

Public Participation Plan

Citizen Participation in the MPO Planning Process



**Metropolitan Planning
Organization**

Pinellas County, Florida



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

PINELLAS COUNTY METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

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Introduction and Purpose

Meaningful and effective public participation is essential to the successful implementation of a public plan or project and necessary to ensure the needs of the local citizenry are adequately addressed. In addition, public participation is necessary to gauge the effectiveness of an agency's planning activities. The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) actively seeks to incorporate the involvement of the public in its planning efforts pursuant to this Public Participation Plan (PPP), which seeks to accomplish the following goals:

- 1) Compliance with the public participation requirements of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) [23 U.S.C. 134/49 - U.S.C. 5303 (i) (5), (i) (6), and (j)(4); 23 U.S.C. 135/49 U.S.C. 5304 (f)(3) and (g)(3)]; and with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Limited English Proficiency requirements of Executive Order 13166, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, as it pertains to the traditionally underserved population;
- 2) Identification of public priorities and perspectives regarding transportation issues and topics addressed by the MPO in its plans, projects and policies;
- 3) An informed and educated citizenry on transportation matters related to the MPO's planning program; and
- 4) Active partnerships with civic groups, business organizations, local governments, neighboring MPOs and other local, regional and statewide public agencies in the implementation of the Public Participation Plan.

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear directive for the public participation activities undertaken by the Pinellas County MPO as they pertain to the agency's primary responsibilities. This includes the development and implementation of the following:

- The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP);
- The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Congestion Management Process and related corridor strategy plans;
- Unified Planning Work Program;
- Transit studies; and
- Other activities associated with MPO projects.



The MPO has identified a number of objectives and strategies that facilitate effective public participation. A description of these activities and the methodology for evaluating their

effectiveness is included in the table in Appendix A, Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness. This table is utilized to monitor the implementation of the PPP.

The PPP also incorporates public involvement activities resulting from the consolidation of the MPO and Pinellas Planning Council (PPC) with a common policy board in 2014. The PPC is responsible for the coordination of land use planning among the 25 local jurisdictions of Pinellas County. This includes managing and implementing the Countywide Plan, which guides the County's future land development. The main purpose of consolidating the MPO and PPC was to combine and coordinate land use and transportation planning from a countywide perspective. With the merging of the two agencies, the MPO/PPC will be developing a communications plan in 2016. The plan will address the public involvement objectives and strategies of the newly consolidated agency. While the MPO will continue to maintain and implement its PPP, some existing strategies have been modified and others added to ensure the PPP reflects what is anticipated for the MPO/PPC Communications Plan. In terms of public participation and outreach, joint MPO/PPC efforts will revolve around the integration of land use planning in MPO plans and projects.

Compliance with Federal Requirements

The MPO Public Participation Plan was originally adopted in 1994 in accordance with the requirements of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). Signed into law in December, 2015, the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act is the most recent successor to the ISTEA legislation. As with prior legislative acts following ISTEA, FAST continues the strong Federal emphasis on public participation.



The FAST Act mandates that the public participation programs of metropolitan planning processes shall include a “proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing participation of the public in developing plans and transportation improvement programs (TIPs).” In addition, in accordance with FAST, the MPO shall provide and/or carry out the following:

- Minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public participation process is initially adopted or revised;
- Timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, other interested parties and

segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdictions);

- Reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;
- Adequate notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs;
- Demonstration of explicit consideration of and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;
- Consideration of the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households in an effort to ensure that the requirements of Title VI and Environmental Justice have been met during the planning process;
- Summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments in a final plan or TIP when received as a result of the public participation process;
- If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public participation efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available; and
- Periodic review of the effectiveness of the public participation process to assure it provides full and open access to all.



These procedures are reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration during certification reviews for Transportation Management Areas (TMAs), and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to assure that full and open access is provided to the MPO decision-making processes;

The MPO's public participation processes shall be coordinated with statewide public participation processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

In accordance with FAST, the MPO Public Participation Plan guides the MPO's interactions with agencies, organizations, and individuals who are affected by or involved with transportation in the County or region. This includes Federal, state, regional and local governments and elected officials, businesses and professional organizations, civic and social organizations, neighborhood and residential associations, special interest groups and interested individuals. Pinellas County does not have any Federally-recognized Tribal agencies.

Also pursuant to the FAST Act and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the PPP requires that public meetings be held at convenient times and locations that are wheelchair and transit accessible. It also stipulates that all plans and the TIP shall be available on the website, and that documents are written in a format and style that is easy for a lay person to comprehend. In addition, FAST emphasizes the use of visual tools to engage citizens in the planning process. Some examples of visual tools used by the MPO include artist renderings to show before and after conditions associated with a transportation project, diagrams and flow charts to illustrate important data or trends, and computer simulations that demonstrate the effect of an intersection improvement on local traffic operations.



Objectives

The Pinellas County MPO shall provide for public participation consistent with the following objectives and strategies in the development of its short and long-range transportation plans, programs, and projects.

- Objective 1: Raise the level of understanding of the transportation planning process in the region and identify how interested citizens can participate.
- Objective 2: Maximize opportunities for public participation in the transportation process.
- Objective 3: Maintain contact with interested citizens and key stakeholders throughout the process of developing MPO plans and projects.
- Objective 4: Be responsive to citizens.
- Objective 5: Involve traditionally under-served persons, including minority, low-income, elderly or those addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in transportation planning issues.

Objective 6: Inform and educate incoming MPO Board members, local commissioners/council members and advisory committee members regarding the MPO's functions, responsibilities and programs.

Public Participation Activities

The public involvement strategies implemented through the PPP revolve around the activities of the MPO's advisory committees and outreach efforts conducted by MPO staff. This section of the Plan describes these strategies as well as how they are employed in the process of developing the MPO's core planning documents, the LRTP and TIP. As with the MPO/PPC Board meetings, all advisory committee meetings are open to the public and opportunities are provided for public comment. Meeting information, including schedules, start times, locations and agendas, is available on the website.

Advisory Committees

The MPO has seven advisory committees that provide input and recommendations on plans, programs and policies that are reviewed by the MPO Board. Four of these committees are comprised of citizens as well as representatives from local, regional and state agencies. The following section provides descriptions of the committees with citizen members. Although it does not have citizen members, the Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) plays a key role in ensuring that the interests of the local governments and their constituents are considered in the MPO planning process. The membership of the TCC includes representatives of local and regional planning and transportation agencies as well as planners and engineers representing Pinellas County and the municipal governments. The meeting schedules and agendas of all the MPO advisory committees are available online at the link shown below.



<http://www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/MPOCommit.htm#committee>

Any individual interested in serving on the CAC or another committee as a citizen member can do so by contacting MPO staff. If there is an opening available, the person would be asked to send correspondence requesting a position on the committee along with background information regarding their professional experience and interests, particularly in relation to the committee of which they would like to serve. This letter can go to an MPO board member representing their jurisdiction or directly to MPO staff. The letter and accompanying background information is then presented to the MPO Board at a regularly scheduled meeting

to approve the requested appointment. Staff will often invite a person interested in a committee position to attend and observe one of the meetings prior to sending a formal request to become a member. Staff also works with its partner agencies and Board representatives to recruit citizen members as necessary to fill a vacant position(s).

Citizens Advisory Committee

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) is comprised of a cross section of representatives of the community, including the elderly and physically impaired. The CAC meetings are held monthly in the evenings to accommodate working people. Members are appointed to represent each of the County's jurisdictions. The CAC meets on the fourth Thursday of every month at 7 p.m., 310 Court Street, in Clearwater, excluding June, July, November and December. June and July meetings are normally cancelled for summer break. For Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, the November meeting is cancelled and the December meeting is usually moved to the first week of the month.



The CAC assists the MPO in addressing community needs in the development and implementation of its programs and policies. The CAC plays a key role in determining MPO funding priorities through the annual review of project priority lists and the evaluation of applications for Transportation Alternative (TA) Program funding. They also regularly bring issues of concern to the MPO regarding traffic safety hazards and advocate for legislative action on issues such as texting while driving and funding for transportation projects that serve bicyclists, pedestrians and transit users. Lastly, CAC members participate on the Transportation Mobility Management Advisory Committee (TMMAC) and the Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority (TBARTA) Citizens Advisory Committee.

Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee

The Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) was formed in 2014 after the merging of the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) and Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC). The BAC and PTAC were established in 1983 and 1990, respectively. Appointed members of the BPAC include technical representatives from various governmental agencies, law enforcement personnel and



citizens interested in bicycling and pedestrian issues. The BPAC usually meets on the third Monday of every month, 8:30 a.m., 310 Court Street. July and December meetings are normally cancelled for summer break and the holidays, respectively.

The responsibilities of the BPAC revolve around furthering the MPO's goal of enabling bicycling and walking to be a viable transportation choice for commuting as well as recreational purposes in Pinellas County. The BPAC is actively engaged in the periodic update and ongoing implementation of the MPO Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan, including its objectives and policies which guide the MPO's decision making on matters relating to these travel modes.

They regularly participate in the review of road safety audits and reconstruction plans to ensure the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians are adequately addressed and take part in education initiatives to increase citizen awareness of traffic laws affecting bicyclists and pedestrians. The BPAC also appoints members to work on individual tasks or projects such as the US 19 Corridor Study and the review of ranking criteria for TA Program projects. Lastly, BPAC members participate on the Tri-BPAC, a regional committee that includes members from the Hillsborough and Pasco County BPACs.

Local Coordinating Board

The Local Coordinating Board (LCB) is the governing body of the MPO's Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program. The TD Program provides transportation assistance to economically and physically disadvantaged citizens in Pinellas County. The 15-member board was established in 1991. The LCB meets quarterly and its membership consists of an elected official as chairperson and representatives of social service agencies, private transportation providers, FDOT and citizens who utilize the Program. The Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) also serves on the LCB in an advisory capacity. LCB members serve on various subcommittees focused on individual tasks or projects such as the annual CTC Evaluation and the review of stretcher transportation services. The responsibilities of the LCB are defined by Chapter 427, Florida Statutes. The LCB meets quarterly on the third Tuesday of February, May, September and November, 9:15 a.m., at 310 Court Street.

School Transportation Safety Committee

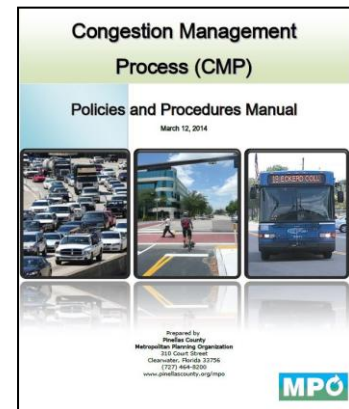
The School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC) was established in 1998. The STSC meets two to three times annually and is made up of School Board, Board of County Commissioner, and municipal government representatives as well as



citizens. The STSC was formed to address issues concerning the safe movement of students traveling to and from school. They monitor school construction projects and traffic control issues to ensure pedestrian access needs are adequately addressed. The STSC also reviews crash data and related safety concerns in the vicinity of schools as it affects student access.

Transportation Mobility Management Advisory Committee

Membership of the Transportation Mobility Management Advisory Committee (TMMAC) includes local and FDOT planners, traffic engineers, and professionals with expertise in traffic management, emergency management (including fire and rescue), law enforcement, transit and communications and citizens. The TMMAC also includes MPO board members and a CAC representative. The TMMAC meets twice annually for the purpose of coordinating intelligent transportation system (ITS) planning and implementing and overseeing the Congestion Management Process (CMP) in Pinellas County. The Committee was formerly known as the ITS Advisory Committee, which was established in 2001. The TMMAC monitors the implementation of the County's ITS Master Plan and CMP on an ongoing basis. The TMMAC meets on the first Wednesday in February and September, 1:30 p.m., at 310 Court Street.



Tampa Bay Area Regional Transportation Authority Citizens Advisory Committee

Although this group does not serve the MPO, it conducts public involvement activity affecting citizens within Pinellas as well as neighboring counties. It is responsible for implementing a public involvement program in the Tampa Bay region. The 21-member committee is comprised of residents and business representatives appointed by the TBARTA Board. There are three Pinellas County representatives including one local CAC member. The TBARTA CAC advises the TBARTA Board on matters concerning the development and implementation of the Regional Transportation Master Plan and related initiatives. The Committee also promotes public awareness and participation in the planning and implementation of the Master Plan while helping to disseminate information about the Plan to local citizen groups. The TBARTA CAC meets the third Wednesday of every other month, 1:30 p.m., 4350 West Cypress Street in Tampa.

Website

Since the MPO first published its website in 1998 it has been the primary tool for public outreach and input in the MPO Public Participation Program. The website serves as a central repository of MPO plans, documents, agendas and meeting notices. It also provides web viewers with access to MPO Board and advisory committee rosters, video streams of the monthly Board meetings, general information about transportation topics and surveys where they can submit their comments and opinions about transportation in the County and region. The site receives over 12 thousand hits on an annual basis. In 2016, the website will be merged with the existing PPC site and redesigned to create a more vibrant, interactive and user friendly internet presence.



Social Media

In 2012, the MPO incorporated social media into its public involvement activities. This included Facebook, Twitter and an internet-based conversation forum, TellUsPinellas. In 2011, the MPO adopted a set of policies governing its use of social media. These are included in the appendix. The policies are designed to ensure that the MPO's employment of social media applications is in compliance with applicable State and local laws and policies that govern public correspondence and records.

Facebook

Facebook is primarily utilized to share information about transportation news and topics and to provide an opportunity for citizens to comment on them. The MPO actively seeks to encourage more people to "like" the page through distribution of printed materials, word of mouth and advertisements that appear on the Facebook pages of area residents. Most of the current likes on the MPO Facebook page resulted from these advertisements. The MPO will continue these efforts on an ongoing basis to increase its number of Facebook likes as well as instances where an MPO post is shared by others.



Twitter

The MPO utilizes Twitter primarily to promote MPO meetings and events, such as the opening of the public comment period for the LRTP update.

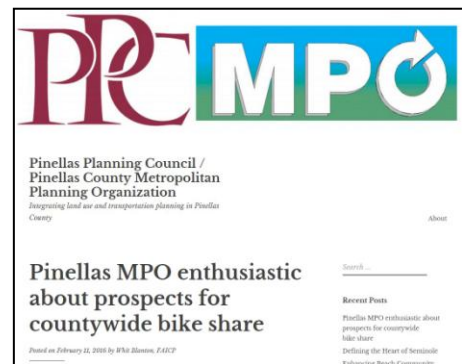
TellUsPinellas

TellUsPinellas is an internet based forum designed to engage citizens in conversation and idea exchange about transportation topics and issues. It was developed using Mindmixer, since renamed mySidewalk, a software/web tool utilized by local governments and public agencies to dialogue with citizens and civic leaders. TellUsPinellas provides citizens with an opportunity to correspond with MPO staff and one another about transportation issues of concern in Pinellas County and the Tampa Bay region. They can suggest ideas and provide comments or expand on the ideas of others.

TellUsPinellas was initially developed as a tool for citizens to guide the policy direction of the 2040 LRTP and was utilized for that purpose from 2012 to 2014. Participants were asked to respond to a series of questions during this period focusing on different themes such as the most critical transportation needs, congested roads and safety, what the County's transportation system should look like, types of transportation improvements they would like to see, transportation mode choices and the most popular destinations in the County. MySidewalk is being utilized in 2015 and 2016 for an MPO/FDOT sponsored US Highway 19 corridor study and to provide input on other topics related to MPO plans and emphasis areas.

Blog

In 2015, the MPO and PPC launched a blog site at <https://ppcmpo.wordpress.com/>. The purpose of this site is to publish general interest transportation-related stories providing citizen friendly commentary on current issues and topics. The site is linked and promoted through the MPO website, Facebook, and Twitter.



Linkedin

The MPO also maintains an account on LinkedIn, the online professional networking service. LinkedIn has primarily been used to post blog stories and to encourage people to participate in TellUsPinellas. It has also been used to advertise job openings.

Outreach Materials

The MPO utilizes printed materials for distribution at public events and at the locations of civic and business group meetings where staff participates in panel discussions or as a speaker. These items are occasionally prepared for specific projects, but most often as part of an ongoing program and/or publication. These include traffic count maps, display boards/exhibits, brochures and posters or flyers.

Traffic Count Map

Since 1982, the MPO has annually prepared and distributed a fold out map that identifies the annual average daily traffic (aadt) data collected on the major roads in Pinellas County. The information is typically utilized by people considering real estate purchases, site selection for new or re-locating business, traffic impact assessments related to proposed development projects, road design plans, bus route planning and others who are interested in trends in travel patterns and traffic demand. The maps are distributed to the Pinellas County Convention and Visitor's Bureau, government agencies, public libraries, chambers of commerce, city halls, FDOT and the Pinellas County School Board.

LRTP Executive Summary

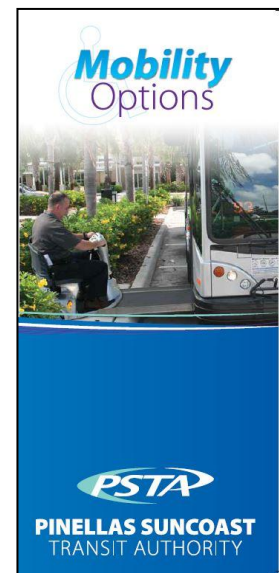
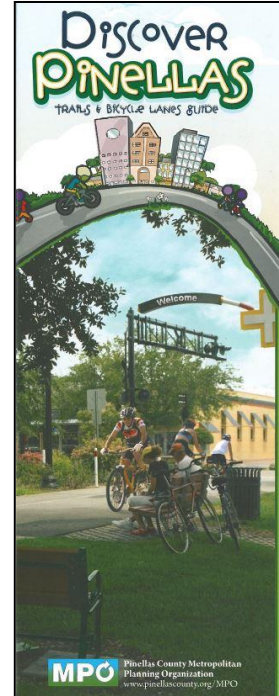
As part of the public outreach associated with the release of a new LRTP, the MPO publishes an executive summary report. This is an abbreviated version of the adopted LRTP. It includes a listing of the Plan's goals, a summary of growth projections and related trends, funding sources, and maps and descriptions of planned transit, road, trail and ITS projects. An electronic copy is posted on the MPO website and emailed to those included on the MPO's mailing lists. Printed versions of the report are distributed at committee meetings, public events and workshops and public speaking engagements involving MPO representatives. A Spanish language version of the Executive Summary is also produced and made available to members of the Hispanic community.



Brochures

Listed below are descriptions of the brochures currently distributed by the MPO. They are also produced by the MPO with the exception of the Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program brochure, *Mobility Options*, which is published by PSTA.

- Walk Smart – This is a bicycle/pedestrian safety brochure aimed primarily at elementary school children. It lists basic safety rules for walking, bicycling and riding the bus. Making pedestrian and bicycle safety a part of their education curriculum is considered to be a critical step in helping them to be safety conscience adults. Walk Smart is distributed annually to over 100 thousand public and private school children.
- Discover Pinellas – First published in 2013, Discover Pinellas was developed in partnership with the Pinellas County Health Department. It features a foldout map identifying the County’s trails and bike lanes, bike and skate shops, safety tips and farmer’s market locations. It also provides information on traffic laws affecting bicyclists and pedestrians, rules of the trail, safe cycling practices, PSTA’s Bikes on Buses Program, and the Communities Putting Prevention to Work Program, which is designed to provide safe access to physical activity and healthy nutrition for people of all ages. Over 20 thousand of the guides have been distributed annually to chambers of commerce, city halls, bicycle shops, and interested citizens.
- LRTP Brochure – This is published concurrent with or prior to the adoption of the LRTP. The brochure presents the goals of the Plan as well as an abbreviated version of its elements. These brochures are distributed at meetings and workshops and posted on the website during and after the process of developing and adopting the LRTP.
- Mobility Options – This brochure was developed by PSTA in 2013 after they assumed responsibility for managing the TD Program as the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC). PSTA continues to maintain and distribute the brochure. But as the designated official planning agency (DOPA) for the program, the MPO also distributes the brochure on an ongoing basis as part of its public outreach efforts. The TD Program provides cost affordable transportation to low-income and physically impaired residents in Pinellas County. The brochure provides information regarding service rates and instructions for participating in the program. Over two thousand paper copies are distributed annually and the brochure is also posted on the website.



Flyers, Posters and Press Releases

As part of the public outreach activity associated with the development of the LRTP every five years, the MPO prepares and distributes flyers, posters and/or press releases to inform citizens about the Plan and opportunities for them to provide input. These printed materials are also utilized periodically for other projects such as corridor studies or safety initiatives. The MPO also works with the Pinellas County Communications Department to prepare and distribute these items.

Traditional Media

The MPO utilizes various media forms when necessary to reach a broader audience. These include the local newspaper, television and radio. The MPO also utilizes multiple media and communication sources, including telephone, television and the internet for its ETown hall meetings, which have featured televised discussions with guest panelists responding to questions from viewers and listeners.

Newspaper

Public hearing notices related to workshops associated with the LRTP, where public input on proposed transportation plans and expenditures is necessary to ensure the interests of citizens are given due consideration prior to MPO adoption, are advertised in the *Times*. In addition, all LCB meetings are advertised in the *Times* as required by the Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged. Daily circulation of the *Tampa Bay Times*, excluding Sunday, is 468,000.



Television

All monthly MPO/PPC meetings are broadcast on Pinellas County's government access channel (PCC-TV). The telecasts are shown on channel 637 on Bright House Networks, 18 on Wide Open West (WOW) Network, and 44 on Verizon. The meetings are televised live and replayed the following week. Live video streams of the meetings are also available at the link below, which is accessible from the MPO website. A link to the meeting archives, where viewers can replay the entire meeting or a particular agenda item, is also available on the MPO website. The MPO works with private television stations occasionally either by providing information or as an interviewee on various transportation subjects.



<http://www.pinellascounty.org/video/live-meetings.shtml>

ETown Hall Meetings

ETown hall meetings feature live panel discussions with elected officials and transportation agency representatives addressing issues associated with the LRTP. Questions are submitted to the panel guests from participants via telephone and online blog. The MPO has been involved with the production of four televised ETown halls to date. Over five thousand people have participated in each of these events.



Radio

On a more limited basis, the MPO includes the use of local radio in its public involvement efforts. Public service announcements related to bicycle and pedestrian safety have been broadcast on public stations and MPO staff has participated in a discussion of its Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan on community station WMNF 88.5 FM in Tampa.

Staff Outreach Activity

The MPO regularly has staff members attend and participate in a variety of community events and workshops. They serve as speakers and panelists at meetings and workshops and tend display tables and exhibits at community events while discussing transportation issues and topics with citizens. The MPO also sponsors its own public workshops where citizens are invited to review and provide comments on elements of the LRTP and related plans. The number of outreach meetings, events and workshops the MPO has been involved in has averaged 24 per year since 2010. Event participants and audiences reflect a broad cross section of County residents representing different age, race and income groups.

Community Events/Exhibits

Staff members participate in community events tending exhibits or display tables where they interact with citizens, respond to their questions and comments and distribute and collect surveys. The exhibits display story boards featuring information on MPO programs and topics usually associated with the LRTP. In recent years, these events have included the Pinellas Folk Festival and Country Jubilee in Largo, Stetson University Health Fair in Gulfport, and Harbor Walk at the



University of South Florida St. Petersburg. Unattended exhibits are also stationed at area libraries, city halls and the County Courthouse. These exhibits include information directing people to the MPO's online survey or they can leave feedback on site using survey cards provided with the exhibit.

Civic and Business Group Meetings

The MPO actively seeks opportunities to speak to civic, professional and business organizations about transportation plans and programs as a means to share information, collect feedback and to discuss issues of concern with them. The MPO also participates in the Pinellas County Speaker's Bureau, which is administered by the Pinellas County Communications Department. Citizen and business group representatives use the Speaker's Bureau to request presentations from MPO and County staff on topics of interest to their organizations.



Staff members often contact civic and business groups directly to schedule a presentation. In recent years, MPO staff has presented to the Tampa Bay Realtor's Association, Gateway Chamber of Commerce, St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and its Transportation Task Force, North County Council of Neighborhoods, North Clearwater Neighborhood Coalition, Upper Tampa Bay Chamber of Commerce, Lealman Community Association, and the American Society of Engineers. Regarding the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce Transportation Task Force, MPO staff attends their monthly meetings on a regular basis.

Public Workshops

During the LRTP development process, the MPO holds public workshops for citizens to learn about the components of the Plan and to provide comments. The most recent MPO workshops were held in Palm Harbor, Clearwater and St. Petersburg as part of the development of the 2040 LRTP in 2014. The MPO has also held public workshops to invite citizens to review and provide input on the Bicycle Pedestrian Master Plan and to participate in a regional needs study associated with the update of the Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan.



MPO staff also takes the opportunity to attend workshops held by other agencies where transportation issues are being addressed. As an example, MPO staff has attended Homeless Coalition workshops in Largo where they've provided information about mobility options for low income residents. In addition, staff participated in a Pinellas County sponsored community workshop in the Ridgcrest area focused on transportation and land development needs and FDOT's Walkwise Tampa Bay in Madeira Beach where staff spoke to citizens and public officials about bicycle and pedestrian safety.

Public Hearings

The MPO holds public hearings for all Board actions relating to adoption and amendment of the TIP and LRTP. Public hearings are also held for PPP amendments. Board actions on TIP and LRTP public hearing items are determined by a roll call vote. Public hearing notices are posted on the MPO web site.

Public Surveys

The MPO utilizes survey forms as a means of assessing public opinion concerning the MPO's planning activities and programs. Two survey forms are used on an ongoing basis. One survey is used to collect feedback on transportation topics addressed in the LRTP and the other is used to gauge public awareness of the MPO and associated plans and activities. Both surveys are accessible from the menu on the MPO's website and are also distributed in paper form by MPO staff at public meetings, workshops and community events. The MPO will occasionally utilize survey instruments for a specific project. For example, the MPO conducted a survey in 2014 of Pinellas Trail users and a regional needs survey of transportation disadvantaged communities in 2013.



Mailing Lists

The MPO currently maintains 12 mailing lists. These mailing lists are utilized in the distribution of meeting agendas, and printed materials such as press releases, flyers and summary reports. There is a mailing list for each MPO advisory committee as well as condominium associations, homeowner's associations, and people who participated in TellUsPinellas during the development of the 2040 LRTP. Individuals can request they be included on an MPO mailing list on the survey forms they complete or through the MPO website. The MPO periodically revises and updates its mailing lists to reflect changes in names, addresses or to add or remove any contacts as necessary.

Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The LRTP is the focal point of the MPO's planning programs and activities. In accordance with Federal requirements, the Plan assesses the transportation needs of Pinellas County and sets forth improvements necessary to address those needs over a 20-year period. A new Plan reflecting the most recent population, land use, socioeconomic and employment data and associated trends is required every five years. Public involvement objectives specific to the LRTP are listed below.

- Develop an early, proactive, and ongoing public participation process that includes the general public, the MPO committees and Board, local and regional planning partners, and other stakeholders.
- Incorporate visualization techniques to help convey the transportation planning process and transportation improvements identified.
- Provide prompt response to input and inquiries related to the transportation planning process.
- Maintain contact with interested citizens and other stakeholders throughout the LRTP development process.
- Involve traditionally under-served persons including minority, low-income, disabled and elderly citizens.

Civic, Business Group and Community Meetings

MPO staff members regularly speak to civic and business organizations, offering presentations on various transportation plans and topics. These presentations become more frequent and more focused on LRTP topics during the time when a new Plan is being developed. They provide an opportunity to engage the attendees in discussions about transportation topics and issues and to inform them about the requirements of the Plan, adoption schedule and the role it plays in securing funding and setting priorities.

For the development of the 2040 LRTP, the MPO also held stakeholder meetings and charrettes. The stakeholder meetings involved representatives of property owners along the rail alignment that was approved as the locally preferred alternative in the 2012 Pinellas Alternatives Analysis. Comments provided by the stakeholders revolved around their concerns and opinions about the prospect of a future rail system and premium transit service in their communities as well as Pinellas County. The charrettes were designed to collect input from



citizens and business representatives on the design of transit station areas adjacent to the proposed rail line identified in the Alternatives Analysis.

Website

New website pages were designed and published specifically for the development of the 2040 LRTP in 2012. They included information on all aspects of the Plan as well as applicable requirements and laws, adoption schedule, notices of hearings and public events where citizens could provide comments and talk to MPO staff. The pages also included links to published documents associated with the Plan. Following adoption of the 2040 LRTP in December, 2014, information from the web pages was condensed and transferred to a single LRTP page on the main website. This webpage will continue to serve as a central point of information for the LRTP and associated amendments and modifications.

Social Media

As previously discussed, TellUsPinellas was launched in 2012 as an online conversation forum for people to share their concerns and opinions on topics covered in the LRTP. LinkedIn, FaceBook, Twitter, and YouTube were used to provide updated information on the LRTP draft and to keep people informed of the progress of the Plan development and the release of new LRTP planning and resource documents.

Focus Groups

Focus groups provide an opportunity to receive feedback from specific population groups about transportation issues addressed by the MPO. Focus groups were utilized in 2012 to generate ideas and obtain feedback on specific topics related to the LRTP. Two of the focus groups represented underserved communities, four represented specific geographic areas around the County, one included young adult representatives ages 20 to 30 and the other included individuals 60 and older. The results of the discussions provided meaningful input for the development of the 2040 LRTP.



Public Events, Exhibits/Displays

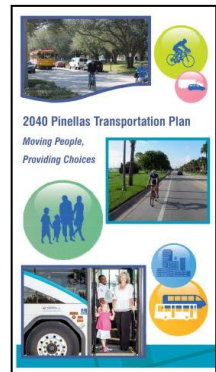
MPO representatives attend many community events and festivals throughout the County during the development of its long range plans. This includes using table top exhibits/displays at the events to present information on the LRTP. This activity will continue on an ongoing basis.

Media

As mentioned previously, the MPO and its partner agencies conducted four ETown hall meetings from 2011 to 2013. Future ETown hall meetings are anticipated during periods when the LRTP is being updated. All MPO meetings involving the discussion of LRTP elements, proposals, topics and Plan adoption will continue to be televised on PCC-TV and subsequently archived for viewing by video stream through the MPO website.

Outreach Materials

Press releases, brochures, and flyers (fact sheets) are utilized to invite feedback and to keep people informed throughout the LRTP development process. The MPO also regularly teams with local and regional planning partners to disseminate project and public meeting information related to the LRTP through their newsletters, websites, community events, and other communication tools as appropriate. The MPO will continue to utilize these types of outreach materials for the LRTP as well as in association with other planning activities.



Key Contacts/Mailing Lists

In association with the 2040 LRTP, the MPO developed a comprehensive mailing list that included contacts from other public agencies, elected and appointed public officials, advisory committee members, civic organizations, homeowners associations, business organizations, groups representing underserved populations, transportation agencies, and citizens who asked to receive project updates. The MPO will continue to maintain and update this list of contacts for use in the distribution of outreach materials and notifications.

MPO Workshops

The MPO routinely holds public workshops to invite and respond to citizen comments on proposed transportation improvements identified in the cost feasible element of the LRTP. These workshop sessions will continue to be utilized with the development of future LRTPs.



Inter-agency Coordination

The MPO actively engages in meetings of other agencies, including local governments, PSTA and FDOT, where citizen comments are solicited on transportation plans and projects related

to the LRTP. The MPO considers feedback received at these meetings in the development of the LRTP and other transportation plans.

Public Hearings

Public hearings are held during monthly MPO meetings on items relating to various elements of the Plan as well as whenever the Board is considering action on LRTP amendments or Plan adoption. These hearings allow for Board member discussion and citizen comments.

Surveys

Transportation surveys are utilized throughout the LRTP development process to gauge public opinion about current and future transportation needs and the prioritization of public funds for future transportation improvements. The surveys also capture demographic information about respondents (e.g., age range, zip code, etc). Online access to the surveys is provided through the MPO website and promoted on committee agendas, via emails, and at public workshops, community meetings, and other public events where information on the LRTP is shared. Respondents are also provided an opportunity to complete and return paper survey forms at the public workshops and community events and at local libraries and city halls. Employment of survey instruments will continue to play a key role in the collection of public input for the LRTP.



Visualization

An assortment of visualization techniques are used to help convey information about the Plan development process and the contents of the LRTP to the public in an easy to understand format. Maps, graphics and photographs are frequently utilized to highlight key points of the LRTP.

Local Government Input

During the development of the LRTP, local government comprehensive plans, which also rely on citizen participation to frame their goals, objectives and policies, are utilized to ascertain the transportation needs and concerns of the local communities. These needs and concerns help to shape the direction of the LRTP. Local government input is particularly important in regard to assumptions on future growth and land use patterns. The MPO also coordinates with local government staff to ensure their transportation projects and/or planning initiatives are considered during the development of updated editions of the LRTP.

Advisory Committees

The TCC, BPAC, TMMAC and CAC play a key role in the development of the LRTP and in providing a conduit for citizens to help shape the policy direction and recommendations of the Plan. The TCC reviews LRTP draft documents with particular emphasis on the data and analysis that was developed in support of the recommended transportation improvements. The TMMAC directs its input on operational issues, including those involving intelligent transportation systems (ITS) and Adaptive Transportation Management Systems (ATMS).



The bicycle and pedestrian components of these documents are developed and reviewed by the BPAC. Input from the CAC, as well as from the general public through surveys and correspondence, provide the primary source of citizen input into the development of the LRTP in terms of addressing issues of greatest concern to the public. The TCC and CAC also review all proposed LRTP amendments prior to MPO action. Other committees also review proposed amendments as they relate to their particular focus areas.

LRTP Amendments and Modifications

Any local government or agency (e.g., PSTA, FDOT) may submit a request to the MPO to modify or amend the LRTP. MPO staff conducts a technical review of the request, including a determination as to whether the request should be processed as a modification or an amendment.

A proposed amendment requires public review and comment and an assurance of fiscal constraint. Proposed amendments include adding or deleting projects from the LRTP Cost Feasible Plan and major changes to project costs, initiation dates, or design concepts and scopes for existing projects. Public hearings are required for proposed amendments.

Proposed modifications follow the same review process as amendments except that no public hearing or assurance of fiscal constraint is required. These are minor changes that typically involve items such as map



corrections, revisions needed for consistency with the TIP, and adding unfunded projects. Procedures for processing an LRTP amendment and modification are shown below.

- Proposed amendment/modification information is presented to MPO advisory committees for review.
- Information on proposed amendment/modification, including background materials and notice of scheduled MPO Board action, is posted on the MPO website.
- Proposed amendment/modification information is presented to MPO Board with report of advisory committee recommendations. Actions on proposed amendments, which are public hearing items, are recorded by a roll-call vote. It should be noted that a public comment period is not required for LRTP amendments, only for initial LRTP adoption.
- Information on approved LRTP amendment/modification is posted on the MPO website.
- Approved LRTP amendment is transmitted to all applicable agencies, in accordance with the MPO Program Management Handbook, and to internal distribution lists.
- Updated LRTP reflecting the changes resulting from amendment or modification is posted on the website.

Due to timing issues, there may be occasions when a proposed amendment will need MPO approval before the advisory committees have an opportunity to review them. In these situations, information describing the proposed amendment is sent to the appropriate advisory committees via email. Any comments or concerns raised in response are presented to the MPO prior to their scheduled action.

In addition, the MPO Executive Director has the authority to approve amendments/revisions to MPO plans and programs approved by the Board, including the LRTP, when such action is needed to obtain State or Federal approval within a constrained timeframe. This policy was adopted by MPO resolution in 2008. It also stipulates that the Executive Director consult with the Board Chairman prior to executing the amendments and that a report describing the amendments be provided to the MPO Board at their next meeting.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

There are four processes associated with the TIP that provide opportunities for public involvement. These processes are associated with the review and approval/adoption of the following:

- Project priority lists;

- The MPO provides ample opportunities for the public to participate in these processes largely through its network of advisory committees, including the CAC and TCC, which review all TIP items that require MPO Board approval. Other committees, including the TMMAC and BPAC, have a more limited role in the review of TIP matters. Their focus is on TIP elements specific to their areas of interest. Actions of the MPO regarding the TIP follow a public hearing and consideration of recommendations and comments provided by the committees and interested citizens. These hearings are advertised on the website and through social materials to be considered by the Board in the review less than seven business days prior to the meeting. processes.



Local Transportation Improvement Programs/Fall Update

Locally adopted County and municipal government work programs are considered by the advisory committees for inclusion in the fall update of the TIP in October. Following the committee meetings, the adopted work programs are posted on the website along with maps identifying the location of the improvements. In addition, staff prepares summary tables for the website that provide abbreviated project descriptions corresponding with the maps. This allows web viewers to access the project information without having to look through the lengthy work program documents. The MPO approves the fall update in November. Announcement of MPO action on the fall update is also posted on the website along with the updated TIP.

FDOT Work Program/Annual TIP Adoption

In October or November, FDOT holds public hearings on its draft Tentative Work Program via a live webinar presentation. These are advertised on the MPO website and through social media. During this time frame, FDOT presents its draft Tentative Work Program to the MPO advisory committees. Following the advisory committee meetings, the draft Tentative Work Program is posted on the website along with any FDOT presentation material shown at their public hearing and committee meetings. The MPO Board considers the draft Tentative Work Program for approval in November/December. Announcement of MPO action is also posted on the website.



A final version of the Tentative FDOT Work Program, which is included in the annual TIP adoption, is presented to the advisory committees in May. Following the advisory committee meetings, the final Tentative Work Program is posted on the website along with a summary of the project descriptions and accompanying maps similar to what is made available for the fall update. In addition, staff includes a report identifying the changes from the previous year's Work Program. This report, in addition to the maps and summary of project descriptions, allows web viewers to find the information of interest to them without having to read through the details of the Work Program document. The MPO typically approves the FDOT Tentative Work Program in November or December and adopts the annual TIP in June. Announcement of MPO action is also posted on the website along with the new TIP.

Proposed Amendments and Modifications

A TIP amendment is a revision that involves a major project change, including addition or deletion of a project, or a major change in cost, phase, initiation date, or design concept or scope (i.e., changing project termini, or the number of through traffic lanes). An amendment requires verification of financial constraint and a public hearing. A modification includes minor changes to project phases, costs, funding sources of previously included projects, or initiation dates. These do not require a demonstration of fiscal constraint or a public hearing.

The TCC and CAC are typically the only advisory committees that review proposed TIP amendments and modifications. Following



review by the TCC and CAC, information on proposed amendments/modifications are posted on the website. This includes descriptions of the proposed changes as well as maps identifying their location. The MPO approves proposed amendments/modifications with consideration given to any comments and recommendations from the committees and interested citizens. Approval of proposed amendments requires a roll call vote following a public hearing. Descriptions and maps associated with all proposed amendments and modifications approved by the Board are posted on the website until the next fiscal year begins.

As noted previously, the MPO Executive Director has the authority to approve amendments/modifications to MPO plans approved by the Board, including the TIP, when such action is needed to obtain State or Federal approval within a constrained timeframe. This typically occurs in situations where an MPO meeting is cancelled. Prior to signing/approving the amendment/modification, the Executive Director must consult with the Board Chairman and a report describing the change(s) must be provided at the next Board meeting.

Usually due to the cancellation of their meetings, there are occasions when the CAC and TCC do not have an opportunity to review a proposed TIP amendment or modification prior to its approval by the MPO Board or Executive Director. In these situations, the proposed amendment/modification will be scheduled for committee review at their earliest meeting dates following its approval. In the case of the CAC, the members will also be notified of the proposed amendment prior to MPO or Executive Director action via email.

The MPO also has an interactive web-based TIP tool (see link below) that allows the public to query and view TIP project information on a map as well as in tabular form. The interactive web-based TIP tool displays photographs and pop-up windows that are activated when a user moves their cursor over the project location on a map. The popup windows summarize information about each project as it appears in the TIP.

<http://www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/PDFs/New%20Interactive%20Map4/InteractiveTIP.pdf>

Public Participation Activities for the Traditionally Underserved

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and FDOT require public participation activities to address the needs of the traditionally underserved. These include people who have special cultural, racial, economic, language or ethnic characteristics, or who are low-income, poorly educated or disabled. The MPO engages the County's underserved through its participation in community events, meetings and workshops that serve their neighborhoods. These have included the Ridgecrest Community Workshop in Largo, Citizens Alliance for Progress Health Fair in Tarpon Springs, Lealman Community Association meetings in unincorporated Pinellas County, Family Fun Day Festival in St. Petersburg and Homeless Coalition

meetings in Pinellas Park. The MPO also utilizes libraries within these areas to display information about the LRTP and provides survey forms there for residents to provide their comments on transportation issues of concern.

Pinellas County Transportation Disadvantaged (TD) Program

The MPO's responsibilities as the designated planning agency (DOPA) for the TD Program provide additional opportunities for underserved communities to participate in the planning process. The TD Program provides low-cost transportation to individuals who qualify as "transportation disadvantaged" as defined by Chapter 427, Florida Statutes. To be qualified as "transportation disadvantaged" and to receive TD Program services in Pinellas County, a person must have no means of transportation available, including family and friends, and have an income of less than 150 percent of the Federal poverty level.



Public input on matters related to the TD Program is mostly provided through the LCB, which includes several members who represent low income and physically and mentally impaired citizens. The LCB meetings also provide opportunities for public comment on matters affecting the transportation disadvantaged community. Issues addressed through the LCB typically concern access to medical appointments, job sites, dining halls, disease treatment and rehabilitation centers, and for sustenance needs (e.g., grocery, bill payment, etc.) for disadvantaged citizens.

Community workshops are also held periodically to assess the needs of the transportation disadvantaged community. Workshop participants include social service, transportation providers and public agencies as well as citizens. The results of the workshops are incorporated in the TD Service Plan, which sets forth goals and strategies for the Program.

Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA)

The MPO also relies on its partnership with and ongoing efforts by PSTA to engage citizens who are disadvantaged and/or underserved. Opportunities for these citizens to provide input to PSTA regarding access to transit service occurs through on-board surveys with bus riders, staff presentations to civic and business groups, stakeholder committees, telephone town halls, social media and the Transit Riders Advisory Committee



(TRAC). This committee helps PSTA identify ways to improve the delivery of fixed route and paratransit service. Information resulting from these efforts is reflected in PSTA's Transit Development Plan and utilized by the MPO in the development of the LRTP and TIP as well as the TD Service Plan.

Title VI, Limited English Proficiency, and Americans with Disabilities Act

As a recipient of FTA funding, the MPO is required to comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Limited English Proficiency requirements of Executive Order 13166, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color or national origin in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Presidential Executive Order 13166 addresses services to those individuals with limited ability to speak English. A Limited English Proficiency person is one who does not speak English as their primary language and who has a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. Presidential Executive Order 12898 addresses environmental justice in minority and low-income populations.

The MPO's policy regarding Title VI is not to discriminate against any person with respect to an MPO program or service and to engage all segments of the population in the transportation planning process. All notices of MPO public hearings and workshops include the statement below, which reflects this policy.

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact the Office of Human Rights, 400 South Fort Harrison Avenue, Suite 300, Clearwater, Florida 33756; [(727) 464-4062 (V/TDD)] at least seven days prior to the meeting.



The MPO website complies with U.S. Section 508 Standards for Electronic and Information Technology. This provides for access to web content by persons who are vision impaired. In addition, the MPO meetings, which are all televised, provide close captioning for hearing impaired individuals.

Regarding accessibility for people with disabilities, all MPO sponsored event locations are within one-half mile of a transit route and bus stop and are wheelchair accessible. When conducting public meetings and workshops, staff also tries to anticipate the targeted audience and have translators and suitable materials in alternative formats available when necessary. In addition,

minority news publications may be used for public notices of MPO workshops when their readers are stakeholders in the projects or plans being presented.

In the process of disseminating and collecting survey forms, staff considers the needs of those who cannot read or write and will verbally read the survey and record the respondent's comments if necessary. Staff also makes surveys available in alternative formats such as in large type, Braille or Spanish. For the most recent Pinellas Trail survey conducted in 2014, staff was aware that a large percentage of trail users in some locations were of Hispanic origin. Consequently, a survey form was prepared in Spanish for these individuals and staff was able to provide instructions to them in their native language as well.



More detailed information on the MPO's approach to addressing the needs of individuals under Title VI and who have limited English speaking ability is included in the Title VI Plan. Both are available on the MPO website at the links identified below.

- Title VI Plan - <http://www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/PDFs/TitleVI/TitleVIPlan.pdf>
- LEP Plan - <http://www.pinellascounty.org/mpo/PDFs/DBETitleIV/LEPPlan.pdf>

Monitoring and Evaluation Mechanisms

Regular monitoring and review of the MPO Public Participation Plan is necessary in order to determine its effectiveness. A review and assessment of the activities described in the Plan is conducted periodically and documented in an evaluation report. The report presents MPO public involvement activity conducted in recent years. This includes advisory committee actions, website traffic, Facebook responses, circulation of brochures, media usage, survey results and staff outreach activity. Based on the findings of the evaluation review, the report also includes recommendations for improving the PPP. These reports are reviewed by the MPO advisory committees and the Board. The most recent evaluation was completed in July, 2015. Recommendations from the 2015 report are reflected in the table, *Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness*, in the appendix. The table describes the actions to be taken by the MPO to implement the Plan as well as corresponding measures of effectiveness.

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Objective 1:	Raise the level of understanding of the transportation planning process in the County and region. Provide opportunities for interested citizens to participate in the MPO planning process.
Strategy 1.1:	Develop and publish an PPC/MPO annual report that highlights the activities and accomplishments of the unified agency related to land use as well as transportation planning.
MOE 1.1:	N/A
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual reports will be posted online and distributed through email correspondence and public events, workshops and meetings where MPO or PPC staff is present. • Annual reports will cover noteworthy accomplishments and challenges of the MPO and PPC as well as trends and issues affecting land use and transportation planning in Pinellas County.
Strategy 1.2:	Re-design website for consolidated MPO/PPC with interactive features that allow for easy access to topics and documents, encourage feedback and provide an enhanced user experience.
MOE 1.2:	Annual increases in number of website hits
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The MPO website will continue to be utilized as the primary public involvement tool and resource, providing the following information on an ongoing basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transportation planning news and updates; ○ Pages and documents on MPO programs and projects; ○ MPO board and advisory committee meeting notices and agenda information; and ○ MPO meeting video archives and Interactive surveys. • The website will also continue to utilize visualization techniques, such as interactive maps and illustrative graphics where applicable
Strategy 1.3:	Attend/participate in civic and business group meetings
MOE 1.3:	Attend a minimum of 10 civic and business group meetings per year. This includes meetings where MPO staff is invited to speak or serve on a panel.
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information presented by staff will typically focus on the LRTP or related topic • Continue to utilize the Pinellas County Speakers Bureau to schedule speaking appearances in addition to contacting the organizations directly.
Strategy 1.4:	Participate in community events as exhibitor with display of transportation planning and/or project information
MOE 1.4:	Present MPO planning topics and related materials at a minimum of ten community events on annual basis

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Activity/Comments:	Utilize visualization techniques where applicable. These may include maps, graphs and other illustrations that highlight key issues for the public.
Strategy 1.5:	Utilize local television stations, including public access television (PCC-TV), to inform the public about transportation issues and topics and the role of the MPO
MOE 1.5:	All MPO Board meetings shall be televised on PCC-TV.
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with the Pinellas County Communications Department to arrange for information about MPO plans and programs and related topics to be presented on PCC-TV through video productions such as Etown Halls. Work with other public and private radio and TV stations to inform the public about transportation topics such as bicycle and pedestrian safety and complete streets
Strategy 1.6:	Set up unattended print and electronic visual displays during LRTP development at public venues such as libraries, city halls and the courthouse with public feedback/survey cards
MOE 1.6:	At least 25 percent of public venues utilized shall be in areas serving environmental justice communities
Activity/Comments:	Create display boards to provide information and collect citizen input.
Strategy 1.7:	Partner with local governments and other agencies to obtain data on public opinions relative to the LRTP
MOE 1.7:	The LRTP shall include public input resulting from survey and outreach activities of the MPO's partner agencies, including FDOT District 7, PSTA, TBARTA, and local governments.
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work with other agencies and local governments to collect survey/public input information relative to the LRTP Coordinate outreach efforts with TBARTA and other transportation agencies
Strategy 1.8:	Utilize social media to inform citizens of transportation issues and topics relevant to the MPO planning program and provide opportunities for feedback
MOE 1.8:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual increases in number of likes on MPO Facebook page and individual posts Annual increases in number of Twitter followers

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media sites will be promoted through printed materials such as agenda cover sheets, summary reports, and display boards. Links to the sites will be provided on the website. • Advertisements shall also be purchased on Facebook periodically, as necessary, to encourage more “likes.” • Explore opportunities to expand MPO presence on other social media applications such as Youtube and email software. • Use blog site to share commentary on transportation topics and elicit feedback from citizens.
Strategy 1.9:	Utilize survey instruments to collect public input on issues and topics associated with the LRTP and related programs
MOE 1.9:	Biennial increase in number of completed surveys
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to make online survey available on the MPO website • Distribute survey in paper form at public events and meetings where MPO staff is present • Employ more specialized survey instruments for purposes such as identifying the needs of the transportation disadvantaged citizens and the travel patterns of Pinellas Trail users
Strategy 1.10:	Utilize survey instrument to assess public awareness regarding the MPO’s role and responsibilities
MOE 1.10:	Biennial increase in percentage of survey respondents indicating they are aware of MPO responsibilities and functions
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribute survey in paper form at public events and meetings where MPO staff is present • Continue to make online survey available on the MPO website • Explore the use of remote voting technology at public meetings and events to improve the effectiveness of the survey process (also applies to Strategy 1.9).
Objective 2:	Maximize opportunities for public participation in the transportation planning process.
Strategy 2.1:	All venues utilized by the MPO for public workshops shall be accessible by transit and compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).
MOE 2.1:	All MPO workshop and meeting locations will be within one-half mile of a bus route and ADA compliant

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When not held at the MPO offices or County courthouse, the MPO shall continue to rely on the use of other public buildings, including PSTA headquarters, for its workshops Use checklist to ensure all meeting details are considered, including newspaper advertisements and/or notices, social media and website outreach, printed materials and graphics needed for meeting, facility arrangements, etc.
Objective 3:	Maintain contact with interested citizens and key stakeholders throughout the process of developing MPO plans and projects.
Strategy 3.1:	Identify key contacts representing local interest groups and initiate communication and correspondence with them, as deemed appropriate, in the process of seeking public input on topics related to the LRTP.
MOE 3.1:	Annual increases in total number of MPO mailing list recipients
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to maintain and develop email database for informing key contacts about the latest developments in the LRTP update process and related programs. Key contact list shall include representatives of governments, neighborhood associations, civic groups, chambers of commerce, freight carrier and airport representatives, public and private transportation providers and human service agencies that serve women and minority groups and persons with disabilities.
Strategy 3.2:	Utilize advisory committee network to collect information from local governments, transportation agencies, and citizens on issues relative to the LRTP
MOE 3.2:	All local government, agencies and citizen representatives who are members of the MPO advisory committees shall have ample opportunities to provide comment on all elements of the LRTP as they are being developed.
Activity/Comments:	Continue to work with MPO advisory committees to collect input from representatives of local governments, transportation agencies, and citizens.
Objective 4	Promptly respond to citizen inquiries about transportation issues and concerns
Strategy 4.1:	Provide feedback on all questions and comments received on transportation issues and topics related to MPO functions and responsibilities.
MOE 4.1:	All questions and inquiries received by MPO staff via email or phone shall be answered within 24 hours
Activity/Comments:	People with questions or comments not related to MPO functions or responsibilities shall be referred to the appropriate agency.

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Objective 5	Involve traditionally under-served persons, including minority, low-income and elderly citizens or those addressed by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the development and review of transportation plans
Strategy 5.1:	Continue to provide accommodations for people with disabilities and who do not speak English to participate in MPO sponsored events.
MOE 5.1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All MPO public hearing notices shall indicate availability of translators • All MPO meetings and events shall provide accommodations for disadvantaged citizens in accordance with ADA requirements and in coordination with the Pinellas County Human Rights Department • All MPO printed materials and documents distributed to the public shall be produced in a format that is clearly understandable to a layperson. • All MPO web pages shall be published in compliance with U.S. Section 508 Standards for Electronic and Information Technology
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include statement in meeting/public hearing advertisements indicating availability of translators. • Provide translators, TTY relay, electronic amplifiers, large fonts in print materials and Braille translations as needed/requested for persons with disabilities at MPO sponsored meetings and other events
Strategy 5.2:	Work with human service agencies and healthcare and social service providers to identify issues and collect input related to the needs of the traditionally underserved.
MOE 5.2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attend at least one Health and Human Services Coalition meeting per year • No less than 50 percent of the Local Coordinating Board membership shall continue to represent the interests of the traditionally underserved
Activity/Comments:	The MPO will continue to take advantage of opportunities provided through the Transportation Disadvantaged Program to engage traditionally underserved citizens in the planning process.
Strategy 5.3:	Collect input from low income and minority individuals and focus groups on LRTP issues.
MOE 5.3:	All focus group activity shall include representation from low income and minority communities
Activity/Comments:	Gather feedback of low income and minority individuals through discussion, distribution and collection of survey forms at public events, meetings and workshops.
Objective 6	Inform and educate incoming MPO Board and advisory committee members regarding the MPO's functions, responsibilities and programs.

Public Participation Objectives, Strategies and Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)

Strategy 6.1:	Ensure new MPO board and advisory committee members are informed regarding their roles and responsibilities relative to the MPO and/or advisory committee of which they are a member
MOE 6.1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All new incoming Board members shall be briefed by the MPO/PPC Executive Director regarding their roles and responsibilities prior to their first meeting • Provide opportunity for each MPO member to attend MPOAC Institute training • An orientation session for CAC members will be conducted by MPO staff on an annual basis • Newly appointed CAC members shall be briefed by staff regarding the committee's role and responsibilities and provided corresponding informational materials • Work with CAC members to identify topics of which they would like further information and included in future agendas
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the CAC orientation meetings as an opportunity for questions and answers relating to the function of the committee • Consider development of a informational brochure or summary for distribution to CAC members
Objective 7	Ensure the objectives of the Public Participation Plan are achieved
Strategy 7.1:	Conduct evaluations to gauge the effectiveness of PPP strategies and recommend changes based on the findings as necessary to improve the Plan's performance
MOE 7.2:	Complete PPP evaluation and associated report biennially
Activity/Comments:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation reports and follow-up PPP amendments shall be presented to the advisory committees and MPO Board for review and approval. • Develop template for tracking progress of PPP strategies that can be incorporated in the evaluation reports and utilized to streamline the evaluation process

Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization Internet Social Network Policy

The Pinellas County Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) public outreach objectives and strategies are identified in its Public Participation Plan (PPP). An update to the Plan in 2011 introduced the utilization of social media to the MPO's toolkit of public involvement strategies. The Plan calls for the use of social media/networking sites (e.g., Facebook, Twitter and Youtube) for the distribution of news and information regarding MPO projects, programs and events and also as a means to collect citizen feedback on MPO activities and related transportation issues.

The Pinellas County Attorney's Office has drafted policies governing the use of social networking sites by departments maintaining websites on the County server under the authority of the County Administrator. The MPO website resides on the County server. This report outlines policies and procedures intended to guide the use of social media tools by the MPO in accordance with the social network policy ~~draft~~ provided by the County Attorney's Office.

The Pinellas County Communications Department is responsible for providing oversight and monitoring all web applications operating on the County server under the authority of the County Administrator. Their duties include developing new protocols, branding and policy changes, technical announcements/issues, providing written authorization prior to initiating any pilot projects and quality control. The MPO web manager works directly with Communications Department staff for technical support in the administration and management of the website. That relationship is anticipated to continue regarding administration of social media applications.

The social networking programs and applications currently being utilized by the MPO in carrying out its PPP objectives include Twitter, Facebook and TellUsPinellas, an online conversation forum. The use of these applications is discussed in the PPP. The MPO anticipates expanding its use of social media on an ongoing basis to improve the reach and effectiveness of its PPP. Therefore, the policies and procedures described here apply to other social networking applications the MPO may use in the future, in addition to those currently in use.

MPO Social Media Policies

With its growing popularity and large number of users, social media has far reaching potential as a tool for engaging the public in the MPO planning process. But with this communication tool comes a responsibility to ensure that correspondence posted by MPO staff is fact based and non-biased, maintained and updated on a regular basis, compliant with applicable laws and County policies and not a source for creating new public documents. Listed below is a set of policies that encompass these responsibilities and provide guidelines for the establishment and operation of social networking sites.

1. MPO social networking sites shall be supervised and administered by the MPO web manager with technical assistance provided by the Pinellas County Communications Department.
2. The web manager shall be responsible for reviewing all information before it is posted on social networking sites to ensure that the material is appropriate for public viewing.
3. All MPO social networking sites shall adhere to Florida Sunshine Law, Public Records Law and all other applicable state, Federal and local laws, regulations and policies including all information technology and records management policies of Pinellas County.
4. MPO social networking sites and entries shall clearly indicate that any articles and content posted or submitted for posting are subject to public disclosure.
5. The MPO shall include an introductory statement on its social networking sites that clearly specify their purpose and topical scope. The MPO's social networking sites shall link back to the MPO website for forms, documents and other information.
6. The MPO's social networking comments containing any of the following forms of content shall not be posted:
 - a. Comments not topically related to the particular site being commented upon;
 - b. Profane language or content;
 - c. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
 - d. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
 - e. Solicitations of commerce;
 - f. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
 - g. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the public or public systems; or
 - h. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
7. All social networking sites shall clearly indicate they are maintained by the MPO and shall have MPO contact information prominently displayed.
8. The MPO shall use a general office e-mail account for its social networking sites.
9. The MPO shall not follow private citizen or commercial profiles from within its social networking profile.
10. The MPO's communication on social networking sites shall be one-way. After its initial posting, the MPO will not respond to subsequent viewer comments/messages.

11. Videos, captions and transcripts shall be compliant with Section 508 (29 U.S.C. 794 d) to ensure disabled employees and members of the public have access to information that is comparable to access available to others. For video captions and transcriptions, when available, captions should be included within the videos.
12. Photos uploaded to MPO social networking sites shall be labeled and text captions and descriptions shall also be provided when social networking sites make these fields available.
13. The MPO logo shall be used as the agency picture on social networking sites.
14. The MPO shall avoid creating new material on social networking sites. Instead, material from existing websites or previously published documents shall be used.