

Public Participation Plan

Adopted by Policy Board March 7, 2024

PLANNING THE WAY WE MOVE





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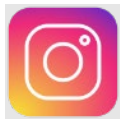
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Disclaimer

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Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Statement

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its metropolitan transportation planning process on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, or economic status, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations. It is also the policy of the Transportation Council to ensure that all programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. Additionally, the Transportation Council will provide meaningful access to services for persons with limited English proficiency. If information is needed in another language, contact 518-458-2161 or send an e-mail to info@capitalmpo.org.

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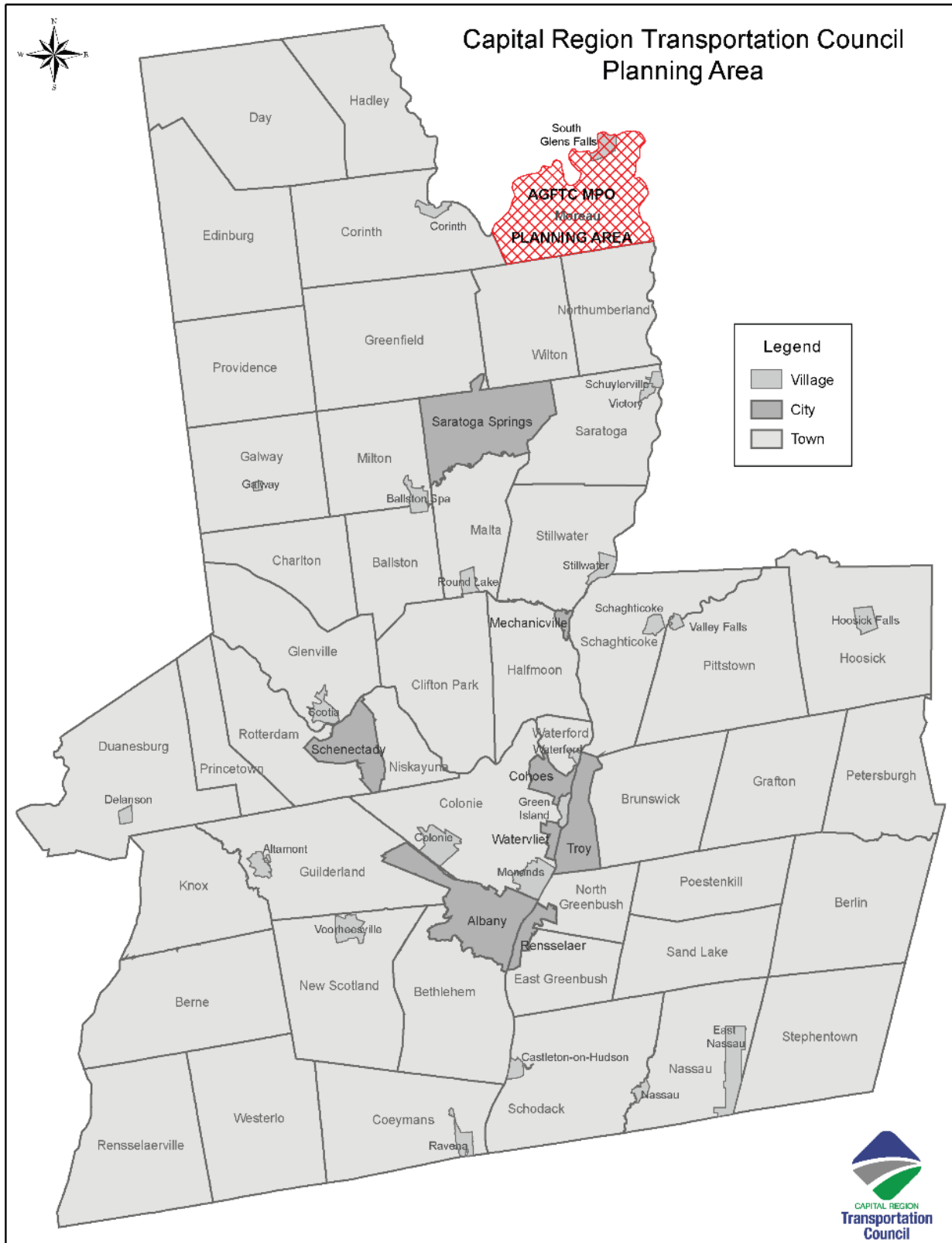
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Glossary

Term	Meaning
Bipartisan Infrastructure Law	The federal transportation law, also known as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. This law set federal transportation policy and funding from 2021 to 2026.
Capital Region	For this plan, the “Capital Region” refers to the Transportation Council’s 4-county planning area (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady), excluding the Town of Moreau and Village of South Glens Falls.
Environmental Justice	The just treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of income, race, color, national origin, Tribal affiliation, or disability, in decision-making and other Federal activities that affect human health and the environment. All people are protected from disproportionate and adverse human health and environmental effects and hazards, including those related to climate change and the cumulative impacts of environmental and other burdens.
Equity	For public participation, the resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that responds to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups.
Equity scan	For public participation, a systemic approach to identifying historically under-represented populations in an area of interest or study that serves as a basis to target and direct planning efforts.
Limited English Proficiency Population	Persons who speak English less than very well.
Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)	An organization designated by federal law and by the governor of each state for urban areas over 50,000 persons to carry out a metropolitan transportation planning process to receive funds from federal transportation programs. The Capital Region Transportation Council is an MPO.
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	The 20+ year, long term plan for how the Capital Region will invest, manage, and operate the transportation system to reach economic, sustainability, and mobility goals. The plan directs how federal transportation funds will be spent in the region.
Planning Committee	The Policy Board’s delegated decision-making body to develop recommendations about transportation plans and programs on their behalf. The Planning Committee is usually the technical staff, like planners and engineers, for the government agencies and municipalities represented on the Policy Board.
Policy Board	The highest decision-making body of the MPO, is comprised of 25 voting members including local elected officials (or their designees) from four counties, eight cities, three towns and villages, and officials and transportation agency representatives from the New York State Department of Transportation, the Capital District Transportation Authority, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the New York State Thruway Authority, the Albany Port District Commission, and the Albany County Airport Authority.
Public Engagement	Two-way communication where the agency requests input from community members about an issue, problem, opportunity, or decision, and community members share their thoughts, ideas, and feedback.
Public Involvement Plan	The planning activity-specific plan that details how the goals of the Transportation Council’s Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning process. It identifies the methods of outreach and engagement reflecting the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity.
Public Outreach	One-way communication that informs community members about an issue, problem, opportunity, or decision.
Public Participation	General communication with the public, including passive and active involvement from the public. Informing the public (outreach) and gathering input (engagement) are both forms of public participation activities.
Public Participation Plan	The Public Participation Plan is a federally mandated document that provides the baseline standards of how the Transportation Council will engage with the public and guide outreach activities.
Title VI	Short for “Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987”, which states that entities like the Transportation Council may not exclude anyone, on the grounds of race, color, national origin, age, disability/handicap, or sex, from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
ATAC	Active Transportation Advisory Committee
BIL	Bipartisan Infrastructure Law
CDTA	Capital District Transportation Authority
CMP	Congestion Management Process
EAC	Equity Advisory Committee
FAC	Freight Advisory Committee
HSTAC	Human Services Transportation Advisory Committee
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MTP	Metropolitan Transportation Plan
NYSDOT	New York State Department of Transportation
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PPP	Public Participation Plan
ROSAC	Regional Operations and Safety Advisory Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
UPWP	United Planning Work Program



About the Capital Region Transportation Council

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving a region with over 850,000 residents in the counties of Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga (excluding the Town of Moreau and Village of South Glens Falls), and Schenectady. Under federal law, the Transportation Council is responsible for implementing a regional transportation planning process to support the development of a safe and efficient transportation system that offers mobility options for those that live, work, and play in the Capital Region.

More detailed information about the Transportation Council and how it operates is covered in the [Reference Guide to the Capital Region Transportation Council](#).

Executive Summary

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) developed this Public Participation Plan to state its guiding principles to public participation in the metropolitan transportation planning process. Drawn from both legal requirements and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement, they are realistic and are also aspirational. The Transportation Council will craft a public involvement process that is:

Continuous: Engagement should result in community contributions in the earliest stages of, and throughout, a project, study, or other planning activity. Community contributions should be part of an ongoing relationship outside of the specific planning activity.

Thorough: Engagement should be comprehensive, providing many options for how a person can be notified and get involved, with consideration for how an array of different modes of engagement can reach as broad an audience as possible.

Inclusive: Engagement should encourage diverse viewpoints and values to be integrated into the decision-making processes, incorporate community-initiated efforts into planning processes, proactively incorporate a broad representation of the community, and use engagement methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the community, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Effective: Engagement should *demonstrate* broad reach, representation, and contribution to the decision-making process. Engagement should be evaluated to assess effectiveness and bold, innovative, and/or creative strategies or methods are encouraged to improve efforts.

Public Participation in the Transportation Council Planning Process

To implement the goals of this plan, the Transportation Council will develop an activity-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each of its core planning activities and studies funded through the Community Planning/Linkage Program. Each PIP will detail how the goals of this Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning activity. The PIP will also account for the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity and how the goals of this policy will be affected. The PIP will include [engagement methods](#) that are suited to the context and conditions of the planning activity.

The Transportation Council's core planning activities, which are a required function of the federally funded regional transportation planning process, have a [process to be officially adopted](#). Typically, the activity must be recommended by the Transportation Council's Planning Committee and adopted by the Policy Board. Leading up to adoption, the public will have the opportunity (minimum of 25 days) to review the documents under consideration.

Outreach & Meetings at the Transportation Council

The Transportation Council strives to use a variety of outreach methods to ensure timely, accessible, accurate, and complete information about its policies, programs, events, and activities, including press releases, our [website](#), [newsletter](#), email, and [social media](#).

Additionally, the public is welcome to participate at the [Policy Board](#), [Planning Committee](#), or [advisory committee](#) meetings. See the [calendar of events](#) for dates and times of upcoming meetings.

Ways the public can participate in these meetings:

- **Review meeting agenda and materials** posted on the Transportation Council website one week prior to the meeting.
- **View meetings** which are broadcast live, recorded, and made available on our YouTube Channel.
- **Submit written comments** by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Register to speak** during the public comment agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, also by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Requests for aids, services, reasonable accommodations, or oral interpretation** for Transportation Council public meetings, can be made by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org at least **48 hours** prior to the meeting.

Evaluation

To understand if the Transportation Council's public participation efforts are effective, it will [evaluate](#) activity-specific [PIPs](#) and conduct an [annual review](#) of overall participation efforts with both [quantitative metrics](#) and [qualitative objectives](#) that reflect how well the goals above were met and any lessons learned.

Introduction

What is the Public Participation Plan?

The Public Participation Plan is a federally mandated document that guides outreach activities and provides the baseline standards of how the Transportation Council will engage with the public. The Plan describes how the public can engage with the Transportation Council's decision-making bodies and how the public can get involved with Advisory Committees. It also addresses what strategies, procedures, and possible methods the Transportation Council will use to gather input on planning documents and proposed projects. Finally, it includes how the effectiveness of public participation will be assessed.

Who is "the Public" in Public Participation?

When the Transportation Council talks about involving the public, or refers to the "community," in transportation decision-making, who do we mean? The public includes anyone who resides, works, visits, has an interest in, or does business in an area potentially affected by transportation decisions. This includes individuals, community groups (i.e., neighborhoods, community-based organizations), government agencies, non-profit organizations, advocacy groups, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, and other interested parties. Any of these individuals and groups are welcome to engage in the metropolitan transportation planning process according to this plan.

Equity Integration

The Transportation Council understands equity in public participation to be when resources and opportunities for participation are distributed in a manner that responds to historic and ongoing disadvantages faced by marginalized groups. Equitable public engagement is mindful of how power operates, and is reproduced, within engagement processes, institutions, and broader systems. It recognizes that the history of transportation planning has often excluded the voices and discounted the needs of racial and ethnic minorities, people with low-income status, people who have a disability, seniors, people who do not drive their own personal vehicles, those with limited English proficiency, and those experiencing homelessness.

To apply this understanding, the Transportation Council is committed to integrating equity throughout all aspects of public participation. When crafting a Public Involvement Plan for any planning work conducted by or for the Transportation Council, it is



expected that staff will begin by asking and seeking answers to the following, non-exhaustive list of questions:

- What groups that have experienced historic and ongoing disadvantages are present in the area of interest? Who might have missed out on past conversations?
- What relationships exist, or can be forged, with community organizations in the area of interest, and how can they be involved at the earliest stages of the planning process, including shaping the public participation plan itself?
- What will be the most effective methods of communication to reach the groups identified? What are the most culturally aware and sensitive means to do so?
- What methods of participation will be most effective and culturally informed to result in involvement? What specific barriers are faced in each method of participation and how will they be overcome?
- What structures are necessary to ensure public input will shape decision-making? How will input be presented and communicated to decision makers and the public?
- What forms of evaluation will be employed to determine effectiveness of outreach to disadvantaged groups?
- Considering the area of interest, the nature of the project, and the disadvantaged groups present, who else can I reach out to for help answering these questions?

The Transportation Council also recognizes integrating equity into its public participation processes requires continual evaluation, clarification, refinement, and/or experimentation and commits to such an iterative approach.

Requirements Framing Public Participation

The following federal policies provide a basic framework to build a Public Participation Plan for a federally regulated transportation agency like the Transportation Council. The Transportation Council understands these regulations to be a starting point, and not an end point, for the iterative development of its Public Participation Plan.

- **Civil Rights and Title VI:** The Transportation Council shall not exclude anyone on the grounds of race, color, or national origin (as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987) from participation in, deny the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program/activity receiving Federal monies. Other statutes designate additional legally protected classes, specifically age, sex, and disability (Age Discrimination Act of 1975, Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973, 23 USC Section 324, and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973/ADA of 1990, respectively). The [Transportation Council's Title VI plan](#) covers how these policies relate to the organization.
- **Environmental Justice:** Pursuant to Executive Order 12898 (Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations), the Transportation Council considers its impact in all planning activities, including public engagement. This means ensuring that consideration and accommodation of low-income and minority populations are taken to ensure adequate representation and sensitive engagement. The Transportation Council's most recent [Environmental Justice/Title VI analysis](#) addresses how the organization is meeting this directive.
- **Limited English Proficiency (LEP):** Pursuant to Executive Order 13166 (Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency), the Transportation Council must provide meaningful access to materials to eligible LEP persons. Federal guidance identifies language groups eligible for support, which are those that constitute 5% of the population or 1,000 people, whichever is less. The Transportation Council's LEP Policy is included in [Appendix I](#).
- **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL):** The BIL emphasizes early and continuous public engagement and outreach to underserved and underrepresented communities.
- **Tribal Consultation:** The BIL and New York State renewed emphasis on outreach to Native Nations encourages the Transportation Council to establish an ongoing relationship with those federally recognized Native Nations with historical presence in the Capital Region.
- **Disability:** The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires that people with disabilities be involved with the development and improvement of transportation services and systems, including access to meetings, meeting sites, and information about and informing decision-making.

Public Participation Plan Goals

The goals of this plan are an articulation of the Transportation Council's guiding principles to public participation. Drawn from both legal requirements and lessons learned from prior outreach and engagement, they are realistic and are also aspirational. While the Transportation Council expects to meet these goals in all its planning work, we also recognize that living up to the highest ideals embodied in these goals will be an iterative process of improvement.

Continuous: Outreach and engagement should result in community contributions in the earliest stages of, and throughout, a project, study, or other planning activity. Community contributions should be part of an ongoing relationship outside of the specific planning activity.

Thorough: Outreach and engagement should be comprehensive, providing many options for how a person can be notified and get involved, with consideration for how an array of different modes of engagement can reach as broad an audience as possible.

Inclusive: Outreach and engagement should encourage diverse viewpoints and values to be integrated into the decision-making processes, incorporate community-initiated efforts into planning processes, proactively incorporate a broad representation of the community, and use engagement methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the community, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Effective: Outreach and engagement should *demonstrate* broad reach, representation, and contribution to the decision-making process. Engagement should be evaluated to assess effectiveness and bold, innovative, and creative strategies are encouraged to improve efforts.

Public Participation in the Transportation Council Planning Process

To attain the goals of this plan, the Transportation Council will develop an activity-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each of the core planning activities listed below. Each PIP will address how each goal of this Public Participation Plan will be met throughout the planning activity. The PIP will also account for the specific context and circumstances of the planning activity, including challenges that affect attainment of each goal. The core planning activities that will have a PIP are:

- Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
- Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan)
- Congestion Management Process (CMP)
- Air Quality Conformity Analysis (public participation activities likely included with those of the accompanying document, either the TIP or MTP)
- Environmental Justice/Title VI Analysis
- Public Participation Plan (PPP)

All studies funded by the Transportation Council, including regional-scale plans and studies funded through the Community Planning/Linkage Program are also expected to create a PIP specific to the context of each study. The final study report will include a public involvement summary and Transportation Council staff will conduct a public involvement evaluation after each study is complete, further explained in the [evaluation section](#).

Creating a Public Involvement Plan

The Public Involvement Plan will lay out the public outreach and engagement efforts to be carried out in support of the PPP's four goals. The plan will describe the particular strategies, methods, and/or tactics that respond to the specific circumstances under which the planning activity will be conducted. The PIP will also establish a schedule for each method and/or tactic to be deployed.

Since these factors are necessarily different for each planning activity, each PIP will look different. For example, the PIP for an MTP will be very large in scale and scope, but the PIP for the UPWP will be much smaller in scale and scope. While no specific format is required, a planning activity PIP should be clear as to what public outreach and engagement activities are happening at each stage of the planning process, and how the goals of this Plan are being met. Planning activity PIPs, with the exception of the evaluation portion, should be completed as early in the planning process as is feasible.

Reaching Public Participation Goals in a Public Involvement Plan

The guide on the following pages demonstrates how the Transportation Council, and anyone that conducts planning activities on its behalf, will consider how each goal can be realized throughout the planning process.

While this guide does note required actions, it is not intended to be exhaustive, a complete inventory, nor a step-by-step checklist, but rather a tool to facilitate meeting the goals of this Plan in the PIP of the planning activities of the Transportation Council.

Goal: Continuous

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will shape decision making throughout the planning process

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Public outreach and engagement opportunities are offered at key decision points throughout the planning activity such as purpose, needs, and vision statements or other frameworks that drive decision making; project, concept, policy, or recommendation selection; and document review.
- Allow minimum public review of draft final documents as described in [Adoption of Planning Activities and Public Review](#).
- Communicate to the public how its input shaped the planning process and final project outcomes.

Consider the following:

- Reach out to community members and organizations with existing (or establish new) relationships with the Transportation Council for input on scope. (Note that nonprofit groups or others interested in participating on a consultant team for a Transportation Council contract would not be eligible to participate if they assist in any way with the development of a planning study scope of work).
- Review previous planning studies, plans, or other data sources for indications of community concern impacting scope, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.
- Establish communications with the Policy Board, Planning Committee, and advisory committees, as warranted, for input into the scope and as collaborators for ongoing outreach and engagement to their contacts, communities, and/or industries.
- Explore ways to incorporate public input into data collection, such as interactive mapping or other crowdsourcing data collection methods, if possible.
- Develop a strategy to ensure that public engagement efforts are shaping the vision(s), concepts, projects, etc. that are being considered as possible outcomes of the planning activity. While other constraining factors must always be appropriately weighted in generating possible outcomes, public input should be recognizable in the possibilities and decision-making.
- Identify opportunities to continue relationships with community groups, institutions, or members beyond the planning activity (add to newsletter distribution, attend meetings, inform about advisory committees).

Goal: Thorough

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will reach as broad an audience as possible through a variety of methods.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Assess the range of interests and groups who may be impacted by the proposed study or plan and design the public involvement process based on how best to reach those groups and collect their input.
- Employ multiple modes of engagement (digital, in-person, mass media, social media, etc.) to maximize the number of people that will see and respond to outreach efforts, including a website to post information, meeting notices, updates, and opportunities for public engagement. The [following section](#) outlines some methods and considerations.
- Develop summaries, visualizations (maps, StoryMaps, infographics, charts, graphs, etc.), and other materials that facilitate understanding of the materials under consideration and review, as appropriate to the activity.

Consider the following:

- Supplement existing data sets, plans, studies with focus group meetings, institutional stakeholder outreach, or other methods if existing sources informing scope are ambiguous or are lacking in sensitive areas or topics.
- Employ low-tech modes of outreach like flyering, mailings, postering, etc. that have the benefit of connecting with a broad range of people, including those who may not have access to the internet or a reliable device that can connect to the internet. Use low-tech modes throughout the public involvement process.
- Provide draft documents to public libraries for in-person review, particularly core Transportation Council planning activities.
- Use creative methods that have the potential to reach people that do not usually participate in transportation planning.
- Use a variety of methods of engagement that allow for a broad understanding of the issues and tradeoffs being considered.
- Use language that is approachable to a wide audience and balances simplification and education on complex matters.
- Engage mass media via press release, in addition to digital media, to reach the broadest possible public.

Goal: Inclusive

Policy: Public outreach and engagement will enable diverse viewpoints and values in decision-making processes and use methods that are responsive and accommodating to a broad spectrum of the public, particularly those historically underserved in transportation planning.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Identify Transportation Council-defined EJ and eligible Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations in, and adjacent to, study areas (regional planning activities & community planning studies), allowing for targeted outreach and engagement to help minimize or eliminate adverse impacts of planning outcomes on their communities. (Equity scan)
- Comply with the [Transportation Council's LEP Plan](#).
- Ensure materials and meetings are ADA accessible according to the ADA Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) for Buildings and Facilities as well as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines, at the AA level.

Consider the following:

- Call on ongoing relationships or conduct additional outreach and engagement in the scoping phase if needed to establish what methods are responsive and accommodating for the specific communities in the study area.
- Translate outreach and engagement materials, draft project documents, and other written materials, as appropriate for languages present in the study area, particularly those identified via the LEP Plan.
- Evaluate how various methods are accessible to various communities and demographics, what methods are preferred by communities, and what methods might serve more than one group or community.
- Select a mix of in-person and web-based methods to accommodate those that may be challenged to attend meetings at a particular time and place (shift work, care obligations, physical limitations, social limitations, etc.) or those that may struggle to engage online (internet access issues, digital illiteracy, etc.).
- Integrate, or otherwise account for, input from digital and in-person methods that does not privilege one form of input over another.
- Assess engagement and feedback received throughout the public involvement process to identify whether underserved populations are missing or underrepresented and conduct additional/alter targeted outreach and engagement if necessary.

Goal: Effective

Policy: Evaluate efforts to assess their effectiveness in achieving broad reach, inclusion, and contribution to the decision-making process.

Required actions of all planning activities:

- Conduct an evaluation that, at minimum, considers the criteria outlined in the [Evaluation section](#) of this document, and possible considerations below.
- To the extent practicable, collect demographic information from participants to understand effectiveness of targeted outreach and engagement.

Possible considerations for evaluations:

- Review and comment on the extent to which public outreach and engagement was conducted in each phase of the planning activity and if there are opportunities for relationships to build, continue, or deepen with community groups and members.
- Note if and how any publicly sourced data was collected and used in establishing existing conditions.
- Review and comment on the extent to which public input shaped each phase of the planning process, particularly key decision points (scoping, purpose statement or other frameworks, outcomes considered and selected, document review, etc.).
- Review the equity scan to identify if it adequately identified disadvantaged groups, and if there could be improvements to such assessments in the future.
- Describe how the public outreach and engagement methods used were inclusive of, and responsive to, underserved communities.
- Note and describe when efforts fell short of expectation and what possible lessons can be drawn.

Engagement Methods and Considerations

Every PIP will include engagement methods that are suited to the context and conditions of the specific planning activity it is designed for. Further, every intersection of this Public Participation Plan's goals and planning phases of a particular planning process will have engagement methods that are more, or less, suited than others.

The following are possible methods to be employed by the Transportation Council, and some considerations to be taken into account for each type.

Meetings

Meetings organized for the purpose of gathering input for a specific planning activity and could include charrettes (small group meetings), poster sessions, open houses, or focus groups.

Considerations

- **Site selection**
 - Proximity to communities identified through the equity scan to reach underserved populations
 - ADA accessibility
 - Accessibility by transit, walking, biking, and other non-vehicle modes of travel
 - Suitability of meeting type to the targeted community
 - Sensitivity in meeting type to power dynamics (ensuring a few people do not dominate discussion because of personality or position in the community)
 - Availability of wi-fi or other technologies
- **Notification**
 - Adequacy of lead time to allow community members to become aware of the meeting (minimum of 7 days)
 - Reach of various forms of notification (digital and analog media may reach distinct parts of the community)
- **Materials**
 - Ability to gather demographic data of attendees whenever possible
 - Access to internet on site and at home to determine what information to put on which handout materials (QR code card, info sheet, etc.)
 - Comprehensibility to a broad range of people
 - Suitable for all ages
- **Language accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's [LEP Plan](#)
 - Arrangement of written translation and oral interpretation services, if warranted

Tabling, Pop Up Events, and Community Events

These in-person events are smaller in scale than a meeting and typically result in one-on-one conversations. Tabling typically means that the Transportation Council will have representatives at a conference, farmers' market, or other preexisting event. Pop up events are similar to tabling but are Transportation Council organized and are located at places like bus stops, plazas, parks, or other public places. Community events provide an opportunity for the Transportation Council to give a presentation, lead a discussion, or simply be a participant to gather input.

Considerations

- **Selecting opportunities**

- Proximity to communities identified through the equity scan to reach underserved populations
- ADA accessibility
- Accessibility by transit, walking, biking, and other non-vehicle modes of travel
- Opportunity to establish or deepen a relationship with a community-based organization
- Potential reach of an event and/or location
- Access to specific mode users or those that may not be reachable by traditional means of communication
- Needed permits or approvals from municipalities, event sponsors, or roadway owners.

- **Materials**

- Brevity, given the brief nature of most interactions
- Access to internet on site and at home to determine what information to put on which handout materials (QR code card, info sheet, etc.)
- Documentation of one-on-one or small group discussions
- Data standardization for collating and analysis of input (i.e., how one-on-one conversations will be combined with survey results)
- Suitable for all ages

- **Language accommodation**

- Adherence to the Transportation Council's [LEP Plan](#)
- Arrangement of written translation and oral interpretation services, if warranted.
- Coordination with partners to understand need for written translation and oral interpretation services

Surveys and Virtual

These methods have a lot of potential to reach people as they do not necessarily require attendance at a particular place and time. Surveys are a straightforward, standardized, and usually simple means of collecting input from a wide range of people. Other forms of virtual engagement that mimic elements of in-person meetings could include virtual workshops, meetings, or presentations with interactive elements that engage the audience. There are also interactive tools like crowdmapping (a form of crowdsourcing) or multi-featured platforms that allow detailed input in forms that can be powerful.

Considerations

- **Demographics**
 - Appropriate marketing methods to reach target demographics
 - Collection of standardized demographic data for appropriate comparison to American Community Survey/U.S. Decennial Census data if at all practicable
- **Notification**
 - Reach of various forms of notification (different types of digital and analog media may reach distinct parts of the community)
 - Adequacy of lead time to allow community members to become aware of the virtual event (minimum of 7 days)
- **Accessibility**
 - Suitability of, and accommodations for, visually and hearing impaired, particularly with virtual engagement methods
 - Accommodation for those without reliable internet access, to the extent possible
- **Language Accommodation**
 - Adherence to the Transportation Council's [LEP Plan](#)
 - Availability of translated text, using translation tools and professional resources, where appropriate

Going Deeper

There are many creative, unique, and novel methods of public engagement. A few are listed below, though more can be found in the USDOT's [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#), among other sources. These methods could result in more or deeper engagement than more traditional methods. At the same time, many of these methods do not have long histories, so assessment of the specific context, conditions, and challenges of a planning activity must be taken seriously. Some examples of these methods follow with some considerations.

- **Community liaison** – one or more people are hired by the Transportation Council, project sponsor, or consultant to be a local expert in the community to facilitate public engagement.

Can be effective if a liaison who is trusted/known to the community(ies) can be readily identified and compensated reasonably based on a realistic time investment.

- **Demonstration projects** – the Transportation Council partners with a roadway owner to use low-cost materials to pilot a short-term design solution (for example, using simple paint to outline a curb extension at an intersection) on a public street.

Allows for new or different designs to be tested in the real world without much investment, allowing for adjustments, additions, or expedition of implementation with supportive partners, prior engagement and/or education with the community, monitoring and data collection during the project, and post demonstration engagement.

- **Guided audits** – transportation planners walk with community members, groups, and others to note and discuss what transportation infrastructure works in a study area, what does not, and what are possible solutions that make sense in that context.

Allows for a relaxed, wide-ranging discussion that can reveal challenges not previously considered and foster discussion between community members that could build consensus if care is taken to offer the opportunity to a wide range of groups. Include the disability community and advocates, facilitate discussion to be productive, and prepare materials to educate and direct conversation.

- **Curbside conversations** – similar to pop up events, but more casual (possibly involving a couch or other items to create a relaxed environment, with approval/permits as needed from the roadway or facility owner). Planners or community liaisons will engage with people on a sidewalk/pocket park/adjacent to a road, bridge, railroad, or other transportation facility to gather their thoughts on planning activities.

Can have similar advantages to pop ups, though the relaxed setting may bring in those that might not otherwise engage in transportation planning if care is taken to select a comfortable location, recruit community partners to create and staff the space, plan for capturing and integrating the input, and have appropriate language resources on hand.

Adoption of Planning Activities and Public Review

The Transportation Council engages in many planning activities, some of which are central – or core – to its role in planning the federally funded transportation system and have a process to be officially adopted. The Community Planning/Linkage Program, on the other hand, leaves decisions on how to advance the project to the sponsoring community.

Core Planning Activities

All core planning activities require a recommendation from the Planning Committee of the Transportation Council and adoption by the Policy Board to become the official policy, plan, analysis, or program of the organization. The following are the core planning activities for the Transportation Council including a brief description of the activity, information on how often the activity is conducted, the last time it was completed, the next scheduled completion, and the minimum number of days the draft document of the planning activity is to be available for public review are listed below.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) - The 20+ year, long term plan for how the Capital Region will invest, manage, and operate the transportation system to reach economic, sustainability, and mobility goals. It directs how federal transportation funds will be spent in the region.

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: September 2020

Next Scheduled Adoption: September 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) - The multi-year program of transportation projects that funds the implementation of projects and priorities outlined in the MTP.

Frequency: Every 3 years

Last Adopted: September 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: June 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) - The planning work that the Transportation Council will undertake and budget for the fiscal year.

Frequency: Every year

Last Adopted: March 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: March 2024

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Congestion Management Process (CMP) - Articulates a process for identifying, measuring, and addressing regional congestion and evaluating strategy effectiveness.

Frequency: Process update every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2028

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Coordinated Public Transit Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) - Identifies transportation needs of people with disabilities, older adults, and people with low income, provides strategies for meeting these needs, and prioritizes transportation services for funding and implementation.

Frequency: Every 5 years

Last Adopted: December 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2028

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Air Quality Conformity Analysis - The analysis of regional air quality and how new projects using federal funds will affect it under the Clean Air Act.

Frequency: Concurrent with adoption of MTP and TIP

Last Adopted: September 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: June 2025

Minimum Public Review: 30 days

Environmental Justice/Title VI Analysis - An evaluation of the Transportation Council's planning projects and programs to ensure that both positive and negative impacts of transportation planning are fairly distributed, and that Environmental Justice and Title VI populations do not bear disproportionately high and adverse effects.

Frequency: After adoption of the TIP

Last Adopted: January 2023

Next Scheduled Adoption: December 2025

Minimum Public Review: 25 days

Public Participation Plan (PPP) - Articulates the baseline standards for outreach, public engagement, and communication for the Transportation Council's meetings and planning activities.

Frequency: Every 2 years

Last Adopted: April 2022

Next Scheduled Adoption: March 2024

Minimum Public Review: 45 days

Community Planning/Linkage Program Studies

The Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program, known as the Community Planning/Linkage Program, is a Transportation Council-funded program that partners with municipalities in the Capital Region to prepare community-based transportation studies and land use plans in alignment with the MTP. There are typically several Linkage Program studies underway at any time. Status information of current studies is presented at every Planning Committee and Policy Board meeting.

Once an individual study is completed, further action is at the discretion of the study sponsor. The Transportation Council has no further interaction with the study unless the municipality (or municipalities) or other sponsor requests to undertake additional feasibility studies. Planning studies with regional significance can be considered for inclusion in the MTP. If a study were to become part of the MTP, the study would be treated as if it were an MTP amendment, with a Planning Committee recommendation and 25-day public review necessary before Policy Board approval.

How are Adopted Documents Revised?

The documents of planning activities will often need to be revised in some way before their next adoption. The planning documents can be revised in technical or clerical ways, or in substantial ways that alter the original planning activity. While the specific definition of the revision terms can be found in each relevant planning activity document, *generally*:

- Administrative modification: a minor revision including copy edits, updating links, minor changes to project scope, minor changes to project costs, minor changes to funding sources, minor changes to project phase initiation dates, etc. (ex. [TIP administrative modifications](#)) that does not require public review.
- Amendment: a revision that involves a larger change including language changes that have a substantive impact on policy as originally passed, the addition or deletion of a project or major change in project cost, project phase initiation dates, a major change in design concept or scope, etc. that requires public review.

The public will have the opportunity to review the revisions in proportion to the scale of the revision, according to the table below:

Activity & Revision Type	Transportation Council Staff/ Sponsor/NYSDOT	Planning Committee	Policy Board	Revision Review Period
MTP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days
TIP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Minor Amendment		x		7 days
Major Amendment		x	x	25 days
UPWP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days
PPP				
Administrative Modification	x			
Amendment		x	x	25 days

Note: All revision types will include notification to the Planning Committee and/or Policy Board

For *this* document, the Public Participation Plan,

- Administrative Modifications will be limited to copy edits, clarifications, updating links or contact information, etc.
- Amendments will be larger changes to language that will alter the meaning of provisions in this document from its adopted intention.

Outreach & Meetings at the Transportation Council

Outreach Communication

The Transportation Council strives to use a variety of methods to ensure timely, accessible, accurate, and complete information about its policies, programs, events, and activities. Further, the Transportation Council will continually evaluate methods, scope, and scale of its communications for more innovative, effective, efficient, and accessible means.

- Press Releases – Releases communicate with local media outlets to cover events, meetings, announcements, or other activities that the Transportation Council deems appropriate. The Transportation Council will continually look for new press contacts, outlets, and relationships that appropriately advance a broader reach.
- Website – The Transportation Council maintains and updates a [website](#) that contains relevant information to its activities, events, meeting details and materials, participation opportunities, and documents for review. The website will strive to be relevant to events and activities that are upcoming and ongoing. The website will contain a calendar of events and meetings.
- Newsletter – The Transportation Council's [newsletter](#) serves as a convenient means of connecting the public to upcoming and ongoing events, meetings, and activities. The newsletter will prioritize Transportation Council activities but may also note other relevant organizations' activities.
- Social Media – To connect with a broader public, the Transportation Council maintains social media accounts to share announcements, events, meetings, and participation opportunities. Currently, the Transportation Council can be found on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#), and [LinkedIn](#).
- Email – The use of email to connect and inform the public regarding outreach and public participation opportunities will be targeted and limited, mostly meeting participants or other targeted stakeholders that have had contact with the Transportation Council.

Social Media Outreach and Engagement Policy

- Social media posts and content development will be the responsibility of the staff person(s) assigned by the Executive Director. The Executive Director will make a final determination on any items that may be questionable as related to this policy.
- The most appropriate use of Transportation Council social media is to provide relevant, timely, and informative content to the public.
- Information received by social media users in the form of comments, replies, direct messages, tags, or mentions will not be considered official public comments. This information will be treated as feedback and discussion summarized, when necessary, for the Transportation Council Policy Board, Planning Committee, advisory committees, or planning activity.
- The Transportation Council will moderate conversation on its social media and delete comments that violate the stated terms for appropriate use to the extent practicable. Comments received containing any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed:
 - Violent, obscene, profane, hateful, or racist comments
 - Comments that threaten or defame any person or organization
 - Solicitations, advertisements, or endorsements of any financial, commercial, or non-governmental agency
 - Comments that suggest or encourage illegal activity
 - Multiple off-topic posts by a single user
 - Repetitive posts copied and pasted by multiple users
- The Transportation Council will share articles, websites, or online information produced by other sources related to its projects and tasks. The Transportation Council shares these items as "information only" and does not endorse, support, or have responsibility for the accuracy of these items.

Transportation Council Public Meetings

The public is welcome to participate with the following public bodies of the Transportation Council at their meetings:

Policy Board

The highest decision-making body of the MPO is comprised of 25 voting members including local elected officials (or their designees) from four counties, eight cities, three towns and villages, and officials and transportation agency representatives from the New York State Department of Transportation, the Capital District Transportation Authority, the Capital District Regional Planning Commission, the New York State Thruway Authority, the Albany Port District Commission, and the Albany County Airport Authority.

Meetings are usually held at 3pm on the first Thursday of March, June, September, and December.

Planning Committee

The Policy Board's delegated decision-making body to develop recommendations about transportation plans and programs on their behalf. The Planning Committee is usually the technical staff, like planners and engineers, for the government agencies and municipalities represented on the Policy Board.

Meetings are usually held once in those months when the Policy Board does not meet, usually on the first Wednesday at 9:30am.

Advisory Committees

Committees have been established by the Transportation Council's Policy Board to allow for professional and public input into the region's transportation planning process. They are ongoing forums led by Transportation Council staff open to anyone interested in participating. The current advisory committees are:

- Active Transportation Advisory Committee (ATAC) – Discusses topics related to bicycling, walking, micromobility (i.e., e-scooters, bike share, etc.), and other forms of active transportation.
- Freight Advisory Committee (FAC) – Discusses topics related to truck and rail freight.

- Regional Operations and Safety Advisory Committee (ROSAC) – Discusses topics related to congestion management, transportation system operations, security, and safety.
- Human Services Transportation Advisory Committee (HSTAC) – Discusses topics related to the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, older adults, and people with low incomes.
- Equity Advisory Committee (EAC) – Discusses topics related to Environmental Justice and Title VI.

Advisory Committees usually meet quarterly, specifics can be found on our [calendar of events](#).

Ways the public can participate in these meetings:

- **Review meeting agenda and materials** posted on the Transportation Council website one week prior to the meeting.
- **View meetings** which are broadcast live, recorded, and made available on our YouTube Channel.
- **Submit written comments** by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Register to speak** during the public comment agenda item at the beginning of the meeting, also by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org.
- **Requests for aids, services, reasonable accommodations, or oral interpretation** for Transportation Council public meetings, can be made by calling (518) 458-2161 or emailing info@capitalmpo.org at least **48 hours** prior to the meeting.

Meeting Notice

Meeting dates will be published on the Transportation Council website at least 14 days prior to the meeting. Meeting dates shall also be published in the Transportation Council's newsletter, and social media outlets. Policy Board and Planning Committee meetings will also have a press release issued no less than a week prior to the meeting.

Evaluation: Measuring Effectiveness

The fourth and final goal identified in this Plan is Effective. To understand whether or not a public participation effort is effective, it is vital to evaluate our plans, strategies, methods, and tactics.

Public Involvement Plans

Every PIP will include an evaluation of the public outreach and engagement efforts employed during the planning activity after its completion. This evaluation will include:

- An overview of quantitative metrics and qualitative objectives,
- Discussion of goals met,
- Discussion of any goals not met and a best understanding as to why, and
- Lessons learned and/or suggestions for future improvement for planning activities.

Community Planning/Linkage Program Studies

PIPs for Community Planning/Linkage Program studies will be completed by consultant staff and include the same subject matter as above. The key difference in these PIPs will be the Effectiveness goal. While PIPs for core planning activities will contain a full evaluation, the Linkage Program PIPs will simply contain the applicable [quantitative metrics](#) collected during the study. Transportation Council staff will complete the evaluation of public participation efforts.

Annual Public Participation Evaluation

In addition to the evaluation within PIPs, the Transportation Council will evaluate its overall public participation efforts each year. The annual evaluation report will include:

- An analysis of all PIPs completed that year
- A summary overview of the quantitative metrics and qualitative objectives for public outreach and engagement, not related to a specific planning activity
- A discussion of the PPP Goals that were met by that year's overall public participation activities.
- A discussion of the PPP Goals that were not met by that year's overall public participation activities, and a best understanding as to why, and
- Lessons learned and/or suggestions for future improvement to this Plan or other structural changes.

The metrics and considerations outlined below are meant as a starting place for evaluation and the Transportation Council is committed to refining them to better reflect effectiveness of public outreach and engagement efforts.

Quantitative Metrics

While no set of metrics is comprehensive, the following metrics and goals are defined to establish a basis for comparison for PIPs and the annual evaluation:

Activity Type	Quantitative Metric
In-person events	Number of events by type Attendance Number of comments/responses and interactions
Surveys & comments	Number of survey responses Number of comments
Newsletter	Number of subscribers Number of opens and click throughs
Website	Number of unique page views/users
Press releases & media mentions	Number of press releases Number of media mentions
Social media	Number of posts Number of new followers Number of impressions Number of users reached Engagement rate
Equity analysis of attendees & participants	Comparison of the demographics of the region/study area to that of the attendees and participants in public engagement activities based on voluntary survey responses. Number of activities in targeted communities to provide context.

Annual Goals

The Transportation Council sets the goal to meet or exceed each metric from the prior year, with consideration of the number and scale of the planning activities completed in each year. The exception will be the equity analysis metric, which will have the goal to meet or exceed the demographic proportionality for the region or study area.

Qualitative Objectives

While quantitative metrics are important, they often leave out information that is difficult or impossible to quantify. To attempt to define some of these more elusive aspects of public participation effectiveness, the following qualitative objectives should be addressed in the annual evaluation report:

- Public input had an impact on the outcomes of planning activities and processes,
- Adequate notice was given for events,
- Public input was considered throughout planning processes, and
- Relationships with underserved communities were established, expanded, deepened, and/or continued.

The annual evaluation report should provide evidence that they have been achieved, progress has been made, or describe our best understanding as to why efforts fell short.

Appendix I: Limited English Proficiency Plan



Limited English Proficiency Plan

Draft for Policy Board Review and Approval

March 7, 2024

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I. Background

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is committed to quality, inclusive planning that involves all residents of the Capital Region who wish to participate, including people who are limited English proficient (LEP), defined as those who do not speak English as their primary language and who have a limited ability to speak, read, write, or understand English.

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's (USDOT) Policy Guidance Document Concerning Recipients' Responsibilities to Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Persons, "Title VI and its implementing regulations require that DOT recipients take responsible steps to ensure meaningful access by LEP persons. Recipients should use USDOT guidance to determine how best to comply with statutory and regulatory obligations to provide meaningful access to benefits, services, information, and other important portions of their programs and activities for persons who are LEP¹." LEP requirements extend to all Transportation Council programs and activities, even those that do not receive federal assistance.

II. Analysis to Determine Appropriate Language Assistance

The U.S. Department of Transportation recommends a specific analysis by each agency receiving federal funds². The analysis is intended to help agencies identify required, proactive language-assistance measures and how to appropriately target agency resources. The USDOT recommends an analysis of four factors: 1) The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to encounter a program, activity, or service of the Transportation Council, 2) The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Transportation Council programs, activities, and services, 3) The nature and importance of services provided by the Transportation Council to the LEP population, and 4) The resources available to the Transportation Council, and the overall costs incurred by the Transportation Council to provide LEP assistance.

1. The number or proportion of LEP persons eligible to be served or likely to encounter a program, activity, or service of the Capital Region Transportation Council.

Eligible LEP Language Groups at the Regional Level

The greater the number or proportion of LEP persons within a given service area (for example, the Capital Region, a specific county within the region, or a specific municipality or neighborhood where a study is taking place), the more likely language services will be needed³. USDOT guidance provides the "Safe Harbor rule" that states that "written translations of vital documents for each eligible LEP language group that constitutes 5% or 1,000 people, whichever is less, of persons eligible to be served" is "strong evidence of compliance with the recipient's

¹ Policy Guidance Concerning Recipient's Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons. [Federal Register, Volume 70 Issue 239 \(Wednesday, December 14, 2005\) \(govinfo.gov\)](#). Accessed 12/15/23.

² Ibid.

³ USDOJ Final LEP Guidance. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/doj-final-lep-guidance-signed-6-12-02>. Accessed 12/14/23.

written translation requirements⁴." The Transportation Council uses the "Safe Harbor" 5%-or-1,000 person rule to help identify the language groups within a geographic area that are eligible for support under the LEP Plan.

To identify the language groups that meet the "Safe Harbor" rule, the Transportation Council uses the American Community Survey 5-year estimated count of *People 5 Years and Older Who Speak English Less Than "Very Well"* to determine the number and proportion of limited English proficient people in the region. Table 1 shows the total number and proportion of people by language group for Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga and Schenectady Counties who speak English less than "very well." Three language groups, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic were identified as having more than an estimated 1,000 people each who speak English less than "very well" and are therefore eligible for support under the LEP Plan.

Table 1: Number and Proportion of People in Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, and Schenectady Counties Who Speak English Less Than "Very Well"

Language Group⁵	Number of People who Speak English less than "very well" (age 5+)	Proportion of People who Speak English less than "very well" (age 5+)
Spanish	6,892	0.83%
Chinese	3,732	0.45%
Arabic	1,344	0.16%
All Languages	26,708	3.22%

Source: American Community Survey 5-Year estimate, 2018-2022, Table C16001.

Identifying Eligible LEP Language Groups at the Sub-Regional Level

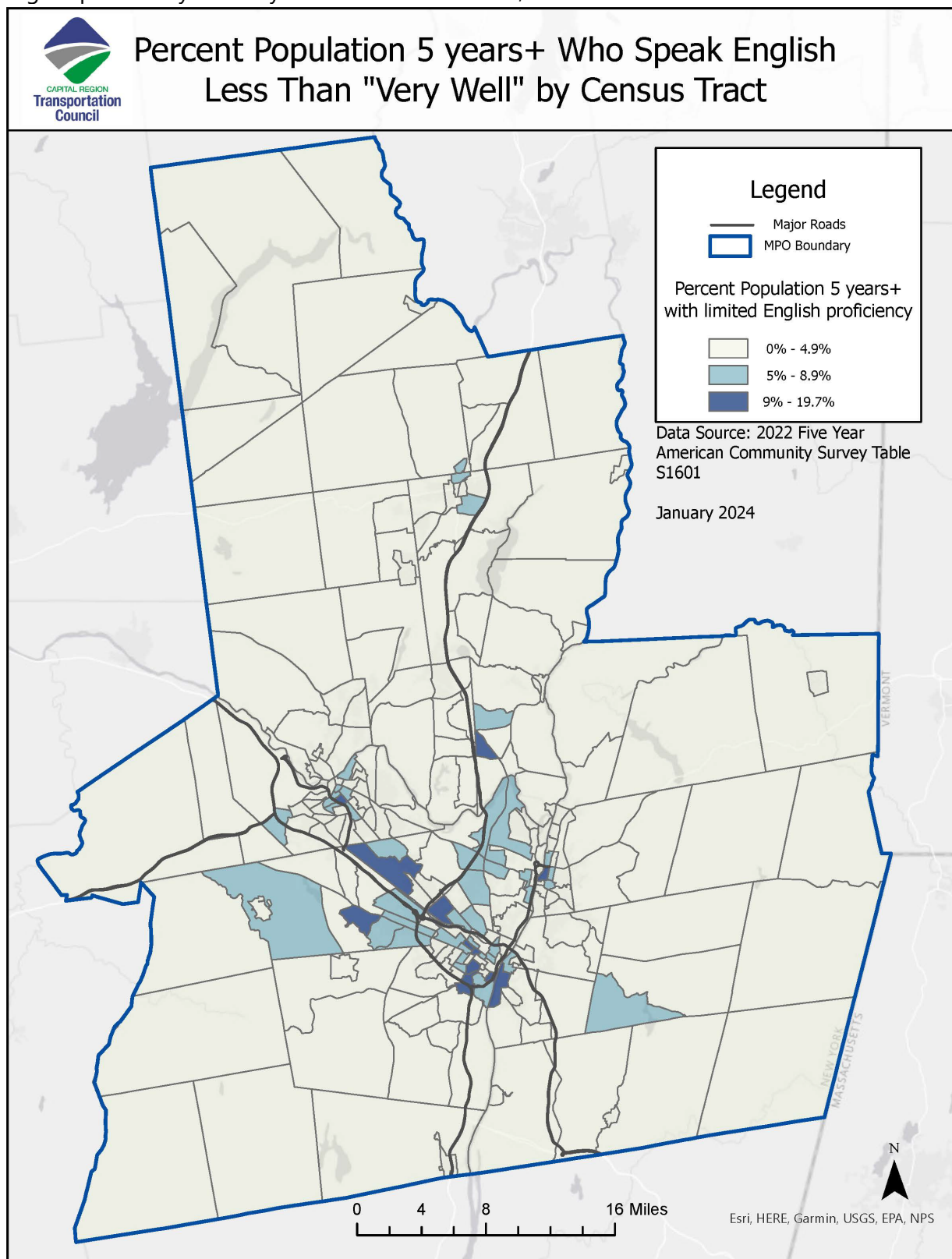
The eligible language groups identified in Table 1 apply to region-wide programs, studies and plans that the Transportation Council engages in. Initiatives carried out on a smaller geographic scale, such as Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Studies, must identify the number and proportion of persons in language groups present within the appropriate geographic area.

Figure 1, below, shows the proportion of each census tract's population over the age of 5 years who speak English less than "very well." While only about 3.22% of all Capital Region residents speak English less than "very well," the map illustrates that the proportion can vary greatly by Census Tract, reaching as high as approximately 19.7% in some neighborhoods. The variability in the map illustrates the importance of identifying language groups in each planning area when preparing the public engagement strategy for new plans and studies.

⁴ Policy Guidance Concerning Recipient's Responsibilities to Limited English Proficient (LEP) Persons. [Federal Register, Volume 70 Issue 239 \(Wednesday, December 14, 2005\) \(govinfo.gov\)](https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2005/12/14/volume-70-issue-239-wednesday-december-14-2005). Accessed 12/15/23.

⁵ Note for Languages Spoken at Home from the 2016 American Community Survey. https://www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/programs-surveys/acs/tech-doc/user-notes/2016_Language_User_Note.pdf Accessed 12/14/23.

Figure 1: The proportion of people over the age of 5 years, in all language groups, with limited English proficiency. ACS 5-year estimate 2018-2022, Table S1601.



While the ACS does not provide enough granular data to identify all language groups at the census tract level, it does provide a useful “first pass” to determine whether the total LEP population reaches the “Safe Harbor” threshold and thus warrants additional investigation⁶.

One useful source of information for identifying languages spoken at the sub-regional level is the local school district. School districts must maintain current information of the languages spoken in the homes of students so that the schools can communicate effectively with parents and guardians. A list of the languages spoken, the number of families at the school that speak each language, and the boundary of the school’s attendance zone can all be obtained from the public school district or the New York State Department of Education.

Another consideration is the presence of worksites and other non-residential sites, such as places of worship and community centers. These locations may be places where significant numbers of LEP people are frequently present but are not captured in ACS or school data.

2. The frequency with which LEP persons come in contact with Transportation Council programs, activities, and services.

As part of its on-going efforts to improve public engagement and increase public feedback on core MPO products such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), as well as the [Community and Transportation Linkage Planning Program](#) and other efforts, the Transportation Council has worked to improve its outreach and engagement to eligible LEP populations. Accordingly, the frequency with which LEP persons who come in contact with Transportation Council programs, activities, and services has increased slightly and is expected to rise modestly.

3. The nature and importance of services provided by the Transportation Council to the LEP population.

The Transportation Council’s programs use federal funds to plan for future transportation projects that have an impact on all residents, but do not include any direct service or program that provides vital, immediate, or emergency assistance, such as medical treatment or services for basic needs (like food or shelter). Nor does the Transportation Council require “screening” activities, such as applications or interviews, prior to participation in its programs or events. Involvement by any person with the Transportation Council or its committees, programs, or projects is strictly voluntary.

4. The resources available to the Capital Region Transportation Council, and overall costs incurred by the Transportation Council to provide LEP assistance.

⁶ ACS 5-year Table C16001 provides more detailed estimates for some language groups by Census Tract but is not a comprehensive list.

The Transportation Council funds LEP assistance with federal transportation planning funds. Technological advances and reasonable business practices have helped keep the costs to provide these services down. A native Spanish-speaking staff member is available to assist with Spanish speakers, as needed. Staff has researched and established other cost-effective translation and interpretation service relationships.

Discussion

The Capital Region is home to a diverse population that speaks dozens of languages. All residents and travelers within the region deserve the opportunity to engage meaningfully with Transportation Council policies, programs, plans and studies. Three language groups, Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic, meet the “Safe Harbor” provision and are identified as eligible LEP language groups that should receive written translation and oral interpretation support in compliance with federal regulations. While staff have not often encountered LEP people in the past, the Transportation Council recognizes the importance of engaging people with limited English proficiency in order to serve the public good and endeavors to increase engagement with these groups. The Transportation Council has the staff and financial resources available to address these needs.

III. Implementation

Inclusive public participation is a high priority in Transportation Council-sponsored plans, studies, and programs. The Transportation Council encourages input from all stakeholders and seeks to ensure that all segments of the population, including LEP persons, have the opportunity to be involved in the transportation planning process. All language assistance activities detailed below will be coordinated by the Transportation Council’s Title VI Coordinator, the Executive Director, in collaboration with other Transportation Council staff.

Translation of Written Documents

Title VI Notice and Complaint Procedure

The Transportation Council will maintain the Title VI Notice and Complaint Procedure in the three languages that are covered by the “Safe Harbor” provision for the Capital Region: Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic⁷. The English version and all translated versions will be posted on the Transportation Council website. Staff will utilize a professional service for these translations.

Other Core MPO Products

The executive summaries of other core products identified in the Transportation Council’s Public Participation Plan, including the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), Transportation

⁷ Simple Chinese will be used to translate all documents into Chinese unless a compelling reason is made to begin using Traditional Chinese instead. Modern Standard Arabic will be used to translate all documents into Arabic.

Improvement Program (TIP), and the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), will be translated into Spanish, Chinese, and Arabic following the adoption of this LEP Plan and when a new draft version of each core product is released for public comment. The executive summaries of adopted, final drafts of the core products will be re-translated if it is substantively different from the draft version. Upon written or verbal request to the Transportation Council, the executive summary of a core product will be translated into any other language as well, provided that translation services are available for the requested language. If, after reviewing the executive summary, the requester finds it to be insufficient for their needs, they may request a translation of the full version of the core product. All translations will be made available on the Transportation Council website. Staff will utilize a professional service for these translations.

Plans and Studies in Sub-Regional Areas with Eligible LEP Language Groups

Upon written or verbal request to the Transportation Council, the executive summary of any sub-regional draft plan or study released for public comment will be translated into any eligible LEP language corresponding to the sub-regional area of that plan or study. The executive summary of the adopted, final draft of the product will be re-translated if it is substantively different from the draft version. Translated versions of the executive summaries will be made available on the corresponding plan or study website for as long as the website is active and will also be posted on the Transportation Council website. Staff will utilize a professional service for these translations.

Other Requests for Written Translation

Upon written or verbal request to the Transportation Council, other publicly released documents such as meeting agendas and minutes, notices of Requests for Proposals (RFP), and newsletters will be translated into any language, provided that translation services are available for the requested language. Staff will utilize a professional service for these translations. The Transportation Council website can be translated into many different languages by the general public by using a free, browser-based service such as Google Translate.

Oral Interpretation

Transportation Council staff will use Language Identification Flashcards when encountering a LEP individual to identify the person's primary language. These cards, developed by the U.S. Census Bureau and widely used by federal and other agencies, bear the phrase "Mark this box if you read or speak [name of language]" translated into numerous languages. The Language Identification Flashcards are free and available online at <http://www.lep.gov/ISpeakCards2004.pdf>.

Language Identification Flashcards will be kept in the following locations and will be made available for staff to use with members of the public:

- Transportation Council office
- Meetings/Tabling caddy
- Public meetings when Transportation Council staff are present, such as for member-sponsored programs, plans, and studies, the MTP, and the TIP.

Oral Interpretation, In-person

At in-person outreach and engagement events for Transportation Council-related initiatives with a study area containing eligible LEP populations, staff are expected to be prepared to use the Lionbridge interpretation service to fulfill a request from an eligible LEP person. To ensure requests can be accommodated, procedures for how to use the Lionbridge interpretation service must be available at all such Transportation Council outreach and engagement events⁸.

When staff encounter LEP people that are not covered under the “Safe Harbor” provision, they must determine what level of support is feasible during the in-person event. Support can take many forms and will vary depending on the circumstances, including the initiative’s Public Involvement Plan⁹. Possible support options include having an accompanying bilingual person interpret, politely gesturing for the person to leave their name and contact information so staff can set up a follow up conversation with an interpreter, using Google Translate on a cellphone, or calling the Lionbridge interpretation service¹⁰.

Oral Interpretation, Virtual Meetings

Requests from any LEP person for oral interpretation for presentations or meetings with a regional scope must be made at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. Staff are to use Lionbridge for interpretation services.

Developing Public Involvement Plans

A Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for each plan or study will be developed and implemented according to the Transportation Council’s Public Participation Plan and this LEP Plan. When conducting a study or developing a plan in a sub-regional area, the Transportation Council will determine eligibility of LEP language groups using the analysis in Section II, above.

The Transportation Council will inform consultants of the LEP Plan and of the LEP requirements that their work is subject to. The Transportation Council will also inform its consultant teams of the Lionbridge interpretation service that Transportation Council staff can access, as needed, for consultant-led projects.

⁸ A copy of the Lionbridge procedures document should accompany the Language Identification Flashcards in the office meetings/tabling caddy at all times.

⁹ See the Transportation Council Public Participation Plan for more information.

¹⁰ USDOJ Final LEP Guidance. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/doj-final-lep-guidance-signed-6-12-02>. Accessed 12/14/23.

Plans and Studies in Sub-Regional Areas with Eligible LEP Language Groups

Each sub-regional plan or study PIP will require all its associated public outreach and engagement materials include a notice, in each eligible LEP language, that states translation and interpretation services are available for the eligible LEP language group upon request. Upon written or verbal request to the Transportation Council, public outreach and engagement materials will be translated into eligible LEP languages. Transportation Council staff will utilize a professional service for these translations.

Notifying the Public

It is important to notify the public of this policy and of the availability of translation and interpretation services.

Core Documents

A statement similar to the following will be included in each core document:

Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Statement

The Capital Region Transportation Council (Transportation Council) is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its metropolitan transportation planning process on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability, or economic status, as protected by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations. It is also the policy of the Transportation Council to ensure that all programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low-income populations. Additionally, the Transportation Council will provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency.

If information is needed in another language, contact 518-458-2161 or send an e-mail to info@capitalmpo.org.

Si se necesita información en otro idioma, llame al teléfono 518-458-2161 o bien enviando un correo electrónico a info@capitalmpo.org.

如欲获得其他语言的相关信息，请联系：518-458-2161，或发送电子邮件至：info@capitalmpo.org。

518-458-2161 إذا كنت بحاجة إلى المعلومات بلغة أخرى، فيرجى التواصل مع الرقم info@capitalmpo.org أو إرسال رسالة بريد إلكتروني إلى

Meetings, Events, Transportation Council Website

Meeting and event notices, as well as the Transportation Council website will include a statement informing the public of available translation services and of the Transportation Council's interpretation policy, incorporating the following:

Requests from any LEP person for oral interpretation must be made at least 48 hours prior to the meeting.

IV. Plan and Procedural Maintenance

Monitoring and Updating the LEP Plan

The Transportation Council continuously monitors the Capital Region's changing demographics and the needs of persons with limited English proficiency. The Transportation Council reviews regional ACS 5-year estimate data every two years to ensure that all eligible LEP language groups are identified and appropriately supported in accordance with this Plan. County-level American Community Survey data show a need to monitor the future number of LEP people in the French language group (which includes Creole and Haitian), as it falls short of the Safe Harbor provision cut-off of 1,000 people by a relatively small number.

Staff Procedures and Training

Once this plan is adopted, procedural documents that outline how staff can obtain written translation and oral interpretation services and how to respond to LEP phone call and email inquiries will be reviewed and updated, if needed. Transportation Council staff will be briefed on this LEP Plan and how to assist LEP individuals as part of ongoing Title VI training (see the Transportation Council's Title VI Assurances and other Civil Rights Regulations document).

Appendix II: Public Comments

1. Alex Word - 1/23/2024:

I think all these attempts at outreach will be useless unless you're asking the right questions and collecting the right data. Planning efforts should of course be guided by the experiences of real people, but their ACTIONS are the data you should be collecting, not their stated preferences. People often don't know what they want, so to respond to their stated preferences would be to get comfortable building a better Walkman when what people really want is an iPhone. I would suggest you make a commitment to seeking the types of data that will lead to new ideas instead of data that will simply affirm the things you're already doing and act as a mechanism to wrap a veneer to legitimacy around the large policy objectives of influential people.

Please do not corrode the public's trust. If you ask people about how to achieve sustainability they'll give you things like solar panels! But experts will tell you're almost always better off insulating your house and decreasing your energy demand first. This process is not only insulting to the experts and staff who sit there politely and tolerate the ridiculousness that pours from the public conscience, but when recommendations are unveiled and the public sees nothing that resembles what they asked for, they too feel disrespected. All of this is to say, you should be upfront with your limitations, and be clear about what the feedback meeting is for: generating ideas, building social license, acknowledging people, letting off steam, etc.

Response:

The Transportation Council agrees that asking sharp questions and seeking the best quality data available are critically important. People's actions are indeed important to observe and are the basis for much of transportation planning data, though it is incomplete. People may face barriers to acting in the way they would prefer, which itself is valuable data. New ideas are always welcome and encouraged, however, the newness of an idea is not, itself, an advantage. Every form of public input has advantages and drawbacks. It is with this understanding that the Transportation Council is encouraging multiple forms of public input and that care is taken when processing and interpreting the resulting data.

Expert insight, analysis, and opinion is incredibly valuable and integral to the transportation planning process and will continue to shape the outcomes of the transportation planning process. However, the history of transportation planning

indicates that expert opinion alone can have negative outcomes for communities, and frequently those negative outcomes were borne by marginalized populations. The Transportation Council is committed to ensuring both expert knowledge and community wisdom are incorporated into its planning process.

2. Mary Toscano - 1/23/2024

Meetings should be held at a time convenient for stakeholders. (ie., not everyone is available during daytime hours)

Response:

The Transportation Council encourages a variety of options for input that are available at any time of day. This PPP encourages planners to consider the needs and schedules of the communities where studies and other planning activities are taking place when scheduling meetings, as well as considering providing virtual options to participate remotely and recording meetings which can be accessed at any time.

3. Anonymous - 1/23/2024

Put signs with QR codes on buses, so transit users can find information and participate about their transportation!

Response:

The Transportation Council agrees that this could be an effective way to gather public input. The Transportation Council has begun to make use of QR codes and is currently working with CDTA to place advertisements for public input in buses.

4. Anonymous – 1/25/2024

I think the goals are good. One thing I would like to see added is targeted outreach to those most impacted by a project. Broad outreach is important but it's critical to gather input from the populations most impacted by a project.

For the Inclusive goal, I would love to see a requirement that community leaders from historically marginalized communities be invited to participate in project advisory committees. Gathering input from EJ communities is important, but giving them "a seat at the table" and empowering them in the decision-making process is even more important.

I think it would also be nice to add a consideration related to incentivizing people to participate in engagement processes. We ask a lot of the public and to the

extent possible they should be compensated for their time and input. This could include providing healthy food at public meetings, paying members of Community Advisory Committees, or providing free transit or bike share passes.

Response:

The most impacted can be understood in several different ways, not least of which are those physically/geographically impacted by a potential project or decision, but also those impacted socially and economically. The Transportation Council strives to target and incorporate input from these stakeholders in all its activities.

The Transportation Council supports and encourages community leaders from historically marginalized communities to serve on project advisory committees and is currently looking for any community leaders that would like to participate in the Equity Advisory Committee. This plan stops short of a requirement since this could be understood as compelling participation on behalf of potentially overburdened communities. We are aware that planning fatigue is a growing phenomenon as federal requirements encourage more public engagement in programs it funds.

This plan allows for incentives and compensation within federal and state regulations, which can sometimes limit options. As this possible tactic is employed, the Transportation Council will monitor effectiveness and seek best practices going forward.

5. Autumn Thorman – 1/25/2024

Are the insights actionable? What is the predicted turnaround time for action items? What's the likelihood this will be an abandoned project after garnering public support?

Response:

The PPP provides the framework by which the public can be part of the transportation planning process. For planning studies, the insights provided by the public inform the recommendations and concepts developed within the planning study. Specific recommendations for transportation projects are all actionable if the study sponsor pursues implementation of the plan. There is no timeline for how long implementation may take as there is no guaranteed funding for plan implementation, one of the challenges of community planning.

6. David Peterson – 1/25/2024

Here's what I think about "public participation". It's often just lobbyists or cranky people that don't want to see positive change showing up to complain. I wish we had these people back in the 50s-70s to stop all these [redacted] Urban Renewal projects that ruined our cities.

Get rid of 787 and the highways that bisect the downtown. Sell off the land and redevelop it. Do not ask for public input, just as Gov Rockefeller didn't ask for public input in the 60s.

Response:

The Transportation Council notes this comment.

7. Rebecca Orrison – 1/25/2024

The Public Participation Goals are a great starting place. However, I would like to see more of an emphasis on the goal of being Inclusive. The Capital Region is a diverse set of communities, with various unique needs and backgrounds. Does the Transportation Council plan to have resources in Spanish? How will the Transportation Council partner with community groups to facilitate community-relevant discussions - who is responsible for facilitation, how will follow-up with communities be observed?

I'm curious how these public involvement plans are dove-tailing with housing goals, climate goals, and business development goals of the region - I think these themes are all related and it would benefit the public and planning teams to highlight how the transportation planning will support other regional initiatives.

Response:

Upon adoption of the PPP, the Transportation Council's [Limited English Proficiency \(LEP\) Plan](#) will be added to Appendix I. This Plan describes how language translation and interpretation services will be handled for public participation activities. Beyond the requirements of the LEP Plan, the PPP encourages the use of translation services whenever it makes sense to do so.

The PPP encourages Transportation Council staff, advisory committee participants, and consultants to be a resource for forming and maintaining relationships with community groups that go beyond any one planning activity.

The transportation goals developed in community plans are consistent with the principles of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (the long-range transportation plan for the region) which is developed considering other state and regional plans and goals including housing, economic development and climate. The Transportation Council will be working on a new Metropolitan Transportation Plan and will be coordinating with the goals of other regional initiatives.

8. Benjamin MacKrell – 1/26/2024

Further explanations and contextual information around regional and global trends surrounding any given issue might be included in Transportation Council communications. As well as discussion on what potential action or inaction will do to abate or inflame the ongoing climate crisis should be included in all public outreach. Ideally all public presentations will have further information about broader plans and long-term Transportation Council goals.

Response:

The Transportation Council seeks to provide such context, particularly the relationship of any planning activity to the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (the long-range transportation plan for the region). Climate will be more strongly considered in the next Metropolitan Transportation Plan currently in development. Additional context will be provided in public presentations as appropriate.

9. Peter Knaup – 2/8/2024

If this effort is not too late, I believe it's an appropriate approach to gather feedback. Ideally it will yield meaningful input and enable the city to develop and implement effective plans to improve the safety, quality, and efficiency of streets and transportation options in the capital region.

Ensure relevant case studies and real-world examples of applications in areas similar to the capital region along with the success stories, failures/challenges, and any other relevant learnings.

Response:

The Transportation Council seeks to provide appropriate context for public input opportunities and will take into consideration the addition of more case studies or examples that can illuminate possible designs, policies, or other guidance.

10. Anonymous – 2/23/2024

Without a deadline this is just a dream. Need to add deadlines.

Response:

The Transportation Council agrees that timelines and deadlines are important. The Final Draft PPP added language that will require Public Involvement Plans (PIP) to include a schedule of participation activities. For many participation activities described in the PPP, it would be unworkable to include a deadline defined in this document, separate from the deadlines of the study, report, or other activity.

11. Anonymous – 2/26/2024

How are you measuring these goals and how do you know if/when you have achieved them?

I think you should be able to give transparency metrics on how you are doing in meeting your goals.

I think it's very difficult for any average citizen or resident that is not already involved with government or has a planning degree to understand the full scope of your planning projects, and also have a full understanding of the schedule of each one and their byproducts, and when the time will come to leave public comment on them. On top of that, there is virtually no promotional budget - so very few folks will hear about these projects. I think this is a major fault for all government projects, that they believe the average person should be liable for understanding their complexity. Your complexity, however, is not our problem. I would think the planning departments would have a less myopic, "mandated" view of their work schedule but sadly that does not seem to be the case. As everything is very project driven, comments are limited to a specific project at hand. I think the planning agencies should have 24/7 open comment periods. The comments that are left should be structured into a database for the planners to query when the time comes. i.e. "ok, we're doing a project on the congress st bridge b/w troy and watervliet, let's check the database to see what comments we've gotten on that"

Response:

The PPP includes a section on Evaluations that includes the metrics that will be used to understand how well the goals of this PPP were met for a particular PIP, as well as an annual general evaluation for the scope of public participation

activities of the Transportation Council. Information on how the public shaped the planning process is also required by the PPP.

The Transportation Council hopes that the provisions of the PPP will assist in making the planning process and planning studies more understandable to the public. Simple language, glossaries of terms, executive summaries, online videos and surveys accessible 24/7, and other tools will be used to demystify the plans and their content. The PPP strives to make the federal transportation planning process as clear, approachable, and transparent as possible.

Comment deadlines on planning studies are used to keep the planning process moving forward. However, the public can comment on a planning study or any implementation activity resulting from a planning study at any time by emailing info@capitalmpo.org. While comments received after published deadlines for a study, report, plan, or process may not be captured in the planning document itself, they are included in materials for future planning activities or forwarded to other agencies or municipalities responsible for implementing the plans. Note that the Transportation Council does not implement transportation projects itself. It relies on communities, state agencies, and regional transportation agencies to design and implement projects, providing opportunities for public input.