Federal regulations require MPOs to develop documents in order to receive federal transportation funds: an Unified Planning Work Program; a 20-year multi-modal Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), and a Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP). The Metropolitan Transportation Plan consists of both long-range and short-range goals/strategies that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. Under FAST requirements, the plan must consider ten (10) factors in determining the social, economic, and environmental goals of the region, as well as the impact of transportation on achieving those goals.

These are the ten (10) factors:

- 1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- 2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- 3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- 4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- 5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- 6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- 7) Promote efficient system management and operation;
- 8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
- 9) Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- 10) Enhance travel and tourism.



The GF/EGF MPO's organizational structure includes an Executive Policy Committee comprised of representatives from:

- the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Planning Commissions;
- the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks City Councils; and
- Grand Forks County and Polk County (Figure 2).

The Executive Policy Committee appoints the Executive Director, who is the chief administrative officer and technical advisor of the MPO. The director, in cooperation with GF/EGF MPO staff creates a Unified Work Program, Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), and Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP).

A Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) assists and advises the MPO staff and Executive Policy Board by providing an advisory committee of professional planners and engineers. TAC members review Transportation Plans, TIPs, and additional plans/updates/studies prior to approval by the MPO (Figure 3).

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Transportation Plan is currently comprised of three elements: street and highway plan, transit development plan and the bicycle and pedestrian plan. A key objective of all plans includes engaging the public in preparation of the plan through a variety of methods. These elements are part of the respective Cities' of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Comprehensive Plans. The GF/EGF MPO reviews and updates each of these elements at least every five years to confirm their validity and consistency with current and forecasted transportation and land use conditions/trends, in addition to extending the forecast period.

The TIP is a short-term transportation programming document that is prepared every year by the GF/EGF MPO and submitted to the North Dakota and Minnesota Departments of Transportation. All transportation projects proposed for federal funding, or are regional significant, or need a federal action, in the next four years must be included in the TIP. At minimum, the TIP must be revised every four years.

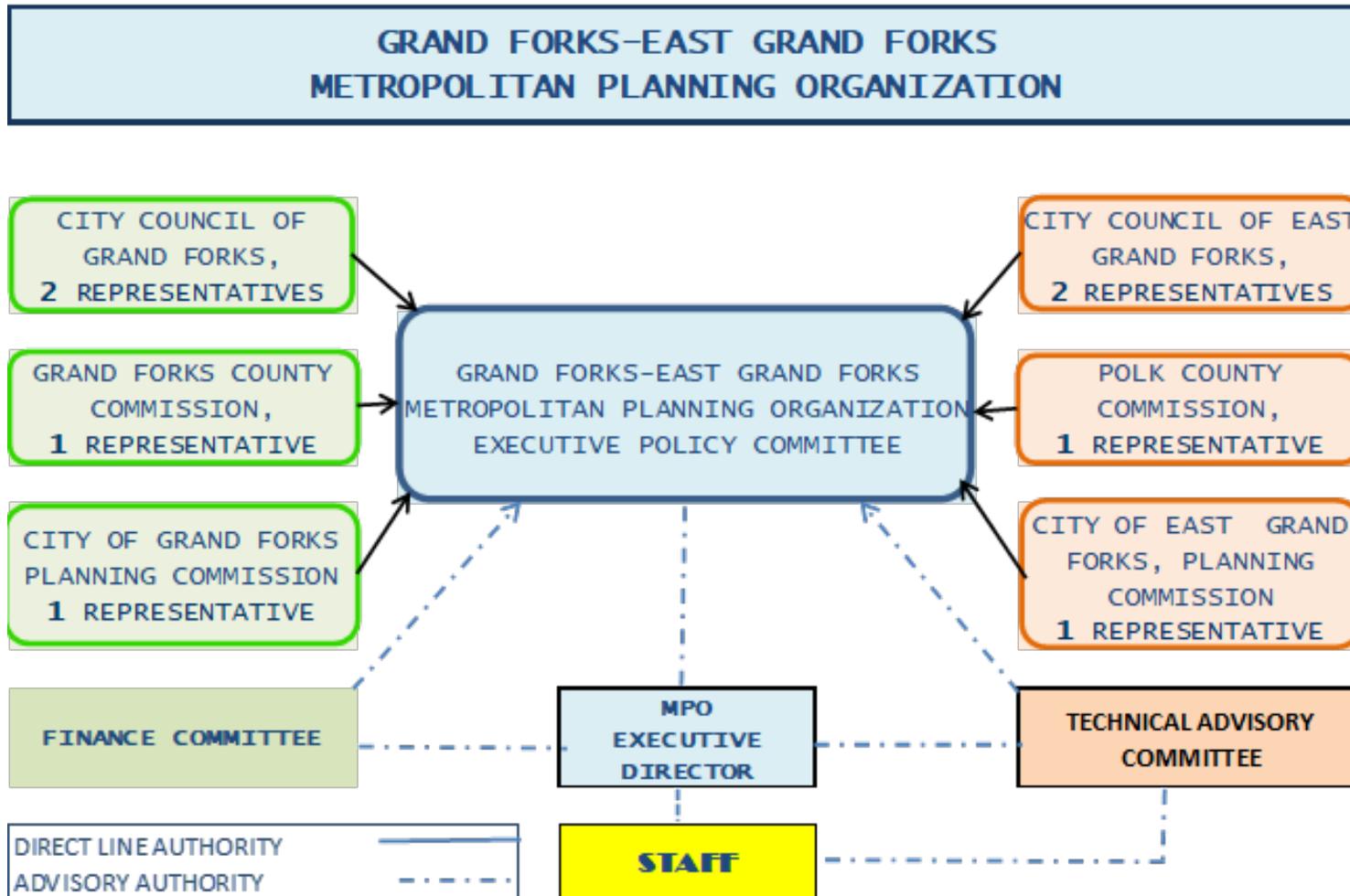


Figure 2: MPO Organizational Chart

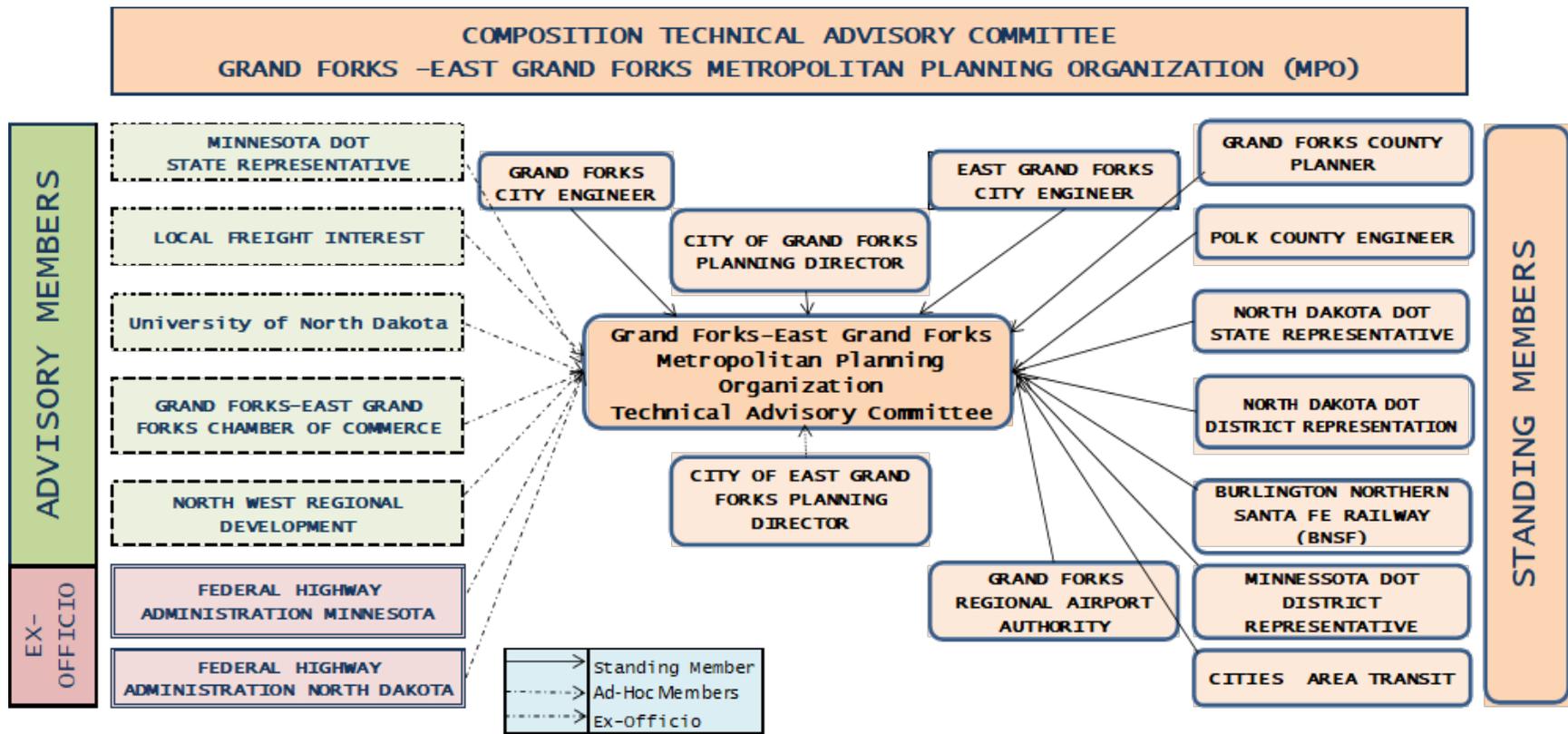


Figure 3: Technical Advisory Committee Makeup

## II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

### FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

The MPO public participation process follows the six (6) useful elements in planning for effective public involvement according to guidance by the FHWA are:

1. Clearly defined purpose and objectives for initiating a public dialogue on transportation plans, programs, and projects
2. Identification of specifically who the affected public and other stakeholder groups are with respect to the plan(s), program(s), and project(s) under development
3. Identification of techniques for engaging the public in the process
4. Notification procedures which effectively target affected groups
5. Education and assistance techniques which result in an accurate and full public understanding of the transportation problem, potential solutions, and obstacles and opportunities within various solutions to the problem
6. Follow through by public agencies demonstrating that decision makers seriously considered public input.

Regulations call for coordination between the public participation process for statewide planning and the public involvement procedures followed by each MPO. The purpose was to enhance public involvement in the issues, plans, and programs, in addition to reducing redundancies and costs. The intent was not simply to encourage public input, but to foster full public participation in MPO decision-making processes. The Memorandum of Understanding among the MPO, State and Transit operators more specifically identifies the respective coordination in public participation. Per the Memorandum of Understanding regarding the transportation planning process, the public participation process described herein is used to satisfy the public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP) for the following transit operators: City of Grand Forks , North Dakota and City of East Grand Forks, Minnesota operating together under Cities Area Transit (CAT).

Metropolitan planning organizations are required to allow at least 45 days for comment before the public involvement process is adopted or revised. Furthermore, public involvement procedures must be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all.

In accordance with federal law, this Public Participation Plan is developed in consultation with interested parties and allows for reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment. These parties will have an opportunity to comment prior to approval of the Plan

To carry out the participation plan, public meetings are to be conducted at easily accessible locations at convenient times. Meetings will also employ visualization techniques to describe plans and make public information available in an electronically accessible format,

such as on the MPO website (<http://www.theforksmpo.org>).

Federal legislation has expanded over the years by including encouragement for MPO's to "consult or coordinate" with other types of planning officials affected by transportation. These parties may be involved in planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations or shipping and freight movement. The legislation also requires the MPO to promote consistency between transportation improvements and state and locally planned economic development patterns. Elements of transportation and security of the transportation system are also separate planning factors need to be considered during the MPO planning process. Lastly, the planning factors now include sustainability and enhancing tourism.

#### **TITLE VI OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACT**

The public participation process must comply with the requirements of Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the Title VI assurance under 23 U.S.C. 324 and 29 U.S.C. 794. The basic requirement of these Titles is to ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving federal assistance. See the MPO's Title VI documents for more details

#### **ADA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS**

The public participation process must also comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA). The ADA mandates that all public materials, meetings/hearings, and facilities are made fully accessible to all members of the public on an equal basis.

#### **PRIVATE SECTOR REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to the above requirements, the public participation process must also comply with the private sector requirements as outlined in 49 United States Code 5306(a), which requires that MPO's "shall encourage to the maximum extent feasible the participation of private enterprise." See the MPO's Private Sector Participation Plan for more details

#### **LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to the above requirements, the public participation process must also comply with the limited English proficiency requirements as outlined in Executive Order 13166, which requires that MPO's ensure discrimination does not occur due to a person's lack of ability to fully understand English. See the MPO's LEP Plan for more details.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE REQUIREMENTS**

In addition to the above requirements, the public participation process must also comply with the environmental justice requirements as outlined in Executive Order 12898, which requires that MPO's ensure minority and/or low income populations are not discriminated against. See the MPO's Environmental Justice Manual for more details.

## **II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization has long believed in fostering public participation early and often in the planning process. The GF/EGF MPO has actively involved the public through a number of methods. Examples have included public meetings to inform how a particular study was progressing and public hearings to formally obtain public input.

In order to support the GF/EGF MPO's commitment to equally involve the public early and often in the planning and project development process, a cohesive, comprehensive public participation plan was developed. The following mission statement has been adopted by the GF/EGF MPO as an overall guide in the preparation of the goals and strategies that follow.

### **MISSION STATEMENT:**

**To make public participation an integral element of all transportation planning activities.**

This statement defines the overall desired result of the GF/EGF MPO's Public Participation Plan. However, standing alone it does not produce any results. Goals were established to identify approaches to achieve the desired results. These goals are the foundation upon which the PPP is built. The goals address specific requirements defined by federal regulations and the desires of the GF/EGF MPO.

To develop a system to measure the progress of these goals, a series of objectives were established for each individual goal. Achieving each objective will enable the GF/EGF MPO to make public participation a truly integral element of all of its transportation planning activities. Under each objective is a standard that can be followed to specifically ensure the objective is effectuated. These standards should be viewed as minimally acceptable; efforts will be made to exceed them in so far as it is practical.

The adopted goals, objectives, and standards are outlined in detail below.

**GOAL:** Provide a proactive public participation process in all transportation planning activities.

**Objective:** Follow the Public Participation Plan (PPP)

**Objective:** Notify the following parties to provide recommendations for PPP prior to completion of draft:

Environmental Experts	Airport Operators
Private Transit Operators	Affected Public Agencies
Representatives of the Disabled	Bicycle, Pedestrian Representatives
Representatives of Senior Citizens	Historic Preservation Experts
Transit Users	Economic Development Planners
Transit Employees	Shipping & Freight Companies
Public Transit Operators	Transit Safety & Security Professionals

**Objective:** Allow opportunity to comment on PPP prior to its approval

**Standard:** Publish notice for 45 days citizen public comment period prior to PPP final approval

**Objective:** Seek out all transportation interests, particularly those traditionally under-served such as low-income and minority interests

**Standard:** Communicate with social service and advocacy agencies to help identify and communicate with underserved transportation interests

**Standard:** Maintain a demographic profile of the entire metropolitan planning area that includes identification of locations of socio-economic groups including low-income and minority populations

**Standard:** Compile a list of interests

**Standard:** Employ creative advertising strategies to try to reach these interests, i.e. posting flyers in buses, grocery stores, churches, or other locations that may reach these interests and other methods

**Objective:** Develop effective public participation techniques for each specific planning activity

**Standard:** During the development of the Scope of Work for each specific planning activity, evaluate various techniques and select the appropriate techniques according to activity purpose, geographical area, affected interests, etc.

**Standard:** Monitor effectiveness of techniques during planning activity based upon such items as attendance, responses, complaints, inquiries, etc., and adjust accordingly

**Standard:** Have a variety of meeting locations and times to ensure that those with transportation challenges or work commitments have access to all transportation activities

**Objective:** Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input

**Standard:** Document all responses to public input by development of public input files for each project

**Standard:** Provide verbal or written response to public input, as appropriate, within 10 calendar days of receipt of input or through documentation in the final report

**Standard:** Provide feedback to the public through periodic newsletters, general circulation newspaper inserts, radio programs, telephone hotlines, public access television, or reports or publications describing project or program progression.

**GOAL:** Provide complete information of all transportation planning activities as early and as often as necessary

**Objective:** Maintain an "Open Records" policy, as allowed by law, of all files

**Standard:** Review all laws governing the "openness" of files

- Standard:** Dispose of files as governed by law or acceptable record keeping practices
- Standard:** Provide requested information, as appropriate, within 10 calendar days of receipt of request
- Standard:** Charge reimbursement fee for significant costs of reproducing and retrieving requested records
- Standard:** Provide space in MPO offices for individuals to review documents

**Objective:** Distribute drafts of all documents/material to be discussed at public meetings/hearings to key locations, as appropriate, to be available for public review prior to the meeting/hearing

- Standard:** Distribute to City Halls, libraries, and other appropriate locations
- Standard:** Distribute drafts 5 calendar days in advance (45 days for Public Participation Plan)
- Standard:** Post on official MPO website

**Objective:** If final documents/materials differ significantly from the one that was made available for public comment or raise new material issues which could not reasonably have been foreseen, additional opportunities for public input shall be made available

- Standard:** During the drafting of the Scope of Work for each specific planning activity, make a determination as to what constitutes a "significant difference which could not reasonably be foreseen"
- Standard:** Monitor progress of each specific planning activity to review adequacy of significant change determination and adjust accordingly

**GOAL:** Provide timely public notice, as appropriate, of all meetings/hearings where transportation planning activities will be discussed

**Objective:** Publish notice, as appropriate, in local newspapers in advance of public hearing

**Standard:** Publish notice at least 10 calendar days in advance (45 days for Public Participation Plan)

**Standard:** Avoid *legal notice* format by structuring notices in formats applicable to all interested parties

**Objective:** Distribute press releases, as appropriate, to all local media in advance of meeting/hearing

**Standard:** Distribute at least 10 calendar days in advance of public hearings (45 days for Public Participation Plan)

**Standard:** Distribute at least 5 calendar days in advance of public meetings

**Standard:** Follow up with local media to ensure press releases were utilized by watching for announcements and by documenting reaction to those releases, such as requests for interviews, telephone inquiries, etc.

**Objective:** Mail or e-mail notices, as appropriate, to transportation interests in advance of meetings/hearings

**Standard:** Mail or email notices at least 10 calendar days in advance for public hearings (45 days for Public Participation Plan)

**Standard:** Mail or email notices at least 5 calendar days in advance for public meetings

**Objective:** Develop and maintain official mailing list of continuous transportation interests, program interests (separate for street and highway, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle), and specific project interests

**Standard:** Add citizens requesting to receive mailings

to the official continuous mailing list

**Standard:** Take names and contact information from public hearing/meeting sign-in list to send additional mailings pertinent to specific project approval

**Standard:** Review official mailing list of continuous transportation interests annually by sending notice to all parties to call, mail, or email the MPO to be taken off the list

**Objective:** Consider use of other innovative forms of public engagement (refer to Appendix A)

**Standard:** Employ use of latest social media as these methods could be the most effective, quickest means of communication

**Standard:** Use visualization techniques at public meetings including maps, PowerPoints, digital movies, and handouts

**GOAL:** Provide full public access to key decision points on all transportation planning activities.

**Objective:** Establish points of key decisions during the development of the Scope of Work for each planning activity

**Standard:** During drafting of Scope of Work for each specific planning activity, identify the points of key decisions for that activity

**Standard:** Monitor progress of activity to determine adequacy of identification of key decisions and adjust accordingly

**Objective:** Employ expertise of environmental professionals and sources during transportation planning process

**Standard:** Develop a discussion of potential environmental mitigation activities in Metropolitan Transportation Plan

**Standard:** Consult with federal, state, land

management, and regulatory agencies when creating discussion section

**Standard:** Consult with federal, state and local agencies responsible for land use management, water resource management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation during development of MTP and as needed

**Standard:** Seek out and compare transportation plans with State conservation plans or maps if available

**Standard:** Seek out and compare transportation plans to inventories of natural or historic resources if available

**Objective:** Be consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI assurance under 23 U.S.C. 324 and 29 U.S.C. 794

**Standard:** Ensure no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination

**Standard:** Review MPO policies, practices, and procedures annually to access compliance

**Objective:** Be consistent with Environmental Justice requirements of Presidential Executive Order 12898

**Standard:** As the GF/EGF MPO Environmental Justice Procedural Manual dictates, planners will assess environmental justice at the start of the planning process. The planners will:

- 1) determine benefits to, and potential negative impacts on minority populations and low-income population from proposed investments or actions;

- 2) quantify expected effects (total,

positive and negative) and disproportionately high and adverse effects on minority populations and low-income populations; and

3) determine the appropriate course of action, whether avoidance, minimization, or mitigation.

**Standard:** The fulfillment of the above analytical process will be documented in all MPO planning documents.

**Objective:** Comply with the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and with U.S. DOT regulations "Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities"

**Standard:** Identify both communities ADA Coordinators as the GF/EGF MPO's ADA Coordinators

**Standard:** Include in all notices, press releases, and other appropriate materials a statement informing individuals with special accommodation needs or auxiliary aid to contact the ADA Coordinator

**Standard:** Hold all meetings/hearings in fully accessible buildings/meeting rooms

**Objective:** Periodically review Public Participation Plan to ensure continued full and open access to all

**Standard:** Annually assess PPP for consistency with federal, state and local requirements

**Standard:** Include this annual review as a regular work element in the GF/EGF MPO Annual Unified Work Program

## **III. IMPLEMENTATION**

### **ACTIVITIES COVERED**

The Grand Forks/East Grand Forks Metropolitan Planning Organization undertakes many different planning activities. Although the federal regulations specifically identify the transportation plan and the transportation improvement program for inclusion in the PPP, the GF/EGF MPO's Public Participation Plan will cover the other planning activities as well. Examples of those activities include:

- corridor studies;
- development of the Annual Unified Work Program; and
- the Monitoring and Surveillance Report.

An important distinction needs to be made between planning activities done by the MPO and project design activities undertaken by either the City, the County or the state DOTs. This PPP covers only the former and not the latter.

Because the PPP as adopted by the GF/EGF MPO covers both administrative issues as well as specific planning activities, the implementation will be broken down into four types:

1. General activities;
2. Transportation Plan;
3. Transportation Improvement Program; and
4. Other planning activities.

The implementation for each type is detailed below.

### **GENERAL ACTIVITIES**

These activities are those that are more administrative in nature. Many have already been implemented by the GF/EGF MPO.

#### List of Interests

The GF/EGF MPO has developed lists of groups, agencies, and transportation operators for public input prior to the preparation of transportation plans and program documents. These groups, agencies, and transportation operators, along with the media, will be informed of public meeting to ensure that the public is aware of the GF/EGF MPO's activities and have the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process. Participants included on the list will need to verify each year their desire to remain on the list, by calling in, e-mailing a notice, or sending a letter to the GF/EGF MPO. It is possible that the GF/EGF MPO may request these entities to nominate persons to form special advisory committees to provide expertise in the development of transportation plans.

With the inclusion of certain groups and organizations on mailing lists for public input, the GF/EGF MPO attempts to "seek out and consider" the needs of those traditionally underserved by the existing transportation system. These individuals include, but are not limited to low-income, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and minority populations. In addition, explicit consideration, recognition, and feedback to any public input received during the planning and program development processes must be demonstrated, especially in regards to the underserved.

### Open Records

The GF/EGF MPO periodically reviews the laws governing the accessibility of its files.

In North Dakota, the MPO, as a public entity is subject to the Open Record and Open Meeting laws. To deny access to records, the MPO must explain, within a reasonable time, the legal authority or statute for denying the request. Certain MPO employee personal information may be exempt or confidential. Citizens have a right to open records regardless of the reason.

A request for public records can be made in any manner. The MPO must respond to the request within a reasonable time, either by providing the requested record or by explaining the legal authority for denying all or part of the request. Depending on the amount of records requested, a "reasonable" time could be a couple of hours or a few days. If the MPO is unable to fulfill the request within a reasonable timeframe, it should give the requester an estimate of when the record will be available.

A public entity can only deny access to information for which there is a specific statute closing that information.

### Public Notice

A standard public notice has been developed for use by the GF/EGF MPO. The notice must be published 10 calendar days prior to the event, or 45 days in advance of a Public Participation Plan. The notice should not be used merely as a "cookie cutter." Some consideration must be given to the specific needs of the planning activity the notice will be addressing. There are basic elements of a notice yet can be tailored to address the unique circumstances of each specific planning activity.

Due care shall be taken to ensure that each notice prepared by the GF/EGF MPO include the statement informing all individuals with special accommodation needs or auxiliary aids need to contact the ADA Coordinator.

### Press Release

Drafting a press release for release prior to a meeting is another great example of a method to engage the public. The press release must be released 5 calendar days

in advance of the event.

### Website

The official website of the MPO will be located at <http://www.theforksmmpo.org>. This site contains information on the historical background of the MPO and the entity's primary responsibilities. Contact information for all board members and staff are available, along with upcoming meeting agendas and past meeting minutes. Links are provided for political partners of the MPO, including federal, state, county, and city contacts. Furthermore, each planning document is available for quick and accessible download. Key planning documents highlighted on the site include the Unified Work Program, TIP, MTP and list of annual projects.

The MPO will establish a separate page on the site for each new project. The page will include everything from the beginning Scope of Work to the final plan and recommendations. Press releases, upcoming public hearings, meeting agendas, and any proposed changes will be posted on the project page in a timely manner as available.

As the MPO recognizes the need to serve the underrepresented of the population, links to the MPO website, and plans concerning public transit will be made available on the website of the metropolitan area's public transit operator, Cities Area Transit.

### Consistent with State Public Participation Plans

A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), the mayors of Grand Forks and East Grand Forks, and the MPO in July 2010. This MOU is currently being revised. The purpose of the memorandum is for the member parties to cooperatively undertake a continuing and comprehensive transportation planning and programming process for the metropolitan planning area in order to achieve a common goal.

## **MPO TRANSPORTATION PLAN**

The federal regulations specifically cite a long-range transportation plan and the public participation requirements for MPO's. The MPO maintains a separate MTP Procedure Manual that details the engagement process.

The GF/EGF MPO's transportation plan is actually comprised of three elements: street and highway, alternative modes and intelligent transportation system. Each of these covers a different "long range" and they are updated at a minimum of every five years. Figure 4 illustrates the process that the Transportation Plan goes through during its update.

The common key decision points in each of the transportation plan elements include:

- developing a Scope of Work;
- identifying the issues;
- identifying alternatives;
- evaluating alternatives; and
- approving the preliminary and final drafts.

## Transportation Plan Process

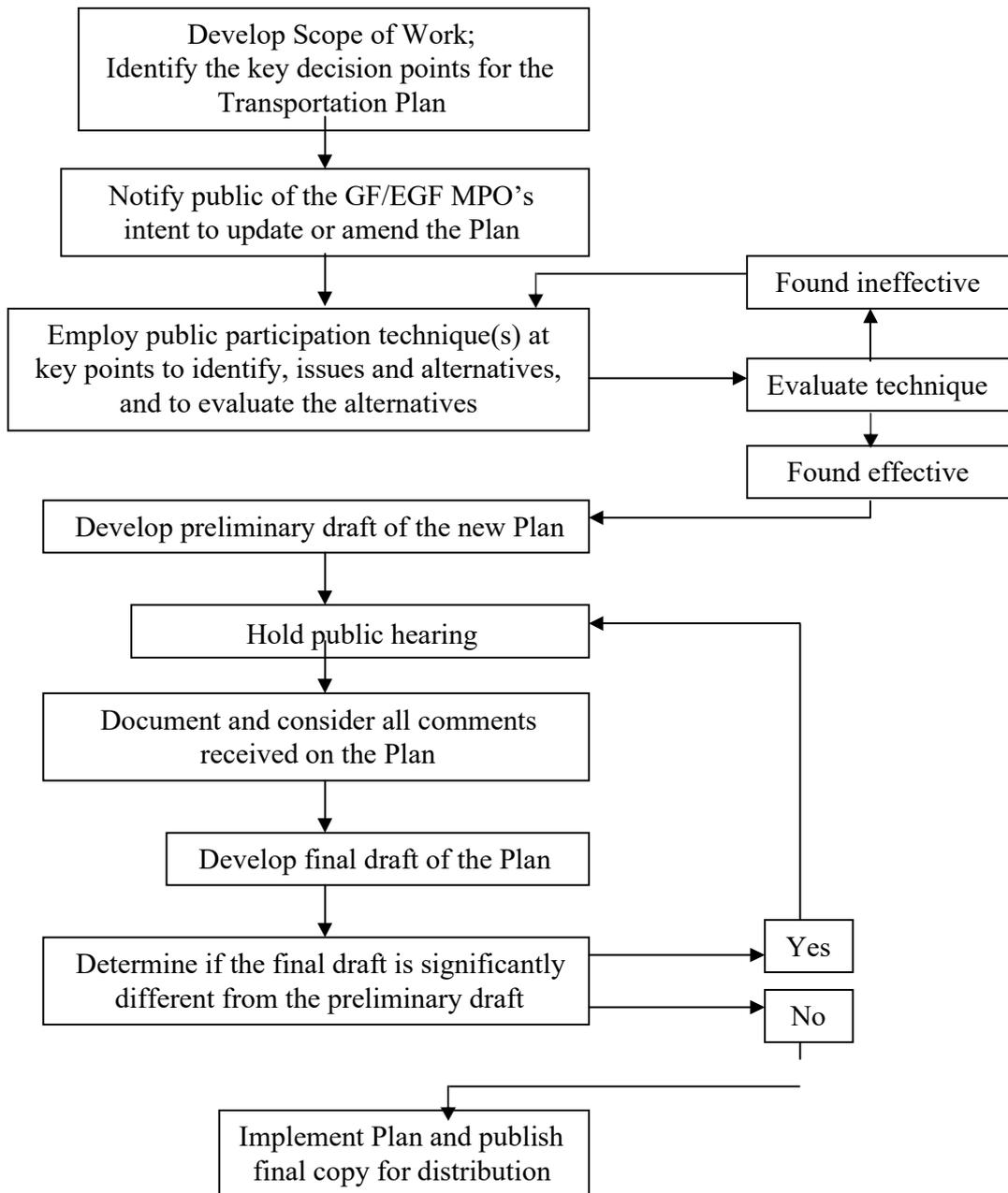


Figure 4: Transportation Plan Update Process

A series of public hearings will be scheduled during the preliminary and final draft approval process of the transportation plan elements. The public hearings will be held concurrent with meetings of the Planning and Zoning Commissions of both cities. A component of the transportation plan approval process includes the formal adoption of the Plan with an amendment to the Grand Forks and East Grand Forks Comprehensive Plans. When adopting amendments to their Comprehensive Plans, both communities are required by state statute to hold public hearings.

### **TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

The federal regulations specifically cite the MPO transportation improvement program (TIP) and the public participation requirements that must be met. The MPO maintains a separate TIP Procedural Manual that details the engagement process in developing the TIP.

Annually, the GF/EGF MPO will prepare a TIP for the next four years. A TIP lists all transportation projects that will be undertaken within the metropolitan area during the years covered by that particular TIP. The first year projects are considered committed projects, which mean they can be expected to be constructed. Second year projects have a significant likelihood of being constructed, but may be moved back due to changes in federal funding levels, prior year cost overruns, subsequent project priority changes, or increases in project costs. Third and fourth year projects are tentative due to variability of second year factors. The TIP covers all street and highway, transit, bikeway, pedestrian, and other significant transportation projects. A diagram illustrating the TIP approval process is shown in Figure 5.

The points of key decisions in the TIP development process include:

- soliciting projects;
- categorizing submitted projects;
- ranking and prioritizing projects; and
- approving the preliminary and final drafts.

## Transportation Plan Improvement Process

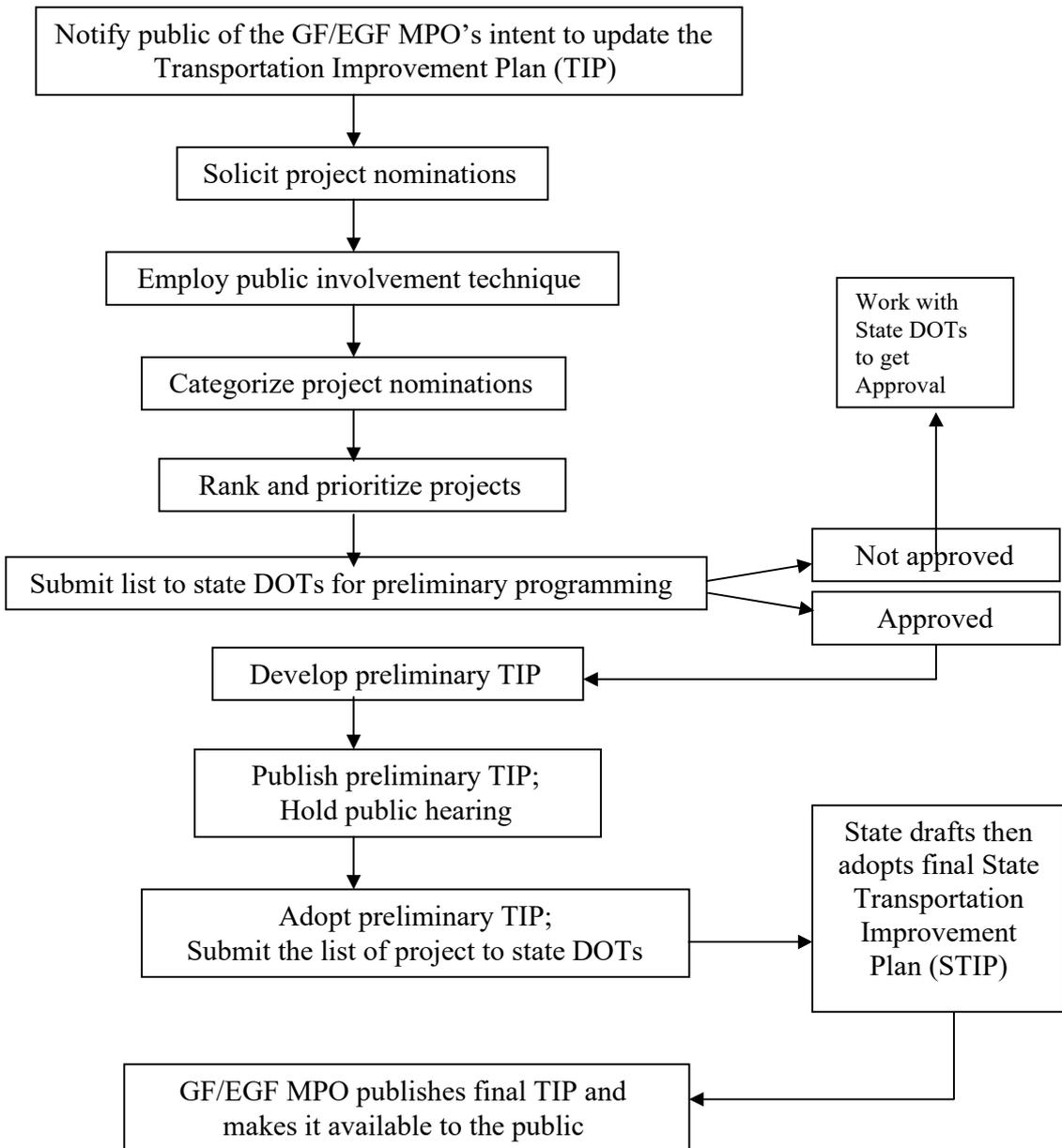


Figure 5: Transportation Improvement Process

## **OTHER PLANNING ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED BY THE GF/EGF MPO**

Each year, the GF/EGF MPO conducts various plans/updates/studies. Examples of these would include corridor studies, Annual Unified Work Program, and Monitoring and Surveillance Report. Upon drafting the Scope of Work for each, the specific public participation plan for the each project will be identified. These specific public participation plans will follow the overall requirements of this PPP.

The points of key decisions will be determined during the specific planning activity's drafting of its scope of work. Each activity will be unique so no common points can be identified in this PPP. However, each specific determination of key decisions will be monitored to evaluate whether additional points are identified and whether additional public input is necessary at those points.

The specific public participation plan will, during the drafting of the scope of work for that specific planning activity, determine the appropriate techniques that will be utilized (Appendix A). A technique may be selected because it:

- meets a particular need and objective of a planning phase;
- is appropriate for the scale of the area or project;
- can reach target publics;
- can be implemented within budgetary and time constraints;
- is compatible with the community's operations, structure, politics, and style.

Also during the drafting of the specific planning activity's scope of work, a determination as to what may constitute a "significant difference" will be made. During the planning activity, the determination will be monitored to ensure that it remains valid. If doubts occur as to whether a change constitutes a significant difference, the GF/EGF MPO normally will require additional input before formal adoption of that change.

The final report for these types of activities will include the public participation process used, the comments received, and the response to the comments.

## IV. CONCLUSION

The MPO makes key decisions with the requirement of citizen involvement. Federal law mandates a higher level of public involvement and provide the opportunity to promote greater awareness and more active involvement in the decision-making process. The law encourages informed public comment by requiring that the agencies provide the public with relevant information regarding plans, programs, and studies well in advance of any public hearings.

In response to the MPO's commitment to organizing its public involvement processes, this Public Participation Plan was adopted. It is the desire of the GF/EGF MPO to make public participation an integral element of all of the transportation planning activities it undertakes. By following this Plan, the GF/EGF MPO hopes to create community ownership in the products produced. This community ownership should lead to confidence and trust in the efforts of the GF/EGF MPO.

Reports, analyses, and data relative to transportation plans, TIPs, and specific projects should be accessible and understandable. "Accessible" also means available in enough time to be thoroughly reviewed, and modified by public comment as necessary.

Public participation techniques that offer a variety of opportunities for input would appear to best meet the spirit of public involvement. The GF/EGF MPO attempts to see that these public participation techniques are consistent with this Plan. The results/benefits of different techniques should be documented for evaluation purposes.

This plan is dynamic. As changes occur, the public involvement processes utilized by the GF/EGF MPO are to be periodically reviewed in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all.

The MPO will be effective with its public participation when a well informed public feels it has opportunities to contribute input into transportation decision making processes at all stages. Instead of relying on one or two public meetings, the MPO will hold several well attended meetings. In addition, indicators to show the plan's effectiveness include frequent news coverage on transportation issues, public forums where a broad representation of diverse interests are in attendance and plans, TIPs, and project designs are reflective of the understood and considered public input. Two-way continuing and consistent communication between the MPO and the public is imperative.

**APPENDIX A.**

**PUBLIC PARTICIAPTION TECHNIQUES  
FOR  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Pop-up Meetings</b></p> <p>Holding impromptu meetings in non-traditional locations. Advance advertisement of the meeting is optional. These are typically held within targeted communities in areas with a significant amount of foot traffic.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You can target specific neighborhoods based on demographic information</li> <li>You can set up during non-traditional meeting hours</li> <li>You can increase awareness for your project</li> <li>When placed in high-traffic areas such as transit stations, you can reach thousands of people in a short time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You may attract people other than those directly impacted by your project</li> <li>It may be difficult to gauge the level of participation in advance</li> <li>You may not get the amount of participation desired</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Select a site that is convenient and has built in foot traffic</li> <li>Identify local community leaders and ask them to spread the word</li> <li>Make your display highly visible and inviting</li> <li>Provide lemonade and cookies or similar light refreshments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Pup-up Vehicles</b></p> <p>Vehicles designated for travel to gathering places like town squares, parks and neighborhoods and to community events like open streets and block parties. These may be equipped with table and chairs, white boards and markers, project one-pagers, maps (hand held size), sign-up sheets for future contact. Surveys may also be used for engagement purposes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>By meeting people where they are, you can engage with a broader range of community members, including those underrepresented in traditional community meetings</li> <li>If decorated, the van can generate interest/contact when daylighting as a fleet vehicle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can be costly if a vehicle must be purchased specifically for engagement</li> <li>Pop-up meeting times and venue locations vary widely</li> <li>Cost to wrap vehicles if decoration is desired</li> <li>Logistics of scheduling and staffing the vehicles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A child-friendly experience can bring parents into the discussion</li> <li>Children can color the truck below with washable markers</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Intercept Surveys</b></p> <p>Conducting in-person interviews with people at public locations. These could be done in parks, malls, or at community events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Surveys can be administered verbally by bilingual team members to minimize embarrassment, discomfort, stigmatization, and other feelings that can discourage people with literacy barriers</li> <li>• Surveys can be conducted in targeted communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some minorities may feel uncomfortable speaking to someone who looks like a government official</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep the survey short so that it can be completed in under 5 minutes</li> <li>• Provide incentives for survey completion when possible</li> <li>• Train staff to engage and draw participants in</li> <li>• Provide bilingual staff members for appropriate communities</li> </ul>
<p><b>Business Interview Meetings</b></p> <p>Meet with business owners one-on-one to discuss project details as well as their needs and concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners can participate and express their concerns in a small group setting</li> <li>• Interviews can be initiated by a community leader that has established trust within the minority group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business owners may not feel comfortable opening up</li> <li>• The meeting may cause business owners to be concerned</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be sure business owners are initially contacted by someone they know and trust. Government employees may be perceived to be associated with Immigration and Naturalization Service or Internal Revenue Personnel</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Focus Groups</b></p> <p>Small group sessions with 8-12 participants that can be used for testing project messages or collecting input. Structured conversations led by a facilitator.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides an opportunity to test messages prior to launching them in a specific community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relatively expensive, especially if a focus group facility is used</li> <li>Requires some type of incentive to ensure participation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clearly identify targeted audiences for participation in focus group</li> <li>Hire a professional, third-party facilitator</li> <li>Offer incentives for participation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Non-Traditional Public Meetings</b></p> <p>Public meetings held at non-typical locations or at non-typical times.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Makes information accessible and brings it to the public at convenient times and locations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Outdoor meetings are subject to weather events</li> <li>Can be difficult to predict conflicts with the selected meeting space or time</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with community leaders to identify the best times and locations for meeting</li> <li>Enlist the help of community leaders in getting the word out and for advisement on how best to advertise to target audiences</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Listening Sessions</b></p> <p>A public meeting where the primary objective is to listen to community concerns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is an effective way to clear the air and let underserved communities voice their concerns prior to the start of a new project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conversations can get heated and emotional</li> <li>• Conversations may have very little to do with the project at hand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a professional facilitator with conflict resolution experience</li> <li>• Conduct training with staff to ensure they do not get defensive or argumentative</li> <li>• Take notes and address or forward issues as appropriate</li> </ul>
<p><b>Chat and Chews</b></p> <p>Food is a great incentive to meeting participation but it also plays into the communal aspects of many cultures. Talking over food about a project can make the information more accessible to participants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team members can get to know the public in a more informal setting while breaking bread</li> <li>• The more intimate setting can help build trust and rapport more quickly</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not providing enough food</li> <li>• Unexpected attendees</li> <li>• Team members may be perceived as insincere or harboring ulterior motives by the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a meal as part of an existing community group meeting at which you are presenting</li> <li>• Invite residents to a local coffee shop at a set time and date to talk about the project</li> <li>• Adhere to culturally appropriate food options</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Mobilize Community Ambassadors</b></p> <p>Identify and train community leaders so they can help disseminate information about the project.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Immediate trust and credibility with community being targeted</li> <li>• They can reach and inform people in a completely non-threatening and safe way</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ambassador may pass on inaccurate information due to limited knowledge</li> <li>• Ambassador may not be able to report back feedback effectively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide ambassadors with a log they can use to document who they talked to and any questions or concerns they may have expressed</li> <li>• Stay in regular contact with ambassadors and keep them informed of new developments</li> </ul>
<p><b>Informational Workshops</b></p> <p>Educational workshops to educate participants about the transportation planning process in general or specific initiatives that may affect their community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helps to build the knowledge basis necessary to effectively participate in the decision-making process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional costs related to extra meetings</li> <li>• Not everyone in the community will be at the same educational level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct a poll or survey to see what type of information will be most beneficial</li> <li>• Conduct the workshops on specific topics in advance of meetings related to those topics</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>E-blasts</b></p> <p>Emails to groups of people with project news and information</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can reach many people at once</li> <li>• Has the ability to target specific groups/neighborhoods who may be impacted by an activity</li> <li>• Inexpensive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Limited to people with email</li> <li>• Not everyone checks their emails regularly or frequently</li> <li>• Be cautious of sending the same kind of e-mails every time. Mix them up. Be creative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide project news through e-blasts regularly so that people will keep an eye out for updates</li> <li>• Ensure the e-mail notification is part of a larger strategic outreach program. It cannot be the only tactic utilized as it can be viewed as impersonal</li> <li>• Use an e-mail contact management system to track who is responding, and gather analytics to ensure this tactic is effective</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Visual Survey</b></p> <p>Participants choose priorities based on pictures and graphics.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can collect valuable information from a diverse group of people</li> <li>• People respond well to the highly visual information</li> <li>• Works well when discussing design or aesthetics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May require one-on-one assistance to explain graphics</li> <li>• May not always be effective; highly dependent on content</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only include viable options among the pictures, if you know something is not financially or physically possible, do not include it</li> <li>• Ensure that graphics do not appear “too busy” to avoid confusion</li> </ul>
<p><b>Crowdsourcing</b></p> <p>Participants use maps to identify problem areas, such as pedestrian barriers, or community assets of importance to be protected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Crowdsourcing maps can help pinpoint where participants reside in relation to project areas</li> <li>• Helps to illustrate the diversity of input collected in a visual, geographically referenced format</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not everyone may have access to online tools</li> <li>• Maps can also emphasize the lack of diversity among commenters</li> <li>• If done on hard paper maps, requires a significant amount of data entry/logging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maximize efficiency by making the most of online tools</li> <li>• Provide GIS specialists to operate computers with large monitors to log stakeholder input at public meetings as points on a map</li> <li>• Use multi-colored dots or icons to indicate different types of feedback</li> <li>• Train all staff on the tool selected for use</li> </ul>

Engagement Tool	Potential Benefits	Potential Challenges	Tips for Success
<p><b>Youth engagement events</b></p> <p>Events targeted at kids and young adults.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Young people contribute important insights and learn about transportation and planning</li> <li>• Parents can learn about the project at drop-off or pick-up time</li> <li>• Young people often serve as translators for parents with Limited English Proficiency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires careful planning to ensure activities are interesting and appropriate to the targeted age group</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with an interested organization (school, scouts, place of worship, 4H Clubs)</li> </ul>