



# Public Participation Plan

Adopted by the MRMPO Policy Committee

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# Public Participation Plan

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# 1. Introduction

It is a goal of the Middle Rogue Metropolitan Planning Organization (MRMPO), as the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Grants Pass metropolitan area, to provide citizens and interested parties with reasonable opportunities to participate in the metropolitan transportation planning process. Beyond efforts to provide information to the public, this goal encompasses a wide range of strategies and activities to enable public involvement in a meaningful way in the MRMPO’s decision-making process. Ultimately, efforts to bring more voices and wide-ranging interests to the table will yield better planning results.

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan is to provide all interested parties with reasonable opportunities to comment on the MRMPO’s plans, programs, and projects. The policies and practices described in the Public Participation Plan recognize the need for robust public involvement at all stages of regional planning. This plan is intended to encourage, facilitate and follow through on public comments, concerns and suggestions by establishing procedures for providing full public access to information and decisions, timely public notices, and early and continuing public involvement in plan development.

The Public Participation Plan describes methods, strategies and desired outcomes for public participation. It addresses outreach to a broadly defined audience of interested parties and is a facet of the MRMPO’s role of providing the region with a continuing, cooperative and collaborative transportation planning process.

## A. Consistency with Federal Requirements

The current transportation authorization act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), adopted in November 2021, requires MPOs to consult with a number of agencies, organizations, and interest groups in producing a Public Participation Plan.

The IIJA requires MPOs to develop a participation plan to involve interested parties, including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of persons with disabilities, and other interested parties. In doing so, MPOs must hold public meetings at

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convenient and accessible locations and times, and make public information available in electronically accessible formats. The resulting plan must support continued consultation by all interested parties in all aspects of the planning process.

To seek the participation of all interested parties in this plan update, the MRMPO held public meetings and distributed copies of the draft plan and information about the plan. People were informed of plan development by mail, it was advertised in regional newspapers, and the draft was placed on the MRMPO web site.

In addition to the transportation act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and a succeeding 1994 Executive Order require the federal-aid recipients to consider impacts on minority and low-income populations and assure those populations are able to participate in planning decisions. Plan goals address these federal requirements and the procedures included herein are consistent with those goals.

The draft plan was available for public review and comment by all interested parties for 45 days, from April 27, 2022, to June 15, 2022. A subsequent notice inviting agency comments was sent on April 27, 2022, more than 45 days prior to the public hearing on June 16, 2022.

## **B. Establishment and the Role of the MRMPO**

Federal law requires that metropolitan areas of at least 50,000 population form Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) to be responsible for planning regionally significant transportation projects to assure that long-range, multimodal transportation system needs are met. Additionally, MPOs must show that transportation plans meet Clean Air Act requirements. Following the 2010 Census, the greater Grants Pass urbanized area was designated a Metropolitan Statistical Area (an urbanized area with a population exceeding 50,000). To fulfill the federal planning obligation, the governor designated the Rogue Valley Council of Governments (RVCOG) as the region's MPO on March 20, 2013. Subsequently, the RVCOG Board of Directors delegated responsibility for MRMPO policy functions to the MRMPO Policy Committee. RVCOG provides staff support for the MRMPO.

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## 2. Plan Overview

The Public Participation Plan is an adopted document of the Middle Rogue Metropolitan Planning Organization. It provides the policy framework for the role of the public in MRMPO decision making and it describes activities through which public concerns and suggestions are solicited, how responses are formulated, and how final work products reflect public sentiments.

The plan recognizes four key aspects of a meaningful public participation program that must be supported.

- **Inform** – The public must be provided with ample opportunities to learn about activities, issues, and upcoming decision making.
- **Understand** – The public must be given adequate, relevant and understandable information about an issue, including competing values, technical underpinnings, applicable standards and likely decision options.
- **Participate** – Project scheduling must allow adequate time for the public to learn about an issue and prepare responses that can be incorporated into the decision-making process at a time when such comments can influence outcomes.
- **Respond** – Subsequent planning steps must clearly demonstrate how public input influenced the final product, or provide some other response to input received.

The plan also recognizes that for any single project or planning activity there are likely to be several points at which the key activities described in this plan will need to be initiated. For example, providing up-to-date information should be ongoing throughout a project. And opportunities should be provided to periodically update the public, regardless of their level of familiarity with the project.

The goals and policies contained in the plan ensure that the public is provided with opportunities to become informed, gain an understanding, and provide comment. The MRMPO intends for the public to have a say at all phases of metropolitan planning—from identifying needs to evaluating and selecting projects. Through the goals, procedures and tools discussed in the plan, the MRMPO intends to foster on-going, two-way

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communication between decision makers and the public so that decisions reflect and respond to public concerns, needs, and values.

Activities the MRMPO undertakes to foster public participation—some regularly scheduled activities, others special events that coincide with particular project milestones—are described in the plan section *Public Role in Decision Making*. The section also describes the MRMPO’s decision-making authority and outlines its processes and procedures. The organization’s consistency with applicable regulations also is described, including its consistency with federal requirements for public participation contained in the IIJA

The *Public Participation Tools* section describes various methods the MRMPO uses to engage the public, how various methods can be employed, and the outcomes that can be expected are described. Through the course of any single project, it is anticipated that more than one tool or activity will be used.

The *Public Participation Implementation Guidelines* describes how public participation tools and methodologies are used in the context of the MRMPO’s key tasks and responsibilities. This section also provides a snapshot of the basic duties of the MPO in fulfilling regional transportation planning obligations.

A list of commonly used transportation terms and acronyms relating to the metropolitan planning process is in *Appendix A*.

This plan is intended to provide the public with basic information about MRMPO operations so that any interested parties can begin to consider how they may participate. Additionally, it is a tool for MRMPO staff and can be a resource for member jurisdictions. It sets basic standards and procedures for the MRMPO to assure that the public has opportunities to participate in metropolitan planning in a meaningful way. The plan describes numerous activities that may be undertaken to identify stakeholders, inform both the general public and targeted audiences, and elicit comments and ideas from the community. It is not anticipated that all strategies would be effective in every situation. Nor is a single activity or strategy likely to foster sufficient public awareness and participation. Instead, this plan provides a menu of activities that can be combined to create a public involvement plan tailored to the scope and expectations of a plan, program, or project. It also sets expectations for public participation in key MRMPO activities.

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### 3. Goals and Objectives

In an effort to meet the federal standards continued under the IIA and improve transportation planning, the MRMPO set the following goals and policies for public participation.

**Goal 1: Opportunities shall be created for all segments of the public to be informed and understand about issues under consideration by the MRMPO. Reasonable access to complete information about transportation planning issues and events will be provided.**

Policy 1: An MRMPO website will be maintained containing information on: schedules and agendas for upcoming meetings; various updates and news topics; plan, program, and study documents; and project applications and selection processes. Descriptions of programs, contact information and links to other organization's websites will also be available. E-mail will be utilized and encouraged to allow comments on transportation planning related matters, including plan, program, and project development. The MRMPO website address will be included in printed materials.

Policy 2: All MRMPO plans and documents shall be made available for the public to review at the RVCOG office and on the MRMPO website ([www.mrmppo.org](http://www.mrmppo.org)). Copies of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and other MRMPO Plans shall be distributed to all public libraries. Copies of draft documents for public review and comment shall be provided to planning partners to allow public review of those documents at their offices.

Policy 3: A Citizen's Guide to Transportation Planning shall be created and periodically updated as a resource to the public. The Public Participation Plan outlines what strategies will be used by the MRMPO to increase public participation, while the Citizen's Guide provides an overview of the region's transportation policies and strategies for becoming involved in the planning process.

Policy 4: A public involvement brochure will be designed to introduce the regional transportation planning process and specify how citizens can better

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participate in decision making. It can be sent to interested parties, included in information packets, and placed in public areas. Contact information will be included, and the brochure will provide a postage-paid comment card to solicit ideas, comments, and additions to the mailing list.

Policy 5: The MRMPO will distribute project specific progress reports on significant MPO projects. Progress reports will aid in keeping those citizens that have shown an interest involved.

Policy 6: The MRMPO will publish summaries of several important documents, including the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and Air Quality Conformity Analysis. These summaries will be short and will be presented in a non-technical way to make them more easily understood by the public.

Policy 7: The MRMPO will work with local media on an ongoing basis to ensure proactive coverage of transportation planning activities. Press releases may be issued on current project and programs.

Policy 8: Whenever possible, MRMPO will go directly to interested groups instead of asking people to come to public offices. Staff shall be available to attend community meetings to discuss current planning initiatives and to provide an overview of the transportation planning process.

Policy 9: The MRMPO will employ visualization techniques to convey plans, issues, and concerns. These techniques may include maps, photographs, aerial photography, interactive tools, artist renderings and models to help analyze options, impacts, and potential outcomes.

**Goal 2: The public shall be provided timely notice on all transportation issues and processes.**

Policy 1: Advance notification will depend on the project and its timeline, but 30 days of notice will be given. The project work plan, with specific dates and timelines, will be published and sent to affected groups and interested citizens. Public notification will continue throughout the process, with emphasis on periods when input can have the greatest impact. The MRMPO will provide adequate time for public review of draft documents prior to opportunities for comment or testimony. The length of comment period and review periods will vary based on the nature of the plan or program, but major plans or projects such as the RTP, TIP, UPWP, and Air Quality Conformity will have at least a 30-day comment period, with amendments to these documents having at least a 21-day comment period.

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Policy 2: Notice and agendas of all meetings of the MRMPO committees shall be made available on the website at least six days before they occur. Notifications will be easy to understand and provide adequate information or indicate how additional information can be obtained. Accommodations will be made for those individuals with disabilities upon request.

Policy 3: To the extent possible, notifications of citizen involvement opportunities will contain the following information: the purpose of a meeting or event, location, and time, as well as information on public transit and a phone number where additional information can be obtained. The format for citizen involvement and the time line for public comment on the project will also be included.

**Goal 3: Provide the public with opportunities to participate in the transportation planning process.**

Policy 1: The MRMPO will provide frequent opportunities for general public, interest groups, providers of transportation and others to participate in the transportation planning process, especially in the early stages of plan and project development, when such comment can have the greatest effect.

Policy 2: The MRMPO shall conduct public hearings prior to the adoption of each of the transportation plans and programs for which it is responsible, and shall hold public forums and public meetings related to transportation planning initiatives and projects at appropriate times in the planning process. Whenever practicable, the MRMPO will work to improve the format of public meetings and hearings to better facilitate the public involvement process. An agenda item will be included in regularly scheduled MRMPO meetings to allow an opportunity for public comment.

Policy 3: The MRMPO will schedule meetings to allow the greatest opportunity for attendance by the public and interested groups, including evening, lunch, or weekend meetings when necessary.

Policy 4: Planning initiatives shall be reviewed to determine the appropriate public involvement techniques, outreach activities and communication strategies. These tools will be tailored to the affected groups and interested residents whenever possible.

Policy 5: Residents and other interested parties who have expressed interest in a particular topic, such as bicycle and pedestrian issues shall be included in the planning process. Task forces shall be convened at appropriate times in the planning process.

Policy 6: Scientific surveys shall be conducted at appropriate times to produce statistically valid results identifying the desires of the region. This will be

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considered a tool that could be used to determine the preferred outcome of a plan or project, and used accordingly.

Policy 7: To increase the participation of citizens and organizations in the transportation planning process, the MRMPO will maintain a contact spreadsheet that can serve as a mailing list for the newsletter and other digital and paper mailings. Entries in this spreadsheet will include the names of those requesting copies of draft documents, submitting comments and attending public hearings. Citizens requesting placement on this contact list will also be added. At the conclusion of the review and comment period for a planning project, individuals in this spreadsheet can review the determination on an action and a summary of all public comments received and staff responses on the MRMPO website. The MRMPO will attempt to verify ongoing interest by allowing participants an opportunity to remove their names from the contact list. The request can be made by return mail, telephone, or email.

Policy 8: The MRMPO shall continually work to identify new stakeholders interested in or affected by the transportation planning process. In accordance with the IIA, stakeholders shall include “citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of persons with disabilities, and other interested parties.”

Policy 10: The MRMPO staff and committees will consider public input, which may result in revisions to draft plans and programs, as an integral part of the planning process. Every attempt will be made to respond to public comment in a timely manner. Oral comments will be recorded at public meetings, and forms for written comments may be provided at all public meetings along with staff contact information. The public will also have an opportunity to comment during public meetings of the Policy Committee before any final action, as well as via email prior to the meeting. A link on the website will be provided for public comments.

Policy 11: A public involvement program may be prepared for each major transportation plan or project. Essential points in the plan will be identified and a proposed public involvement schedule will be shown. Major stakeholders for the plan will be identified, and will be included in the public involvement process. Public involvement procedures for individual plans should follow the guidelines in this Public Participation Plan. The Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee will review and provide comment on all public involvement plans before their approval by the Policy Committee.

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**Goal 4: Identify and involve traditionally underserved communities, including communities of minority, low-income or elderly populations, in the transportation planning process.**

Policy 1: The MRMPO will work to identify traditionally underserved populations within the region, including minority, low income and senior citizen populations. Outreach activities will be developed to involve stakeholders from these communities in the transportation planning process.

Policy 2: Some meeting sites will be selected which are more easily accessible to traditionally underserved communities. Meeting announcements will be made on the website.

Policy 3: Assistance shall be provided upon request, and with 48-hour notice, to the hearing and visually impaired, those not fluent in English, the transportation disadvantaged or others requiring special assistance at all MPO meetings, hearings and workshops. Public notices of these events shall notify the public of this opportunity. Meetings shall be held in ADA-compliant venues.

Policy 4: Meeting locations served by transit or accessible by means other than the automobile will be chosen whenever possible.

**Goal 5: Public comments and concerns shall be considered as projects and plans are developed.**

Policy 1: The MRMPO will gather and record public comment, making comments part of the permanent record for MPO projects and plans.

Policy 2: A summary analysis or report on comments received and their disposition will be made a part of all Regional Transportation Plans and Transportation Improvement Programs.

Policy 3: In instances when a final version of a Regional Transportation Plan or Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the draft version that was subject to public review, another opportunity for public comment will be provided.

Policy 4: Summaries of responses to comments and any changes made as a result will be prepared and distributed at subsequent committee or public meetings and will be available on the MPO website. Articles featuring summarized comments may appear in the MRMPO transportation planning newsletters or on the website.

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## 4. Public Role in Decision Making

### A. MRMPO Decision-Making Authority

In addition to the local government members, the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality, Oregon Department of Transportation, Oregon Department of Land Conservation and Development, Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, ~~and local Tribal Governments~~ also participate in the MPO process.

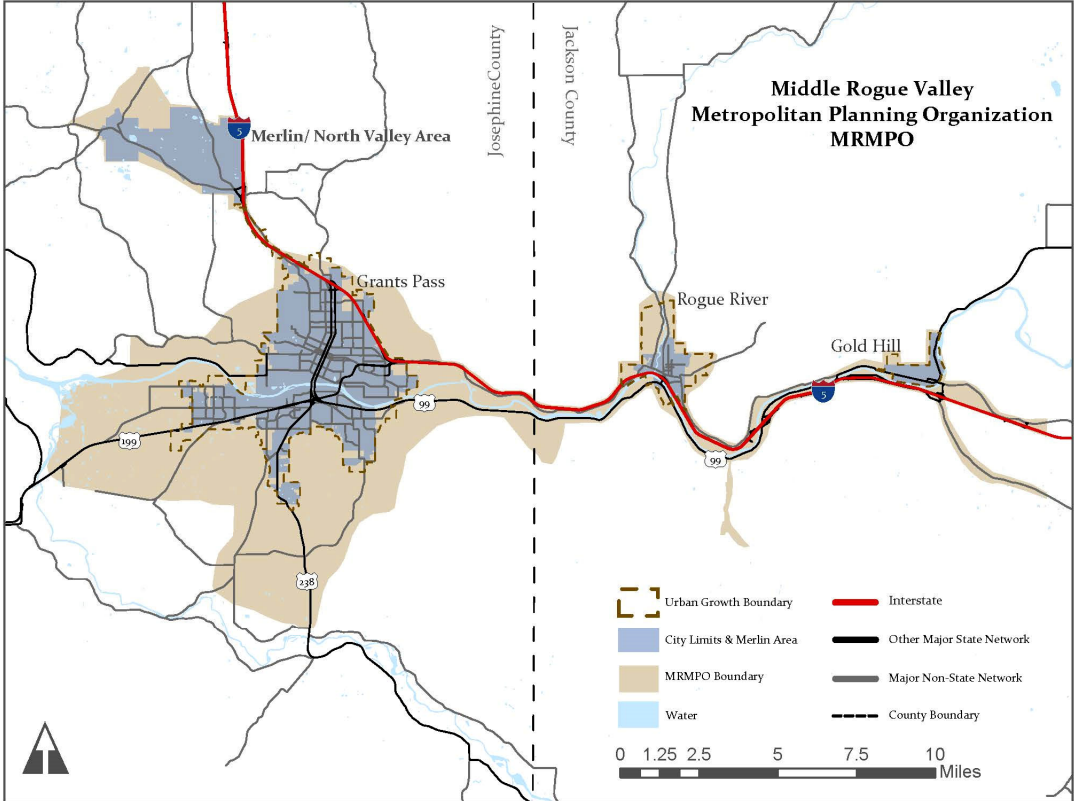
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Federal and state transportation planning requirements of the MRMPO can generally be summarized as follows:

- Develop and maintain a Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) consistent with state and federal planning requirements.
- Perform regional air quality conformity analyses for carbon monoxide (CO), for which the Grants Pass area is a Maintenance Area, and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>) for which an area corresponding roughly to the Grants Pass UGB as of 2014 is the Maintenance Area.
- Review specific transportation and development proposals for consistency with the RTP.
- Coordinate transportation decisions among local jurisdictions, state agencies and area transit operators.
- Develop an annual work program.

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Map 1.1: MRMPO Area Map



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**B. MRMPO Structure and Process**

The Policy Committee considers recommendations from the public and from the MRMPO sponsored advisory committees as part of its decision-making process. The organization maintains a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), made up of jurisdictional public works and planning staff members, that meets regularly to review matters to be decided.

The MRMPO has taken strides over the last two years to improve its efforts for public outreach. The MRMPO created a new standing committee in 2020 – the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC). This committee has three representatives from Grants Pass, one member each for the cities of Rogue River, and Gold Hill and Jackson County, and two members representing Josephine County. Three additional members may be considered for each of the following interests: freight industry, mass transit, and active transportation. The CAC meets monthly and considers and advises on all aspects of the MPO’s activities.

Additionally, the MRMPO periodically organizes advisory committees and steering committees for specific projects and purposes. These committees often capitalize on particular knowledge or capability in the community. For example, in the neighboring RVMPO a Freight Advisory Committee consisting largely of local shippers and carriers was organized to provide review and advice for the Rogue Valley Freight Study.

All committees operate under bylaws, which were adopted after public hearing by the Policy Committee.

All MRMPO committee meetings are public and may be announced by way of news media notification, newspaper advertising, direct notice to stakeholders via mail and email, and web site postings. Material for all committee meetings is posted on the web site ([www.mrmppo.org](http://www.mrmppo.org)) and time for public comment is reserved for all committee meetings.

The three standing committees maintain a regular meeting schedule, as noted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: MRMPO Meeting Schedule**

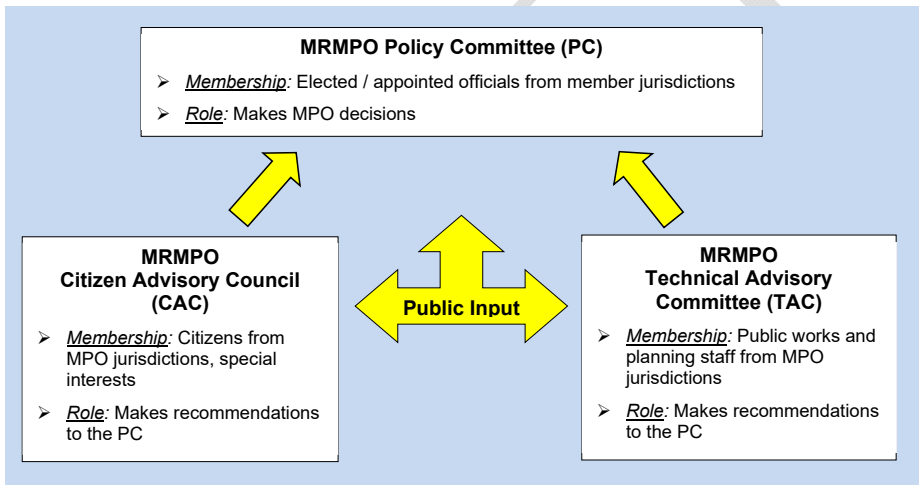
Committee	Meeting Day	Date
Policy Committee	Third Thursday	Monthly
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)	First Thursday	Monthly
Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC)	Second Thursday	Monthly

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### C. MRMPO Committees, Committee Relationships

The MRMPO’s committee structure and its schedule of regular, public meetings help ensure that decision makers on the Policy Committee routinely hear from a broad base of stakeholders. The public may choose to address only the Policy Committee or provide input to the advisory committees as well. The MRMPO organizational structure chart, on the following page, illustrates how the public may participate in decision-making.

Table 2: MRMPO Organizational Structure



### D. Compliance with Guidelines

The Public Participation Plan and the goals and policies that form its foundation are intended to ensure that the MRMPO provides the public with opportunity to influence Policy Committee decisions. The plan acknowledges that much of the MRMPO’s decision making is based on policies and decisions made at the jurisdictional level. Therefore the MRMPO supports local efforts to encourage public participation in local decision making. In some instances, project ranking at the regional level may be based in part on demonstration of local support. Local governments, in their transportation planning activities, are encouraged to be consistent with the MRMPO Public Participation Implementation Guidelines in Section 6.

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The procedures outlined in this plan establish minimum standards for public participation. However, failure to exactly comply with the procedures contained in the plan shall not, in and of itself, render invalid any MRMPO decisions or actions. Any dispute arising from this plan will be resolved with a focus on the degree of compliance and the extent to which the MRMPO's actions met the intent of the goals and policies. If it is determined that the spirit of the goals is not met, the MRMPO may conduct additional public involvement to ensure adequate public review.

### **E. Consultation with Tribal Governments**

The MRMPO boundary resides within ancestral and unceded traditional territories of the Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation. The Indigenous people of this land never surrendered lands or resources to the United States. Following treaties between 1851 and 1855, Kalapuya people were dispossessed of their indigenous homeland by the United States government and forcibly removed to the Coast Reservation in Western Oregon. Today's descendants of the Kalapuya are citizens primarily of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde Community of Oregon and the Confederated Tribes of the Siletz Indians of Oregon. We give our respect and appreciation to all the Kalapuya generations stewarding this land and to the many more tribes who have ancestral connections to this land.

The United States Government's relationship with Tribal governments is set forth in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, statutes, judicial decisions, and Executive Orders and Presidential memorandum. Therefore, to the greatest extent practicable and to the extent permitted by law, MRMPO will consult with tribal governments prior to taking action that have substantial direct impact on federally recognized tribal governments. To ensure that the rights of sovereign tribal governments are fully respected, all such consultations are to be open and candid so that tribal governments may evaluate for themselves the potential impact of relevant proposals.

Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon, Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians, the Cow Creek Band of Umpqua Tribe of Indians, and the Tolowa Dee-ni' Nation are all contacted during the RTP and TIP update period to determine their interest in participating in the RTP or TIP update, the extent they would like to participate, and the means of receiving information and commenting on the draft documents.

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## 5. Public Participation Tools

Through the course of any single project, it is anticipated that more than one tool or activity may be used.

**Web Site.** The MRMPO web site, [www.mrmppo.org](http://www.mrmppo.org), is the organization's principal means of communicating all of its work to the public. All meeting schedules and materials, including meeting minutes, are posted, as are drafts of all reports, research findings and publications, including the regional plan, TIP and work plan. A tool on the site enables readers to directly contact staff. Project selections, such as the CMAQ and STBG funding process, are conducted on the web (applications posted for committee review). Staff continues to expand this site.

**Newsletters.** The MRMPO may produce newsletters periodically, seeking to tie publications to important events and opportunities for the public to participate in an event or comment on a pending action. Copies are distributed to libraries and city halls around the region, mailed to addresses on transportation-related mail lists, and distributed at meetings.

**Fact Sheets, Brochures.** These are typically single topic communication pieces that address a subject in depth for deeper public understanding. They are often used at Open House sessions to provide participants with background for discussion and comment, and available in the public information display in the RVCOG lobby.

**Feedback Forms.** Simple, one-page questionnaires can elicit public attitudes about a variety of subjects. These forms should be designed to include guided comments (direct questions to which the MRMPO seeks comments) and open-end questions that encourage respondents to describe their concerns.

**Visualization Techniques.** As much as possible the MRMPO should use maps, charts, photographs, aerial photography and interactive tools to engage the public. Visual cues may tell the story more quickly than paragraphs of information, and can be used with written material to give the public a more thorough picture of an issue or debate. Visualization techniques should be incorporated into other tools listed in this section whenever possible, i.e. photographic posters at open houses illustrating smart growth concepts, plan maps printed as fact sheets, and diagrams of possible improvements.

In 2021, the MRMPO developed an inter-active TIP on its website. This inter-active TIP is designed to provide the Transportation Improvement Program in a more user-friendly format. It provides the basic information on each of the projects in an easy-to-read format. Each project sheet contains a map of the project location and/or limits, a project description and Key Number, and a funding table indicating which funds are being used for which phases of the project and, for any amendments that occur, a link is provided to the Change Management Request form that explains in detail what modifications are being made to the project.

**Open Houses.** These informal sessions use visualization techniques to foster discussion and elicit comment from all segments of the community including agency staff, public and elected officials. Open houses are held in conjunction with RTP and TIP updates, as well as major planning studies. They are widely advertised.

**Committee Meetings.** Efforts are made to schedule meetings of the three standing committees and ad hoc committees at convenient times and locations as determined in consultation with committee members. Meetings may be advertised in newspaper display ads and agendas are mailed to an interested-parties list. Meeting materials are posted on the web site. Oregon Public Meetings Law requires that all meetings of governing bodies be noticed in advance, be open to the public, be held in an accessible location, and the minutes be published.

**Comment Periods. Legal Advertising.** Formal public comment periods are initiated for draft UPWP, RTP, TIP and Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD), Public Participation Plan and major funding decisions. All comment periods are 30 days, except for the Public Participation Plan's 45 day review period, and 21-day review period for amendments to adopted plans and programs. Public hearings and initiation of comment periods may be advertised in the Press Release section of the Daily Courier (newspaper of record), Grants Pass, OR, the Rogue River Press, and the Mail Tribune. Additional advertising may be purchased. All comments received are retained in the project record.

**Public Hearings.** The Policy Committee conducts public hearings for plan and program updates and other key funding decisions.

**Press Releases.** Project milestones and key opportunities for public input may be described in press releases sent to all news media in the region (print, radio and television).

**Display Advertising.** Meetings and other key events can be announced in newspaper ads. The MRMPO attempts to obtain prominent placement in Sunday and other editions.

**Other tools.** Radio spots may be used to announce special events and opportunities for public participation

**Social Media.** The MRMPO may utilize social media to increase engagement, promote public events, and build new relationships.

## 6. Public Participation Implementation & Documentation

The MRMPO is responsible for coordinating a collaborative transportation planning process for the region. All interested parties must be included, including those who are traditionally underserved by the transportation system and services. This section of the plan addresses the core metropolitan planning activities and responsibilities, focusing on how the public participates in their production.

### A. MPO Work Products and Public Participation

There are four core work products that an MPO is responsible for producing and keeping up to date on a regular schedule. Those products and the public participation in each are discussed below.

- 1) **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).** Produced annually, the UPWP lists all planning tasks and studies the MPO will undertake during the year. Both MRMPO standing committees discuss and propose planning tasks. Staff conducts additional consultation with agencies and interested parties as necessary. Policy Committee holds a public hearing on the draft UPWP after a 30-day comment period. Fact sheets and other information may be produced by staff as necessary. A record of comments received and responses is kept on file, reported to committees, posted on the web site, and may be incorporated into the final plan.
- 2) **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).** Updated every four years, the RTP is a long-range (20-year) plan that contains the region's goals and policies, projects, funding forecasts, strategies, and projected demands on the transportation system. Advisory committees discuss the plan update over several meetings. The MRMPO hosts two open house sessions, a 30-day comment period and public hearing. Comments received will be responded to and included in the final document. The draft RTP, and supporting White Papers and other research, as needed, is posted on the website and mailed to interested parties. Open house meetings are advertised in the newspaper, on the website and by mailing to individuals and organizations on transportation mail lists. Staff conducts outreach including community presentation.
- 3) **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).** Updated every four years, the TIP is the short-range listing of financially constrained (funded) projects to be undertaken in the coming four years. Projects in the TIP are incorporated into the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). Public process for the

TIP is the same as, and conducted concurrently with, the RTP update. The TIP and all major amendments are subject to a comment period (30-day for program adoption, 21-day for major amendments) and a public hearing. (Public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review and comment on the TIP will satisfy the Program of Projects (POP) requirements of the Section 5307 Program and other Federal Transit Administration funding programs.) A record of comments received is kept on file with responses, reported to committees, posted on the website, and may be incorporated into the final plan.

- 4) Air Quality Conformity Determination (AQCD).** The MRMPO is required to show through the AQCD that both the RTP and the TIP conform to federal Clean Air Act standards. The determination process is technical in nature, but the findings are subject to public review during the activities described above for the RTP and TIP. A record of comments received will be kept on file with responses, reported to committees, posted on the website, and may be incorporated into the final plan.

#### **MRMPO Public Participation Plan**

The Public Participation Plan is subject to periodic review, evaluation and updating. The plan is maintained to meet federal requirements for public involvement in metropolitan planning and Oregon Public Meetings and Public Records Law. Furthermore, the MRMPO covers a growing region where the public has demonstrated an interest in the state of transportation facilities and services. MRMPO staff shall periodically review the Public Participation Plan with an eye toward augmenting tools and procedures.

Evaluation is an integral part of public involvement, and is discussed in the section *Evaluating Public Participation Plan & Activities*. Updates that follow an evaluation will be posted on the web site, review by the TAC and the CAC, noticed to the local media, and publicly discussed to encourage both comments on proposed amendments and suggestions for additional amendments. There will be a 45-day comment period prior to public hearing by the Policy Committee. Comments received will be responded to and included in the final document.

#### **MRMPO Discretionary Funding**

The MRMPO coordinates the allocation of funds from two significant federal sources: Surface Transportation Block Grant Program (STBG) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program. Jurisdictions submit applications, based on the goals, priorities and projects in their state Transportation System Plans (TSP). All TSPs in the region are periodically updated and those updates include a public participation component, which typically includes a separate citizen advisory committee. Additionally, MRMPO applications ask jurisdictions to provide information about public participation in the project for which federal funds are sought. Applications are posted on the web for comment, along with guidelines and criteria. A record of comments received during a 30-day comment period will be kept on file with responses, reported to committees and posted on the web site

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## 7. Evaluating Public Participation Plan & Activities

Federal Metropolitan Planning guidelines require a periodic review of the effectiveness of public involvement processes. MRMPO will review the public involvement process and activities to ensure that all interested parties, including transportation stakeholders and traditionally underserved groups, have opportunity to provide input.

Evaluation is key to any plan update. The evaluation should fit the activity. It can be a debriefing at the staff level, identifying elements that worked well and developing improvements. Evaluation questions should be incorporated into public comment forms distributed at events. Also, surveys can be conducted to solicit input. Surveys, like feedback forms, are a way to get evaluation feedback on either an event or an ongoing program from a targeted or randomly selected group. Surveys can be conducted using a statistically valid method, or can be more informal questions posed to gather a sounding from the public. Surveys may be conducted in person, online, by phone, by mail or email.

A variety of sources may be used for evaluation, including:

- Telephone comments;
- Citizen letters;
- Internet E-mail;
- Newsletter questionnaires;
- Questions and comments made in meetings, workshops and displays;
- Focus group comments; and
- Comments from advisory committees.

Responses will be tracked demographically and geographically by zip code to ensure that target audiences are being contacted. If certain areas are found to be underserved, MRMPO will target these areas for increased outreach to provide those citizens with opportunity to participate. In addition, periodic surveys will provide a mechanism for measuring the effectiveness of the public involvement process.

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## Appendices

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## Appendix A: Glossary, Acronyms and Some Common Transportation Terms

<b>AQCD</b>	<b>Air Quality Conformity Determination:</b> Finding based on analysis showing that plans, programs and projects comply with Clean Air Act standards. The RVMPO area is regulated for carbon monoxide (Medford) and particulates.
<b>CMAQ</b>	<b>Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality:</b> The program is a federally-funded program for surface transportation improvements designed to improve air quality and mitigate congestion.
<b>CO</b>	Carbon Monoxide: A common air pollutant associated with gasoline internal combustion engines
<b>DLCD</b>	Department of Land Conservation and Development (Oregon)
<b>FHWA</b>	<b>Federal Highway Administration</b>
<b>FTA</b>	<b>Federal Transit Administration</b>
<b>MPO</b>	<b>Metropolitan Planning Organization:</b> Required by federal law in urban areas over 50,000 population, and designated by the governor, MPOs consist of local jurisdictions that collaborate to fulfill federal requirements for long- and short-range, regional, multimodal transportation planning.
<b>ODOT</b>	Oregon Department of Transportation
<b>PAC</b>	<b>Public Advisory Council:</b> The RVMPO's citizen sounding board; makes recommendations to the Policy Committee, which makes all MPO decisions.
<b>PC</b>	<b>Policy Committee:</b> The RVMPO's decision making body; made up of member jurisdiction representatives.
<b>PM10</b>	Particulate Matter 10: Air Pollution (usually road dust or smoke) that is of a size of 10 microns or less
<b>PM2.5</b>	Particulate Matter 2.5: Air Pollution (much smaller than road dust or smoke and often the result of internal combustion engines and ) that is of a size of 2.5 microns or less
<b>PPP</b>	<b>Public Participation Plan</b>

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- RTP**      **Regional Transportation Plan:** Long range, multimodal plan for regional transportation needs.
- STBG**    **Surface Transportation Block Grant Program:** Provides flexible funding for surface transportation needs.
- STIP**     State Transportation Improvement Program: the statewide short-range, multi-modal list of all of the State’s projects (including all of those associated with MPOs) for the upcoming four year cycle
- TAC**      **Technical Advisory Committee:** RVMPO committee of member jurisdictions’ planning and public works representatives; makes recommendations to the Policy Committee.
- TIP**      **Transportation Improvement Program:** Federally required, short-range multi-modal list of the region’s projects for the coming four years.
- TSP**      **Transportation System Plan:** A state-required long-range plan for municipal multi-modal transportation networks generally incorporated into comprehensive land use plans; must be consistent with the RTP and TIP.
- UA**        Urbanized Area: An area determined by the Bureau of Census to contain a population of at least 50,000
- UPWP**    **Unified Planning Work Program:** Federally required plan for projects and studies to be undertaken by the MPO for the year.

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## About this Document

The Public Participation Plan update was adopted by the MRMPO Policy Committee after a public hearing on October 20, 2022, in Grants Pass, to meet requirements of the federal transportation act, Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA). The MRMPO's Technical Advisory Committee and Citizens Advisory Committee recommended adoption after review of draft plans and suggesting changes. This Plan incorporates suggested changes from staff, TAC and CAC, and was open for a 45-day comment period, which is required by federal law for plans of this type of decision.

Regarding specific policies required by the IIJA, the MRMPO staff prepared the plan to comply with the IIJA. After review by the Technical Advisory Committee on October 6, 2022, and the Citizens Advisory Committee on October 13, 2022, staff completed the draft plan, which was open to public comment from September 6, 2022, to October 19, 2022. No additional public comments were received. The public hearing was continued to permit notification of affected agencies, which was mailed on September 6, 2022. No comments were received from the notified agencies.

In addition to review by MRMPO committees, special outreach was initiated during the comment period for interested parties including citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of persons with disabilities, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of non-emergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than title 49, U.S.C. Chapter 53, and other interested parties. Outreach activities included:

- Legal Notice of 45-day public comment period September 6, 2022, to October 19, 2022, published on September 6, 2022, and public hearing, published in the Grants Pass Daily Courier, Agency Notice provided on September 6, 2022, and draft posted on MRMPO web site April 29, 2022.
- Technical Advisory Committee, presentation, and discussion on October 6, 2022.
- Citizen Advisory Committee, presentation, and discussion on October 13, 2022.

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