

Public Participation Plan

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GVMC

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The Public Participation Process for Transportation Planning

A participation process for transportation planning must be clearly outlined and adopted by the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), which receives transportation funds from the Federal Highway Administration and from the Federal Transit Administration. The actions and processes described in this document apply to transportation planning done by the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council (GVMC) in conjunction with the work of the transportation committees of the Council. The standards for this process can be found in Title 23, Code of Federal Regulations, Part 450, especially Section 316.

In general, the Federal regulations cited above had required “a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs (Transportation Improvement Programs).” With the passage of the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), enacted on August 10, 2005, additional emphasis was placed on extensive stakeholder participation. SAFETEA-LU expanded the public involvement provisions by requiring MPOs to develop and utilize “participation plans” that are written in consultation with an expanded list of “interested parties,” which the GVMC refers to as the Interested Citizens/Agencies List. The latest transportation bill, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, was signed on December 4, 2015, and continues to ensure that public involvement remains a hallmark of the transportation planning process.

Specific public involvement requirements detailed in FAST ACT legislation include the following:

- Holding public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs
- Making public information available in an electronically accessible format and means (such as the World Wide Web)
- Requiring a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised
- Providing timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects (including, but not limited to, central city and other local jurisdiction concerns)
- Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes, and including written and oral comments received on the draft transportation plan or TIP as a result of the public involvement process, as an appendix of the plan or TIP
- Being consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which ensures that 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 under any program receiving Federal assistance from the United States Department of

Transportation; and moreover, seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low income and minority households

- Identifying actions necessary to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990

To meet these standards, this participation process includes outreach to solicit public opinion and transportation needs, especially of the underserved, through the following means:

- Continually adding new information to the website
- Ensuring that there is an opportunity for public comment at committee meetings
- Making information easily available to the public in a variety of ways (online, print, email, etc.)
- Making every attempt to schedule public meetings at convenient times and locations that are along transit routes and accessible to those with disabilities
- Allowing opportunities for public comment on key decisions
- Responding to comments in a timely and forthright manner
- Regularly reviewing the public involvement process itself

The emphasis of this process is on early involvement of the public in all processes in order to obtain input and insight before decisions are made.

Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Plans and policies need to be revisited and reviewed periodically to determine if the public's needs are being addressed in an effective and efficient manner. In order to ensure the effectiveness of this plan, the public must be kept informed of activities of the Transportation Division of the Grand Valley Metropolitan Council and be given a meaningful opportunity to participate in the development and review of public policy through public outreach activities and techniques.

Public Participation Goal: The public involvement process for transportation planning shall provide complete information, timely public notice, and full access to information regarding key decisions; and shall support early and continuing involvement of the public.

Objective 1-Public Access to Information: The public shall be provided timely notice and appropriate access to information about transportation plans, issues, and processes through notices/information posted on gvmc.org and our social media pages, emails to the interested citizen/agency list, flyers posted at local libraries and jurisdictions, newspaper ads, press releases, videos, a quarterly newsletter, as well as other tools and techniques when determined necessary. (Please see the Public Participation Timeline Summary on page 25 for more information on public notification dates.)

The following policies will be adhered to in order to meet this objective:

- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Public Participation Plan (PPP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP),

the Title VI Plan, the Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, and other important documents shall be made available by GVMC Transportation staff in an electronic format for the public to review on the GVMC website (gvmc.org). For those without internet service, most libraries offer free computer and internet access, and many offer free WI-FI. All plans and documents will also be available at GVMC offices, and copies of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan will be distributed to all public libraries in the MPO area and to all members of the GVMC Transportation Committees. Copies of plans or project lists will also be distributed to the GVMC Transportation Committees. Any person or agency may also request a copy of any of GVMC's plans via telephone, fax, mail, e-mail, or in person at any time. A small copying fee may apply.

- GVMC will employ visualization techniques to describe Metropolitan Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). These may include the following formats: project location maps, story maps, ArcGIS online interactive maps, photographs, narrative project descriptions, charts, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and sketches. Staff will continue to monitor and investigate developing technologies to improve the MPO's visualization process.
- Notice and agenda of all GVMC Transportation Committee meetings shall be available to the public a minimum of six days before they occur with the exception of emergency meetings when less time is allowed under the State of Michigan Open Meetings Act.
- Information pertaining to the adoption, revision, or amendment of all GVMC Transportation plans shall be available a minimum of six days prior to the date of the final action with the exception of emergency meetings when less time is allowed under the State of Michigan Open Meetings Act.
- All meetings and workshops of GVMC Transportation Committees will be open to the public except as allowed by the State of Michigan Open Meetings Act.
- Per GVMC's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, strategies will be developed to provide notices of programs, services, or activities to limited English proficiency (LEP) populations by using appropriate media and brochures (also in languages other than English). Community groups serving LEP populations will be contacted, as well as schools, church groups, chambers of commerce, and other relevant entities as part of the regular public participation process.
- In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals needing special accommodations to participate in meetings or individuals with limited English proficiency should contact GVMC Transportation Staff at least four working days prior to the scheduled meeting. As per GVMC's Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, GVMC will provide oral

and written translation; written interpretation and translation; and sign language, if requested, or as a result of an LEP analysis on any given project or projected program, requiring translation or interpretation.

Objective 2-Public Access to Meetings and Facilities: Opportunities shall be created for the public to participate in the planning process for important issues, plans and projects under consideration by the GVMC Transportation Division, through public meetings, committee meetings, and other venues. GVMC will target groups who can expect to be directly affected by the outcome or those with special needs that may not be well served by the existing transportation system.

The following policies will be adhered to in order to meet this objective:

- GVMC Transportation Staff shall inform the public about issues and proposals under their consideration through public meetings, presentations, mailings, press releases, or other techniques during the development of each of the transportation plans, programs, or projects for which GVMC is responsible.
- GVMC Transportation Staff will continue to develop and maintain an Interested Citizens/Agencies List for the purpose of disseminating information about transportation plans, policies, and activities. The Interested Citizens/Agencies List, while all inclusive, will be especially geared to reach those low-income and minority populations that have traditionally been underserved in the transportation planning process.
- GVMC Transportation Staff shall consult with stakeholders through correspondence that utilizes the continuously updated Interested Citizens/Agencies List.
- GVMC Transportation Staff shall review the Public Participation Plan prior to the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) development process. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) will also be reviewed for required updates if needed before the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

Objective 3-Public Input: The solicitation, compilation, and consideration of public input shall be an integral part of the GVMC Transportation decision making process.

The following policies will be adhered to in order to meet this objective:

- GVMC Transportation Staff shall conduct public participation meetings prior to the adoption of the transportation plan or program for which it is responsible, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or substantive amendments thereof. Notices of such meetings will be distributed through the Interested Citizens/Agencies List as well as the area media. Public meeting notices will also

be posted on the GVMC website, gvmc.org, and our social media pages.

- Those plans and programs that require extended review periods will allow for written comments to be submitted, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, the Public Participation Plan, and any other plan with extended review periods. All comments received as well as a response to each comment will appear as an appendix to the applicable plan or program. GVMC Transportation Staff will notify the public of extended review periods that are required by State or Federal guidelines and specifics regarding how to comment on those plans or programs.
- Those members of the public wishing to address comments to any GVMC Transportation Committee will be given the opportunity to comment at the regular public meetings of those committees.

Public Participation Strategies

Participation Plan

The development, adoption, and amendment of GVMC transportation plans and programs shall be subject to the Public Participation Plan. The Public Participation Plan will be monitored and reviewed before the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) development process as required by federal guidelines and before the start of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) development process if needed due to changes in federal law, deficiencies in the tools and techniques used to reach the public, or if it is determined that other changes need to be made to the document. (Please see Appendix A for information on the Public Participation Plan evaluation criteria.) It is hoped that the directives of this plan will result in well-attended public meetings, local news coverage of programs, and more public interest in transportation issues within the region. The procedure for developing the Public Participation Plan is outlined on page 14.

Availability of Information

All events/opportunities appear on GVMC's webpage (gvmc.org), our social media pages, are sent to partnering agencies for posting on their social media pages, and are emailed to the Interested Citizens/Agencies List that GVMC maintains. Transportation plans, including the MTP, PPP, TIP, and UPWP, will also be included on the GVMC website for public review and comment. Open house/public meeting notices are published in a general circulation newspaper in the region, such as The Advance and its affiliate papers—The Cadence and The Penasee Globe, El Vocero Hispano, and The Grand Rapids Times. For more information about these newspapers, please see the “Newspaper Ads” section on page 29.

GVMC staff will make written materials provided to our committees available to the public upon request. Requests can be made by phone, fax, mail, email, through gvmc.org, in person at GVMC's office or at Committee meetings. When appropriate, a charge may be levied for copies of

publications. The charge will cover the cost of producing and, if applicable, mailing the materials. All such materials are available for viewing at GVMC offices at no cost.

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The transportation needs and opinions of those with disabilities will be sought out and the planning process will be made accessible to such persons as per the regulation provided by the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Public meetings will be held in facilities that are on transit routes and that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Meeting Times

Every attempt will be made to host public meetings at convenient hours to maximize attendance. Public meetings are generally held between 5:00 pm and 7:00 pm. There is also an opportunity for public comment at GVMC's Technical Committee, Policy Committee, and Board meetings. Committee meetings are held in the early morning, so those with atypical work schedules may find these meeting times more convenient. For a list of committee meeting times and locations, please see the "Committee Meetings" section on page 26.

Writing in Plain Language

Plain language is defined as "communication your audience can understand the first time they read or hear it."¹ Every effort will be made to use plain language in all MPO public involvement materials, including newspaper ads, flyers, and mailings, in accordance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. This act requires that Federal agencies use "clear Government communication that the public can understand" and was signed on October 13, 2010.² For more information on writing in plain language, please visit www.plainlanguage.gov.

Public Comments

General Comments: Members of the public are welcome to submit comments on specific issues or to contact staff with questions at any time. A staff directory with emails and direct phone numbers is included on gvmc.org for the public's convenience, or staff can be reached through GVMC's main line at (616) 776-3876. GVMC's Technical Committee, Policy Committee, and Board meetings are also open to the public and include an opportunity for public comment on the agenda. (Please see "Committee Meetings" on page 26 for more information about meeting times and locations.) Meeting agendas are posted on gvmc.org a minimum of six days before a scheduled meeting.

Ways to Submit Comments: During public comment periods, staff ensures that the public can submit comments in a number of ways, including:

- Downloading a comment form from gvmc.org and sending it to GVMC by mail or email (See Appendix B for example.)
- Completing an online submittal form on gvmc.org (See Appendix C for example.)
- Emailing comments to a GVMC staff member
- Phoning in comments to a GVMC staff member
- Filling out a comment form in person at GVMC or at a public meeting
- Commenting on a GVMC social media post

¹ From www.plainlanguage.gov

² From <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/plaw/>

Note: Comment forms are for the public's convenience only, and comments don't need to be written on an official comment form to be considered.

A comment form is available in Appendix B. The electronic comment form is available in Appendix C.

Response to Comments: GVMC will summarize and respond, if necessary, to public comments on the MTP, the PPP, the UPWP, the TIP, on amendments to the TIP, on proposed major area-wide investment studies, and on key decisions based on the manner in which they are received. For instance, comments received by email will be responded to by email. We will also forward comments about specific projects to the responsible entities. Comments and responses will be kept on file, be available for public review, and will be made part of the plan, program, or other document as adopted. Summaries of comments and responses will also be given to the Technical and Policy Committees as well as the jurisdiction(s) directly responsible for the project for review. Comments will be responded to before decisions are made or plans or programs are adopted. Responses will be made in a timely manner so that they can be considered during the next phase of the plan or program development.

Social Media Comments: Comments submitted on our social media pages that require a response will be replied to in a timely manner on the platform where they are received (i.e., comments received on Facebook will be replied to on Facebook). Comments will also be shared with the responsible agency or jurisdiction if applicable. Off-topic, bullying and/or offensive Facebook posts will be deleted at GVMC discretion or by Facebook if the comment violates their policies.

Note: Not all comments warrant a formal response, and this may be especially true for comments received over social media. This decision will be made at staff discretion.

Coordination with Statewide Public Involvement Efforts, Such as the MDOT Five Year Program, Statewide TIP and State Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRTP)

For the MDOT Five Year Program and the Statewide TIP, MDOT follows a prescribed statewide public involvement process for these documents and products. The GVMC MPO TIP is included in the STIP by reference and follows the public involvement process described herein. Projects from the MDOT Five Year program are included in the MPO TIP and are reviewed by the MPO staff and committees during the project development process, in coordination with the MDOT Grand Region.

The MDOT SLRTP has its own public involvement process, which is currently being developed for the 2045 SLRTP. The SLRTP is a policy document, which is different from the MPO MTP, which is more project specific. Therefore, the public involvement activities will have a different focus. Various MPO staff members statewide are involved in developing the public involvement process and will continue to participate in the process as the 2045 SLRTP is developed. GVMC will also participate in outreach efforts locally for the SLRTP, provide local contact information for MPO stakeholders, and post notices and links to relevant documents on its website. In addition, presentations will be made at the MPO committees, which are open to the public.

Coordination with Other Agencies, Jurisdictions and Organizations

GVMC has partnered with our local transit agency, The Rapid, and uses space at Rapid Central Station to hold public meetings, to set up displays, and to conduct public surveys. GVMC and The Rapid cross-post social media notices, and GVMC and the Rapid have shared our public

involvement lists so that all of our interested parties receive notifications of public outreach opportunities.

GVMC has also partnered with LINC UP, a community development organization that provides services to Kent County, and is involved in a host of projects and services that reach families, houses, businesses and neighborhoods at large. They have agreed to allow GVMC to hold public meetings at their location for free, share our posts about public involvement opportunities on their social media pages and in their e-blasts, and permit GVMC to participate in and distribute information at their events.

GVMC is continually working to build partnership relationships with other agencies and jurisdictions that can help us inform the public about opportunities to get involved in the transportation planning process. Staff is also investigating ways that we can potentially share efforts with MDOT in engaging and informing the public, especially in regard to environmental justice. The MDOT Grand Region office has expressed a willingness to help advertise information about GVMC's public comment opportunities and public meetings by posting flyers at their location and informing their interested parties through their existing outreach forums. GVMC posts notices for major MDOT projects and looks forward to continuing to build this partnership. GVMC is also striving to make connections with neighborhood associations and other agencies that serve lower income and minority populations.

Project Level Public Involvement Coordination

GVMC will post on its website meeting notices for individual project public involvement meetings, in coordination with the local transportation authority responsible for the project. Most regionally significant projects are also reviewed in more detail at the MPO committee meetings, which are open to the public. The MPO staff usually participates in regionally significant project public involvement activities and will assist the individual implementing agency with developing public and stakeholder mailing lists and/or identification of the affected stakeholder groups. GVMC will often help to arrange meetings with the affected agencies, stakeholders and the project's owner agency. Comments received by the MPO through its website, committees or other communications will be forwarded to the implementing agency.

Public Involvement for Planning Projects That Are Not in the TIP

As particular planning or programming projects arise, the performing entity will develop a specific participation process that is appropriate for the project. Examples of such projects are: The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), substantial amendments to that plan, corridor studies, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and major metropolitan transportation investment studies. The participation process for planning or programming projects will follow the TIP or MTP amendment procedures outlined in this document and include the following specific measures as well as other actions: (1) a formal public meeting will be held well in advance of the adoption of transportation plans and before the adoption of the TIP, (2) a reasonable period of time will be set aside before the adoption of a plan or the TIP during which the public may comment verbally at the public meeting or in writing to the GVMC offices.

Continual Evaluation of Tools and Techniques

The MPO uses a variety of tools and techniques in order to involve the public in the transportation planning process. GVMC staff believes the tools and techniques reflected in this document allow

MPO staff to reach the public most effectively at the present time. However, these tools and techniques will be evaluated on an ongoing basis to ensure that they continue to be relevant and effective in reaching the public. (Please see Appendix A for information on the Public Participation Plan evaluation criteria.) If staff determines that a specific tool or technique is no longer effective, staff will discontinue its use and consider replacing it with a different tool or technique. Staff will also continue to monitor technology advancements as well as new and emerging social media outlets that have the potential to be useful in the public involvement process. If a new tool or technique is discovered or becomes available, staff may use it in addition to the tools and techniques listed in this document.

For a description of the tools and techniques that the MPO uses to reach the public, please see the “Public Participation Tools and Techniques” section on page 26.

Public Participation Summary Reports

After the completion of all TIPs, MTPs, and Public Participation Plans, staff will generate a report that summarizes the overall number of public comments received, the estimated number of people reached throughout the public participation process, and the various tools that were used. This report will be included as an Appendix of the document.

Public Participation Procedures for Major Documents

GVMC produces four major documents that require public involvement. These documents include the Public Participation Plan (PPP), the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). Public involvement for the PPP, TIP, UPWP, and MTP document will be continual throughout the plan development processes. Updates will be posted on gvmc.org before TPSG Committee meetings, public meetings, and before public comment periods begin, and will be given verbally during Technical and Policy Committee meetings periodically as well. However, GVMC has selected several milestone points for each document when it will engage the public through additional means in order to inform them of opportunities to become involved in the development process, which may include invitations to public meetings, requests for public comment, or other information. These milestones are outlined in the tables on the following pages, along with the procedures for amending the TIP and MTP. *Please note: In years when the TIP and MTP are developed simultaneously, public participation activities for both documents may be combined at staff's discretion in order to maximize efficiency and resources and reduce confusion. Please also note: GVMC staff may choose to add additional tools and techniques not specified at their discretion at any point during the UPWP, PPP, MTP and TIP development process to enhance public outreach.*

Public Participation Plan

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) describes the ways in which GVMC will engage the public in the transportation planning process in order to ensure adherence to federal legislation and that the public involvement process for all documents is continuous. The table below describes the public participation procedure for developing the PPP.

Public Participation Plan Development

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure	Public Notification Date (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
1. Draft Public Participation Plan developed and presented to the Technical and Policy Committees	<p>After the draft Public Participation Plan has been developed and presented to the Technical and Policy Committees, GVMC will bring it to the public for comment. GVMC staff will notify the public of this opportunity in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Email sent to interested citizen/agency list • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP • Newspaper advertisement in English and Spanish (Please see pg. 29 for more information on newspaper ads.) 	<p>At least 1 day before the public comment period begins</p>	<p>45 days; the public comment period will begin after the draft document is presented to the Policy Committee and will end at least one week before the final document is approved by the Policy Committee</p>
2. Public Participation Plan approval	<p>After all comments have been considered and the 45-day public comment period has concluded, the document will be brought to the Policy Committee for approval. The public will have an additional opportunity to comment on the document at the Policy meeting and will be notified of this meeting in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP 	<p>5 days before the scheduled Policy Committee meeting</p>	<p>N/A</p>

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) defines federal and state transportation planning requirements and incorporates in one document all federally assisted state, regional, and local transportation planning activities proposed to be undertaken in the Grand Rapids Metropolitan Area during the fiscal year. The UPWP also includes the budget for all federally assisted transportation planning activities that will be undertaken by its Transportation Division, the Interurban Transit Partnership (ITP) and the Michigan Department of Transportation (MDOT). It must be submitted annually to the sponsoring federal agencies prior to October 1st.

Unified Planning Work Program Development

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure <i>(For more information on the items listed below, please see the Public Participation Tools and Techniques section on page 26)</i>	Public Notification Date (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
1. Kickoff to UPWP Development	<i>Before the UPWP development process begins, GVMC staff will notify the public in the following ways:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC's Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP 	Between mid-February and mid-March every year	N/A; notification only
2. Adoption of draft document	<i>Once the draft UPWP document is complete, Staff will bring it to the Policy Committees and GVMC board for approval. Public comment opportunities will be available at both committee meetings. The public will be notified of this public comment opportunity in the following ways:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC's Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP <p><i>Note: Please see the "Public Comments" section on pg. 10 for information on submitting comments.</i></p>	6 days prior to Policy Committee meeting where approval of the UPWP will be requested	A minimum of 14 days, beginning 7 days prior to the Policy Committee meeting and ending at the Board meeting. The comment period length will vary depending on the amount of time between the meetings.

The UPWP occasionally needs to be amended to include the addition of a new work task or additional funding. Outlined below is the public involvement procedure for UPWP revisions.

Description of UPWP Amendment	Public Participation Procedure
1. Adding a new work task to the UPWP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting • Committee meeting
2. Amending the budget for a UPWP work task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting • Committee meeting

Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is the list of road, transit and non-motorized projects that communities and agencies plan to implement over a four-year period within GVMC's MPO area. (Please see Appendix D for a map of GVMC's MPO area.) The table below describes the public participation procedure for the development of the TIP document, and the following table describes the public participation procedures for amendments and modifications to the document once it's developed.

Transportation Improvement Program Development

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure <i>(For more information on the items listed below, please see the Public Participation Tools and Techniques section on page 26.)</i>	Public Notification Date (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
1. Kickoff to TIP Development	<p><i>Before the TIP development process begins, GVMC staff will notify the public in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Email sent to Interested Citizen/Agency List • Social media post on GVMC's Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP • Press release submitted to GVMC's media contact list and posted online 	7 days prior to the first TIP programming meeting	N/A; notification only
2. Draft project lists, environmental justice, and air quality results (if applicable) completed and available	<p><i>Once draft project lists have been developed, environmental justice has been completed, and an air quality analysis has been performed, GVMC staff will bring these items to the public for comment. A public meeting will also be held. The public will be notified of the meeting <u>and</u> the comment period in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website 	7 days prior to the public meeting and before the 1 st day of the public comment period	14 days

<p>for public comment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email sent to Interested Citizen/Agency List and direct mailing sent to environmental justice mailing list • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP • Newspaper advertisement in English and Spanish that notifies the public of the public comment period <u>and</u> the public meeting • Flyer with information on the public comment period <u>and</u> the public meeting distributed to all libraries and jurisdictions within the MPO area (See Appendix E for complete list.) • Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online <p><i>Note: Please see the “Public Comments” section on pg. 10 for information on submitting comments.</i></p>		
<p>3. Adoption of draft document</p>	<p><i>Once the draft TIP document is complete, Staff will bring it to the Technical and Policy Committees and GVMC board for approval. Public comment opportunities will be available at all three committee meetings. The public will be notified of this public comment opportunity in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP <p><i>Note: Please see the “Public Comments” section on pg. 10 for information on submitting comments.</i></p>	<p>6 days prior to Technical Committee meeting</p>	<p>A minimum of 14 days, beginning on the date of the Technical Committee meeting and ending at the Board meeting. The comment period length will vary depending on the amount of time between the meetings.</p>

Transportation Improvement Program Amendments

It is frequently necessary to amend the TIP because of changes to projects within the document. TIP amendments require the review and recommendation of the Technical Committee and approval of the Policy Committee as well as federal approval and are characterized by one of the changes proposed below along with the corresponding public involvement procedure for the TIP amendment. For additional information about the process that is followed for TIP amendments and administrative modifications, please see the matrices in Appendix F.

Description of TIP Amendment	Public Participation Procedure
1. Add new project over \$5 million (including Safety, TAP, and CMAQ projects) in TIP project list	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting • Committee meeting
2. Delete project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting • Committee meeting
3. Federal aid cost increase over 25%	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
4. Major* scope/design change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
5. Move illustrative list project into the TIP (new project)**	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
6. Change non-Federal aid funded project to Federally funded project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
7. New discretionary projects over \$5 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting

Please see the Public Participation Timeline Summary on page 25 for information on the length of the public comment period and prior public notice for TIP amendments.

Notes:

Major = 1) change in lane configuration, 2) change affecting road capacity, 3) change affecting air quality (regionally significant)*

*** Any project from the TIP Illustrative Project list, which has previously been processed for public involvement with the TIP, is not required to have additional public involvement (Consultation, EJ and EA) prior to completing the TIP amendment process.*

Project specific public involvement is not necessary for TIP administrative modifications or MPO adjustments, which include the following:

- Changes in Federal-aid cost, more than 10% and less than or equal to 25% of the TIP programmed amount
- Minor Federal-aid changes may be allowed if other local projects are not impacted, and will be reflected in the next TIP list of projects (ie-MDOT, ITP, TAP, Bridge, Safety, or other discretionary sources)
- Revisions that cause projects to switch years can be made by MPO staff with Committee notification; however, if financial constraint and/or another agency project are impacted, MPO Committee approval is required (MPO Adjustment).

- Changes in non-federal funding participation; these modifications will be reflected in the next TIP list of projects.
- Minor*** scope changes (not regionally significant as defined); however, project scope changes affecting AQ conformity or other projects will require MPO Committee approval (MPO Adjustment) and may become a TIP amendment (see matrix).
- Changes in funding source within the same funding category (i.e. federal to federal, state to state and local to local; adding, changing or combining job numbers within the project funding limits described herein.
- Corrections to minor listing errors that don't change cost or scope.
- Cost decreases (Federal or non-Federal).
- Changing an existing project to an advance construction project and vice versa.
- Adding lanes or non-motorized, up to 1/2 mile.
- Adding, deleting or changing GPA qualifying projects in most cases will be an Administrative Modification.
- General Program Account (GPA) line items budget changes exceeding 25% will require a Federal TIP Amendment, consistent with the Statewide GPA Policy (see below).

Administrative modifications or MPO adjustments do not require federal approval. GVMC practice is that project changes affecting federal aid and/or other projects require Technical review and recommendation and Policy Committee approval as an MPO adjustment. In addition, MPO staff may approve modifications as noted above. The public will be notified of administrative modifications and MPO adjustments affecting existing projects in the TIP through the MPO committee meetings or the GVMC website.

For more information on how TIP amendments, administrative modifications, and adjustments are handled, please consult our Policies and Practices for Programing Projects document.

Notes:

*Minor*** = May include at staff's discretion: 1) lane extensions up to 1/4 mile, 2) sidewalks & NM, 3) ADA enhancements, 4) signalization and/or signs, 5) utility issues, 6) pavement type, 7) phase changes, 8) additional spaces in park-and-ride lots, 9) other*

General Program Accounts (GPAs)

GVMC uses, where and when possible, General Program Accounts (GPAs) to facilitate a smooth modification/amendment of projects listed in a current TIP. Federal regulation 23 CFR 450.324 (f) states projects that are not considered to be of appropriate scale for individual identification in a given program year may be grouped by function, work type, and/or geographic area using the applicable classifications under 23 CFR 771.117(c) and (d) and/or 40 CFR part 93. Projects proposed for funding under title 23 U.S.C. Chapter 2 that are not regionally significant may be grouped in one line item or identified individually in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). In Michigan, these groupings of projects are called General Program Accounts (GPAs). A project consists of all the job numbers and phases for proposed work that are included in the associated environmental documents. Projects that have similar work type activities can be grouped together in a GPA based on that work type activity and included in the state's metropolitan area

TIPs and/or the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) for non-metropolitan areas. Trunkline Project lists for each individual GPA are maintained by MDOT and included in the MPO TIP where applicable.

GPA's may be used as a tool to streamline the TIP development processes and minimize the need to amend the TIP. Grouping projects in GPA's is a tool to reduce the record keeping requirements of individually listing minor projects. The line item GPA, while it encompasses several small-scale projects, is treated as one project for the purposes of amendment/MPO adjustment/administrative modifications to the TIP and STIP. This allows for more flexible programming of the TIP and STIP and a reduction in the number of federal amendments.

The following rules will apply to all GPA categories:

1. The project cannot be a new road, capacity expansion, or capacity reduction (road-diet) project.
2. The project cannot be funded with a congressional or state earmark.
3. The project cannot be experimental.
4. Each project must be an environmental Categorical Exclusion (minimal impacts) and air quality neutral.
5. Advance Construct and Advance Construct Conversion phases cannot be listed as a GPA project.
6. Reconstruction projects are not GPA eligible.
7. GPA projects shall cost less than \$5.0 Million

Individual state, local and transit GPA projects are listed in the MPO TIP in a separate tab. The public will be notified of administrative modifications or MPO adjustments affecting GPA qualifying projects in the TIP through the MPO committee meetings, which are open to the public, and/or the GVMC website.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan

The purpose of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is to ensure that transportation investments in GVMC's MPO area enhance the movement of people and freight efficiently, effectively, and safely. (Please see Appendix D for a map of GVMC's MPO area.) The MTP has a 20-year horizon. Outlined below is the public participation procedure for MTP development, and following is a table that addresses the public participation procedure for MTP amendments.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Development

Milestone	Public Participation Procedure	Public Notification Date	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
<p>1. Kickoff to MTP Development</p>	<p><i>Once the MTP development process begins, GVMC staff will engage the public in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice and detailed MTP information added to website • Email sent to Interested Citizen/Agency List • Social media post on GVMC's Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP • Transportation issues survey developed and circulated • Press release submitted to GVMC's media contact list and posted online <p><i>The following tools and techniques may be used on an optional basis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flyer, brochure, or informational card printed and distributed • Visual aids • Radio PSAs 	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A; Public involvement will be continuous throughout the MTP development process. Updates will be posted regularly on gvmc.org and given at committee meetings.</p>
<p>2. Pre-Programming Collaboration</p>	<p><i>GVMC staff will invite the public to review and comment on identified modal needs. The public will be notified of this opportunity in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Email sent to Interested Citizen/Agency List • Press release submitted to GVMC's media contact list and posted online <p><i>The following tools and techniques may be used on an optional basis:</i></p>	<p>Up to 7 days prior to the start of the public comment period</p>	<p>14 days</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flyer, brochure, or informational card printed and distributed Visual aids Radio PSAs 		
3. Draft MTP, environmental justice, and air quality results (if applicable) completed and available for public comment	<p><i>Once the draft MTP document, environmental justice, and corresponding air quality analysis are complete, GVMC staff will bring the document to the public for comment. A public meeting will also be held to discuss these items. The public will be notified of the meeting <u>and</u> the comment period in the following ways:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice on website Email sent to Interested Citizen/ Agency List and direct mailing sent to environmental justice mailing list Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP Newspaper advertisement in English and Spanish that notifies the public of the public comment period <u>and</u> the public meeting Copies of the draft MTP distributed to all libraries and jurisdictions within the MPO area. (See Appendix E for list.) Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online <p><i>The following tools and techniques may be used on an optional basis:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flyer, brochure, or informational card printed and distributed Visual aids Radio PSAs <p><i>At this point, staff will also contact state regulatory agencies (i.e., MDNR and MDEQ) to consult with them on the draft project list and potential impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.</i></p>	7 days prior to the public meeting and before the 1 st day of the public comment period	14 days
4. Adoption of draft document	<p><i>Once the draft MTP document is complete, Staff will bring it to the Technical and Policy Committees and GVMC board for approval. Public comment opportunities will be available at all three committee meetings. The public will be notified of this public comment opportunity in the following ways:</i></p>	6 days prior to the scheduled Tech meeting	A minimum of 14 days, beginning on the date of the Technical

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with the Rapid and LINC UP • Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online 		<p>Committee meeting and ending at the Board meeting. The comment period length will vary depending on the amount of time between the meetings.</p>
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Note: For more information about the items in the Public Participation Procedure column, please see “Public Participation Tools and Techniques” section on pg. 26

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendments

It is occasionally necessary to amend the MTP because of changes to projects listed within the document. Outlined below is the public involvement procedure for MTP revisions. For additional information about the process that is followed for MTP amendments and administrative modifications, please see the matrix in Appendix F.

Description of MTP Amendment	Public Participation Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add/delete regionally significant project*, as defined by inter-agency work group (IAWG) and/or air quality (AQ) conformity non-exempt project list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech & Policy Committee meeting • Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major ** scope/design change for regionally significant project(s) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech & Policy Committee meeting • Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move regionally significant illustrative list project into the MTP (new project) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech & Policy Committee meeting • Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in air quality conformity model year grouping for regionally significant project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tech & Policy Committee meeting • Web posting

Note: Please see the Public Participation Timeline Summary on page 25 for information on the length of the public comment period and prior public notice for MTP amendments.

Public involvement is not necessary for MTP administrative modifications, which include the following:

- Additional lanes or non-motorized facilities, up to one mile, or as defined by the IAWG
- Increase in Federal aid cost less than or equal to 25% of the MTP programmed amount
- Decrease in Federal aid project cost
- Change in non-Federal aid project cost
- Change in Federal or non-Federal funding category
- Listing error corrections or other non-regionally significant project changes

- Minor*** scope changes (not regionally significant as defined)
- Update to the first four years of the MTP to correspond to the most current TIP

Notes:

Regionally Significant = Regionally significant project definition from 23 CFR 450.104:*

A transportation project that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs and would normally be included in the modeling of the metropolitan area's transportation network. A transportation project (other than projects that may be grouped in the TIP and/or STIP or exempt projects as defined in EPA's transportation conformity regulation (40 CFR part 93)) that is on a facility which serves regional transportation needs (such as access to and from the area outside the region; major activity centers in the region; major planned developments such as new retail malls, sports complexes, or employment centers; or transportation terminals) and would normally be included in the modeling of the metropolitan area's transportation network. At a minimum, this includes all principal arterial highways and all fixed guideway transit facilities that offer a significant alternative to regional highway travel.

Additionally for GVMC's purposes a project is considered regionally significant if it involves the following:

- *adding or reducing through road capacity over one mile or adding a newly constructed Federal-aid road, fixed guideway or BRT transit project*
- *substantial multi-jurisdictional non-motorized project, or a major rail or transit infrastructure project*

Roadway and bridge preservation, operational and/or safety (turning lanes, signalization, ITS equipment or services, etc.) projects are not considered Regionally Significant, as long as any new turning lanes are one mile or less in length (or Exempt projects as defined in FHWA-FTA guidance issued on 4-23-2018 and Transportation Conformity Regulations issued in April of 2012 from EPA).

All non-federal aid projects (for regional significance determination) will be considered on a case-by-case basis based on the regionally significant criteria herein by GVMC's Technical and Policy Committee for inclusion into a TIP and MTP.

*Major** = 1) change in lane configuration, 2) change affecting road capacity, 3) change affecting air quality (regionally significant)*

*Minor*** = May include at staff's discretion: 1) lane extensions up to 1/4 mile, 2) sidewalks & NM, 3) ADA enhancements, 4) signalization and/or signs, 5) utility issues, 6) pavement type, 7) phase changes, 8) additional spaces in park-and-ride lots, 9) other*

Public Participation Timeline Summary

Draft Document/Plan Review	Prior Notice to Public (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	At least 1 day before the public comment period begins	14 days
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	At least 1 day before the public comment period begins	14 days
Public Participation Plan	At least 1 day before the public comment period begins	45 days
Unified Planning Work Program	At least 1 day before the public comment period begins	14 days

Plan (Amendments)	Prior Notice to Public (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	6 days	6 days
Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)	6 days	6 days
Unified Planning Work Program	6 days	6 days

Other	Prior Notice to Public (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period
Congestion Management Plan (CMP)	The CMP goes through public involvement when the MTP is developed; a separate public involvement process is not necessary.	
Major Corridor Studies	6 days	6 days
Major Transportation Investment Studies	6 days	6 days
Non-Motorized Plan	The Non-Motorized Plan goes through public involvement when the MTP is developed; a separate public involvement process is not necessary.	
Public Meetings	7 days	7 days

Public Participation Tools and Techniques

The MPO strives to create a Public Participation Process that encourages early and continuous involvement of citizens, jurisdictions, communities and others interested in the planning process and the decisions and actions of the GVMC Transportation Committees. GVMC will use a variety of tools and techniques to encourage communication with the public in order to achieve this goal. These tools and techniques are described below, along with their primary objectives.

Primary Public Participation Tools and Techniques

The tools and techniques outlined below are the ones that GVMC staff believes are the most effective for engaging the public at the present time and will be utilized most frequently during the public participation process.

Comment Forms

During every public comment period, staff ensures that comment forms are available to the public in a variety of ways. These comment forms include a large area for writing comments on a specific project as well as the name and contact information from the respondent. If the respondent chooses, they can also sign up to be added to GVMC's Interested Citizen/Agency Mailing List by checking a box on the form. (See "Public Comments" section on pg. 10 for more information on submitting comments.)

Primary Objectives—Recording the views and opinions of the public during the TIP and MTP development process and signing up for the Interested Citizen/Agency List.

Committee Meetings

The MPO has two standing Committees: the Technical Committee and the Policy Committee. The agendas for both Committee meetings are posted online and on GVMC's office window at least five days before the scheduled meeting, and both meetings include an opportunity for the public to comment on the items listed on the agenda. Since issues frequently pass from the Technical Committee to the Policy Committee, there will often be two opportunities to comment on issues. The Technical and Policy Committees also include non-voting representatives from the Grand Rapids Chamber of Commerce and a local environmental advocacy group. The GVMC Board meeting agendas also always include an opportunity for public comment, and this meeting is televised on a local governmental access channel.

The Technical Committee, Policy Committee, and GVMC Board meeting schedule is as follows:

Technical Committee—1st Wednesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the Kent County Road Commission Offices, 1500 Scribner NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Policy Committee—3rd Wednesday of the month at 9:30 a.m. at the Kent County Road Commission Offices, 1500 Scribner NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49504

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Board—1st Thursday of the month at 8:30 a.m. at the Kent County Commission Chambers, Kent County Administration Building, 300 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503 (*Please note meeting is also televised.*)

A complete schedule of MPO meetings is posted on GVMC's website. Meeting times and locations occasionally change, so it is important to call or view the meeting agendas from the website before attending.

Primary Objectives – Allowing an in-person opportunity for the public to comment on TIP or MTP amendments, the documents themselves, or anything else on the meeting agenda.

Databases

GVMC staff maintains a master database for the organization as a whole, which includes committee membership lists, local government contacts, elected officials, as well as the Interested Citizen/Agency List, a composite of citizens or businesses that have a working relationship with GVMC or are interested in the transportation planning process.

Primary Objectives – Keeping the organization's contacts organized and up-to-date and maintaining accurate records of committee membership.

Direct Mailings

The MPO may decide to use a direct mailing to reach a targeted group of individuals to inform them about an upcoming meeting, a public involvement opportunity, a construction project in their area, or another issue of interest to them. Mailings will generally be postcards, but may also be letters or flyers.

Primary Objectives—Reaching the public as part of the environmental justice (EJ) process, sending information to the Interested Citizen/Agency List members who do not have email access, and whenever else a targeted group of individuals needs to be reached.

Document Copies

Hard copies of all of GVMC's work products, including the MTP, the TIP, the CMP, the UPWP, the PPP, and the Non-Motorized Plan, are available at GVMC's office. Draft copies of the MTP are also distributed to all libraries and jurisdictions/members within the MPO area before the document is approved. (Please see Appendix E for the complete list of libraries and jurisdictions in the MPO area.)

Primary Objectives—Providing those who don't have access to a computer or who lack the technical skills to find the information online the opportunity to view important MPO work products.

Flyers

Flyers are developed in order to advertise public meetings, public comment opportunities, or other important events. They may include information such as the time, date, and location of a public meeting; contact information; instructions on commenting on draft documents or project lists; and deadlines for commenting. To view the list of locations that may post flyers, please see the "List of Libraries and



Flyers advertising a public meeting

Jurisdictions in the MPO Area” listed in Appendix E.

Primary Objectives—Advertising public meetings, public comment opportunities, and other important events.

Interested Citizen/Agency List

This list is a composite of private citizens who have asked to receive transportation-related information, as well as a variety of agencies (including businesses and governmental entities) that have expressed an interest in or are impacted by transportation issues, such as the following:

- Members of the Technical and Policy Committees
- Traffic agencies
- Private providers of transportation services
- Ridesharing agencies
- Parking agencies
- Transportation safety agencies
- Traffic enforcement agencies
- Commuter rail operators
- Airport and port authorities
- Freight companies
- Railroad companies
- Environmental organizations
- Neighborhood associations
- Interested citizens
- Organizations representing the interests of:
 - The elderly
 - Minorities
 - Transportation agency employees
 - Users of various modes of transportation
 - People with disabilities
 - Economically disadvantaged
 - Ethnic/Cultural groups
 - Native American tribes
 - Others underserved by the transportation system

Individuals and agencies can sign up to be included on this list by checking a box on a comment form (either the electronic version or a hard copy form) or by contacting GVMC by phone, email, fax, or mail, and asking to be included on the list.

Primary Objectives—Providing this group information about upcoming public meetings, public comment periods, and other public involvement opportunities through direct mailings.

MPO Newsletter

The MPO develops a quarterly newsletter that is distributed electronically to our Interested Citizen/Agency list and posted on the “Latest Developments” section on our website. The newsletter includes information about major departmental accomplishments, initiatives, legislative and other relevant news, public comment opportunities and upcoming events, as well as a list of

member agencies and a staff directory with contact information for GVMC Transportation Department staff.

Primary Objectives – Educating the public about the work of the GVMC Transportation Department, the latest transportation-related news, and opportunities to get involved in the transportation planning process.

Newspaper Ads

The MPO uses newspaper ads on a case-by-case basis to alert the public to upcoming public involvement opportunities. These ads may appear in the following papers:

- The Advance, a free newspaper that is delivered weekly to homes within Kent and Ottawa County, as well as its affiliate papers—the Cadence and the Penasee Globe
- The Grand Rapids Press, a for-purchase paper published twice a week
- El Vocero, a free paper geared toward the local Hispanic community
- GVMC may also choose to advertise with MLive, which includes print and online advertisements on mlive.com

Primary Objectives – Notifying the public about upcoming public meetings or other opportunities for public involvement.

Organizational Logos

The MPO has two logos—one for GVMC and one for the West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC). The MPO logo appears on all official correspondence, including direct mailings, and on all published advertisements, including newspaper ads and flyers. The West Michigan Clean Air Coalition (WMCAC) logo appears on all official correspondence and on all promotional items for the Clean Air Action program.

Primary Objectives – Maintaining uniformity of the MPO’s publications, making its products and correspondence official, and helping the public to identify plans, promotional items, and advertisements of the MPO.

Press Releases

Press releases are generally used on a case-by-case basis and sent to GVMC’s media list, which includes TV, news, press, and radio representatives, and are used to alert the media of noteworthy news items from the MPO and its committees.

Primary Objectives—Informing the public about major initiatives, program changes, or other important news; or alerting the media about the MTP kickoff and pre-programming collaboration.

Public Meetings

Public meetings are generally informal gatherings that give the public a chance to interact with staff and discuss questions or concerns about projects, plans, etc. that are of interest or importance to them. These meetings may include a short staff presentation as well as a variety of visuals, such as maps, brochures, or other important materials, for the public’s convenience. The public is also encouraged to fill out a comment form at the meeting. Records of public meeting attendance and Title VI information are kept on file and included in the appendices of the TIP and MTP.

Primary Objectives – Encouraging public participation during the development of the TIP and MTP and allowing the public an opportunity to meet with staff.



Photograph from April 9, 2013, public meeting regarding GVMC's FY2014-2017 TIP.

Social Media

GVMC is on Facebook and Twitter and uses both venues to promote organizational activities. GVMC staff also plan to attempt to live stream public meetings during the TIP and MTP development process on Facebook.

Primary Objectives – Notifying the public about Clean Air Action Days (Facebook only), collaboration opportunities, major public events, or opportunities for the public to get involved in the transportation planning process.

Surveys

Surveys may be conducted on an as-needed basis during the development of the MTP to gain insight into important issues within the area. Individuals can contact staff by mail, email, fax, phone, through gvmc.org, or stop by GVMC's office in person to receive a copy of the survey.

Primary Objectives— Gauging the public's interest in investment priorities.

Videos

GVMC staff plans to develop a series of short YouTube videos to help inform the public about the TIP, the MTP, performance measures, what we do as an agency, and other topics as necessary. These videos will be posted online for easy viewing access.

Primary Objectives—Educate the public about the transportation planning process within our MPO area.

Visual Aids

As part of Objective 1, attempts will be made to use visualization techniques to describe Metropolitan Transportation Plans (MTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs). These may include the following formats: project location maps, story maps, ArcGIS online interactive maps, photographs, narrative project descriptions, charts, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, and sketches. Staff continues to monitor and investigate developing technologies to improve the MPO's visualization process.

Primary Objectives – Engaging the public during public meetings and helping to increase their understanding of projects, project locations, etc.

Website

GVMC’s website is an inclusive resource for transportation planning information. The website includes basic information such as meeting schedules, committee membership, and contact information, as well as work products, such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Metropolitan Transportation Program (MTP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Information about additional transportation programs and activities is also available. The public can comment on any of our documents or activities at any time by clicking on the “submit a comment” button located on every transportation webpage and filling out the comment form. (See Appendix C for an example.) The site is maintained by a webmaster, consistently reviewed for accuracy, and new information is added to it continuously. GVMC’s website can be found at gvmc.org.

Primary Objectives – Alerting the public to the latest developments in the TIP or MTP development process, as well as TIP or MTP amendments and public comment opportunities, facilitating the submission of public comments during public comment periods, or providing updates about other plans, programs, opportunities, or transportation developments.

Optional Public Participation Tools and Techniques

The MPO primarily relies on the tools and techniques above for reaching the public, but occasionally, the MPO may decide to employ additional tools and techniques to augment its public involvement process in order to increase the public’s participation in transportation planning. This may occur because a primary tool or technique is determined to no longer be effective during the PPP review process, because the primary tools and techniques need to be enhanced with additional activities in order to better engage the public, because an optional public participation tool or technique becomes more popular with the public, or because staff determines it is necessary to use an optional tool or technique for another reason altogether. Examples of optional tools and techniques are outlined on the following pages.

Events

GVMC may choose to staff a booth at a community event in order to interact with the public, solicit public comment, or increase participation in a survey. For example, when conducting surveys, staff may also choose to visit farmers markets or purchase a table at a movie theater to increase their engagement time with the public.

Primary Objectives—Increasing face-to-face interaction with the public, increasing survey response rates, or soliciting public comment.

Radio Ads

GVMC may occasionally purchase radio air time for public service announcements (PSAs) in order to announce public meetings for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or to inform the public about other important opportunities for participation. The radio ads are generally targeted to reach lower income and ethnic minority populations—a demographic that has been underserved in the transportation planning process in the past—through the station that staff selects to air the commercial. (Radio companies can provide demographic information about the listeners of their

stations before an advertising contract is signed. Therefore, staff can ensure that the station selected will reach the intended group of listeners.)

Primary Objectives—Advertising times, dates, and locations of public meetings or other significant public involvement opportunities.

Staff Presentations

Staff will make presentations to requesting organizations about transportation issues and activities as needed. GVMC will publish and distribute an outline of how the transportation planning process works, listing relevant committees and governmental bodies. Staff will proactively identify community-based, transportation-related collaboratives and consortia in the impacted area, learn their resources and roles in communicating with the community around transportation issues, and regularly meet with them to provide pertinent GVMC information to their constituencies and impact areas.

Primary Objectives – Informing the public about the transportation process or other transportation issues or initiatives as they arise.

Other Media

Staff will continue to monitor its public participation procedures and modify its public participation process to include the addition of new, innovative tools and techniques when possible. These may include providing information to publishers of local newsletters (cities, Neighborhood Associations), facilitating small group meetings or subject/project specific workshops, developing email announcements, or establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee.

Primary Objectives—Enhancing the current public participation procedure.

Appendix A: Guide to Evaluating the GVMC Public Participation Plan

Introduction

GVMC continually strives to improve its public involvement and participation process. To this end, GVMC staff has developed the Public Participation Plan (PPP), which is a guideline for public participation activities conducted by the Grand Valley Metro Council. The PPP contains the goals, objectives, and policies of the MPO for actively engaging the public.

The Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Michigan Department of Transportation require the MPO to continuously evaluate the effectiveness of public involvement activities. Therefore, GVMC staff reviews and updates the PPP prior to the start of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) development process and before the development of the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) if needed. By monitoring public participation practices, it is possible to assure that public participation tools and techniques remain effective. If certain tools or techniques are determined to be ineffective during the review process, it is possible to improve them, discontinue their use, or replace them with new activities. This guide outlines the steps to be taken to evaluate the public involvement tools and techniques described in the PPP, identifies performance measures to quantify success rates, suggests strategies to improve the MPO's public participation process, and provides an avenue through which GVMC can evaluate its public involvement goals and objectives. This guide, along with the PPP itself, is a "living document" that will be consistently reviewed to ensure that appropriate changes are being implemented by the MPO.

Evaluation Methods and Performance Goals

In order to determine the effectiveness of public involvement tools and techniques, they must be evaluated and compared to established performance goals. The two typical methods for evaluating the effectiveness of public involvement tools are surveys and quantitative statistical analysis.

Surveys typically consist of short, specific questions regarding public involvement tools. They may be conducted in person, by phone, mail, email, or on the internet. Surveys conducted in person are considered highly effective and generally have the best response rates. Mail, email, or online surveys are useful for providing a written record of respondents' answers. Each surveying method has strengths and weakness, and the survey format affects the type of results and types of people responding. In addition to these surveys, we also encourage you to submit comments at any time about the public participation processes listed in this document. Comments can be submitted to GVMC Staff by mail, email, fax, or phone. Please see page 2 for contact information for GVMC staff.

Statistics can be a great indicator of whether or not tools used for public involvement are reaching their intended audience and which tools have the strongest response rate. For example, the number of people attending a meeting can be compared to the number of people notified of the meeting. This type of evaluation can indicate the effectiveness of any particular involvement strategy.

The following table briefly describes the evaluation methods that GVMC may use to evaluate each of the public participation tools that GVMC currently uses during the PPP review, which will occur after the MTP and TIP development processes have concluded. For each public participation tool, performance goals and methods for meeting those goals are suggested. Below the tools and techniques that are currently employed is a list of public participation tools that GVMC may use occasionally or may substitute as necessary to replace or augment a currently used tool or technique.

Public Participation Tool Evaluation Table

Public Participation Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Suggested Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
Comment Forms	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of responses	20% of meeting attendees filled out a form -OR- 1% of the annual website visitors emailed a comment	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving comments
Direct Mailings (Environmental Justice)	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of persons reached	Minimum of 15% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they received the mailing	Use the most up-to-date geographic address data available to direct EJ mailings to property owners/renters adjacent to proposed project locations
Document Copies	Number of signatures on the document sign-out sheet	A minimum of one signature per sign-out sheet at every location where a document copy is left for review.	Work with GVMC members and jurisdictions within the MPO area to inform them about the document and to advertise that it's available for review.
Email Announcements	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of persons reached	Minimum of 5% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they saw the email announcement	Increase email list by advertising the availability of email announcements using other public participation tools
Interested Citizens/Agencies Mailing List	Number of names on the list	New interested citizens added every year	Work with partner agencies to increase awareness of GVMC and the availability of this list
MPO Newsletter/Email Newsletter	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of returns	N/A; return rate is addressed under Interested Citizens/Agencies List	Continue items that receive favorable comments and correct or improve items that receive negative comments; Work with member agencies to promote the newsletter
Newspaper Advertisements	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of persons the publication reached	Minimum of 10% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they saw the ad; ad formats may be modified based on feedback received	Improve the size, layout, or placement of the ad to increase visibility
Organizational Logo	Calls, emails, etc.	Recognition of the logo	The GVMC logo should be used on all MPO products and publications and on materials for all MPO sponsored activities
Press Releases	Calls, emails, etc.	No standard; format may be modified based on feedback received	Encourage publication of press releases by keeping the media informed
Public Meetings	Calls, emails, etc.; attendance	Level of attendance	Schedule meetings at convenient times and locations; use other public participation tools to increase awareness of hearings

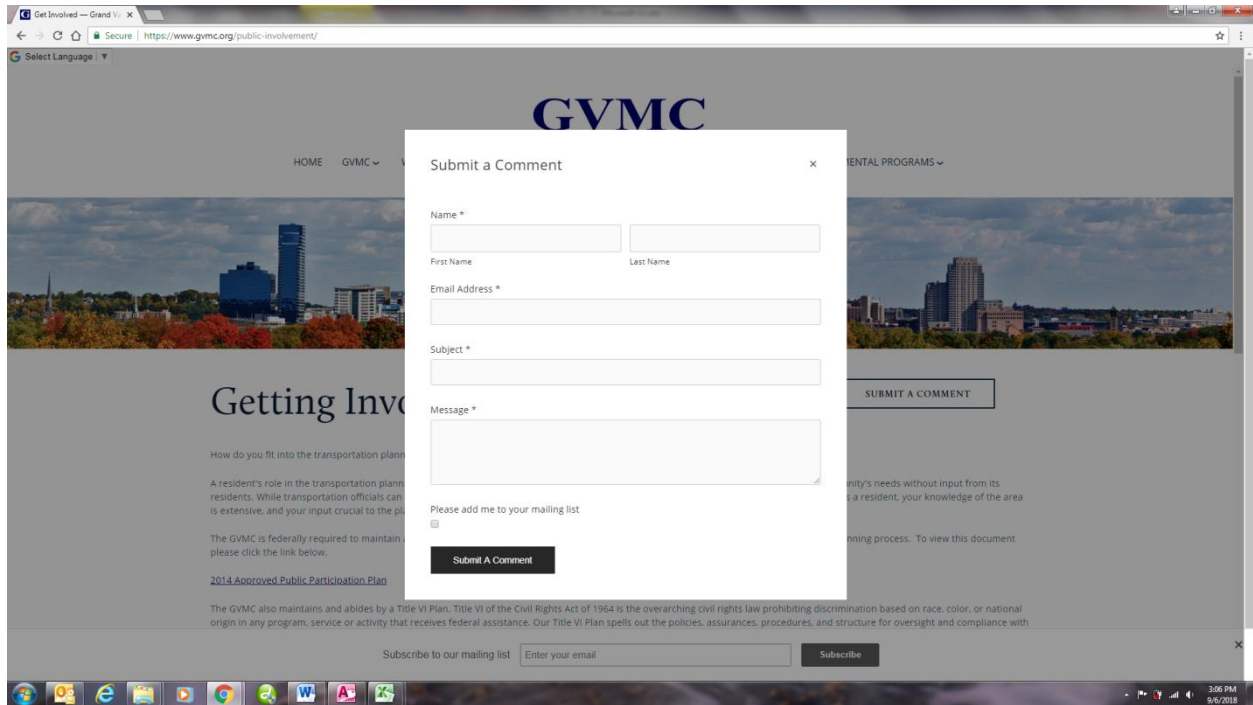
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of "friends" or "followers"	N/A; participants select GVMC themselves	Provide information, announcements, access to surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account weekly
Surveys	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of responses	25% of contact persons participated in the survey – OR- 20% of mail recipients returned the survey	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving feedback; offer incentives for returning surveys
GVMC Website	Number of hits	Minimum of 50 hits/month, 5% increase in hits/year	Provide all plans and documents on the website for public review; use other public participation tools to advertise the website

Optional Public Participation Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Suggested Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
Other Newsletters (Cities, Homeowners Associations, etc.)	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of persons reached	Minimum of 5% of meeting attendees/survey respondents were reached	Provide information to publishers of these newsletters in a timely fashion; investigate all possible newsletters that may reach an affected area
Small Group Meetings	Calls, emails, etc.; Met the expectations of the group	N/A; these meetings are held at the request of the affected groups or interested parties	MPO staff should be available in a timely manner to hold small group meetings regarding any MPO activity or issue; the meeting should be formatted to provide specific information requested by the group and should highlight issues that are of interest to the group
Subject Specific Workshops/ Project Specific Workshops	Calls, emails, etc.; attendance	Minimum attendance as it relates to workshop cost achieved	Schedule at convenient times and locations; hold multiple workshops when possible; use other participation tools to advertise, increase awareness

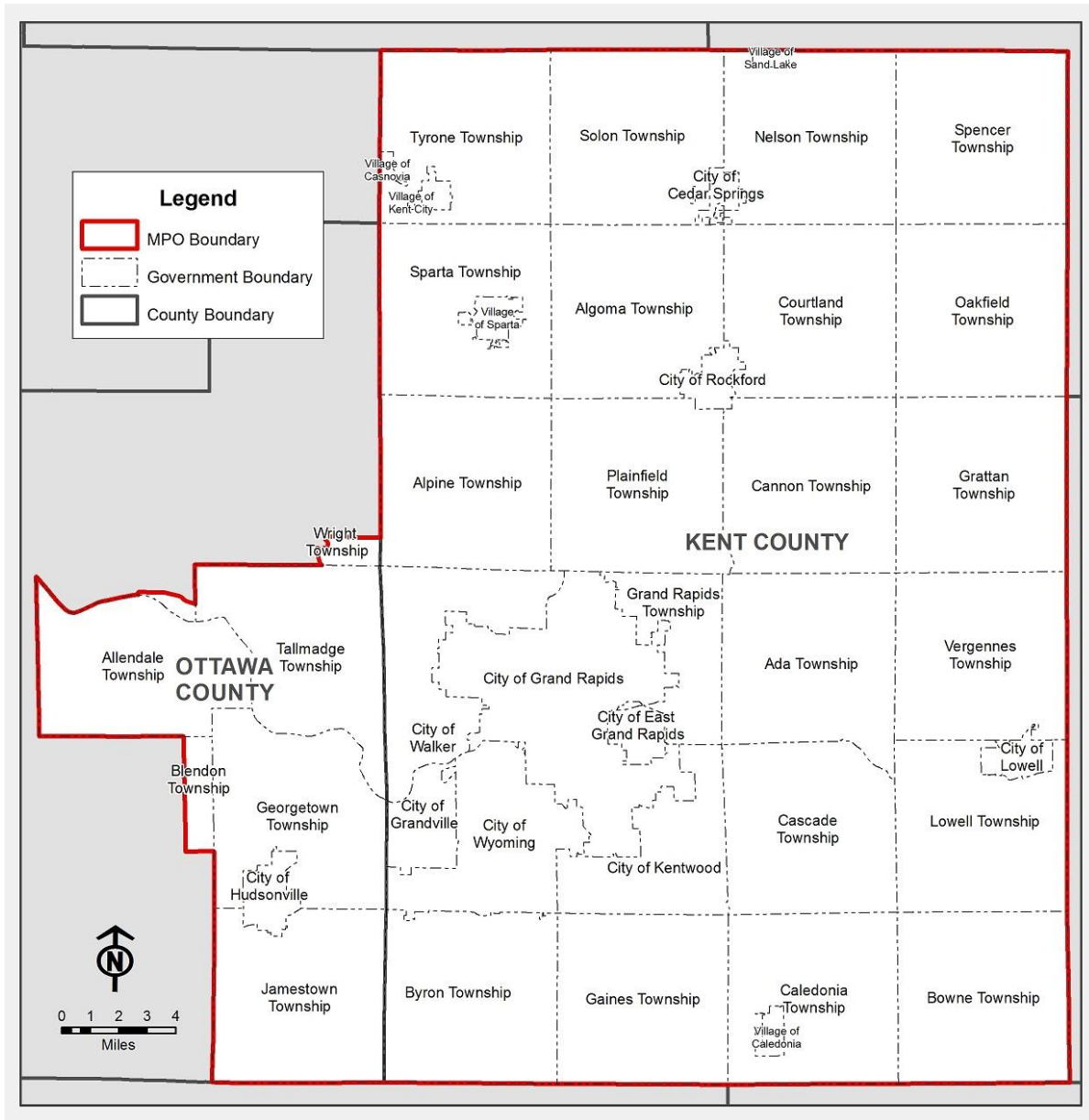
Improvement Strategies

The Grand Valley Metro Council continues to strive for improved public participation in the transportation planning process. With review and evaluation, GVMC hopes to refine public participation strategy improvements to increase public awareness and to improve the quality and quantity of information provided to the public. Contributions and input from the citizens of Kent and eastern Ottawa Counties are crucial for responsible planning decisions, and therefore it is critical for GVMC to seek the most effective public input methodologies.

Appendix C: Submit a Comment Form on Website



Appendix D: Map of GVMC's MPO Area



Appendix E: List of Libraries and Jurisdictions within the MPO Area

Ada Township	Kent District Library-Byron Township Branch
Algoma Township	Kent District Library-Caledonia Twp. Branch
Allendale Township	Kent District Library-Cascade Township Branch
Alpine Township	Kent District Library-Comstock Park Branch
Bowne Township	Kent District Library-East Grand Rapids Branch
Byron Township	Kent District Library-Englehardt Branch
Caledonia Charter Township	Kent District Library-Gaines Township Branch
Cannon Township	Kent District Library-Grandville Branch
Cascade Charter Township	Kent District Library-Kentwood Branch
City of Cedar Springs	Kent District Library-Krause Memorial Branch
City of East Grand Rapids	Kent District Library-Plainfield Township Branch
City of Grand Rapids	Kent District Library-Sand Lake/Nelson Twp. Branch
City of Grandville	Kent District Library-Spencer Township Branch
City of Hudsonville	Kent District Library-Tyrone Township Branch
City of Kentwood	Kent District Library-Walker Branch
City of Lowell	Kent District Library-Wyoming Branch
City of Rockford	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Allendale Twp Library
City of Walker	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Cedar Springs Public Library
City of Wyoming	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Gary Byker Memorial Library
Courtland Township	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Georgetown Twp Library
Gaines Charter Township	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Patmos Library
Georgetown Township	Lakeland Library Cooperative: Sparta Branch
Gerald R. Ford International Airport	Lowell Charter Township
Grand Rapids Charter Township	MDOT
Grand Rapids Public Library (Main)	MDOT-GR TSC
Grand Rapids Public Library: Madison Square Branch	Nelson Township
Grand Rapids Public Library: Ottawa Hills Branch	Oakfield Township
Grand Rapids Public Library: Seymour Branch	Ottawa County Road Commission
Grand Rapids Public Library: Van Belkum Branch	Plainfield Charter Township
Grand Rapids Public Library: West Leonard Branch	Solon Township
Grand Rapids Public Library: West Side Branch	Sparta Township
Grand Rapids Public Library: Yankee Clipper Branch	Spencer Township
Grattan Township	Tallmadge Township
Hope Network	Tyrone Township
ITP-The Rapid	Vergennes Township
Jamestown Township	Village of Caledonia
Kent County Road Commission	Village of Casnovia
Kent District Library Service Center	Village of Kent City
Kent District Library-Alpine Township Branch	Village of Sand Lake
Kent District Library-Alto Branch	Village of Sparta

Appendix F: Matrix

TIP Revisions		Staff Recommendation	Committee Chair Approval	Technical Committee Review & Recommend	Policy Committee Approval	MDOT/HHWA/FTA Approval	Public Participation Procedure
TIP Amendment	Add New Project over \$5.0 Million (including Safety, TAP, and CMAQ projects) in TIP Project List	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
• <i>Financial constraint must be maintained at all times.</i>	Delete Project	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
	Federal-aid cost increase over 25%	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting
• <i>Any new project or major scope/design change shall be consistent with the MTP.</i>	Major* scope/design change	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting
	Move Illustrative List Project into the TIP (new project)***	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting
• <i>GPA line items budget changes exceeding 25%.</i>	Change non-federal aid funded project to federally funded project	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting
	New Discretionary Projects Over \$5 million	X	X (Option)			X	Web posting
• Generally refers to line item projects in TIP Project List (over \$5.0 million)							
TIP Admin. Mod/Adjustment	Additional lanes or non-motorized, up to one mile	X	X (Option)	X	X		Committee meeting
• <i>Financial constraint must be maintained at all times.</i>	Adding, deleting or changing project within existing GPA category and budgets as defined (under \$5.0 Million)	X					At next Committee meeting
	Increase in Federal aid cost more than 10% and less than or equal to 25%	X	X (Option)	X	X		Committee meeting
• <i>Changes to existing projects.</i>	Increase in Federal aid cost up to 10% (per LAP Policy)	X					Not required
	Decrease in Federal aid project cost	X					Not required
	Change in Federal funding category (applies to MDOT only)	X					Not required
	Change in Federal-aid funding level or TIP year not affecting other projects (eg. MDOT, ITP, TAP, Bridge, Safety, HPP (earmarks), or other discretionary sources)	X					Not required
	Adding or changing job numbers within approved funding and scope limits	X					Not required
	Changing an advance construction project to Federal-aid	X	X (Option)	X	X		Not required
	Changing a Federal-aid project to advance construction	X	X (Option)	X	X		Not required
	Change of project year within the 4-year TIP	X	X (Option)	X	X		Not required
	Listing error corrections	X					Not required
	Minor** scope changes (not regionally significant as defined)	X					Not required
Notes:							
• Financial constraint must be maintained at all times.							
• Any new project or major scope change shall be consistent with the MTP.							
• Regionally significant for air quality = Adding or reducing through capacity over 1 mile; adding new Federal aid road, fixed guideway or BRT transit project, substantial multi-jurisdictional non-motorized, or major rail or transit infrastructure.							
• Major* = 1) change in lane configuration, 2) change affecting road capacity, 3) change affecting air quality (regionally significant)							
• Minor** = May include at staff's discretion: 1) lane extensions up to 1/4 mile, 2) sidewalks & NM, 3) ADA enhancements, 4) signalization and/or signs, 5) utility issues, 6) pavement type, 7) phase changes, 8) additional spaces in park-and-ride lots, 9) other							
• *** Any project from the TIP Illustrative Project list, which has previously been processed for public involvement with the TIP, is not required to have additional public involvement (Consultation, EJ and EA) prior to completing the TIP amendment process.							

MTP Revisions

		Staff Recommendation	Committee Chair Approval	Technical Committee Review & Recommendation	Policy Committee Approval	MDOT/FHWA/FTA Approval	Public Participation Procedure
MTP Amendment	Add/Delete Regionally Significant Project (defined by IAWG, AQ non-exempt project)	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
	Major* scope/design change for regionally significant project(s)	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
	Move Regionally Significant Illustrative List Project into the MTP (new project)	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
	Change in air quality conformity model year grouping for regionally significant project	X	X (Option)	X	X	X	Committee meeting, Web posting
MTP Administrative Modification	Additional lanes or non-motorized facilities, up to one mile	X	X (Option)	X	X		Not required
• Financial constraint must be maintained at all times.	Increase in Federal aid cost up to 25%	X	X (Option)	X	X		Not required
	Decrease in Federal aid project cost	X					Not required
• Changes to existing projects.	Change in Non-Federal aid project cost	X					Not required
• MTP modifications will be made during the next MTP amendment or plan update.	Change in Federal or Non-Federal funding category	X					Not required
	Listing error corrections or other non-regionally significant project changes	X					Not required
	Minor** scope changes (not regionally significant as defined)	X					Not required
	Update to the first four years of the MTP to correspond to the most current TIP	X					Not required
Notes:							
• Financial constraint must be maintained at all times.							
• Any new project or major scope change shall be consistent with the MTP.							
• Regionally significant for air quality = Adding or reducing through capacity over 1 mile; adding new Federal aid road, fixed guideway or BRT transit project, substantial multi-jurisdictional non-motorized, or major rail or transit infrastructure.							
• Major* = 1) change in lane configuration, 2) change affecting road capacity, 3) change affecting air quality (regionally significant)							
• Minor** = May include at staff's discretion: 1) lane extensions up to 1/4 mile, 2) sidewalks & NM, 3) ADA enhancements, 4) signalization and/or signs, 5) utility issues, 6) pavement type, 7) phase changes, 8) additional spaces in park-and-ride lots, 9) other							
• *** Any project from the TIP Illustrative Project list, which has previously been processed for public involvement with the TIP, is not required to have additional public involvement (Consultation, EJ and EA) prior to completing the TIP amendment process.							

Appendix G: Comments Received

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Appendix H: Public Participation Summary Report

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