

Public Participation Plan

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission for the
Jasper-Jefferson-Orange-Hardin Regional Transportation
Study (JJOHRTS) Area

45-day public comment period: September 13, 2023 to October 27, 2023

Adopted by the Transportation Planning Committee on November 16, 2023

Prepared by WSP



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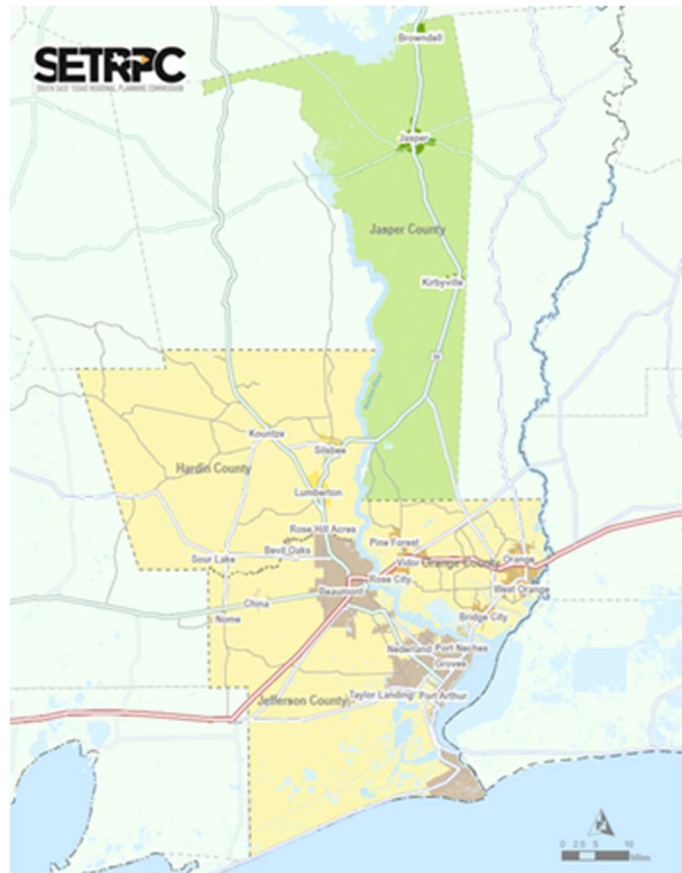
This document was prepared in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and the Texas Department of Transportation

Chapter 1: Background

1.0 Introduction

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) is a voluntary association of local governments that serve the area comprised of Jasper, Jefferson, Jasper, Orange, and Hardin counties. SETRPC provides comprehensive planning services in community development, transportation, and environmental resources. SETRPC, established in 1970 under the authority provided by the 1965 Texas Legislature, solves areawide problems by promoting intergovernmental cooperation and coordination, conducting comprehensive regional planning, and providing a forum for the discussion and study of area issues.

In 1974, the Governor of Texas designated the SETRPC as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the three-county area of Jefferson, Orange, and Hardin counties to comply with the Federal Highway Act of 1962 and established the SETRPC for the Jefferson-Orange-Hardin Regional Transportation Study (JOHRTS) area. In 2021, the Governor of Texas approved Jasper County's request to transfer from the Deep East Texas Council of Governments to SETRPC with an effective date of transfer of April 27, 2021.



SETRPC now serves a four-county region, and the transfer of programs and services to Jasper County will take place over a period of time to ensure continuity and success.

Per federal law, an urban area with a population of 50,000 or more is required to have an MPO. The MPO is responsible for conducting a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C) transportation planning process that results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and support metropolitan community development and social goals. An MPO receives federal funding for transportation planning and may also receive state and local funds in order to carry out mandated planning activities. As the MPO, the SETRPC is responsible for the 3-C long-range transportation planning process in the four-county region.

Within the SETRPC, the MPO's staff support is housed within the Transportation and Environmental Resources (TER) Division, which provides the technical support for the operations of the MPO. The TER Division administers federal and state funds for the planning and implementation of programs, projects, and policies related to various modes of transportation, air quality, solid waste management, and economic development for the four-county region. The staff of the Division works with federal, state, and local entities to:

- Provide improved mobility, increased transportation options, and improved intermodal connections within the region
- Enhance the quality of life of southeast Texas citizens
- Support economic development and tourism
- Improve air quality and assist the region's effort to maintain compliance with federal Clean Air Act standards
- Promote coordination of collection, transportation, and disposal of solid waste
- Maximize community benefit and protect the environment
- Maintain a variety of data and information on southeast Texas, including geographic information system (GIS) data and demographics
- Encourage community participation and increase awareness of individual roles and responsibilities

1.0.1 Transportation Planning Committee

The Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) serves as the governing board for the MPO. The TPC is comprised of 15 voting members who represent Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties; various cities within Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties; and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT). The TPC ensures that the MPO's transportation plans and programs are consistent with the goals and objectives of all comprehensive plans in the JJOHRTS area. The TPC provides regular and continuous general

policy guidance to multimodal transportation planning, approves region-wide transportation plans, and promotes the adoption and implementation of such plans by the various levels of government. Typically, the TPC meets quarterly. These meetings are usually held on a Wednesday or Thursday at 10:00 a.m., as an attempt to avoid schedule conflicts with city council and commissioners court meetings. These meetings are open meetings, and the public is welcome to attend. A list of entities that have representation on the TPC can be found in **Appendix A**.

1.0.2 Technical Committee

The Technical Committee is an advisory committee to the TPC, and works with MPO staff in preparing planning documents, formulating policies, supervising consultants, and providing technical support for transportation studies. It is comprised of 17 members who represent Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties; various cities within the three-county area, and TxDOT. The Technical Committee also participates in evaluating and recommending candidate projects for inclusion in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The Technical Committee meets quarterly, typically on Wednesday or Thursday at 10:00 a.m. Meetings are scheduled so as not to conflict with city council and commissioners court meetings. The Technical Committee meetings are open to the public. A list of entities that have representation on the Technical Committee can also be found in **Appendix A**.

1.0.3 Planning-Related Documents

In addition to developing a Public Participation Plan (PPP), the SETRPC is mandated under federal and state rules to produce three other planning-related documents:

- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The UPWP is a federal requirement for the SETRPC to maintain annual self-certification so that the JJOHRTS region will receive planning and construction funds for transportation facilities and systems. The UPWP is prepared annually and is a statement of work that identifies the planning priorities and activities to be carried out within a metropolitan planning area for a given fiscal year (October 1 to September 30) and includes a list of the planning task descriptions and resulting products from each associated task, denotes who will perform the work tasks, provides the time frame for conducting the tasks, and identifies the sources of funds for each task.

The MTP is a federal requirement for a multimodal transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon for the JJOHRTS region. The MTP is developed, adopted, and updated by the MPO through the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The TIP is a federal requirement for a prioritized listing of transportation projects and programs covering a period of four years. The TIP is the short-range implementation program of the MTP. For projects in the region to be eligible for federal funds provided through the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), they must be included in the TIP. Similar to the MTP, the TIP is developed, adopted, and updated through the metropolitan transportation planning process.

The 10-year plan is a new state requirement associated with meeting the provisions of House Bill (HB) 20 passed by the 84th Legislature for a 10-year plan of transportation projects, financially tied to TxDOT's funding projections and its own 10-year Unified Transportation Plan (UTP). Since the UTP is a state-sponsored document, the public participation for its development is run by the state rather than by the MPO. SETRPC's involvement is therefore limited to contributing projects to the UTP. Since those same projects are tied to the long-range MTP and the short-range TIP, changes in one planning document may trigger the need for changes in another planning document that does require public participation efforts.

Decisions made during the transportation planning process and the development of plans and programs affect both current and future citizens. As users and benefactors of the four-county regional transportation system, their participation is a crucial part of successful plans and programs. Public involvement activities involve JJOHRTS area stakeholders such as the business community, elected and appointed officials, civic organizations, organizations dealing with the environment and planning for natural disasters, public and private transportation providers for all modes, freight interests, economic development and tourism interests, and members of the general public. In addressing the involvement of the general public, the JJOHRTS public participation process will seek to provide fair, meaningful, and accessible opportunities for involvement for all members of the community. The public participation process helps ensure that transportation plans address community needs and also allows the SETRPC to explain the tradeoffs involved in ensuring desired outcomes, as well as the physical and financial constraints associated with various alternative improvements. Opportunities for public input are provided both in formal and informal settings. The nature of public participation is dictated by the subject matter and the development stage of a project or plan.

Chapter 2: PPP Components

2.0 Public Participation Plan

Federal legislation, such as the 2015 authorization of the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, the Clean Air Act, and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) have not only placed new demands on local governments but have also called for new methods to engage the general public, public agencies, and special interest groups in the regional transportation planning process.

In the spirit of these opportunities, the JJOHRTS PPP contains the guidelines and expectations for public involvement during the transportation planning and development processes. In particular, this plan outlines the procedures, tools, techniques, and expectations for public outreach and education on transportation issues. The desired outcome is a process that is both engaging and inclusive to the public. As such, the goals of the JJOHRTS PPP are to:

- Identify affected public groups
- Be responsive to Title VI, including Environmental Justice (EJ) directives and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) guidance
- Engage the community in the transportation planning process
- Expand consultation and stakeholder involvement to include the full range of communities and interests that are affected by transportation decisions. This includes public and private transportation providers for all modes, freight interests, organizations dealing with the environment and planning for natural disasters, economic development, and tourism interests
- Employ a variety of public involvement approaches to garner the greatest amount of public participation
- Employ visualization techniques
- Incorporate public feedback in the decision-making process

To provide the context for metropolitan transportation planning, this document includes an overview of the public involvement process, Title VI requirements, and coordination methods associated with transportation projects in the JJOHRTS area. In addition, Appendix B provides

a summary of the public participation requirements of 23 CFR §450.316(a)(1) and how the SETRPC has addressed them within this plan.

The fundamental purpose of the PPP is to provide for an inclusive approach in which citizens may participate during the continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process. Effective public involvement fosters an opportunity for better planning decisions and collective acceptance of transportation plans and programs.

The public involvement efforts associated with the PPP are designed to be proactive in engaging the community and encouraging public input. Efforts will be made to provide timely information, an explanation of the process, a variety of venues to discuss issues and voice concerns, the opportunity to identify issues and contribute ideas, and the occasion to review and comment on plans, programs, and projects before key decisions are made.

SETRPC will ensure that during the public involvement process, groups that have historically been “underserved” will be encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process. This includes persons from minority, elderly, disabled, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations.

The PPP will be executed at all levels with an effective mix of opportunities, venues, and tools. Specifically, the components of the SETRPC’s public involvement process shall include:

- Community Dialogue
- Formal Public Meetings
- Review and Comment
- Title VI, including Environmental Justice directives
- and Limited English Proficiency guidance
- Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) to ensure that protected populations are included in public participation



2.1 Community Dialogue

SETRPC's public participation process is designed to reach out to the full spectrum of the public: citizens, elected and appointed officials, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, freight transportation providers, media outlets, and other interested parties. In addition to these efforts, the SETRPC makes every effort to include federal, state, and local agencies in the execution of its public participation process.

SETRPC will utilize a variety of methods of enhancing and broadening community involvement in the planning process and providing timely information about transportation issues, meetings, and planning processes. Public participation tools include in-person participation and virtual participation and are based on a variety of platforms. SETRPC will develop the appropriate mix of public participation tools to be used for each public participation event based on the transportation planning program and type of event.

Specific examples of such dialogue efforts are discussed in the paragraphs that follow.

2.1.1 Public Participation Contacts Database

A database of persons, groups, and agencies interested in notification of updated information and public meetings is maintained by the SETRPC. With the transfer of Jasper County to the SETRPC in 2021, the database has been updated to include contacts in Jasper County. SETRPC will utilize this database to distribute information on upcoming activities and meetings. All addresses remain in the database until removal is requested or the US Postal Service returns mail to the SETRPC as undeliverable. Email addresses are also maintained within this database for message notification via electronic communication. A component of the mailing database is a separate spreadsheet of organizational contacts. This list compiles contact information for organizations by category so that the appropriate stakeholders may be contacted whenever necessary. The categories of contacts include:

- Voting and non-voting Transportation Planning Committee members
- Elected officials at the federal, state, county, and city levels
- Newspapers, radio stations, civic organizations, and government agencies who focus specifically on Title VI targeted populations
- Public and private transportation interests including government agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, representatives of public transit riders, freight transportation providers, public ports and airports, public transit providers, intercity bus, taxi and rideshare services, and representatives of disabled populations

- Media contacts including general circulation newspapers, FM and AM radio stations, and television stations
- Major employers
- Civic organizations
- Universities
- Regulatory and disaster preparedness organizations
- Tourism and economic development agencies

2.1.2 Website

SETRPC maintains a website (www.setrpc.org) that provides an overview of the agency, a listing of departments, and the background on various programs. The TER Division maintains its own webpage (www.setrpc.org/ter), which includes information on metropolitan transportation planning. SETRPC uses this webpage to provide the public with easy access to transportation-related documents, a calendar of events, transportation surveys, lists and maps of transportation projects, and a list of MPO Transportation Planning Committee and Technical Committee members and staff. The webpage also allows the public to send emails to the SETRPC. The webpage is updated regularly to include the latest postings of meeting agendas and minutes, as well as information related to ongoing and new planning activities.

SETRPC will use their website as the base and reference point for all in-person and virtual public participation. The website will be a repository for all information related to public participation and serve as the starting point for members of the public to learn more about transportation planning programs and projects.

SETRPC's website will also provide a "how-to" guide for virtual public participation for each event, which will include an explanation of the platform being used to host the event, how to access the event, and how to provide comments or ask questions.

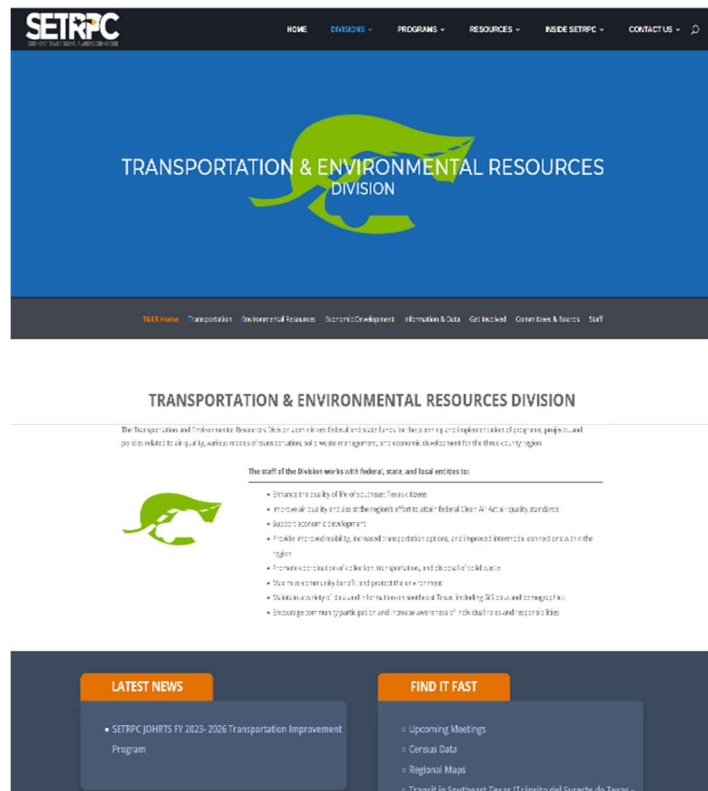


Figure 1: SETRPC Website

Recordings of any online meetings or other types of live event will be made available on SETRPC's website so that members of the public who were unable to attend live can review the information at their convenience.

Notifications for virtual public meetings and events will be the same as traditional formal public meetings. In addition, virtual meetings and event notices will be shared on SETRPC's website, via social media, and in community spaces such as local libraries, etc. All notifications for virtual events will provide a hyperlink to the main project page on SETRPC's website.

2.1.3 Media

SETRPC maintains a list of media contacts from the radio, television, and print media. MPO staff facilitate regular communication with the local media regarding transportation issues and activities in order to keep the public engaged and apprised of agency activities. SETRPC will prepare and submit news releases, as appropriate, on transportation planning activities in the four-county region. Specialized media for specific cultural and language groups will be used when possible and appropriate.

2.1.4 Document Availability

Copies of transportation-related documents, such as this PPP, the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, and the Transportation Improvement Program, are available for review at the MPO office. They are also available for download, at no cost, on the SETRPC website at www.setrpc.org/ter by selecting "Transportation & Environmental Resources" from the "Divisions" drop-down menu.

2.1.5 Staff Presentations

SETRPC staff is available to make presentations to neighborhood groups, civic organizations, government agencies, and other special interest groups to discuss transportation planning related topics. MPO staff will actively seek these opportunities as well as respond to speaker requests. Schedules and presentation content will be coordinated through the MPO office.

2.1.6 Visualization Techniques

A number of visualization techniques will be utilized for in-person participation and virtual participation to enhance the understanding of topics and provide a frame of reference, with the goal of leaving a clear and lasting impression of program initiatives. An appropriate mix of visualization techniques will be selected for each event based on the transportation planning program and type of event, and may include:

- Geographic information systems (GIS) to depict information in map form
- Use of appropriate software to produce other exhibits such as sketches, graphs, charts, photographs, and posters

- Live or recorded slideshows or videos
- Handouts
- Virtual public participation visualization tools such as virtual tours and instant polling charts

2.1.7 Informal/Open House Meetings

Meetings for presenting general information pertaining to transportation planning-related issues, programs, and documents that have been adopted by the TPC are considered informal meetings. An appropriate mix of public participation tools will be selected for each event based on the transportation planning program and type of event and may include in-person and virtual public participation tools.

The SETRPC website will serve as the base and reference point to provide meeting information. For every event, information will be sent to the Public Participation Contacts Database using an email blast, supplemented by a traditional mail-out for those who do not have an email address. Additional tools for providing information on events may include mailings to community groups and social service agencies, radio and TV news releases, various community calendars, and advertisements through local print media.

SETRPC will seek creative opportunities to increase the public's awareness of existing services and to robust and meaningful promote public participation. Potential activities include:

Mobile Information/Promotional Activities – SETRPC will look for opportunities to bring information to the community by equipping a van or bus with a mobile exhibit and traveling around the four-county region. The vehicle will include materials such as flyers, brochures, comment forms, and visual aids that describe the transportation planning process. Staff will solicit input on transportation needs from people who visit the mobile exhibit. With permission, the van or bus can be stationed at a variety of locations including shopping malls, universities, and local public buildings as well as at events such as county fairs and festivals, parades, school sporting events, and neighborhood functions.

Event Planning – SETRPC will seek partnering opportunities with community and business groups and identify opportunities to participate in activities that will afford exposure of the transportation planning process and create an opportunity to receive comments and solicit input from the public. Displays or mini meetings may be held in conjunction with career fairs, community festivals, bus trips, church bazaars, and health fairs.

Focus Groups – SETRPC will identify key opportunities to involve targeted focus groups that are demographically inclusive (race, age, socio-economic status, educational levels, and LEP status) and include traditionally underserved populations (rural populations, minorities, low-income individuals, and individuals with LEP status) to support equitable public involvement.

Sessions with these focus groups will be facilitated in such a way as to develop an understanding of opinion regarding transportation experiences, expectations, and needs.

2.1.8 Virtual Public Participation

Virtual public participation options provide additional tools to expand the reach of public participation and complement in-person meetings and events. Virtual public participation options are intended to complement traditional engagement efforts and are not a permanent replacement for in-person meetings and events. An appropriate mix of public participation tools will be selected for each event based on the transportation planning program and type of event and may include in-person and virtual public participation tools.

Virtual public participation options can broaden the reach of public participation by providing a convenient platform to engage members of the public who traditionally do not attend in-person events. Virtual public participation also provides people who attended an in-person event with an opportunity to follow up the event in case they want to review the information provided or would like to provide additional feedback. FHWA's and FTA's 2021 planning emphasis areas letter encourages MPOs, State DOTs, and public transportation providers to include virtual public participation in the overall public participation process while maintaining participation for those without access to computers and mobile devices. The letter, which can be found in Appendix G, also states that virtual tools can allow for greater transparency and formats that allow the public and stakeholders to better understand proposed plans, programs, and projects. SETRPC will use a combination of virtual and in-person engagement tools in line with FHWA's and FTA's letter.

The type of virtual public participation tool to be used depends on the desired outcome of the event. Some tools are intended to simply share information, some are more adept at facilitating interaction between staff and the community and gathering public comments. SETRPC will choose the online tool or tools used on a case-by-case basis to ensure that the optimum mix of tools is used for each virtual public participation event. Virtual public participation tools and their appropriateness for different types of public participation events are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1: Virtual Public Participation Tools and Event Types

	Public Meeting and Public Hearing	Open House	Focus Group	Stakeholder Meeting	Transportation Planning Committee
Online Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Interactive Meeting Websites	✓	✓	✓		✓
Interactive Mapping	✓	✓	✓		✓
Virtual Walking / Driving Tours		✓	✓	✓	✓
Instant Polling	✓	✓	✓		✓
Online Surveys	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Social Media	✓	✓			✓

Online Meetings – Live, online meetings allow individuals to connect via their computer or smartphone. The specific capabilities of the interaction depend on the chosen online platform, but the platform must at a minimum include a feature for making comments. Typically, the event host can share their computer screen to present the meeting material. Webinars and “telephone town halls” are common forms of online meetings.

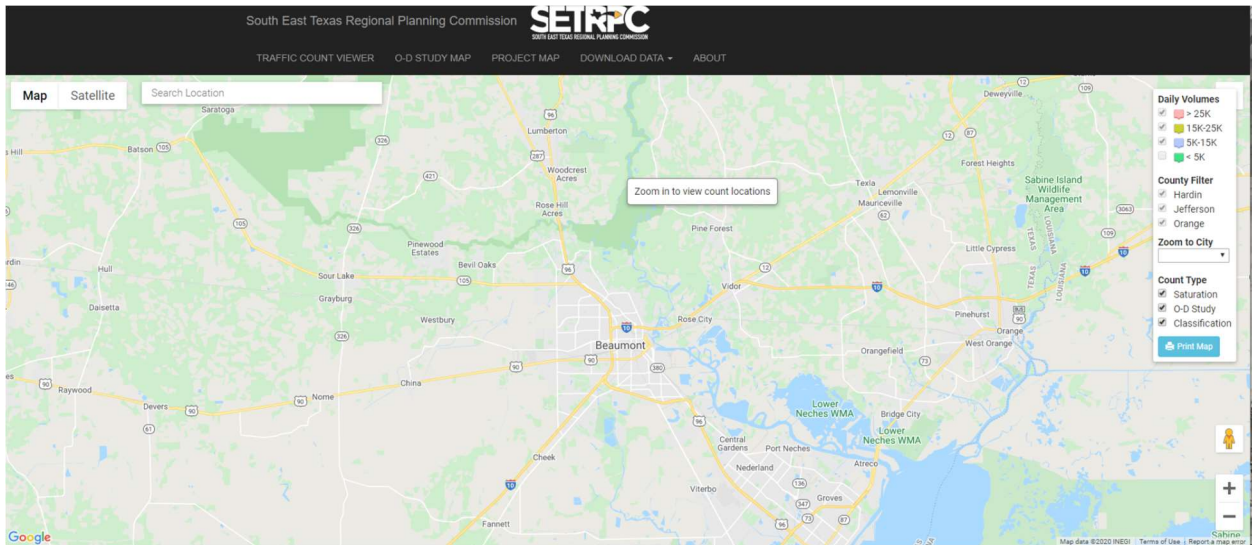
The choice of the online meeting platform depends on the purpose of the online event. Some online meeting platforms are more suited for larger meetings or presentations, while some are better suited for smaller groups since they allow for more collaboration. **Figure 2** shows an example of an online meeting platform that is self-guided and provides information on virtual exhibit boards. When choosing an online meeting platform tool, the SETRPC will take into consideration the number of participants that the meeting can host, the extent of interaction allowed through the platform, recordability features, accessibility, and data privacy considerations.

Interactive Meeting Websites - Interactive meeting websites can include online displays of poster boards presented at public meetings with or without audio recordings of staff explaining various aspects of the boards.

Figure 2: Virtual Meeting Platform



Figure 3: SETRPC Online GIS Map



Interactive Mapping - Interactive mapping tools provide a tool for the public to define different layers of data for viewing. SETRPC's GIS website shown in

Figure 3 provides an example of an interactive map. Like this online GIS map, the interactive map platform may be configured to provide information only. However, to be most useful for virtual public participation, the interactive mapping platform should allow members of the public to provide their comments on the map, which may also be linked to specific locations.

Virtual Walking/Driving Tours - Virtual walking and driving tours can be provided as a video recording, slideshow pictures, or 3-D animations. Animations can visualize the “before” and “after” configuration of a project’s alternatives.

Instant Polling - Instant polling uses a smartphone app to allow the public to vote on options in real time (**Social Media** - Outreach through social media can provide interested stakeholders with information, announcements, documents, and opportunities for input or discussion. Social media allows for the use of a wide variety of media formats, including text, images, and video. Popular social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Social media allows stakeholders to share and obtain information in a manner that is quick, effective, and low cost. Social media platforms provide the opportunity for the SETRPC to reach a broad range of the public to provide information regarding MPO topics of interest and invite users to become involved with MPO activities and events. Social media platforms provide an opportunity for greater involvement of stakeholders and should be used to complement other outreach activities. Not all stakeholders have access to the internet, and this consideration must be taken into account when using social media.

Figure 4). Results of their voting can be instantly displayed in a variety of different ways such as bar charts, pie charts, or word clouds. Instant polling is typically set up for live events with a predesigned set of questions and a set number of choices for answering, rather than allowing for free-form comments.

Online Surveys - Online surveys are engagement tools that allow staff to gather public feedback in different ways. Online surveys, as shown in **Figure 5**, allow staff to collect specific information on certain aspects of a project or plan and may be configured with multiple tabs or sections. While traditional paper surveys are often limited in order to encourage participation, the interactive nature of an online survey more readily captures public attention, can provide more extensive supporting graphics, and may allow for longer surveys.

Social Media - Outreach through social media can provide interested stakeholders with information, announcements, documents, and opportunities for input or discussion. Social media allows for the use of a wide variety of media formats, including text, images, and video. Popular social media platforms include Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram. Social media

allows stakeholders to share and obtain information in a manner that is quick, effective, and low cost. Social media platforms provide the opportunity for the SETRPC to reach a broad range of the public to provide information regarding MPO topics of interest and invite users to become involved with MPO activities and events. Social media platforms provide an opportunity for greater involvement of stakeholders and should be used to complement other outreach activities. Not all stakeholders have access to the internet, and this consideration must be taken into account when using social media.

Figure 4: Instant Polling on Smartphone

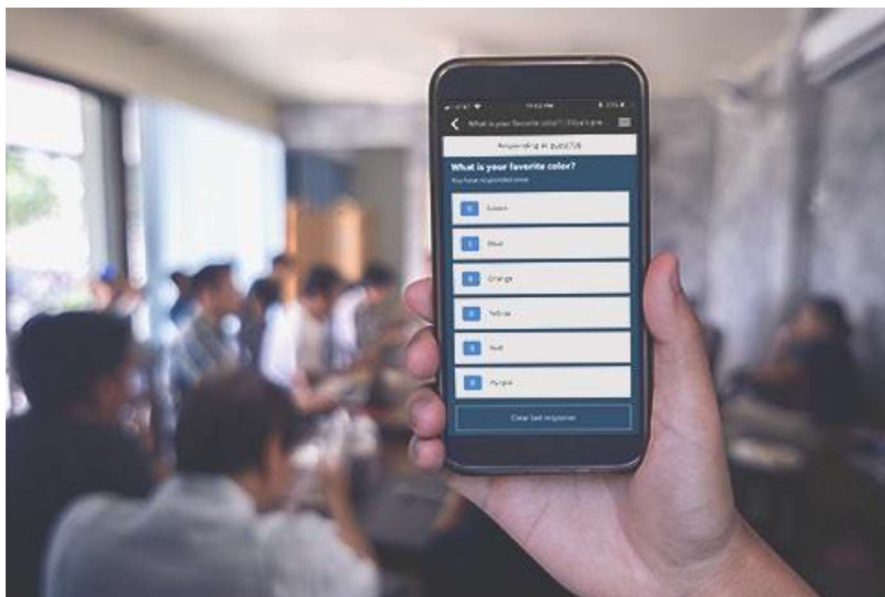
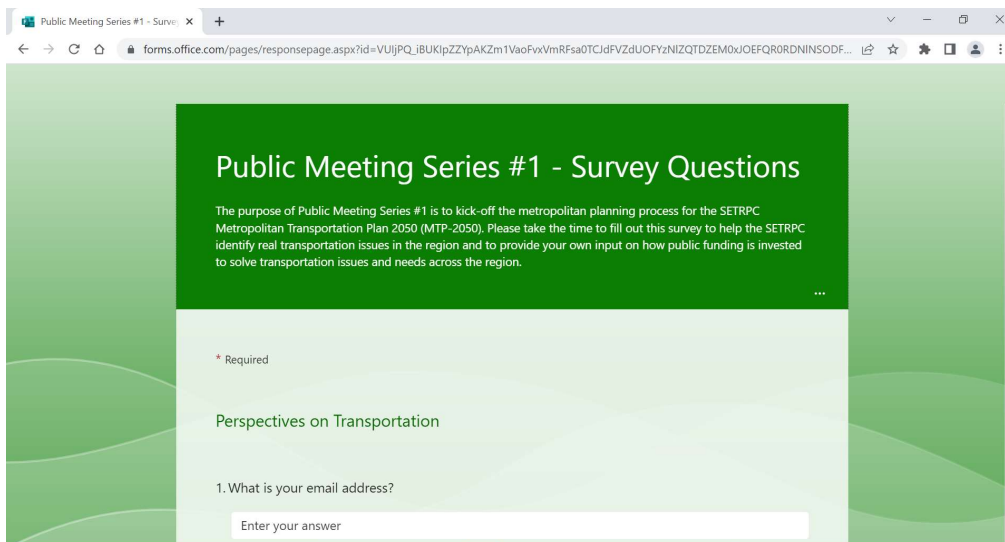


Figure 5: Online Survey

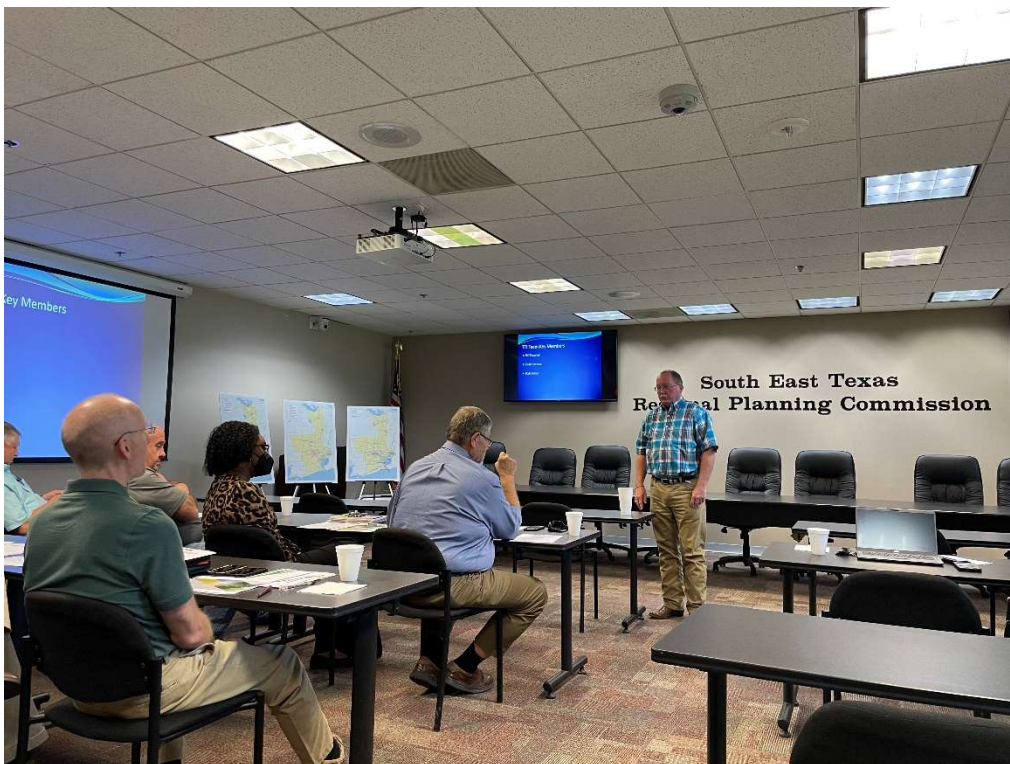


2.1.9 Outreach To Special Groups

As the intent of the SETRPC’s public participation process is to provide timely and meaningful opportunities for participation to all persons and interests, the process is designed to reach out to a wide range of stakeholders, interest groups, and organizations in order to provide robust opportunities for public participation and to publicize those opportunities to the affected populations.

The primary method for consulting with these groups is the SETRPC’s public participation contacts database. This list compiles contact information for organizations by category so that the appropriate stakeholders may be contacted whenever necessary and provides contact information for the interest groups referenced in 23 CFR 450.316(a) and 23 CFR 450.316(b).

In addition to the outreach to referenced special interest groups that are conducted during the public participation program for individual plans and projects, the SETRPC will contact the listed groups on a rotating basis at least once per year to ensure that the contact information is current and to maintain their interest and involvement in the transportation planning process.



2.2 Formal Public Meetings

In addition to the informal public meetings previously discussed, the SETRPC may also hold formal public meetings guided by federal and state transportation planning requirements and in compliance with formal open public meeting regulations.

For virtual formal public meetings, the necessary quorum must be documented, and any online voting should follow local legal requirements. Any modifications for necessary quorum or voting procedures required to make a virtual meeting possible must follow FHWA guidance.

For every formal public meeting, including virtual public meetings, a summary with public comments and responses is prepared. Where a published report is involved, the summary of the public meeting is incorporated into the document as an appendix.

2.2.1 Meeting Notifications

Public notification of formal public meetings will be provided at least 10 days prior to the first meeting and will be consistent with public meeting notification requirements outlined in the next section (Planning Documents: Update and Revision Procedures). Meeting announcements will be provided to media outlets in all four counties, and formal notice to elected/appointed officials and the County Clerk will be made.

Notification of all formal public meetings will be made in area newspapers to ensure adequate regional coverage. Notices will also be posted in the SETRPC offices, on the SETRPC website, and on the Transportation and Environmental Resources webpage. Radio or TV news media releases and postings on various community calendars will also be made, as necessary. In addition, notifications via email and regular mail (for those without email) will be made to those persons and groups within the MPO's formal contact database. A second round of press releases may be issued closer to the public meeting date, as deemed necessary by the SETRPC staff.

Notification for TPC meetings will be provided 14 days in advance as a posting to the

We Value Your Input

Please join us for a meeting about Southeast Texas Transportation Programs!

Learn about the road, transit, bicycle, pedestrian, and safety projects that are proposed through Year 2040, how much they will cost, and when they will happen.

Share your opinion on the proposed projects and provide input on what you want to see in the future. The public review and comment period will be held November 1 – November 30, 2017.

The South East Texas Regional Planning Commission – Metropolitan Planning Organization is responsible for planning transportation improvements in Hardin, Jefferson, and Orange Counties, and we hope to hear from you.

Please attend any meeting to provide input or submit written comments by 5:00 PM, November 30, 2017 to: Bob Dickinson, 2210 Eastex Freeway, Beaumont, Texas 77703. All comments received will be addressed and provided to the Transportation Planning Committee for consideration.

For special needs requests, please contact Bob Dickinson at least 48 hours in advance at 409-899-8444 x 7520 or bdickinson@setrpc.org

SETRPC
SOUTH EAST TEXAS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
www.setrpc.org/ter

Monday November 13
First Action Forum
318 Proctor Street
Port Arthur, TX
3:00 PM

Tuesday November 14
Lumberton City Hall
188 W. Main Street
Lumberton, TX
3:00 PM

Wednesday November 15
Orange Public Library
210 1st Street
Orange, TX
3:00 PM

Thursday November 16
Transportation Committee Meeting
2014 Roman Forum
Beaumont, TX
5:00 PM

webpage calendar of events and formal notice to committee members and interested parties. However, due to their regularity, the TPC meetings, while open to the public, will not be announced in newspaper advertisements.

2.2.2 Meeting Locations

All meetings of the MPO are open to the public. The MPO will host public meetings at appropriate times and locations within the JJOHRTS area to present technical findings and solicit public input on the TIP, MTP, the conformity determination on the MTP, and other transportation planning issues, as necessary. For meetings scheduled by the MPO, efforts will be made to accommodate traditionally underserved audiences including low-income, minority, and limited English proficiency persons, and individuals with disabilities. Efforts will be made to host meetings at public buildings and other highly visible public areas such as shopping centers or health and human service agencies that are accessible by public transportation for increased public access. All MPO meetings are accessible to individuals with disabilities. Arrangements for special assistance or a language interpreter can be made by calling the MPO at least 48 hours in advance. All meeting notifications provide the appropriate contact's name and number to facilitate these types of special requests, and every reasonable effort will be made to accommodate them.

2.3 Review and Comment

Effective public involvement requires open communication. Information should be readily available to the public, and they should be free to comment and receive feedback on their comments.

2.3.1 PUBLIC COMMENT

The public is encouraged to provide comments on any transportation related issue that falls under the MPO area of responsibility. These comments may be made in writing, including email. Persons making the comments are encouraged to provide their name and contact information so the MPO may follow up for clarification as necessary to properly address the comment. Comment and survey forms are also available at public meetings hosted by the MPO.

2.3.2 FORMALLY ADOPTED PROGRAMS/DOCUMENTS

During the preparation of a new MTP, UPWP, or TIP, or during a major amendment to these documents, there will be a 30-day comment period. This comment period begins with the posting of the availability of the document on the SETRPC website and simultaneous email notification to the TPC about the commencement of the comment period. The review and comment period is normally scheduled as early in the planning process as possible. Comments received during the preparation of the new or amended document are published in the document along with responses to the comments. MPO staff will conduct a 45-day

review and comment period on the PPP. Comments received during this period and the responses to those comments will be included in the PPP presented to the TPC. The PPP will also be reviewed on an ongoing basis in an effort to maintain an efficient and effective public information exchange and dialogue.

2.4 Title VI

The PPP supports Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order #12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations), and the three principles of environmental justice as defined in Federal Highway Administration/Federal Transit Administration publication FHWA-EP-00- 013, “An Overview of Transportation and Environmental Justice.” Those principles are:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and
- adverse human health and environmental effects, including
- social and economic effects on minority and low-income
- populations.
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially
- affected communities in the transportation decision-making
- process.
- To prevent the denial of, reduction of, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.

In addition, the PPP supports Executive Order #13166 (Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency). Detailed documentation of the methods used by the SETRPC in addressing Title VI issues is provided in the SETRPC’s separate Title VI/Environmental Justice Program Plan, which was most recently updated in 2022. Using the latest US Census Bureau data and federal government definitions, the SETRPC has identified those areas with high concentrations of Title VI target populations, including minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations. SETRPC will make special efforts to encourage participation in the transportation planning process by citizens in these areas and use data on the latest Title VI populations to support equitable engagement. SETRPC will periodically review the areas with high concentrations of minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency as new or additional information becomes available.



That Title VI/Environmental Justice Program Plan details the formal policy statements on Title VI and Environmental Justice, documents compliant with federal requirements, and describes the analytical methodologies used to identify and map the regional demographic profiles for the targeted populations. A Limited English Proficiency Plan provides supplemental data and procedures to provide meaningful public participation opportunities to populations who are self-described in the census category of “Speaks English less than very well”.

The analytical procedure for identifying protected populations in the SETRPC area is based on a geographic information system (GIS) populated with census data. The methodology is based on a GIS analysis that identifies census tracts with a proportion of the protected population that is greater than the proportion for the region as a whole. Additional details in each plan are used to comply with all federal guidelines, to ensure full identification of component populations, and to define the public participation program to provide meaningful opportunities for involvement for all protected populations.

The SETRPC MPO would also consider the use of FHWA’s Screening Tool for Equity Analysis of Projects (STEAP) to address equity and Title VI/EJ issues as part of the next 2050 MTP update. The interactive web-based GIS platform tool is currently available on the FHWA HEP-GIS website at <https://hepgis.fhwa.dot.gov/fhwagis/>.

While virtual public participation strategies can widen the reach of community engagement efforts, it is important to recognize that virtual tools will not be accessible to everyone. While access to the internet and smartphones are commonplace, there are still some households in the SETRPC region without access to the internet. The appropriate mix of public participation tools to be used for each public participation event, including in-person participation and virtual public participation, will consider the special needs and abilities of minority, low-income, and limited English proficiency populations.

2.5 Measures of Effectiveness

Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) have been developed to gauge how well the SETRPC’s public participation program provides meaningful and convenient access to its transportation planning decision making. While participation opportunities for protected populations are a particular focus of the plan, the MOEs are designed to measure the effectiveness of public participation for all persons and organizations. The eleven MOE targets established for the public participation program are:

- 75% of inquiries received through any outreach opportunity, meeting, or media receive a response within three working days
- 100% of media inquiries receive a response within two working days

- 100% of requests for SETRPC staff to make a presentation to a neighborhood group, civic organization, government agency, or other special interest group receive a response within three working days
- 100% of all formal public meetings are publicized at least ten days prior to the first meeting and comply with the public meeting notice requirements
- 100% of all formal public meetings, project meetings, and committee meetings are accessible to individuals with disabilities and are located on a fixed-route public transit system or demand response service
- 100% of comments or requests for information received through any outreach opportunity, meeting, or media are documented in the relevant meeting material and receive a response within three working days
- 100% of attendees at a public meeting or committee meeting who provide contact information for themselves or a representative organization are enrolled in the SETRPC mailing database
- 100% of requests for translations of planning materials that are requested by LEP populations meeting the four-factor criteria receive responses within three working days. The translation of the documents may take longer, depending on their length and complexity, and the four-factor criteria in some cases allows a translation request to be denied for non-vital or costly requests
- 100% of special interest groups, organizations, or governments listed in the public participation contacts database are contacted once per year to verify their information and maintain their interest in the process
- 50% of individual persons listed in the public participation contacts database are contacted once per year to verify their information and their desire to remain on the database
- 100% of all virtual public participation events are referenced on the SETRPC website

Since these eleven MOEs are designed to measure the effectiveness of public participation in the transportation planning process, they will be measured and reviewed annually. The review of the public participation MOEs will be part of the discussion raised with the special interest groups, organizations, and governments listed in the public participation contacts database during their annual contact to consult with those groups on the effectiveness of the outreach to groups and individuals, and the methodologies and processes used in the outreach efforts. The consultation review will ensure that transportation planning has an open public participation process that provides meaningful and timely public participation opportunities, and that all public input is received, documented, addressed, and incorporated into the planning process.

Chapter 3: Planning Documents

3.0 Introduction

As previously described, the following plans and programs are the state and federally mandated planning documents the MPO must produce:

- Public Participation Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program
- Metropolitan Transportation Plan
- Transportation Improvement Program

SETRPC is required to maintain most of these documents at regular intervals but may also be required to do so on an as-needed basis. This maintenance takes the form of periodic formal updates, as well as amendments and administrative modifications as necessary.

3.1 Formal Updates

SETRPC is required to formally update each of these planning documents, with most documents requiring an update at prescribed intervals. By definition, a formal update involves a comprehensive review and republication of the document. For the PPP, this means developing a refreshed version as determined necessary by the MPO. For the UPWP, this means developing a new work program for each fiscal year. For the MTP, this means developing a new MTP every five years based upon updated planning assumptions and compliance with the air quality transportation conformity regulations. For the TIP, this means developing a new improvement program at regular two-year intervals.

During preparation of a new or updated MTP or TIP, formal in-person and virtual meetings will be held within the JJOHRTS area. The meetings will occur within the 30-day public comment period. Additional formal meetings may be held at locations that enhance the participation of minority, low- income, and limited English proficiency neighborhoods or groups identified in the Title VI/ Environmental Justice Program Plan. The public comment period for both the MTP and TIP will be 30 days, beginning on the date of the website posting regarding the availability of the document for public comment.

Within seven days after the 30-day public comment period closes, SETRPC staff will address public comments received, append documentation to the document, and forward to the TPC.

During the preparation of a new or updated PPP or UPWP, no public meetings will be conducted. Per federal guidelines, the PPP will be available for a 45-day public review and comment period prior to its adoption by the TPC. Notification of the availability of the PPP for public review will be made via posting on the SETRPC's website and by email to interested persons in the SETRPC's mailing database. Since the UPWP is updated annually, public participation opportunities are covered through routine MPO meetings, and no additional outreach is necessary.

3.2 Other Revisions

All MPO planning documents are designed to be "living" documents, and as such, they can and do change based upon changing priorities, assumptions, and application of state and federal laws and guidelines. The MPO may need to revise one of its primary planning documents at any time during a particular document's lifecycle. However, the extent to which public involvement occurs varies depending upon the nature of the revision. Per federal guidelines, revisions are categorized as either "Amendments" or "Administrative Modifications."

3.2.1 Amendments

The PPP, UPWP, MTP, and TIP can each be amended at any time between formal update time periods. For example, TIP amendments are typically conducted on a quarterly basis by either modifying or adding projects. Amendments are conducted for "significant" changes. **Table 2** provides examples of "significant" changes to MPO planning documents that require a formal amendment. Public comment periods for amendments to the PPP will be 45 days, while the comment period for amendments to the MTP and TIP will be 30 days.

Table 2: Significant Changes Requiring an Amendment

Document	Examples of “Significant” Changes Requiring Amendment
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deleting a public involvement activity that would significantly reduce the opportunity for public comment and review
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding or deleting a task • Changing the overall total budget by more than 25%*
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adding or deleting a non-exempt project, i.e., one which requires an air quality transportation conformity determination. (Refer to Appendix C for a list of projects that are exempt from the requirement to determine conformity. Projects not on this list are considered non-exempt and require a formal amendment.) • Re-determining air quality/transportation conformity due to change in the State Implementation Plan requiring redetermination of conformity • Changing the estimated cost of a project that results in a 50% increase in cost and a cost that exceeds \$1.5 million* • Changing the design concept or scope of a project • Changing the funding sources for a project from non-federal to federal funds

**Metropolitan Planning Funds Administration (Texas Department of Transportation, Revised July 2010)*

Steps in the amendment process are as follows:

- SETRPC will notify the TPC during their regular meetings of a necessary amendment.
- SETRPC’s TPC will initiate the amendment as required by SAFETEA-LU and subsequent federal regulations. Elements of the amendment will meet current FHWA, FTA, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and TxDOT requirements.
- SETRPC will post a legal notice in various local newspapers in the four-county area and also issue a press release to other local media outlets indicating that a draft amendment is available for public review on the agency’s website (www.setrpc.org)

and at the SETRPC office. Public meetings are required for amendments to the MTP and TIP.

- Other community involvement techniques may be used, as outlined in the Community Dialogue section of this PPP.
- The public review and comment period is 45 days for the PPP and 30 days for the MTP and TIP and begins on the day the availability notification of the draft document is posted on the website. Email notifications of the commencement of the public comment period will be sent to the TPC as well as to interested persons in the SETRPC mailing database.
- SETRPC staff will have seven days after the closing of the comment period to summarize and address any public input received. The TPC will consider the public input prior to their adoption of the amendment.
- All public input and comments received will be documented with responses by SETRPC in the adopted document of the amendment.
- SETRPC will submit the adopted amendment to the required parties (TxDOT, FHWA, FTA, etc.) for approval.

3.2.2 Administrative Modification

Administrative modifications are minor modifications that do not require public review and comment, re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination.

Administrative modifications to the contents of the MPO's planning documents are documented by the MPO staff, discussed at regular TPC meetings, and formalized in subsequent updates to the necessary documents. A public review and comment period is not required for administrative modifications to any MPO planning document. **Table 3** provides examples of "minor" changes to MPO planning documents that can be handled by Administrative Modification.

Table 3: Administrative Modifications

Document	Examples of “Minor” Changes Requiring Amendment
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanding or refining public outreach techniques
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refining the scope of a task Changing the overall total budget by less than 25%*
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adding or deleting an exempt project, i.e., one which does not require an air quality transportation conformity determination. (Refer to Appendix C for a list of projects that are exempt from the requirement to determine conformity. Projects on this list can be added or deleted via administrative modification.) Change in the estimated cost of a project that does one, but not both, of the following: a) exceeds 50% or b) results in a cost exceeding \$1.5 million* Moving a project from one fiscal year to another fiscal year, without affecting fiscal constraint Moving a project from one federal funding category to another Changing a project’s funding source from federal to state funding Splitting or combining projects without modification to original project design concept and scope Changes to projects within the “grouped” category Changes to project identification numbers (such as Control-Section-Job [CSJ] numbers)

*Metropolitan Planning Funds Administration (Texas Department of Transportation, Revised July 2010)

3.3 Update and Revision Process Summary

Table 4 summarizes the development milestones and public participation activities for updates and amendments of the four prescribed SETRPC planning documents. Administrative modifications, which occur on an as-needed basis, do not require public meetings, nor do they have a public comment period. However, administrative modifications will be presented at TPC meetings, which are open to the public.

Table 4: Update and Revision Process

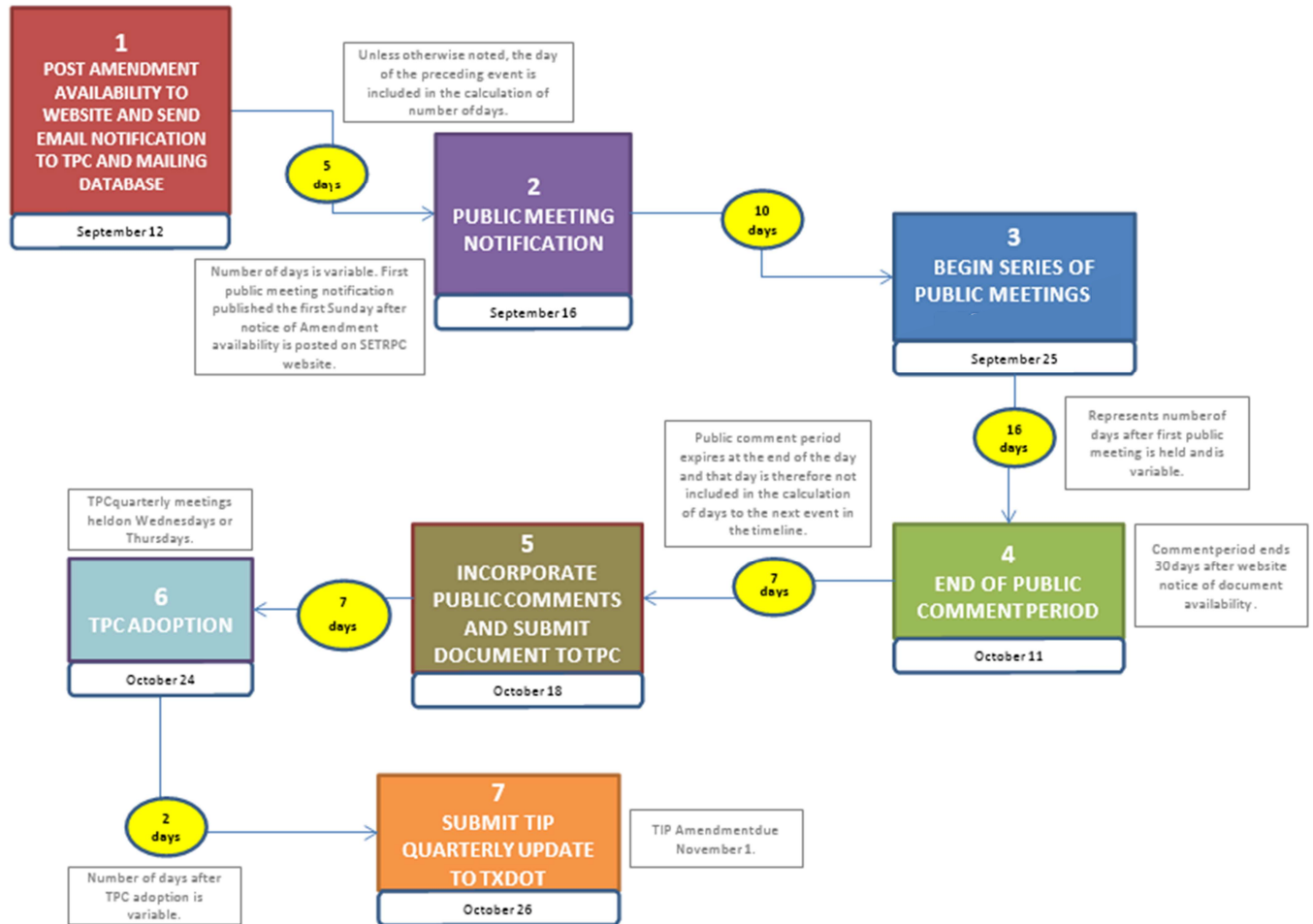
Document	Alteration Type	Frequency	Public Meetings	Public Meeting Notification	Comment Period
PPP	Update	As needed	Use focus groups rather than organized open house meetings	Variable, depending on focus group(s)	45 days
	Amendment	As needed	N/A	N/A	45 days
UPWP	Update	Every year	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Amendment	As needed	N/A	N/A	N/A
MTP	Update	Every 5 years	In-person and virtual meeting options	10 days prior to first public meeting	30 days
	Amendment	As needed	In-person and virtual meeting options	10 days prior to first public meeting	30 days
	Administrative Modification	As needed	N/A	N/A	N/A
TIP	Update	Every 2 years	In-person and virtual meeting options	10 days prior to first public meeting	30 days
	Amendment	Quarterly, if needed, or otherwise*	In-person and virtual meeting options	10 days prior to first public meeting	30 days
	Administrative Modification	As needed	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Quarterly TIP Amendments are due November 1, February 1, May 1, and August 1. Public comment period begins with the website notification of the availability of the planning document to be revised. The MPO has seven days after the closing of the public comment period to address public comments and will provide the document to the TPC at least seven days prior to the meeting in which adoption of the document will be requested by the SETRPC. There is therefore a minimum of at least 14 days between the end of the public comment period and TPC action on the document.*

3.3.1 Public Participation Timeline Example

Figure 6 illustrates the events and timeline for the SETRPC to conduct the public participation process for a quarterly TIP amendment due November 1.

Figure 6: Public Participation Timeline Example





Chapter 4: Plan Evaluation and Future Updates

4.0 Evaluation Process

SETRPC will continually evaluate the techniques and strategies it uses during the public involvement process in order to determine the effectiveness of this PPP. The evaluation of the plan will help to assess the need for new public outreach activities and/or the need to discontinue ineffective activities to receive meaningful public input during the transportation plan development and update process. Should the MPO determine that changes to its PPP efforts are required, the MPO will execute those changes via amendment and will make the revised document available for public review during a 45-day comment period.

Evaluation of the PPP will include consultation with individuals and with groups during the course of specific projects and at least once a year as outlined in the MOEs. The review of the public participation MOEs will be part of the discussion raised with the groups listed in the public participation contacts database during their annual contact to consult with those groups on the effectiveness of the outreach to groups and individuals, and the methodologies and processes used in the outreach efforts. The consultation review will ensure that transportation planning has an open public participation process that provides meaningful and timely public participation opportunities, and that all public input is received, documented, addressed, and incorporated into the planning process.

**Appendix A: Transportation Planning Committee
and Technical Committee Membership**

JJOHRTS Transportation Planning Committee and Technical Committee

Purpose: The JJOHRTS Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) is designated with the responsibility of directing the “continuous phase” of the JJOHRTS area and all other transportation planning activities in the region. The JJOHRTS TPC assures that transportation plans and programs are consistent with the objectives and goals of regional comprehensive planning. The TPC is comprised of both voting and non-voting members from a variety of government entities within the Hardin, Jasper, Jefferson, and Orange counties.

VOTING MEMBERSHIP

City of Beaumont	City of Lumberton	City of Port Neches	TxDOT Beaumont District Engineer
City of Bridge City	City of Nederland	City of Silsbee	Jasper County
City of Groves	City of Orange	City of Vidor	Hardin County
City of Jasper	City of Port Arthur	City of West Orange	Jefferson County
			Orange County

NON-VOTING EX-OFFICIO MEMBERSHIP

City of Bevil Oaks	State Representative, District 21
City of China	State Representative, District 22
City of Kountze	State Senator, District 3
City of Nome	State Senator, District 4
City of Pinehurst	SETRPC Executive Director
City of Pine Forest	Texas Commission on Environmental Quality
City of Rose City	Governor’s Office
City of Rose Hill Acres	U.S. Representative, District 14
City of Sour Lake	U.S. Representative, District 36
City of Taylor Landing	Federal Highway Administration
State Representative, District 19	U.S. Coast Guard

Appendix B: FAST ACT MPO Public Involvement Requirements

The following table presents public involvement requirements from 23 CFR §450.316(a)(1) and how the SETRPC-MPO has addressed them within this Public Participation Plan.

Table 5: FAST Act Requirements

	Requirement	SETRPC Action
(i)	Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to, a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the TIP	Public meeting notices are sent to newspapers throughout the four-county area to ensure adequate geographic coverage. Notification may also be made via radio and/or TV news media releases, and by sending notification directly to individuals and entities within the MPO's contact database. All such notification will be made at least 10 days in advance of public participation activities
(ii)	Provide timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes	Information regarding transportation issues and processes is disseminated via the SETRPC website, outreach meetings, and formal publications
(iii)	Employ visualization techniques to describe Metropolitan Transportation Plan and TIP	Maps, charts, pictures, and electronic media will be used at public involvement activities
(iv)	Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web	MPO documents and meeting notices are available on the SETRPC's website at www.setrpc.org
(v)	Hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times	Public meetings are held in diverse locations throughout the region, which are accessible to individuals with disabilities, accessible to transit stops, and at both day and evening times. Public meetings may also be offered in-person, virtually, or with a hybrid in-person and virtual option when feasible

(vi)	Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the TIP	All public comments will be published in the document upon which the comments were made. In addition, responses to each comment will be included in the final document
(vii)	Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services	Public meetings will be held in diverse locations to ensure geographic coverage. As appropriate, efforts will be made to accommodate traditionally underserved audiences, including low-income and minority households, limited English proficiency persons and individuals with disabilities
(viii)	Provide an additional opportunity for public comment if the final Metropolitan Transportation Plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not have reasonably foreseen from the public involvement efforts	If the MTP or TIP requires “significant” changes based upon public comment, there will be an additional opportunity for public comment
(ix)	Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning, public involvement, and consultation processes	When possible, public meetings will be coordinated with outreach activities by the Texas Department of Transportation. SETRPC offices will be made available to TxDOT for its outreach efforts
(x)	Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process	SETRPC regularly reviews this PPP and the effectiveness of its overall outreach efforts

Appendix C: Selected Regulations Regarding Exempt Projects

The SETRPC region has been declared to be in attainment with air quality regulations. For regions declared to be nonattainment, special rules apply. Federal regulations require that transportation plan revisions in nonattainment areas be found to conform to air quality standards before they can be approved by the MPO or accepted by TxDOT. Some projects, however, are exempt from this requirement and as such do not require a determination of conformity. This provision is not applicable while the SETRPC region is declared to be in attainment but are listed in **Table 6** below for reference. As previously mentioned in this PPP, changes to the MTP or TIP involving such exempt projects may be made via administrative modification. The applicable federal regulation pertaining to exempt projects is 40 CFR Part 93: Transportation Conformity Rule, § 93.126 Exempt Projects.

Notwithstanding the other requirements of this subpart, highway and transit projects of the types listed in **Table 6** are exempt from the requirement to determine conformity. Such projects may proceed toward implementation even in the absence of a conforming transportation plan and TIP. A particular action of the type listed is not exempt if the MPO in consultation with other agencies (see § 93.105 (c) (1) (iii)), the EPA, and the FHWA (in the case of a highway project) or the FTA (in case of a transit project) concur that it has potentially adverse emissions impacts for any reason. States and MPOs must ensure that exempt projects do not interfere with Transportation Control Measure implementation.

Table 6: Exempt Projects

Safety	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Railroad/highway crossing • Hazard elimination program • Safer non-federal-aid system roads • Shoulder improvements • Increasing sight distance • Safety improvement program • Traffic control devices and operating assistance other than signalization projects • Railroad/highway crossing warning devices • Guardrails, median barriers, crash cushions • Pavement resurfacing and/or rehabilitation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pavement marking demonstration • Emergency relief (23 U.S.C. 125) • Fencing • Skid treatments • Safety roadside rest areas • Adding medians • Truck climbing lanes outside the urbanized area • Lighting improvements • Widening narrow pavements or reconstructing bridges (no additional travel lanes) • Emergency truck pullovers

Air Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuation of ride-sharing and vanpooling promotion activities at current levels 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bicycle and pedestrian facilities
Mass Transit	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operating assistance to transit agencies • Purchase of support vehicles • Rehabilitation of transit vehicles¹ • Purchase of office, shop, and operating equipment for existing facilities • Purchase of operating equipment for vehicles (e.g., radios, fireboxes, lifts, etc.) • Construction or renovation of power, signal, and communications systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction of small passenger shelters and information kiosks • Reconstruction or renovation of transit buildings and structures • Rehabilitation or reconstruction of track structures, track, and track bed in existing rights-of-way • Purchase of new buses and rail cars to replace existing vehicles or for minor expansions of the fleet¹ • Construction of new bus or rail storage/maintenance facilities categorically excluded in 23 CFR part 771
Other	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specific activities which do not involve or lead directly to construction, such as: • Planning and technical studies • Grants for training and research programs • Planning activities conducted pursuant to Titles 23 and 49 U.S.C. • Federal-aid systems revisions • Engineering to assess social, economic, and environmental effects of the proposed action or alternatives to the action • Noise attenuation • Emergency or hardship advance land acquisition (23 CFR 712.204(d)) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acquisition of scenic easements • Planting, landscaping, etc. • Sign removal • Directional and informational signs • Transportation enhancement activities (except rehabilitation and operation of historic transportation buildings, structures, or facilities) • Repair of damage caused by natural disasters, civil unrest, or terrorist acts, except projects involving substantial functional, locational, or capacity changes

¹ In PM10 nonattainment or maintenance areas, such projects are exempt only if they are in compliance with control measures in the applicable implementation plan.

Since the SETRPC region has been declared to be in attainment with air quality regulations, the special rules to document conformance with air quality standards for projects in the MTP or TIP, and the category of exempt projects, are not applicable at this time. This section detailing public participation requirements for these special rules is retained to maintain the necessary public participation procedures in the plan and to ensure that those procedures remain consistent with other elements of the plan.

Appendix D: Glossary of Transportation Planning Terminology

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) – ADA requires public transportation to provide equal access to those with one or more disabilities.

Attainment Area – A metropolitan area which is in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards identified in the Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990. The JJOHRTS area was formerly a nonattainment area but has progressed in conformity to an attainment status.

Bicycle Rack – A small, fixed framework designed to secure bicycles.

Bike Lane – A portion of a roadway designated by striping, signing, and pavement markings for the preferential or exclusive use of bicycles.

Bike Path – A bikeway physically separated from motorized vehicular traffic by an open space or barrier and either within the highway right-of-way or within its own right-of-way.

Bike Route – A segment of a system of bikeways designated by the jurisdiction having authority with appropriate directional and informational markers. Bike routes are shared with vehicular traffic.

Bikeway – An all-inclusive classification of any road, path, or way which in some manner is specifically designated as being open to bicycle travel, regardless of whether such facilities are designated for the exclusive use of bicycles or are to be shared with other modes of transportation.

Clean Air Act Amendments of 1990 (CAAA) – Legislation that identified vehicles as one of the primary sources of pollution and called for stringent new requirements in metropolitan areas and states where attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) is a potential problem.

Conformity – A process defined in the Clean Air Act Amendments and required for nonattainment areas which involves assessing the compliance of a transportation plan, program, or project with the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ) – The CMAQ Improvement Program provides funding for transportation-related projects that help attainment of clean air standards under the CAAA.

Environmental Justice (EJ) – The fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in the development, implementation, and enforcement of programs regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. Compliance with EJ regulations requires that the SETRPC track access to and impacts of its activities for Census Tracts with high concentrations of the populations of interest.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act) – The current federal transportation authorization and funding bill, signed into law on December 4, 2015 as the successor to SAFETEA-LU. The FAST Act provides transportation funding totaling \$305 billion for fiscal years 2016 through 2020.

Four-Factor LEP Guidelines – Guidelines provided to determine reasonable accommodations for persons with limited English proficiency. The four factors consider the number or proportion of LEP persons in the region, the frequency of their contact with the SETRPC, the nature and importance of the services provided by the SETRPC to the LEP population, and the resources available to provide LEP assistance.

High-Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) – A High-Occupancy Vehicle is a vehicle containing multiple persons.

Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) – ITS are advanced technologies used to improve the safety, security, and efficiency of the surface transportation system.

Intermodal – The interaction of various modes of transportation, particularly as it relates to connections, choices, coordination, and cooperation.

Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) – The Act was signed into law on December 18, 1991 and was effective for a six-year period (federal fiscal year 1992 through 1997). ISTEA resulted in broad changes to the way transportation decisions are made by emphasizing diversity and balance of modes and preservation of existing systems over construction of new transportation facilities.

Jasper-Jefferson-Orange-Hardin Regional Transportation Study (JJOHRTS) – The JJOHRTS area is the four-county area for which the SETRPC is the MPO.

Level of Service (LOS) – A measure used in transportation planning and traffic engineering often used to measure the level of congestion. The Highway Capacity Manual defines six levels of service, ranging from LOS A (best) to LOS F (worst).

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) – Recognizes that a person's treatment as influenced by their inability to speak, read, write, or understand English can be a form of discrimination based on national origin. SETRPC uses the "four-factor LEP guidelines" to ensure that it accommodates its LEP populations.

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – The agency designated by the governor of each state to carry out long range transportation planning for a designated metropolitan area. SETRPC serves as the MPO for the JJOHRTS area.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) – A 20-year Plan (minimum horizon required by ISTEA) which is required for both metropolitan areas (greater than 50,000 population) and

states. The Plan must consider social, environmental, energy, and economic factors in determining overall regional and state goals.

Model – A mathematical representation of relationships within a system that is used to analyze various conditions based on changes in the relationships. For example, in transportation, future travel demand can be forecast based on changes or projections in socio-economic data.

Multimodal – Involves more than one type of transportation for moving goods and/or persons.

Nonattainment Area – A metropolitan area which is not in compliance with the National Ambient Air Quality Standards. Areas can be considered nonattainment for one or more pollutants including carbon monoxide (CO), ozone, and particulate matter (PM). In nonattainment areas, long range plans and Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) must demonstrate conformity with the State Implementation Plan (SIP) before receiving approval, and thus, federal funding for transportation improvements. JJOHRTS was formerly classed as a nonattainment area for the 2008 eight-hour ozone and 1997 eight-hour and one-hour ozone standards. The region has been reclassified as attainment with the 1997 standards effective November 19, 2010, and as Unclassifiable/Attainment for the 2008 standards effective July 20, 2012.

Park-n-Ride – A transit access mode, in which people drive their private vehicles to a transit stop, park in a designated area, and then ride the transit system.

Right-of-Way (ROW) – ROW is a strip of land or property acquired or designated for transportation purposes.

Roundabout – A circular intersection with yield control of all entering traffic, channelized approaches, and appropriate geometric curvature to ensure circulatory travel speeds of less than 30 mph.

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equality Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) – An act was signed into law on August 10, 2005, authorizing expenditure of \$286 billion for a six-year period (federal fiscal year 2004 through 2009). On March 18, 2010 an extension was signed through December 31, 2010. SAFETEA-LU was designed to address challenges such as improving safety, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency in freight movement, increasing intermodal connectivity, and protecting the environment.

South East Texas Regional Planning Commission (SETRPC) – SETRPC is the MPO for the JJOHRTS area.

State Implementation Plan (SIP) – A plan developed by the state to ensure attainment of National Ambient Air Quality Standards.

Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) – The STIP includes projects to be implemented throughout Texas consistent with the Statewide Transportation Plan.

Surface Transportation Program (STP) – A funding category which provides flexibility in the expenditure of “road” funds for non-motorized and transit modes, and for a category of activities known as transportation enhancement, which could be used to enhance the historic, environmental, and multimodal characteristics of the transportation system.

Title VI – Federal legislation providing that no person shall be denied benefits or excluded from participation in any program receiving federal assistance on the grounds of race, color, or national origin. The SETRPC’s drive to comply with Title VI in letter and in spirit is the basis for its programs in public participation, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency.

Transportation Enhancement Activities (TEAs) – A range of ten projects with an objective that extends beyond that of providing a transportation function (e.g., bicycle facilities).

Transportation Alternative Program Funds – A sub-allocation of the STP to be used for transportation projects that represent efforts over and above what would normally be undertaken.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) – The TIP is a financially constrained short-range document that lists specific projects to be implemented within the JJOHRTS area. Projects included in the TIP must be consistent with the long-range plan, and inclusion of projects in the TIP is a requirement for the use of federal transportation funding.

Transportation Management Area (TMA) – Urbanized areas with over 200,000 population are designated as TMAs. Within each TMA, plans and programs must be based on a continuing and comprehensive transportation planning process carried out by the MPO in cooperation with the state and local transit operators. Despite having a current population of over 200,000 the SETRPC area has not been designated a TMA because its two urbanized areas are considered to be separate, and individually both have populations less than 200,000.

Transportation Mode – A means of transporting people and goods that includes automobiles, transit (e.g., buses, carpooling, HOV lanes, fixed guideway), bicycling, walking, air travel, railroads, waterways, and trucking.

Transportation System Management (TSM) – TSM includes relatively low-cost expenditures used to improve the efficiency and safety of the existing transportation system (e.g., intersection modification, traffic signalization, and signal timing coordination).

Urbanized Area (UZA) – A statistical geographic entity consisting of a densely settled core created from census tracts or blocks and contiguous qualifying territory that together have a minimum population of at least 50,000 persons.

Vehicle Hours Traveled (VHT) – Vehicle hours traveled, a measure of time spent travelling in a vehicle, often summed up for all vehicles over all roads for a given time period.

Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) – Vehicle miles traveled, a measure of the distance travelled by a vehicle, often summed up for all vehicles over all roads for a given time period.

Volume to Capacity Ratio (V/C Ratio) – Volume (V) to capacity (C) ratio representing demand over supply. Demand is expressed as vehicles per hour per lane, or volume, and capacity is maximum number of vehicles that can traverse a given section of roadway during a specific timeframe.

Appendix E: Public Participation Contacts Database

The public participation contacts database is a key component to maintaining meaningful public participation opportunities in the SETRPC region. The database provides the data for individuals who attend public meetings and choose to provide their contact information for participation in future outreach efforts. Additionally, the database lists contact information for special interest groups, organizations, and governments affected by transportation decisions. Data for individuals and groups is the mechanism for ongoing consultation with the public.

The first part of the public participation contacts database is the listings for individuals. This is sourced from the individuals who attend public meetings or provide their contact information to the SETRPC or project-specific websites, comment boards, or other venues provided by the public participation process. One MOE for the public participation process is to contact at least 50% of the individuals listed in the database each year. Individuals will remain on the database until the updates reveal that their contact information is no longer valid or until they request to be removed.

The second part of the public participation contacts database is the listings for special interest groups, organizations, and governments. This portion of the database provides contact information and consultation opportunities for groups referenced in 23 CFR 450.32(a) and 23 CFR 450.32(b), along with other groups representing industries or individuals with an interest in regional transportation planning. The categories of contacts in this portion of the database include:

- Voting and non-voting Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) members, which includes city and county governments, TxDOT, State and US Representatives, TCEQ, FHWA, and the Coast Guard.
- Elected officials and government contacts at the federal, state, county, and city levels are also listed on the database, with some overlap with the TPC. The expanded list includes County Commissioners, County Clerks, and City Council members.
- Newspapers, radio stations, civic organizations, and government agencies who focus specifically on Title VI targeted populations. This category also includes advocates for various disabled populations and a listing of local American Sign Language interpreters.
- Public and private transportation interests including government agencies, representatives of public transportation operators, bicycle and pedestrian advocates, representatives of public transit riders, freight transportation providers, public ports and airports, public transit providers, intercity bus, taxi and rideshare services.
- Media contacts include general circulation newspapers, FM and AM radio stations, and television stations.

- The listing for major employers is cross-referenced to the list of special generators defined by the SETRPC for its demographics database. It includes major regional hospitals, refineries, malls, prisons, universities, and representatives of public transit operators.
- Civic organizations listed in the database include Main Street organizations and Chambers of Commerce from regional cities.
- Universities are cross-referenced and listed in a separate tab.
- Regulatory and disaster preparedness organizations include air quality regulatory agencies and natural disaster risk managements groups such as the American Red Cross, County Offices of Emergency Management, county Local Emergency Planning Committees, and the Texas Department of Public Safety's Division of Emergency Management.
- Tourism and economic development agencies listed in the database are cross-referenced to include Chambers of Commerce from regional cities and city Convention & Visitors Bureaus

Appendix F: Public Participation Documentation

THIS PAGE IS A PLACEHOLDER FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION DOCUMENTATION FOR THIS
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Appendix G: FHWA Planning Emphasis Areas Letter



U.S. Department
of Transportation
**Federal Highway
Administration**

Office of the Administrator

1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Federal Transit
Administration

December 30, 2021

Attention: FHWA Division Administrators
FTA Regional Administrators

Subject: 2021 Planning Emphasis Areas for use in the development of Metropolitan and
Statewide Planning and Research Work programs.

With continued focus on transportation planning the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Offices of Planning are jointly issuing updated Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs). The PEAs are areas that FHWA and FTA field offices should emphasize when meeting with the metropolitan planning organizations, State departments of transportation, Public Transportation Agencies, and Federal Land Management Agency counterparts to identify and develop tasks associated with the Unified Planning Work Program and the Statewide Planning and Research Program. We recognize the variability of work program development and update cycles, so we encourage field offices to incorporate these PEAs as programs are updated.

Please note that this letter is intended only to provide clarity regarding existing requirements. It is not binding and does not have the force and effect of law. All relevant statutes and regulations still apply.

Sincerely,

Nuria Fernandez
Administrator
Federal Transit Administration

Stephanie Pollack
Acting Administrator
Federal Highway Administration

Enclosure

2021 Planning Emphasis Areas:

Tackling the Climate Crisis – Transition to a Clean Energy, Resilient Future

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) divisions and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) regional offices should work with State departments of transportation (State DOT), metropolitan planning organizations (MPO), and providers of public transportation to ensure that our transportation plans and infrastructure investments help achieve the national greenhouse gas reduction goals of 50-52 percent below 2005 levels by 2030, and net-zero emissions by 2050, and increase resilience to extreme weather events and other disasters resulting from the increasing effects of climate change. Field offices should encourage State DOTs and MPOs to use the transportation planning process to accelerate the transition toward electric and other alternative fueled vehicles, plan for a sustainable infrastructure system that works for all users, and undertake actions to prepare for and adapt to the impacts of climate change. Appropriate Unified Planning Work Program work tasks could include identifying the barriers to and opportunities for deployment of fueling and charging infrastructure; evaluating opportunities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by reducing single-occupancy vehicle trips and increasing access to public transportation, shift to lower emission modes of transportation ; and identifying transportation system vulnerabilities to climate change impacts and evaluating potential solutions. We encourage you to visit FHWA’s [Sustainable Transportation](#) or FTA’s [Transit and Sustainability](#) Webpages for more information.

(See [EO 14008](#) on “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” [EO 13990](#) on “Protecting Public Health and the Environment and Restoring Science to Tackle the Climate Crisis.” [EO 14030](#) on “Climate-Related Financial Risk,” See also [FHWA Order 5520](#) “Transportation System Preparedness and Resilience to Extreme Weather Events,” FTA’s “[Hazard Mitigation Cost Effectiveness Tool](#),” FTA’s “[Emergency Relief Manual](#),” and “[TCRP Document 70: Improving the Resilience of Transit Systems Threatened by Natural Disasters](#)”)

Equity and Justice⁴⁰ in Transportation Planning

FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should work with State DOTs, MPOs, and providers of public transportation to advance racial equity and support for underserved and disadvantaged communities. This will help ensure public involvement in the planning process and that plans and strategies reflect various perspectives, concerns, and priorities from impacted areas. We encourage the use of strategies that: (1) improve infrastructure for non-motorized travel, public transportation access, and increased public transportation service in underserved communities; (2) plan for the safety of all road users, particularly those on arterials, through infrastructure improvements and advanced speed management; (3) reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel and associated air pollution in communities near high-volume corridors; (4) offer reduced public transportation fares as appropriate; (5) target demand-response service towards communities with higher concentrations of older adults and those with poor access to essential services; and (6) consider equitable and sustainable practices while developing transit-oriented development including affordable housing strategies and consideration of environmental justice populations.

[Executive Order 13985](#) (*Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities*) defines the term “equity” as the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian

Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality. The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.” In addition, [Executive Order 14008](#) and [M-21-28](#) provides a whole-of-government approach to advancing environmental justice by stating that 40 percent of Federal investments flow to disadvantaged communities. FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should work with State DOTs, MPOs, and providers of public transportation to review current and new metropolitan transportation plans to advance Federal investments to disadvantaged communities.

To accomplish both initiatives, our joint planning processes should support State and MPO goals for economic opportunity in disadvantaged communities that have been historically marginalized and overburdened by pollution and underinvestment in housing, transportation, water and wastewater infrastructure, recreation, and health care.

Complete Streets

FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should work with State DOTs, MPOs and providers of public transportation to review current policies, rules, and procedures to determine their impact on safety for all road users. This effort should work to include provisions for safety in future transportation infrastructure, particularly those outside automobiles.

A complete street is safe, and feels safe, for everyone using the street. FHWA and FTA seek to help Federal aid recipients plan, develop, and operate streets and networks that prioritize safety, comfort, and access to destinations for people who use the street network, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, micro-mobility users, freight delivery services, and motorists. The goal is to provide an equitable and safe transportation network for travelers of all ages and abilities, including those from marginalized communities facing historic disinvestment. This vision is not achieved through a one-size-fits-all solution – each complete street is unique and developed to best serve its community context and its primary role in the network.

Per the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration’s 2019 data, 62 percent of the motor vehicle crashes that resulted in pedestrian fatalities took place on arterials. Arterials tend to be designed for vehicle movement rather than mobility for non-motorized users and often lack convenient and safe crossing opportunities. They can function as barriers to a safe travel network for road users outside of vehicles.

To be considered complete, these roads should include safe pedestrian facilities, safe transit stops (if present), and safe crossing opportunities on an interval necessary for accessing destinations. A safe and complete network for bicycles can also be achieved through a safe and comfortable bicycle facility located on the roadway, adjacent to the road, or on a nearby parallel corridor. Jurisdictions will be encouraged to prioritize safety improvements and speed management on arterials that are essential to creating complete travel networks for those without access to single-occupancy vehicles.

Public Involvement

Early, effective, and continuous public involvement brings diverse viewpoints into the decisionmaking process. FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should encourage MPOs, State DOTs, and providers of public transportation to increase meaningful public involvement in transportation planning by integrating Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) tools into the overall public involvement approach while ensuring continued public participation by individuals without access to computers and mobile devices. The use of VPI broadens the reach of information to the public and makes participation more convenient and affordable to greater numbers of people. Virtual tools provide increased transparency and access to transportation planning activities and decisionmaking processes. Many virtual tools also provide information in visual and interactive formats that enhance public and stakeholder understanding of proposed plans, programs, and projects. Increasing participation earlier in the process can reduce project delays and lower staff time and costs. More information on VPI is available [here](#).

Strategic Highway Network (STRAHNET)/U.S. Department of Defense (DOD) Coordination

FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should encourage MPOs and State DOTs to coordinate with representatives from DOD in the transportation planning and project programming process on infrastructure and connectivity needs for STRAHNET routes and other public roads that connect to DOD facilities. According to the Declaration of Policy in 23 U.S.C. 101(b)(1), it is in the national interest to accelerate construction of the Federal-aid highway system, including the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways, because many of the highways (or portions of the highways) are inadequate to meet the needs of national and civil defense. The DOD's facilities include military bases, ports, and depots. The road networks that provide access and connections to these facilities are essential to national security. The [64,200-mile STRAHNET system](#) consists of public highways that provide access, continuity, and emergency transportation of personnel and equipment in times of peace and war. It includes the entire 48,482 miles of the Dwight D. Eisenhower National System of Interstate and Defense Highways and 14,000 miles of other non-Interstate public highways on the National Highway System. The STRAHNET also contains approximately 1,800 miles of connector routes linking more than 200 military installations and ports to the primary highway system. The DOD's facilities are also often major employers in a region, generating substantial volumes of commuter and freight traffic on the transportation network and around entry points to the military facilities. Stakeholders are encouraged to review the STRAHNET maps and recent Power Project Platform (PPP) [studies](#). These can be a useful resource in the State and MPO areas covered by these route analyses.

Federal Land Management Agency (FLMA) Coordination

FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should encourage MPOs and State DOTs to coordinate with FLMAs in the transportation planning and project programming process on infrastructure and connectivity needs related to access routes and other public roads and transportation services that connect to Federal lands. Through joint coordination, the State DOTs, MPOs, Tribal Governments, FLMAs, and local agencies should focus on integration of their transportation planning activities and develop cross-cutting State and MPO long range transportation plans, programs, and corridor studies, as well as the Office of Federal Lands

Highway's developed transportation plans and programs. Agencies should explore opportunities to leverage transportation funding to support access and transportation needs of FLMAs before transportation projects are programmed in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Each State must consider the concerns of FLMAs that have jurisdiction over land within the boundaries of the State (23 CFR 450.208(a)(3)). MPOs must appropriately involve FLMAs in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP (23 CFR 450.316(d)). Additionally, the Tribal Transportation Program, Federal Lands Transportation Program, and the Federal Lands Access Program TIPs must be included in the STIP, directly or by reference, after FHWA approval in accordance with 23 U.S.C. 201(c) (23 CFR 450.218(e)).

Planning and Environment Linkages (PEL)

FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should encourage State DOTs, MPOs and Public Transportation Agencies to implement PEL as part of the transportation planning and environmental review processes. The use of PEL is a collaborative and integrated approach to transportation decisionmaking that considers environmental, community, and economic goals early in the transportation planning process, and uses the information, analysis, and products developed during planning to inform the environmental review process. PEL leads to interagency relationship building among planning, resource, and regulatory agencies in the early stages of planning to inform and improve project delivery timeframes, including minimizing duplication and creating one cohesive flow of information. This results in transportation programs and projects that serve the community's transportation needs more effectively while avoiding and minimizing the impacts on human and natural resources. More information on PEL is available [here](#).

Data in Transportation Planning

To address the emerging topic areas of data sharing, needs, and analytics, FHWA Division and FTA regional offices should encourage State DOTs, MPOs, and providers of public transportation to incorporate data sharing and consideration into the transportation planning process, because data assets have value across multiple programs. Data sharing principles and data management can be used for a variety of issues, such as freight, bike and pedestrian planning, equity analyses, managing curb space, performance management, travel time reliability, connected and autonomous vehicles, mobility services, and safety. Developing and advancing data sharing principles allows for efficient use of resources and improved policy and decisionmaking at the State, MPO, regional, and local levels for all parties.