



Draft 2021 Public Participation Plan

A comprehensive plan for engaging the public in our transportation planning efforts

GVMC

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Acknowledgements

Cover photograph: 10 Mile Bridge rehabilitation project. Photo courtesy of the KCRC.

Special Accommodations and Contact Information

Accommodations are available upon request for individuals with disabilities requiring auxiliary aids or services and those in need of translation or interpreter assistance to view, read, or understand this document. To request accommodations, or for questions about this document, please contact:

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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 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. The FAST Act was extended on October 1, 2020, and is currently set to expire on September 30, 2021.

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 (MTPs) and Transportation Improvement Programs (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 MTP or TIP as a result of the public involvement process, as an appendix of the MTP 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
- Providing additional opportunities to engage with the public virtually when feasible, practical, or necessary to gather input
- 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 continual 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, a quarterly newsletter, as well as other tools and techniques when determined necessary. (Please see the Public Participation Timeline Summary on page 33 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, including free WiFi. *Please note: During the COVID-19 pandemic, Kent District Libraries (KDL) added 700 new WiFi hotspots to its collection, increasing the number to 833. These small pieces of equipment set up a wireless network that allows a houseful of people to connect to the internet via cellular service. They can be checked out by visiting kdl.org and are available to library cardholders age 18 and older. Hotspots will be mailed to households while KDL branches are closed due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Free WiFi can be accessed from KDL parking lots. Mobile hotspots are also available for checkout from Grand Rapids Public Library branches (visit grpl.org) as well as Lakeland Library Cooperative branches (visit lcoop.org).*
- All plans and documents will also be available at GVMC offices, and copies of the MTP will be distributed to all public libraries in the MPO area. Links to the MTP will be provided to all members of the GVMC Transportation Committees, which they can then share with their audiences on their websites, in newsletters, or on social media. 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, mail, e-mail, or in person during office hours. A small copying fee may apply.
- GVMC will employ visualization techniques to describe MTPs and TIPs. These may include the following formats: project location maps, story maps, interactive maps, web applications, 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 the meeting occurs with the exception of emergency meetings when less time is allowed under the State of Michigan Open Meetings Act.
- In the case of extenuating circumstances that would require electronic meetings, such as the MDHHS Orders that required nonessential personnel to work from home to curb the spread of COVID-19, GVMC will hold all public meetings in accordance with the current Open Meetings legislation. Notices of electronic meetings, including instructions for the public to participate, will be posted along with meeting agendas on gvmc.org a minimum of six days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- 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 meetings prior to the adoption of the transportation plan or program for which it is responsible, including the MTP, 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 gvmc.org and our social media pages.

- Those plans and programs that require extended review periods will allow for written or verbal comments to be submitted, including the MTP, the TIP, the Unified Planning Work Program, and the Public Participation Plan. 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.
- Members of the public wishing to address comments to any GVMC Transportation Committee will be given the opportunity to comment during the public comment portion of those meetings.

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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 reviewed before the start of the MTP development process as required by Federal guidelines and prior to the 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 18.

Availability of Information

All events/opportunities appear on 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 [El Vocero Hispano](#) and [The Grand Rapids Times](#). For more information about these newspapers, please see the “Newspaper Ads” section on page 37.

GVMC staff will make written materials provided to our committees available to the public upon request. Requests can be made by phone, mail, email, through gvmc.org, in person at GVMC’s office during posted business hours, 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 and online 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 34.

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 at 616.776.7603. 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 34 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

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.

Response to Comments: GVMC will summarize and respond to, if necessary, public comments on the MTP, the PPP, the UPWP, the TIP, on amendments to the TIP or MTP, 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,

¹ From www.plainlanguage.gov

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

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 posts will be deleted at GVMC discretion or by the social media platform where they were shared 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 (STIP), 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. MDOT conducts formal public involvement for their Five-Year Transportation Program, generally every year when a new year is added to the program, but comments can be made at any time. The MDOT Five-Year Program link is: www.michigan.gov/mdot/0,4616,7-151-9621_14807_14810_59639---,00.html. 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 used for the development of Michigan Mobility 2045, their latest long-range plan. The SLRTP is a policy document that 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, including GVMC, will continue to participate in the process as Michigan Mobility 2045 is developed. GVMC will also participate in outreach efforts locally for this plan, provide local contact information for MPO stakeholders, and post notices and links to relevant documents on our website or in our quarterly newsletter upon request. In addition, presentations will be made at Transportation Committee meetings, 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 through projects 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 partnerships 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 informing their interested parties through their existing outreach forums, including social media. GVMC posts notices for MDOT public engagement opportunities upon request and looks forward to continuing to build this partnership. GVMC is also striving to make connections with neighborhood associations and other agencies/organizations that serve and engage lower income and minority populations.

Project-Level Public Involvement Coordination

In addition to GVMC's public involvement efforts, individual agencies conduct project-level public involvement for their projects as well. To assist in this effort, GVMC will post notices for individual project public involvement meetings on its website upon request, 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 or MTP

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 MTP, substantial amendments to that plan, corridor studies, the 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 the MTP and the TIP, (2) a

reasonable period of time will be set aside before the adoption of a MTP 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 34.

Public Participation Summary Reports

After the completion of all TIPs, MTPs, Public Participation Plans, and UPWPs, 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. Agendas will be posted on gvmc.org before Technical and Policy Committee meetings when the plans will be discussed or approved, and public notices will be posted according to the guidelines in the following sections of this document. Updates will be given verbally during Technical and Policy Committee meetings periodically as well.

GVMC has also 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, MTP, UPWP, and PPP. *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.

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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 and/or amending the PPP. Please note that amendments are considered changes that alter the content of the document.

Public Participation Plan Development and Amendment Procedure

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	After the draft PPP 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: <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 partner organizations • Newspaper advertisement in English and Spanish (Please see page 37 for more information on newspaper ads.) 	1 day before the public comment period begins	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
2. Public Participation Plan approval	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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with partner organizations 	5 days before the scheduled Policy Committee meeting	N/A

Note: Please see the “Public Comments” section on page 13 for information on submitting comments.

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 Rapid, 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	Public Notification Date (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
1. Kickoff to UPWP Development	Before the UPWP development process begins, GVMC staff will notify the public in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with partner organizations 	Between mid-February and mid-March every year	N/A; notification only
2. Adoption of draft document	Once the draft UPWP document is complete, Staff will bring it to the Policy Committee and GVMC Board for approval. Public comment opportunities will be available at both committee meetings. The public will be notified of this comment opportunity in the following ways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on website • Social media post on GVMC’s Facebook page and Twitter • Social media post shared with partner organizations 	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.

Note: Please see the “Public Comments” section on page 13 for information on submitting comments.

Unified Planning Work Program Amendment

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

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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	Public Notification Date (minimum)	Length of Public Comment Period (minimum)
1. Kickoff to TIP Development	Before the TIP development process begins, GVMC staff will notify the public in the following ways: <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 partner organizations • 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 for public comment	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: <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 	7 days prior to the public meeting and before the 1 st day of the public comment period	14 days

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media post shared with partner organizations • 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 		
3. Adoption of draft document	<p>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:</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 partner organizations 	6 days prior to Technical Committee meeting	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.

Please note that any of the procedures above may be enhanced with optional tools and techniques to extend our outreach. Please see page 40 for additional information.

Please see the “Public Comments” section on page 13 for information on submitting comments.

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 MDOT and federal approval and are characterized by one of the changes proposed in the table below. Also included in the table is the corresponding public involvement procedure for the TIP amendment.

Description of TIP Amendment	Public Participation Procedure
1. Applies to projects over \$5.0 million and all reconstruction projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web posting • Committee meeting
2. Deleting a project; where applicable, funding will be returned to the MPO for reprogramming.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
3. Projects (including GPA category accounts/budgets) with cost change exceeding 25% of the programmed total participating project cost.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
4. Major changes in project design concept or design scope, affecting lane configuration, roadway capacity and/or air quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
5. Adding a “new” local project; the candidate project should be included on a deficiency list as well as the illustrative list.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting
6. Changing non-federally funded project to federally funded project.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committee meeting

Please see the Public Participation Timeline Summary on page 33 for information on the length of the public comment period and prior public notice for TIP amendments.

* 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.

Exceptions to this policy include new projects using Federal aid funding sources not impacting other Federal aid funded projects, such as MDOT, ITP, Statewide TAP, bridge, safety, or other discretionary sources (see matrix). Upon MPO staff recommendation, the Technical and Policy Committee chair or vice chairpersons are authorized to approve Federal project amendments and MPO adjustments in the referenced federal funding categories. Projects covered under

these exceptions will be posted on the GVMC website for public review for one week prior to submitting for federal approval. MPO Committees will be notified at their next regular meeting.

Projects that are categorized as “GPA Projects” can be added, deleted, moved, and changed in cost, through administrative modifications (per policies herein), as long as the GPA account/budget does not exceed the 25% threshold outlined above.

Existing MPO, State and Federal processes will be followed for proposed TIP amendments in the areas of air quality conformity, financial constraint, public participation, environmental justice, and consultation. TIP amendments involving the addition of a new project to an existing TIP will be subject to public involvement as described in the MPO Public Participation Plan. Public involvement for changes to existing projects or moving projects from the illustrative list to the funded TIP project list will be accommodated through the MPO committee process as these projects have gone through the extensive public participation, environmental justice, and consultation processes during TIP development.

TIP Administrative Modifications or MPO Adjustments

Project specific public involvement is not necessary for TIP administrative modifications or MPO adjustments. Administrative modifications or MPO adjustments for the TIP will be considered when any of the following is proposed to an existing project:

- Change in total cost less than or equal to 25% of the TIP programmed amount is an administrative modification and requires MPO staff approval (before it is obligated).
- Minor Federal-aid changes may be administrative if other local projects are not impacted and will be reflected in the next TIP list of projects (i.e., MDOT, ITP, TAP, bridge, safety, or other discretionary sources).
 - 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.
- Revisions that cause projects to switch fiscal 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)
- Minor changes in scope; however, project scope changes affecting air quality conformity or other projects will require MPO Committee approval (MPO Adjustment) and may become a TIP amendment. 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); these modifications will be reflected in the next TIP list of projects.

- Corrections to minor listing errors that do not change cost or scope; these modifications will be reflected in the next TIP list of projects.
- Changing an existing project to an advance construction project and vice versa.
- Adding lanes or non-motorized, up to ½ mile.
- Adding, deleting or changing GPA qualifying projects in most cases will be an administrative modification.
- General Program Account (GPA) budget changes less than 25% of the last federally approved threshold will qualify as an administrative change requiring MPO staff approval, consistent with the Statewide GPA Policy.

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 Committee 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.

If an administrative modification, MPO adjustment, or amendment must be considered immediately, staff will have the authority to implement it; for MPO adjustments and amendments, permission from the Chairpersons of the Technical and Policy Committees and the requesting agency impacted by the adjustment or amendment are required. If the Chairperson from either committee is not available, permission for the Vice-Chairperson will be sought. The modification will be included in the next TIP list of projects. Emergency amendments will be posted on the GVMC website for public review for one week prior to submitting for federal approval. MPO Committees will be notified at their next regular meeting. At all times, the TIP must maintain financial constraint through a combination of Federal and non-federal funds. Administrative modifications and MPO adjustments will be communicated to MDOT and FHWA in a timely fashion and reflected in the next TIP list of projects and posted on the GVMC website for public information.

Public notice of public participation activities and time established for public review of and comments on the TIP will satisfy the Program of Projects (POP) requirements for Section 5307 public involvement.

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

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. In nonattainment and maintenance areas, project classifications must be consistent with the “exempt project” classifications contained in the EPA transportation conformity regulation (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.

GPAs may be used as a tool to streamline the TIP and STIP development processes and minimize the need to amend the TIP and STIP. The GPA, while it contains several small-scale projects, is treated as one project for the purposes of amendment/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 amendments.

GVMC uses GPAs, where and when possible, to facilitate smooth modification of projects listed in the current TIP. GPA projects, while grouped together for TIP amendment threshold purposes, are listed individually in the TIP reports for clear viewing by stakeholders and the public. The following rules will apply to all GPA categories:

1. The project cannot be a new road/facility, 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 a categorical exclusion 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. (Reconstruction projects are identified by work type codes.)
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.

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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)
1. Kickoff to MTP Development	Once the MTP development process begins, GVMC staff will engage the public in the following ways: <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 partner organizations • Transportation issues survey developed and circulated • Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online 	N/A	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.
2. Pre-Programming Collaboration	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: <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 	Up to 7 days prior to the start of the public comment period	14 days
3. Draft MTP, environmental justice, and air quality results (if applicable) completed and	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: <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>available 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 partner organizations • 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 links to the MTP shared with all jurisdictions within the MPO area. (See Appendix E for list.) • Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online <p><i>At this point, staff will also contact state regulatory agencies (i.e., MDNR and MDEGLE) to consult with them on the draft project list and potential impacts on environmentally sensitive areas.</i></p>		
<p>4. Adoption of draft document</p>	<p>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:</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 partner organizations • Press release submitted to GVMC’s media contact list and posted online 	<p>6 days prior to the scheduled 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>

Please note that any of the procedures above may be enhanced with optional tools and techniques to extend our outreach. Please see page 40 for additional information.

Please see the “Public Comments” section on page 13 for information on submitting comments.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Amendments

It is occasionally necessary to amend the MTP because of changes to projects listed within the document. MTP amendments require the review and recommendation of the Technical Committee and approval of the Policy Committee as well as state and federal approval. The table that follows describes proposed changes that trigger an MTP amendment as well as a description of the public involvement procedure for the amendment.

Description of MTP Amendment	Public Participation Procedure
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding a new 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"> Deleting a project; where applicable, funding will be returned to the MPO for reprogramming. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech & Policy Committee meeting Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Projects with cost exceeding 25% of the MTP programmed amount 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech & Policy Committee meeting Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Major changes in project design concept or design scope. A major change is one affecting lane configuration, roadway capacity and/or air quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech & Policy Committee meeting Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing non-federally funded project to a federally funded project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech & Policy Committee meeting Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moving an illustrative list project into the body or project list of the MTP document 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tech & Policy Committee meeting Web posting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Changing air quality conformity model year grouping for a 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 33 for information on the length of the public comment period and prior public notice for MTP amendments.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan Administrative Modifications

Public involvement is not necessary for MTP administrative modifications, which will be considered when any of the following is proposed to an existing project:

- Adding 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
- Corrections to minor listing errors or other non-regionally significant project changes
- Minor changes in scope, or scope changes not considered regionally significant
 - 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.
- Update to the first four years of the MTP to correspond to the most current TIP

Administrative modifications regarding the addition of lanes or non-motorized facilities up to one mile and increases in Federal-aid project cost up to 25% require MPO Committee approval. The other minor modifications to the MTP occur only when the MTP itself is undergoing an update or is being amended. The MTP document is visionary and long range by its very nature and is only administratively modified when other major changes (amendments) are demanded.

Please refer to GVMC's Policies and Practices for Programming Projects document for additional information on MTP revisions.

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.

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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 Program (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 page 13 for more information on submitting comments.) The public may also submit comments online through our "Submit a Comment" form that is located on every Transportation Department webpage on our website. See Appendix C for example.

Primary Objectives—Recording the views and opinions of the public on transportation needs, projects, studies, and transportation documents, 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 six 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, unless otherwise noted

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, unless otherwise noted

Grand Valley Metropolitan Council Board—Currently meets the 1st Thursday of the month in February, May, September, November and December at 8:30 a.m. at the Kent County Commission Chambers, Kent County Administration Building, 300 Monroe Ave. NW, Grand Rapids, MI 49503, unless otherwise noted. *(Please note meeting is also televised when held in person. If extenuating circumstances require the meeting to be held virtually, it can be accessed online.)*

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 a direct opportunity for the public to comment on TIP, MTP, or UPWP amendments, transportation documents, 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, and elected officials. GVMC maintains three mailing lists in MailChimp, including 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; our consultation list, which is comprised of stakeholders from companies focused on the environment, conservation, freight movement, or other related issues, as well as tribal organizations; and a media list that includes our contacts at local news outlets.

Primary Objectives – Keeping the organization's contacts organized and up-to-date, allowing for ease of correspondence with various groups, and maintaining accurate records.

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, 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. Any person or agency may request a copy of any of GVMC's plans via telephone, mail, e-mail, or in person during office hours. A small copying fee may apply. Copies of these documents are also available online, where they may be downloaded and printed by the public at their convenience.

Draft copies of the MTP are distributed to all libraries, and links to the document are sent to all 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 Jurisdictions in the MPO Area" 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

Sample flyer advertising a public meeting

- 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, 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 over email.

MPO Newsletter

The MPO develops a quarterly newsletter that is distributed electronically to our Interested Citizen/Agency List. The newsletter includes information about major departmental accomplishments, initiatives, legislative and other relevant news, public comment opportunities and upcoming events, as well as 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:

- El Vocero. According to their website, this free newspaper is the oldest and largest audited distribution serving all of West Michigan's Latino community for over 27 years.
- The Grand Rapids Press. This for-purchase newspaper is published on Sunday, Tuesday, and Thursday; an eNewspaper is also available.
- The Grand Rapids Times. According to their website, this newspaper is the oldest

existing weekly publication targeted to Black communities with Grand Rapids as the primary market; copies can be picked up from a variety of locations within the area.

- 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 emails and 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 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 during the development of transportation documents.

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.



Photo from a GVMC public meeting

Opportunities may exist for the public to participate online by broadcasting meetings on Facebook live or through other platforms.

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

Social Media

GVMC is on Facebook and Twitter and uses both platforms to promote organizational activities. GVMC staff may also choose to live stream public meetings during the TIP and MTP development process on social media.

Primary Objectives – Notifying the public about collaboration opportunities, major public events, or opportunities for the public to get involved in the transportation planning process.

Surveys

A survey is conducted during the development of the MTP to gain insight into important issues within the area, including the public's priorities on where funding should be allocated to improve the transportation system. Surveys may also be conducted on an as-needed basis for other plans or projects. Individuals can contact staff by mail, email, phone, through gvmc.org, or stop by GVMC's office to receive a paper copy of the survey.

Primary Objectives— Gauging the public's priorities for transportation system investments.

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, interactive maps, web applications, photographs, narrative project descriptions, charts, illustrations, graphics, diagrams, or 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, transportation plans, 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), the Public Participation Plan (PPP), 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 Committee meetings; 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 choose to visit farmers markets or staff a table at a movie theater to increase their engagement time with the public.

Primary Objectives—Increasing face-to-face interaction with the public, improving 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 a 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, Small Group Meetings, and Focus Groups

Staff will make presentations or host small group meetings or focus groups about any transportation issue or activity upon request. The presentation or meeting should be formatted to provide specific information requested by the group and should highlight issues that are of

interest to the group. Focus groups may also be convened to gather public and/or stakeholder input for transportation planning efforts, issues, or projects.

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

Subject or Project-Specific Workshops

Staff will host subject or project-specific workshops, including lunch & learn events, when a need is identified or upon request in order to educate our members, stakeholders, or the local community about transportation issues. For example, GVMC expects to use these workshops to educate stakeholders as part of our safety education and outreach program and to address other community needs as they arise. These workshops will be scheduled at convenient times and locations, and multiple workshops will be held when possible to increase opportunities for participation.

Primary Objectives—Educate our members, stakeholders, or the local community about transportation issues.

Videos

GVMC staff may 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—Educating the public about the transportation planning process within our MPO area.

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, etc.), establishing a Citizen Advisory Committee, or incorporating new and emerging applications or platforms to reach the public into our public involvement process.

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, or phone. Please see page 3 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	Copies will be made upon request. No evaluation criteria needed.	N/A	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.
Flyers	Number of persons reached	Minimum of 1% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicated that they saw the flyer	Work with local libraries and jurisdictions to ensure they have copies of the flyer and that it is posted in a location where it's visible to the public
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	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of returns	N/A; addressed under Interested Citizens/Agencies List	Work with member agencies to promote the newsletter

Public Participation Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Suggested Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
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	Internal review ensuring logo remains effective and recognizable	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 or emails in response to press release and number of articles published as a result of the press release	Minimum of 5% of emails opened and one news response to the press release submission	Encourage publication of press releases by keeping the media informed; send press releases at key times of day to improve response rate
Public Meetings	Number of attendees	Growing number of attendees at public meetings	Schedule meetings at convenient times and locations; use other public participation tools to increase awareness of these meetings
Social Media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)	Calls, emails, etc.; Number of "followers" and number of impressions or people reached	Increasing number of followers and number of impressions or people reached	Provide information, announcements, access to surveys, and meeting information; maintain and monitor account weekly
Surveys	Number of responses	25% of contact persons participated in the survey. Increasing number of survey participants	Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving feedback; offer incentives for returning surveys
Visual Aids	Number of public views, uses, or engagements	Increasing number of public views, uses, or engagements	Continue to research new applications and increase the use of visualization techniques during the creation of major work products
GVMC Website	Number of visitors	Minimum of 50 visitors/month, 5% increase in visits/year	Provide all plans and documents on the website for public review; use other public participation tools to advertise the website

Optional Public Participation Tool Evaluation Table

<i>Optional</i> Public Participation Tools	Evaluation Criteria	Suggested Performance Goal(s)	Methods to Meet Goal(s)
Events	Number of attendees, in-person interactions, or number of surveys completed	Minimum of 5 in-person interactions or 5 completed surveys	Choosing events that are well-attended with booth locations in high-traffic areas
Radio ads	Number of attendees at public meeting who heard ad	A minimum of 1 person attending the public meeting heard the ad	Choosing stations that reach traditionally underserved populations (EJ), as well as stations that reach large numbers of listeners
Staff Presentations, Small Group Meetings, and Focus Groups	Calls, emails, etc.; number of attendees; met the expectations of the group; GVMC staff received additional public and/or stakeholder input	N/A; these meetings are held at the request of the affected groups or interested parties, or in the case of focus groups, convened when needed to gather additional public input.	MPO staff should be available in a timely manner to hold presentations, small group meetings and focus groups 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. Focus groups may also be convened to gather public input for transportation planning efforts, issues, or projects.
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
Videos	Number of views	Increasing number of views, likes and shares	Continue to investigate new platforms to create videos and for opportunities to use them to educate the public
Other Media	To be determined based on media selected	Increased outreach through chosen method	Research new, innovative tools and techniques to reach the public and continue to build partnerships with agencies that interact with the public to increase our reach

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.

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Appendix B: Public Comment Form



2045 Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Public Comment Form

Project:

Comments:

_____	_____
<i>First Name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>

<i>Email</i>	
1. Would you like to be added to our mailing list?	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	
<input type="checkbox"/> No	
2. How did you hear about today's public meeting?	

Grand Valley Metro Council
678 Front Ave N.W. Suite 200 Grand Rapids, MI 49504
Phone: 776-3876 Fax: 774-9292

Appendix C: Submit a Comment Form on Website

Submit a Comment

Name *

First Name Last Name

Email Address *

Subject *

Message *

Please add me to your mailing list

Submit

SEARCH

GVMC 2045 M...

GVMC 2045 Metropolitan...

Clears Federal Review

an (MTP)

SUBMIT A COMMENT

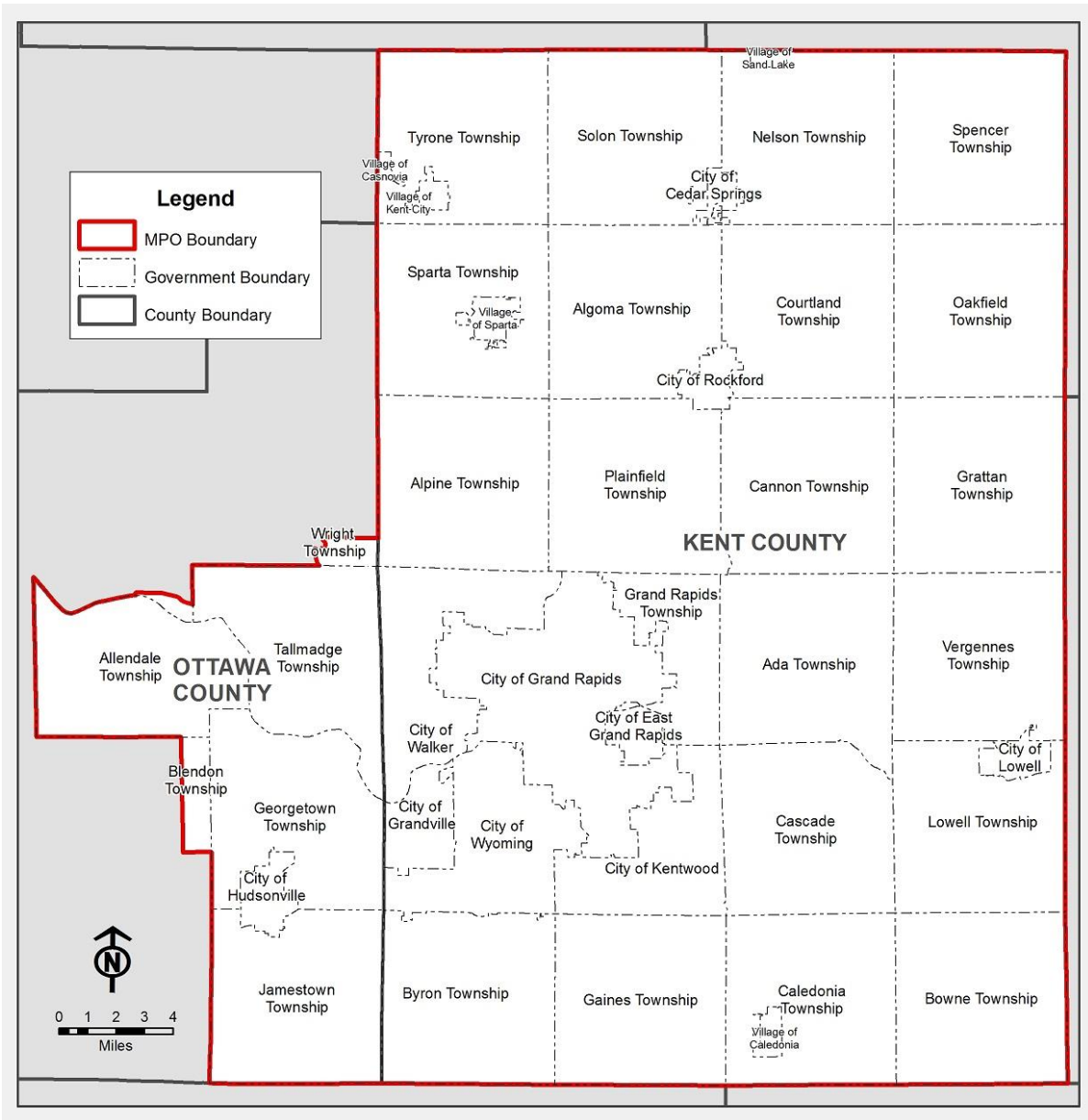
https://www.gvmc.org/mtp

Select Language

Type here to search

4:34 PM 2/23/2021

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 Coop: Allendale Twp Library
City of Walker	Lakeland Library Coop: Cedar Springs Public Library
City of Wyoming	Lakeland Library Coop: Gary Byker Memorial Library
Courtland Township	Lakeland Library Coop: Georgetown Twp Library
Gaines Charter Township	Lakeland Library Coop: Patmos Library
Georgetown Township	Lakeland Library Coop: 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-Amy Van Andel Library (Ada)	Village of Sand Lake
Kent District Library-Alpine Township Branch	
Kent District Library-Alto Branch	Village of Sparta

Appendix F: Comments Received

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Appendix G: Public Participation Summary Report

Public Outreach Strategy and Tools Used

To be written

Estimated Number of People Reached

To be written

Comments Received

To be written

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