



OUTREACH PLAN

Draft
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Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization

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SECTION I: OVERVIEW

Public outreach in transportation planning poses major challenges. Some present a barrier to getting meaningful input from the public: the transportation planning process is complex; discourse is heavy with jargon; and often the public struggles to understand central documents, such as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) or the Regional Mobility Plan, and their interrelatedness.

The duration of the transportation planning process is also a problem – a transportation project can take five, 10, or more years to be completed. How does a transportation agency attract and hold citizen interest, convince them that involvement is worthwhile, and provide the means for them to have direct impact on decisions?

Another challenge is that a transportation planning organization (TPO) is responsible for distributing funding, but doesn't manage projects. Projects are managed by other agencies, such as the Tennessee Department of Transportation and city and county governments.

Furthermore, the best ways to reach out to the public are always changing – sometimes due to the project and other times a result of changing technology and preferences. Because of this, a TPO's outreach structure must allow flexibility for staff to experiment with ways to increase and improve engagement.

GOALS FOR OUTREACH:

- 1) Increase and improve opportunities to include the public in the planning process.
- 2) Increase the accessibility and transparency of information available to the public.
- 3) Increase the efficiency of the public outreach process.
- 4) Provide the public with more ways to be heard in the transportation planning process.
- 5) Make transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people in our region.
- 6) Enhance the environmental justice process.

WHAT IS A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION (MPO)?

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization is our region's designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The 1962 Federal-Aid Highway Act required the formation of an MPO for all urbanized areas with a population greater than 50,000. MPOs were established to ensure that federal funding for transportation projects and programs was based on a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C) planning process. MPOs consist of an Executive Board, made up of local government officials; a Technical Committee, comprised of local engineers and planners; and TPO staff. The Executive Board makes the ultimate decision on how to distribute federal transportation funds within the planning area for road, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian projects as well as other transportation-related studies and projects.

The Five Core Functions of an MPO:

- 1) **Establish a Setting:** Establish and manage a fair and impartial setting for effective regional decision-making in the urbanized area.
- 2) **Evaluate Alternatives:** Evaluate transportation alternatives that are scaled to the size and complexity of the region and realistically achievable.
- 3) **Maintain a Long-range Regional Mobility Plan:** Develop and update a long-range regional mobility plan for the urbanized area with a planning horizon of at least twenty years. The Mobility Plan should be a multimodal, fiscally constrained plan that fosters mobility and access

for people and goods, promotes efficient system performance and preservation, conforms to air quality standards, and enhances the area's quality of life.

- 4) **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a short-range capital improvement program based on the long-range Regional Mobility Plan. The TIP is designed to promote the area's transportation goals by programming projects that address capacity needs, congestion reduction, transit service needs, air quality improvements, and transportation enhancements.
- 5) **Involve the Public:** Involve the general public and affected special interest groups in the four above-listed essential functions.

The Planning Process

Figure 1 shows an overview of the TPO planning process. While the complete process is far more complex, this diagram offers a general summary of the planning procedures and components that result in our current transportation system.

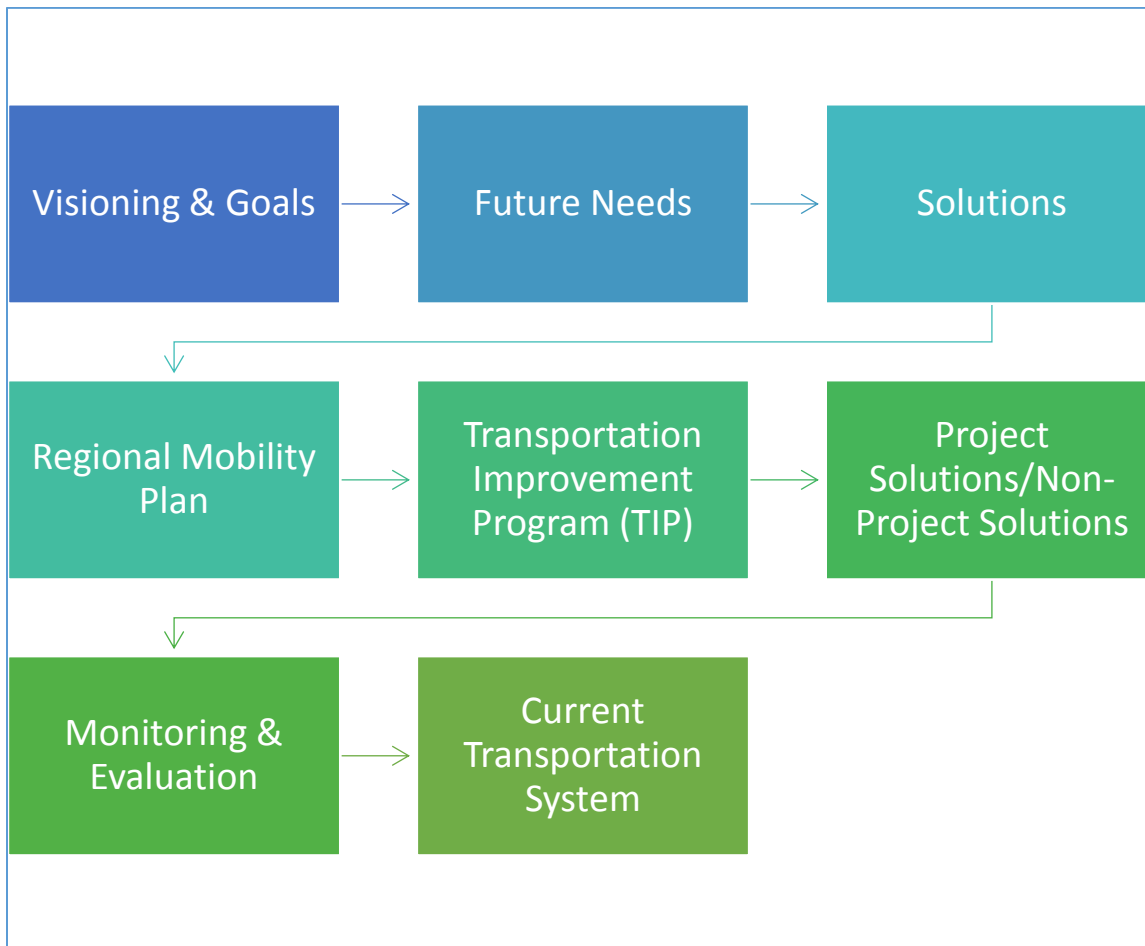


Figure 1. Transportation Planning Process

ABOUT THE KNOXVILLE REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Mission

Advise and assist our region to improve and expand transportation choices by involving residents and decision makers in our plans, forums, and outreach.

Core Principles

- Preserve and manage our existing system.
- Link transportation and land use.
- Plan and build for all transportation modes.
- Develop our region's potential.

The Knoxville Regional TPO was established in 1977. Today, the TPO is housed within the Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission (MPC), shares administration with MPC, and is staffed by MPC transportation planners. The urbanized area was initially made up of the City of Knoxville and a surrounding portion of Knox County. It has grown significantly over time to cover all of Knox County and parts of Anderson, Blount, Loudon, Roane and Sevier counties, including several cities and towns shown in the map in Figure 2.

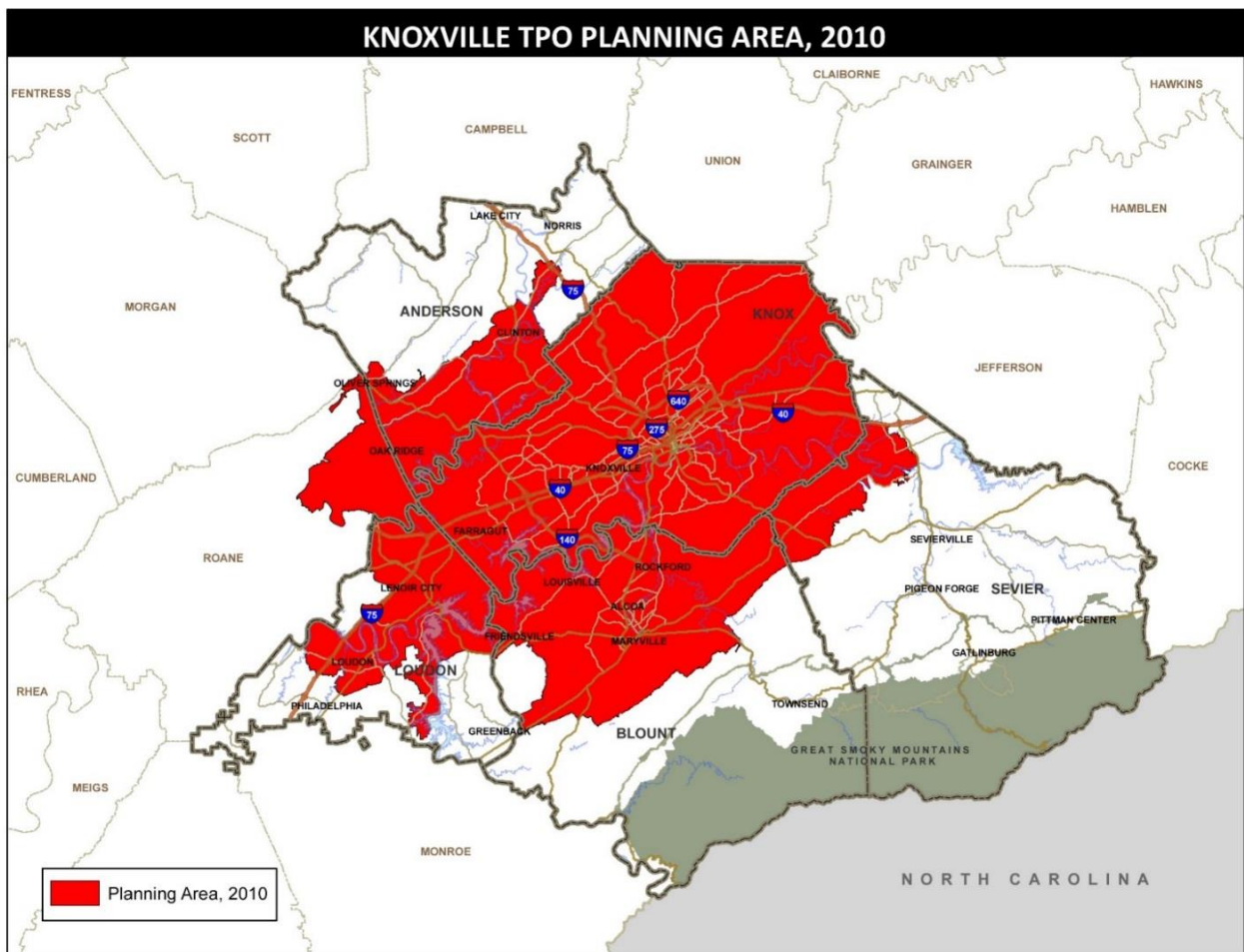


Figure 2. TPO Planning Area Map

Current federal transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, requires the TPO to produce and oversee a TIP. The TIP prioritizes projects based on how much federal, state, and local funding the region expects to receive within the next four years. Projects that are included

must be consistent with an approved Mobility Plan. These plans require adequate public outreach in their development.

OUTREACH AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE PUBLIC

The TPO works with the public in developing transportation plans and programs. Significant public outreach results in greater community support for plans that help achieve the region's goals for the future. The Outreach Plan not only fulfills federal requirements, but also serves as a working tool for TPO staff to refer to with each new plan to ensure that adequate public notice is given and the community is engaged throughout the project. It can also be referenced by community members to learn about the TPO and opportunities for involvement.

General policies guide how public outreach is approached for all plans and programs and are based on regulations and requirements, allowing the public to offer input, increase accountability, and maximize transparency. Guidelines for individual plans allow the TPO to go above and beyond the general policies by outlining measures taken for specific projects based on needs and potential impact. Examples of these measures include outreach to specific target populations, public notice in newspapers or other media outlets in addition to those used regularly, pop-up meetings at events or locations where the target audience can be found, and other similar efforts.

Another way the TPO answers to the public is through the Technical Committee and Executive Board. The Technical Committee is primarily made up of planners and engineers from member cities and counties. They review plans and policies before they are sent to the Executive Board and are active in implementation of plans and programs. Elected and appointed officials from city and county jurisdictions within the TPO planning area serve as Executive Board members. These locally elected officials are directly accountable to their constituents and are authorized to act on TPO plans and other matters related to the TPO planning and programming process.

SECTION II: FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS

Public outreach in metropolitan transportation planning is federally mandated. Federal law includes specific requirements and performance standards and expectations for state departments of transportation and MPOs during transportation planning. Additional transportation legislation, environmental legislation, related regulations, and orders addressing environmental justice and persons with disabilities must also be met. The specifics of these requirements are outlined below.

FAST ACT

Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law in December 2015. Transportation planning under the FAST Act must be performed in conjunction with state and local officials, transit operators, and the public. MPOs are encouraged to consult or coordinate with planning officials responsible for other types of planning activities affected by transportation, including planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, and freight movement. [23 USC 134(g)(3)(A)].

FAST Act also requires expanding public outreach to include traditionally underrepresented stakeholders: users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle facilities, disabled populations, and others, are specifically included in FAST Act as parties to be provided with the opportunity to participate in the planning process.

Finally, the TPO must develop an outreach plan in consultation with interested parties that provides reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment on it. Relevant excerpts of the Code of Federal Regulations can be found in Appendix A.

EXECUTIVE ORDERS

In addition to federal transportation legislation, the TPO must comply with Executive Orders that are relevant to the work of the transportation process. Executive Order (EO) 12898 reinforces the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focuses attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low-income communities. Executive Order (EO) 13166 requires federal agencies and any other entities that receive federal funds via grants, contracts, or subcontracts to make their activities accessible to non-English speaking persons.

More detail on these Executive Orders can be found in Appendix A.

AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT OF 1990

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 requires coordination with people with disabilities during the development and improvement of transportation services. Planners, engineers, and builders must provide access for the disabled at sidewalks and ramps, street crossings, and in parking or transit access facilities. Individuals with disabilities must also be able to access sites where public involvement activities occur and where information is posted or presented.

TITLE VI AND TPO'S NONDISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

The Knoxville-Knox County Metropolitan Planning Commission and the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization ensure compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; 42 USC 2000d; related statutes and regulations to the end that no person shall be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or

activity receiving federal assistance from the U.S. Department of Transportation on the grounds of race, color, sex, or national origin.

The TPO receives Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding and is therefore required to maintain a Title VI program that is compliant with FTA Circular 4702.1B – Title VI and the Title VI-Dependent Guidelines for Federal Transit Administration Recipients. A significant portion of the requirements concern how the TPO seeks to engage those persons who are traditionally underrepresented in the transportation planning process. The TPO’s Title VI plan focuses primarily on minority, low income, and limited English proficient populations.

Excerpts from the TPO’s most recent FTA Title VI Report, including the TPO’s Language Assistance Plan (LAP), are in Appendix B.

SECTION III: GENERAL GUIDELINES

PUBLIC MEETING PRINCIPLES AND TYPES

Principles

Public meetings are scheduled for a specific plan or project and are held for a variety of reasons. The purpose of these meetings is threefold:

- 1) To confirm the purpose and intent of the plan or project;
- 2) To present trends and forecasts for the area or region; and
- 3) To gather public input.

Because the regularly scheduled meetings of the Technical Committee and Executive Board are always advertised and are open to the public, they can also be used for the reasons listed above. Actions of meetings may result in the adoption or amendment of the Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Regional Mobility Plan. Other actions include adoption or approval of resolutions for amendments, adjustments, endorsements, special plans, and reports.

Meeting Types

The following is a list of meeting options that the TPO currently uses to reach stakeholders. Detailed descriptions are available in Appendix C.

- Public hearing
- Public meeting
- Charrette/workshop
- Open house
- Small group meeting
- Town hall meeting
- Meeting-in-a-box
- Pop-up meeting

OUTREACH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES

Tools

Outreach tools are those that enable the TPO to solicit input from concerned residents through various forms of public engagement. The following is a list of outreach tools that the TPO currently uses.

Detailed descriptions are available in Appendix C.

- Community or stakeholder advisory committee
- Comment forms/cards
- Contact person
- Public comment period
- Speakers bureau
- Stakeholder and community interviews
- Surveys and questionnaires
- Symposiums
- Task force

- Video kiosk
- Visual preference survey
- Webcasting
- Websites

Accessibility

The TPO strives to hold meetings at times and locations that are convenient and accessible. When there is a series of public meetings being held throughout the region, a special effort will be made to offer a portion of these meetings at locations that are accessible by public transportation (note: fixed route transit service is available only within the City of Knoxville). When possible, meetings will also be offered on both weekdays and weekends and at different times of day to give the widest range of groups an opportunity to attend, regardless of their schedules. In legal notices and advertisements, the public is invited to contact the TPO if accommodations are needed.

Commitment to Identify and Test New Methods

There are many techniques that the TPO uses which are core components to engaging the public, such as public comment periods, comment cards, surveys and the use of websites. However, the needs of the public are continuously changing, which requires an agency that is constantly rethinking how it engages with those it serves. This approach led to the TPO's expanded use of technology (e.g., keypad polling at meetings, online surveys), social media, meetings-in-a-box, and pop-up meetings.

Early Outreach

Early outreach to local community leaders will help to determine suitable meeting forums and information formats to foster valuable input, especially when soliciting input from target populations. This is done by meeting with those leaders to determine the best way to engage the populations they represent instead of taking a one-size-fits-all approach. By taking advice from those who have a deeper understanding of the community, engagement is more likely to be thorough and ongoing.

Direct Outreach

TPO planning staff provide direct outreach to minority, low-income, and other underrepresented stakeholders, as well as other residents in a study or project area, through contact with local community groups and their leaders.

INFORMATION TOOLS

The following is a list of information tools that the TPO currently considers when selecting methods to share information with the public. Detailed descriptions are available in Appendix C.

- Community TV
- Databases and distribution lists
- Direct and email mailings
- Door-to-door canvassing
- TPO general email address
- Exhibits, displays, signs and bulletin boards
- Newsletters
- Fact sheets and brochures
- Information repository
- Legal advertisements and notices

- Paid advertisements
- Posters and flyers
- Media releases
- Presentations: videos and PowerPoint
- Social media
- TPO, Project and program websites

TRANSPARENT, USER-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES

Understandable and Interesting Language / No Jargon

Meeting notices and materials will use appropriate, understandable language — acronyms and other technical jargon will be avoided as much as possible (for a helpful Transportation Planning Glossary, see Appendix E). Efforts are made to create advertising, project campaigns, and slogans that generate the most interest possible. The TPO makes reasonable efforts to address identified language barriers in order to provide meaningful access to information on its plans and programs. Tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease Score and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score are used to evaluate readability of plans and information on the TPO website.

Use of Shorter Documents or Executive Summaries

Planners are known for writing documents that are lengthy and dense, often read by few people. This reduces transparency and drastically diminishes the effectiveness of the planning process. We are challenged to create products that are clear and succinct, that highlight what is important, and that invite people to see how the planning process affects their lives.

Not all planning products can be both succinct and complete. When this is the case, executive summaries are used to communicate the central concepts to the public and refer them to the main document for comprehensive information. The TPO also produces a series of highlights for certain documents, such as the Regional Mobility Plan 2040. This is done with long documents that have recurring themes or that receive a large number of comments or questions on certain topics. Those topics can be addressed in each highlight article and shared via appropriate websites, social media accounts, newsletters, and partner agencies.

The TPO has also started publishing the State of Transportation in East Tennessee Report as a way to communicate the work of the agency to the public and interested parties. It is a document that will be produced every other year. It provides an overview of the region's transportation system and factors that influence investment in that system. It is a condensed document that highlights current work and uses photos, maps, and graphics to make the information easier to understand.

Use of Visual Tools

Visualization techniques are used to enhance the public's understanding of the TPO's work whenever possible. This is most important where it can simplify confusing information through the use of diagrams and maps. Infographics can also be a very effective way to communicate complex technical material and ideas in an easily digested format for stakeholders and the public.

SECTION IV: DEVELOPING BEST PRACTICES

The Outreach Plan seeks to establish a realistic and forward-thinking philosophy for public outreach in the TPO region. To do this, the Outreach Plan defines meaningful minimum requirements and promotes a culture in which staff continue to push the envelope to experiment with and identify new best practices. Those practices are included in the Outreach Toolkit (see Appendix C) to be used where appropriate. Not all practices are always appropriate and should be used only when it best complements the process. This allows staff to continuously test and identify more effective methods. The TPO has had opportunities to do this through several programs and projects, including Plan East Tennessee, the Bicycle Program, Smart Trips, and Mobility Plan 2040. The best practices from these programs are outlined below.

MEETING-IN-A-BOX

This portable public input tool is used with small groups and allows staff members or community volunteers to convene at the group's convenience. A Meeting-in-a-Box kit contains instruction sheets for the host/facilitator, sample meeting invitations, discussion questions, worksheets for participant responses, feedback questionnaires, and directions for recording and returning responses. Meeting-in-a-Box content can parallel the content of more traditional public meetings. This tool has a high return on investment and responds to the public need for a more flexible process. It has been a valuable tool since the TPO first made use of it during the Plan East Tennessee process.

ALTERNATIVE OUTREACH METHODS

The TPO has incorporated unconventional forms of community engagement in their outreach efforts. Examples of this include going to popular neighborhood locations, like coffee shops and breweries, asking community members to host meetings and invite their friends, and surprising citizens with pop-up meetings. A pop-up meeting is a unique, interactive way to encourage community engagement by meeting people where they already are. Displays, surveys, visuals, and handouts draw attention at parks, festivals, farmers' markets, job fairs, or other events that already have a crowd of people in attendance. Planners can then engage, giving a voice in the planning process to those who might not have been heard otherwise. These types of outreach are great tools for reaching underrepresented groups and those who do not normally show interest in the planning process.

SOCIAL MEDIA

The Bicycle Program, a program housed within the TPO that promotes bicycling as part of the overall transportation system, has been a leader among TPO programs in developing and embracing the use of social media. The program has used Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram to communicate program information and activities to the public as well as to generate general interest through discussion among members of the public. To date, the Bicycle program has nearly 450 followers on Twitter and more than 2,000 likes on Facebook. As a result of this success, other programs of the TPO have established social media accounts and use them regularly to communicate with the public.

The TPO's Social Media Policy is included in Appendix D.

AMBASSADORS

A group of volunteer ambassadors was formed to assist in the efforts of the Bicycle Program. These individuals help staff events, teach classes, and disseminate information to the public on behalf of the program. Because they are not planners, they communicate with the public in a more casual manner, free of technical language. They also help recruit the public to events, meetings, and classes by reaching

out to their personal networks. This helps grow the newsletter list and make more people aware of activities of both the Bicycle Program and the TPO.

TARGETED MARKETING

Smart Trips, an incentive based program that promotes alternatives to driving alone, has used a variety of traditional advertising methods to reach specific target audiences. These include billboard advertising, sponsorship spots on popular radio stations, and a combination of print and Internet ads with local media. Additional efforts to reach populations who may be unaware of the program, such as posters placed on Knoxville Area Transit buses to encourage those already making alternative trips to participate, have been used as well. The program also generates challenges to recruit new members and encourage ongoing participation among those already enrolled. Prizes are given as an incentive, and the program has tried giving away a variety of items to see what is most appealing.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

As a free service that helps employers offer the benefit of carpool matching to its employees, Smart Trips enjoys excellent working relationships with area businesses. Among the most successful partnerships are those with Oak Ridge National Laboratory, Department of Energy's Y-12 National Security Complex, Pellissippi State Community College, and the University of Tennessee. These facilities and schools work closely with Smart Trips to feature the program at worksite events and in their newsletters. ORNL, Pellissippi State, and UT are funding sponsors of the program as well.

These relationships are examples of how the TPO, both generally and through specific programs, can work with organizations, groups, and individuals to make the agency's work more wide-reaching. Leveraging partnerships allows the TPO to reach additional audiences and meet people where they are.

EASY-TO-READ PUBLICATIONS

The TPO has started producing shorter publications that are free of jargon and easier for the general public to understand and use. Materials are produced specifically to get community members who have no technical understanding of transportation planning more involved in the agency's work without reading through lengthy, technical documents. Examples of easy-to-read publications include a highlight series for the Regional Mobility Plan 2040, the State of Transportation in East Tennessee Report, and the Community Guide to Creating Great Places.

The Community Guide to Creating Great Places, for example, was prepared by the Bicycle Program as a resource for individuals, organizations, coalitions, neighborhood groups, the faith community, and others interested in promoting and creating bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods and communities. It explains how public policy is written and introduces the local officials who design and maintain neighborhoods and communities. It also gives tips for working with local elected and appointed officials, as well as pointers on building relationships with media.

SECTION V: PLAN-SPECIFIC GUIDELINES

In addition to the general guidelines for all TPO activities, there are specific guidelines that outline the outreach process for specific TPO products. While the following overview outlines public outreach requirements for each of the TPO's key documents, additional methods may be used to better access and inform the public of the agency's work as needed.

Key documents produced by the TPO:

- Regional Mobility Plan;
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 & 5339 – Program of Projects (POP);
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310;
- Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP);
- Annual Listing of Obligated Funds;
- Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Solicitation; and
- Outreach Plan.

REGIONAL MOBILITY PLAN

The Regional Mobility Plan is a long-range (20+ year) multimodal strategy and capital improvement program developed to guide the investment of public funds in transportation facilities. The Mobility Plan is updated every four years and may be amended as a result of changes in projected funding, project scopes, or other reasons. The current Mobility Plan is available for viewing online as well as at the TPO office.

Activity	Technique(s)
Draft Document:	Drafts are made available online (www.knoxmobility.org) and at the TPO office.
Comment Opportunities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings • At events throughout the region • Via electronic formats (e-mail, online comment cards, etc.) • By USPS mail to the TPO office • In person at the TPO office • During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, Mobility Advisory Committee, and public meetings held specifically for Mobility Plan updates) • Through mail- or web-based surveys and questionnaires (may be used to gather information about specific projects in some cases)
Comment Period:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 30 days is given prior to adoption for updates and amendments.¹ • The public comment period begins with public notice.
Public Meeting(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public meeting(s) are held during the public comment period. • Separate meetings are held for the draft plan and the final Mobility Plan.
Public Meeting Notice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting, announcements will be disseminated. Seven to 10 days prior to the public meeting, a

	<p>media release may be sent. Meetings may also be posted on community calendars.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting, paid media advertisement and/or a public notice will be published in appropriate local newspapers.²
<i>Amendment Notice:</i>	Amendment notices will be sent through web announcements, public notice in appropriate local newspapers, and regularly scheduled meetings.
<i>Summary of Comments Received:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All public comments will be made available online. • A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the Mobility Plan update. • Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final Mobility Plan.³ • Meeting and event summaries, comments and responses, survey reports, and more will be reported on the Mobility Plan website.
<i>Final, Adopted Document:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final document is made available on the Mobility Plan website and at the TPO office. • Upon adoption of the final document, interested parties will be notified that the document is available on the Mobility Plan website. Information will also be shared on the TPO website, on social media, in the TPO newsletter, and with partnering agencies and organizations.
<i>Evaluation Technique(s):</i>	Success of the Regional Mobility Plan outreach is measured by number of views on the TPO website, circulation of the newspapers in which public notices were placed, social media reach, number of survey respondents, number of comments received, and number of citizens reached through public meetings and events.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)

The TIP is a four-year plan that lists all regionally significant and federally funded projects and services in the MPO planning area. This includes highway and street projects, public transit projects, major corridor studies, and bicycle/pedestrian projects. Projects that are included in the TIP must be consistent with the approved Regional Mobility Plan. Additionally, the TIP must have funding mechanisms already in place for all projects and strategies.

The TIP can be amended or adjusted as a result of changes in funding or need. Administrative adjustments to the TIP do not require a specific outreach plan as they are minor changes. Clarification on which changes are considered adjustments and amendments can be found in Appendix E. The current TIP is available for viewing online as well as at the TPO office.

Adopting a New TIP

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Technique(s)</i>
<i>Draft Document:</i>	Drafts are made available online (www.knoxtrans.org) and at the TPO office.
<i>Comment Opportunities:</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings • Via electronic formats (e-mail, online comment cards, etc.)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By USPS mail to the TPO office • In person at the TPO office • During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, and public meetings held specifically for TIP updates) • Web-based questionnaires (may be used to gather information about specific projects in some cases)
Comment Period:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 30 days is required prior to adoption for TIP updates.¹ • The public comment period begins with public notice.
Public Meeting:	Public meeting(s) may be held during the public comment period.
Public Meeting Notice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting, web announcements will be posted. Seven to 10 days prior to the public meeting, a media release may be sent. • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice will be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.²
Summary of Comments Received:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the TIP update. • Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final TIP.³
Final, Adopted Document:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final document is made available online (www.knoxtrans.org) and at the TPO office. • Information will also be shared on social media, in the TPO newsletter, and with partnering agencies and organizations.
Evaluation Technique(s):	Success of TIP outreach is measured by meeting attendance, number of comments on the project, number of views on the TPO website, social media reach, and circulation of the newspapers in which public notices were placed.

Amending the TIP

Activity	Technique(s)
Draft TIP Pages:	Draft TIP project pages are made available online (www.knoxtrans.org) and at the TPO office.
Comment Opportunities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via electronic formats (e-mail, online comment cards, etc.) • By USPS mail to the TPO office • In person or at the TPO office • During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, and public meetings held specifically for TIP updates)
Comment Period:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For projects exempt from air quality conformity, the public comment period for TIP amendments will be ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting. • A minimum of 30 days is required prior to adoption for TIP amendments that involve projects non-exempt from air quality conformity and projects that require a short air quality conformity determination. • The public comment period begins with public notice.⁴

Public Meeting:	Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings scheduled during the comment period are open to the public and serve as public meetings.
Public Meeting Notice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars. • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice will be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.²
Amendment Notice:	Amendment notices will be sent through web announcements, public notices in appropriate local newspapers, and regularly scheduled meetings.
Summary of Comments Received:	A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the TIP update.
Evaluation Technique(s):	Success of TIP outreach is measured by meeting attendance, number of comments on the project, number of views on the TPO website, social media reach, and circulation of the newspapers in which public notices were placed.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) SECTION 5307 & 5339 — PROGRAM OF PROJECTS (POP)

The City of Knoxville is the designated recipient of FTA Section 5307 (Urban Area Formula) and 5339 (Bus & Bus Facilities) funds. A POP is a list or program of projects utilizing FTA funds. As per the FTA Circular 9030.1D, the public participation requirements for the TIP may be used in lieu of a local process when developing the POP. The first-year of an approved TIP constitutes a list of “agreed to” projects for FTA purposes. To make it clear to the public, the public notice for the POP will state the TIP process is being used and it satisfies the FTA public involvement requirements for developing a POP.

FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA) SECTION 5310

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is the designated recipient of the FTA Section 5310 (Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities) funding. TPO’s goal is to have an annual call for projects. However, this is contingent on Congress passing a transportation budget and the Knoxville urban area allocation being published in the Federal Register.

Once the funding amount is published, TPO staff initiates the application process. The application process may or may not occur at the same time as the TIP call-for-projects and depends on when funding is available. The TPO holds a publicly advertised call-for-projects and posts the application on the TPO website. Applications are then evaluated and scored using established criteria.

TPO staff, working with a sub-committee of the Technical Committee, prioritize 5310 projects in keeping with the recommendations in the Knoxville Regional Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. The sub-committee’s ranked list of all eligible applications is then presented to the full Technical Committee for consideration. Finally, the recommendation of the Technical Committee is presented to the Executive Board for final approval and inclusion in the TIP. The TPO’s Section 5310 Program Management Plan provides additional guidance on applying for funding and lists project eligibility.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (TPWP)

The Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP) is a two-year plan developed by staff to focus work and planning funds anticipated in the upcoming fiscal year. All federally funded planning activities must be in the TPWP and must be developed with economic vitality, safety, mobility options, and other

planning factors in mind. The TPWP is reviewed and discussed at the regularly scheduled Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings along with being made available online. Public comments on the draft TPWP are welcomed, and a summary is then reported on the TPO website.

ANNUAL LISTING OF OBLIGATED FUNDS

Ninety days after the end of the fiscal year, the Annual Listing of Obligated Funds will be made publicly available. Notice will be given through appropriate local newspapers. The Listing will be distributed and discussed at the regularly scheduled Technical Committee and Executive Board public meetings along with being made available online and at the TPO office. Public comment is welcomed, and a summary is then reported on the TPO website.

SURFACE TRANSPORTATION BLOCK GRANT (STBG) AND TRANSPORTATION ALTERNATIVES PROGRAM (TAP) SOLICITATION

After the Executive Board determines available funds, staff will solicit qualified government entities for new STBG, TAP, and any other federally funded projects. The solicitation cycle will typically last 90 days. The selected projects will be added to the TIP.

Activity	Technique(s)
Comment Opportunities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings • Via electronic formats (e-mail, online comment card, etc.) • By USPS mail to the TPO office • In person or at the TPO office • During standing meetings (Technical Committee and Executive Board)
Comment Period:	A minimum of 14 days is required.
Public Meeting:	Public meetings may be held during the public comment period.
Public Meeting Notice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars. • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice will be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.
Summary of Comments Received:	A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the final project selection.
Final, Adopted Document:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final document will be made available online and at the TPO office. • Upon adoption of the final document, interested parties will be notified that the document is available on the TPO website.
Evaluation Technique(s):	Success of STBG, TAP, and any other regionally managed federal grant funded project outreach is measured by meeting attendance, number of comments on the project, number of views on the TPO website, and circulation of the newspapers in which public notices were placed.

OUTREACH PLAN

The Outreach Plan outlines the strategies used to provide and receive information from the public on transportation planning and programming process, including funding for projects, studies, plans, and committee actions.

Activity	Technique(s)
Draft Document:	A draft of the plan is made available online (www.knoxtrans.org) and at the TPO office.
Comment Opportunities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings • Via electronic formats (e-mail, online comment card, etc.) • By USPS mail to the TPO office • In person or at the TPO office • During standing meetings (Technical Committee or Executive Board)
Comment Period:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum of 45 days is required prior to adoption. • The public comment period begins with public notice.
Public Meeting:	Public meetings may be held during the public comment period.
Public Meeting Notice:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars. • Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice will be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.²
Summary of Comments Received:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the Outreach Plan update. • Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final Outreach Plan.
Final, Adopted Document:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The final document will be made available online and at the TPO office. • Upon adoption of the final document, interested parties will be notified that the document is available on the TPO website.
Evaluation Technique(s):	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Outreach Plan will be evaluated regularly by TPO staff in consultation with ongoing input received from the public on the outreach process. • All comments and suggestions made by the public will be recorded and taken into consideration when improvement strategies are discussed. • Success of plan outreach is measured by number of comments received, social media reach, number of views on the TPO website and circulation of the newspapers in which public notices were placed.

¹ If there are significant changes to the final draft Mobility Plan or TIP from the one made available for public comment, an additional opportunity will be provided for public comment on the revised changes. The TPO director shall determine when changes are significant and warrant additional opportunity for public comments.

² Comment periods can be noticed separately from public meetings. When the amount of time required for a comment period is longer than the amount of time required for a public meeting notice, the comment period will be noticed separately from the public meeting.

³ When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft Mobility Plan or draft TIP as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final Mobility Plan or TIP.

⁴Unexpected needs and circumstances sometimes necessitate amendments to the TIP. To accommodate these needs, amendments can be presented to the Technical Committee at a regularly scheduled meeting and adopted by the Executive Board at the next regularly scheduled meeting. Both meetings are open to the public. The proposed amendment will be included in any public meeting notices published for the Executive Board meeting. The public comment period will begin with public notice and conclude at the Executive Board meeting at which the change is adopted.

SECTION VI: EVALUATING OUR PERFORMANCE

The Outreach Plan establishes a set of meaningful minimum requirements, based on federal guidance and sound logic. It then sets the tone for a professional culture that continuously seeks out new best practices. This philosophy reflects the need for planning processes that respond to the public rather than just doing the bare minimum.

ONGOING PUBLIC SURVEYS

The TPO constantly tries to incorporate an evaluation of its outreach process in all of its activities. Public surveys used for specific plans and programs will continue to be used as well as a survey designed specifically to identify perception of overall outreach and communications used by the agency. That survey will be used to develop a comprehensive Community Engagement Plan to be used for TPO's programs, activities, and all communications efforts.

BEST PRACTICES

The best way to evaluate our performance is a real-world approach. The TPO and its programs will continue to look to other organizations as well as internal ideas to identify and test new practices in addition to fulfilling a set of meaningful minimum requirements. This will allow the TPO to evaluate performance by testing the effectiveness of a method. How many people did the method reach? Do they have a better understanding of our process as a result? Did this method reach people new to our process? These and other questions determine the effectiveness of a method and its potential value moving forward.

RELIABLE OUTSIDE SOURCES

The TPO will look to outside sources that are able to evaluate outreach methodology, especially those that are able to do so in a statistically significant way. This can be a meaningful source of information in evaluating which methods and practices may warrant further consideration and which practices may warrant less emphasis.

READABILITY OF PRODUCTS

The TPO will utilize tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease Score and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score to evaluate the readability of products and, especially, information on the TPO website. These scores will be used to evaluate TPO performance and identify where complex materials need to be supplemented with summary materials that are easier for the public to understand.

COMMENTS ON OUTREACH PLAN

The final draft of the Outreach Plan will be developed in consultation with interested parties as required by federal rules and regulations through input received during the comment period. Before its adoption, the plan will be made available for public review and comment for a minimum of 45 days. The resulting public input will then be addressed and incorporated as appropriate. These procedures for public outreach have been formally enacted, reviewed, and certified as being in compliance with all applicable federal rules and regulations.

The TPO welcomes additional comments about the public outreach process and this plan. The TPO will keep comments on file and use them to evaluate and revise outreach procedures in the future.

Please submit comments to:

Ally Ketron, Outreach & Communications Specialist

Knoxville Regional TPO
400 W. Main St., Suite 403
Knoxville, TN 37902
Phone: (865) 215-3234 Fax: (865) 215-2068
E-mail: ally.ketron@knoxtrans.org

Or comment in person during the following public meetings:

- Technical Committee Meeting April 10, 2018
- Executive Board Meeting April 25, 2018

Meetings are located in the Small Assembly Room of the City/County Building, 400 W. Main St., Knoxville, TN from 9-10:30 a.m.