



**tpo**

KNOXVILLE REGIONAL



# Outreach Plan

Adopted by the TPO Executive Board on October 27, 2021

In Cooperation with: Tennessee Department of Transportation,  
Federal Highway Administration, and Federal Transit Administration

**A RESOLUTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD  
OF THE KNOXVILLE REGIONAL  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION  
ADOPTING  
THE PUBLIC OUTREACH PLAN**

WHEREAS, in accordance with the requirements of the US Department of Transportation, Section 450.316 of the Metropolitan Planning Regulations, this plan includes a proactive public outreach process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs; and

WHEREAS, interested parties, including citizens, affected public agencies and special interest groups, were invited to participate in the development of this Outreach Plan; and

WHEREAS, the public was afforded an opportunity of more than 45 days to comment on the Public Outreach Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration have reviewed this Public Outreach Plan; and

WHEREAS, the TPO Technical Committee has endorsed this Public Outreach Plan as the guiding document for achieving a coordinated transportation system; and

WHEREAS, the elements of the Public Outreach Plan are to receive final approval from the Executive Board of the local Transportation Planning Organization,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE KNOXVILLE REGIONAL  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION EXECUTIVE BOARD:

that the Public Outreach Plan be adopted.

October 27, 2021

Date



\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor Terry Frank  
Anderson County  
Knoxville Regional TPO Executive Board Chair



\_\_\_\_\_  
Jeffrey A. Welch  
Director  
Knoxville Regional TPO

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |    |
|--|----|
| <i>SECTION I: Overview</i>   | 1  |
| Goals for Outreach   | 1  |
| What is a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)?  | 2  |
| About the Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization                                    | 4  |
| Outreach and Accountability to the Public  | 5  |
| <i>SECTION II: Federal Requirements</i>  | 6  |
| FAST Act   | 6  |
| Code of Federal Regulations  | 6  |
| Executive Orders   | 7  |
| Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990  | 7  |
| Title VI and TPO's Nondiscrimination Statement   | 7  |
| <i>SECTION III: General Guidelines</i>   | 9  |
| Public Meeting Principles and Types  | 9  |
| Outreach Tools and Techniques  | 10 |
| Information Tools  | 12 |
| Transparent, User-Friendly Products and Processes  | 12 |
| <i>SECTION IV: Plan-Specific Guidelines</i>  | 14 |
| Regional Mobility Plan   | 14 |
| Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)   | 17 |
| Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 & 5339 — Program of Projects (POP)                 | 19 |
| Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5310  | 20 |
| Transportation Planning Work Program (TPWP)  | 20 |
| Annual Listing of Obligated Projects   | 20 |
| Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) and Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) Solicitation | 20 |
| Outreach Plan  | 21 |
| <i>SECTION V: Evaluating Our Performance</i>   | 26 |
| Best Practices   | 26 |
| Readability of Products  | 26 |
| Comments on Outreach Plan  | 27 |
| Evaluation Techniques  | 26 |

## SECTION I: OVERVIEW

The Knoxville Regional Transportation Planning Organization (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 fulfills federal requirements and 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. Community members can also use it to learn about the TPO and opportunities for involvement.

### GOALS FOR OUTREACH:



While the TPO strives to involve the public whenever possible, outreach in transportation planning poses major challenges. 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. These factors often make it difficult to get meaningful input.

The duration of the transportation planning process can also be a barrier to engagement – some transportation projects take 10 or more years to be completed. How does a transportation agency attract and hold public 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 as a result of changing technology, preferences, or circumstances. Because of this, a TPO's outreach structure must allow flexibility for staff to experiment with ways to increase and improve engagement.



## 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, comprising 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. Figures 2 and 3 show more details related to both the planning and project implementation phases of the overall process.

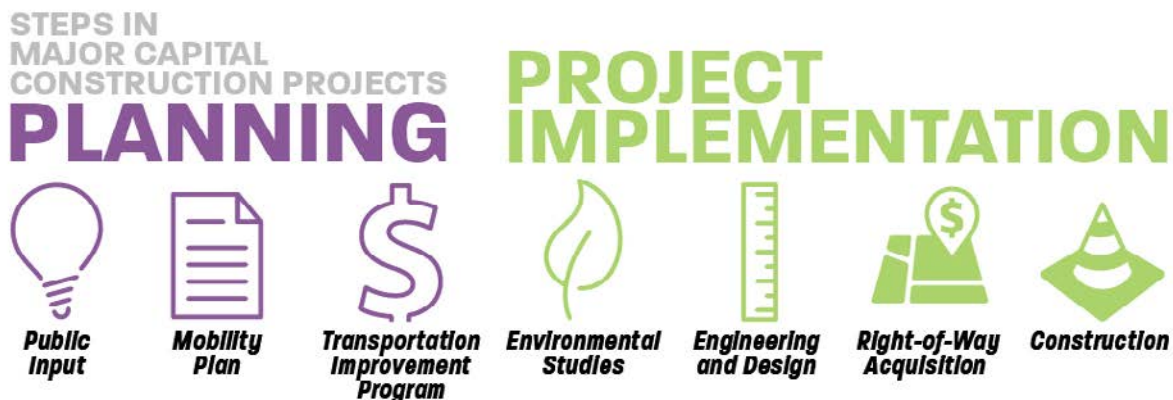


FIGURE 1. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

STEPS IN  
MAJOR CAPITAL  
CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

# PLANNING 2 YEARS

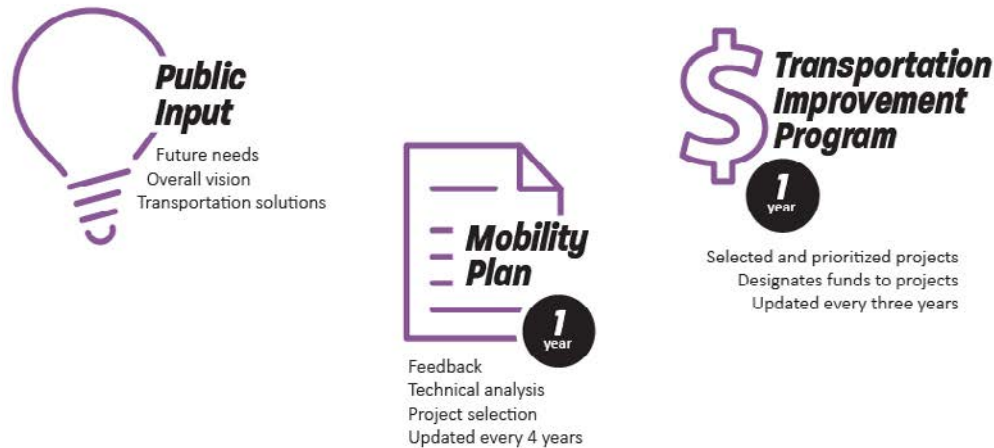


FIGURE 2. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS – PLANNING PHASE

STEPS IN  
MAJOR CAPITAL  
CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

# PROJECT 4-11 YEARS IMPLEMENTATION

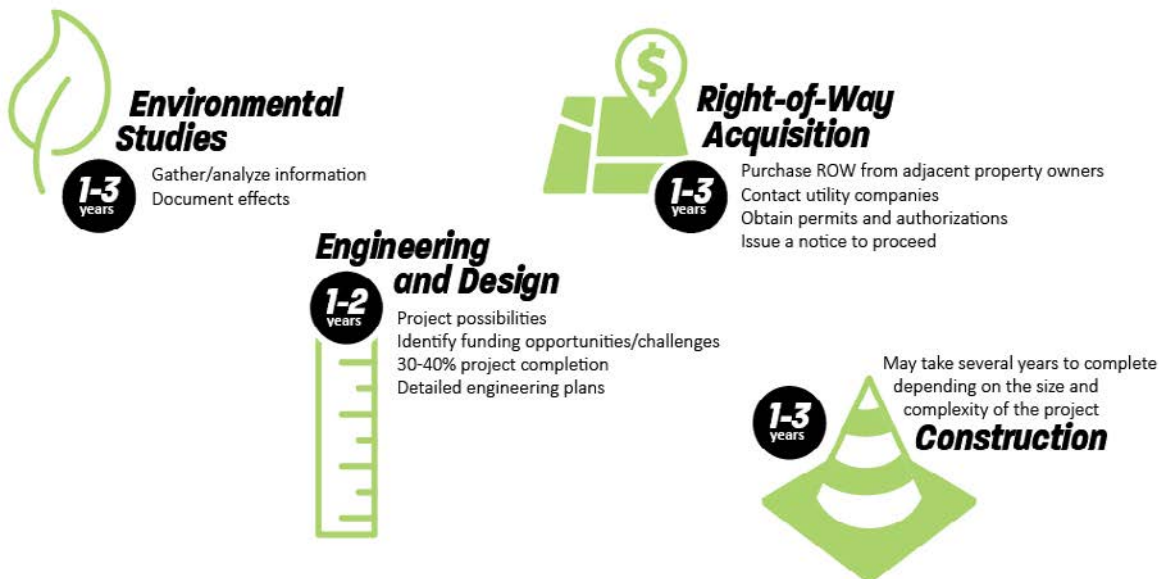


FIGURE 3. TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS – PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PHASE

## 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 and people
- Develop our region's potential

The Knoxville Regional TPO was established in 1977. Today, the TPO is housed within Knoxville-Knox County Planning and the two groups share administration and staff. 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 4.

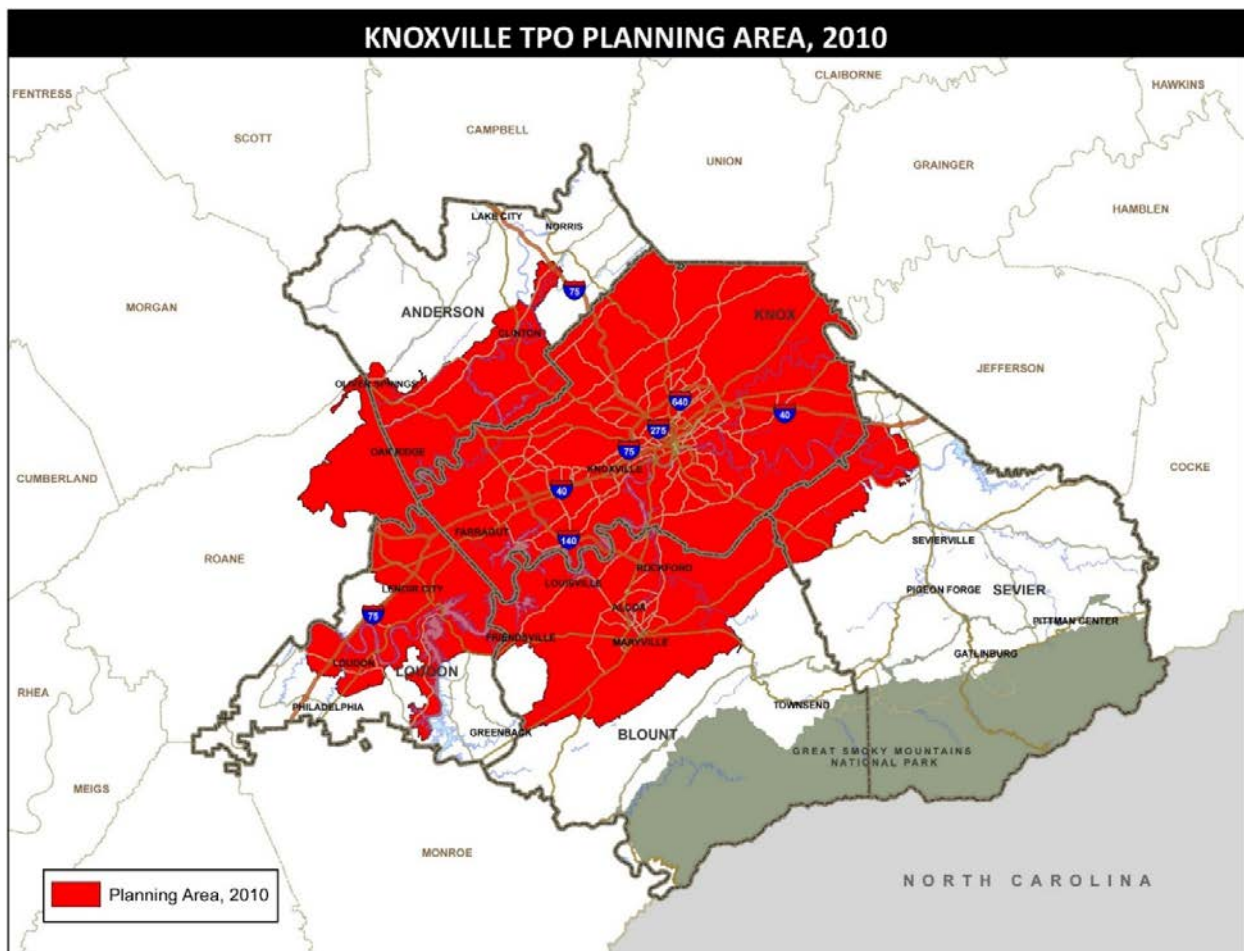


FIGURE 4. TPO PLANNING AREA MAP

Current federal transportation legislation, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, requires the TPO to produce and oversee certain plans. The TPO is responsible for developing a long-range mobility plan, which is updated every four years. The plan identifies and prioritizes improvements for all types of transportation over the next 20 to 30 years. Project costs cannot exceed the funding that is expected to be available. A proposed transportation project must meet the goals of the Plan in order to be selected for funding.

The TPO also develops a four-year schedule of projects that is updated every three years. The Transportation Improvement Program (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

General policies in the Outreach Plan 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.

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 processes.



## 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, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, airport operations, and freight movement. [23 USC 134(g)(3)(A)].

The TPO consults with other planning agencies and considers other planning activities in the MPO largely through interaction with the Technical Committee. These agencies are represented on the committee and the TPO relies on these representatives to share information presented to them with their agencies and contacts. Whenever possible, the TPO expands its reach beyond this group to involve specific jurisdictions, the state, and others on special projects and to host conferences, symposiums, and other events that foster collaboration.

FAST Act also requires expanding public outreach to include traditionally underrepresented stakeholders: users of pedestrian 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 FAST Act can be found in Appendix A.

### CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS

The TPO planning process requires a broad outreach and engagement effort to fulfill federal planning requirements, strengthen the decision-making process, and develop community support for the resultant plans. As identified in 23 CFR 450, agencies/groups the TPO strives to engage in the metropolitan transportation planning process include, but are not limited to:

- Affected Public Agencies
- Representatives of Public Transportation Employees
- Representatives of Public Ports
- Freight Shippers and Providers of Freight Transportation Services
- Private Providers of Transportation
- Representatives of Users of Public Transportation
- Representatives of Users of Pedestrian Walkways and Bicycle Transportation Facilities
- Representatives of the Disabled
- Other Interested Parties

Stakeholder involvement is achieved through the techniques, practices and plan-specific guidelines further described in sections III and IV. The TPO Executive Board, Technical Committee and Mobility Plan Advisory Committee are all venues with representation from identified stakeholders.

The TPO maintains an ongoing and cooperative relationship with federal, state and local public agencies, many of which are represented (as voting or non-voting members) on the TPO Executive Board or Technical Committee. Additional coordination is achieved through TPO staff participation in non-TPO committee meetings, workshops and other sessions related to planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, public transit, active transportation, freight movement, and state planning efforts.

Indicative of this interagency cooperation is the partnership with TDOT in support of major planning documents. Both TDOT's Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) and the TPO's Mobility Plan and TIP are the result of iterative cooperation from plan initiation through completion. This consultation may include modeling and financial assumptions, project priority lists, comment solicitation and review of draft work products. TPO and TDOT staff regularly participate in planning meetings and events held for one another's plans.

#### 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

Knoxville-Knox County Planning 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.

The Title VI Report is updated every three years. The Report is available in draft form on the TPO website and in the Knoxville-Knox County Planning library for 14 days prior to the TPO Technical Committee meeting. During this time, it is available for public comment, and additional comments are welcomed prior to the Executive Board meeting that follows. The final report is also available on the website and in the Planning library.

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

The Outreach Plan seeks to establish a realistic and forward-thinking philosophy for public outreach in the TPO region. To do this, the Plan defines requirements and promotes a culture in which staff continue to push the envelope to experiment with and identify new best practices. There are many techniques that the TPO uses that 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, as well as the circumstances and expectations for community engagement, are continuously changing. This requires an agency that is constantly rethinking how it engages with those it serves, and one that is committed to flexibility and making changes that can positively benefit those it serves. This approach led to the TPO's expanded use of videos, interactive maps, and commitment to regularly update its websites.

It is important to note that not all practices are always appropriate and should be used only when it best complements the process.

### 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.

It should be noted that all of these meeting types can be held in-person or virtually. At times, hybrid models, which allow some participants to gather in person while others join the group virtually, may also be used. Virtual and hybrid meetings have proven necessary at times due to public health concerns. Even when such concerns are not present, these meeting types are great tools to reach more people. They allow individuals to participate in transportation planning processes who otherwise might not be able. This is especially true for regional projects where the public might need to travel greater distances to attend meetings in person.

- Public hearing
- Public meeting
- Charrette/workshop
- Pop-up meeting
- Open house
- Small group meeting



- Town hall meeting
- Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings

### **Accessibility**

The TPO strives to be accessible to all those living in our region. The organization is committed to holding 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. This can be found in Appendix C under the definition of legal advertisements and notices.

In addition to making meetings physically accessible, the TPO is also working on accessibility measures that impact other areas of the organization's work. These include website accessibility, documents that are screen-reader friendly, providing translation services, and more. Web accessibility will be measured based on varying internet speeds, browsers, and screen sizes. This is particularly important as virtual meetings become more common and sometimes necessary.

## **OUTREACH TOOLS AND TECHNIQUES**

### **Tools**

Outreach tools are those that enable the TPO to share information and solicit input from the public. 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
- Visual preference survey

### **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 holding pop-up meetings at community events. These types of outreach can be effective for reaching underrepresented groups and those who do not normally show interest in the planning process.

### **Early Outreach**

Early outreach to local community leaders helps 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 staff provide direct outreach to priority populations and underrepresented stakeholders, as well as other residents in a study or project area. Priority populations are identified in the Mobility Plan as those living in areas with fewer income and educational opportunities, reduced accessibility to safe places for being active, and greater vulnerability to leading a healthy and economically sustainable life. Because these populations are more likely to have health problems and are more dependent on transit, walking and bicycling for transportation, identifying them allows their needs to be incorporated into the projects identified in the TIP and Mobility Plan.

To reach these groups, meeting notices are published in local newspapers, including those targeting minority communities. Information is also shared on the TPO and partnering agencies' websites and on social media, including on pages of community groups of particular interest for a specific plan or program. The TPO has recently started using paid social media advertisements in specific zip codes. Surveys are distributed and comments are sought by participating in standing meetings or providing a pop-up booth at events held in the affected community. While these types of broad outreach are always attempted, the most reliable method for inclusion of these populations is through direct outreach and collaboration between the TPO and local community groups and their leaders. These trusted leaders are able to reach out on behalf of the TPO to encourage participation in planning efforts.

### **Targeted Marketing**

Smart Trips, an incentive-based program that promotes alternatives to driving alone, has used a variety of advertising methods to reach specific target audiences. These include billboard advertising, sponsorship spots on popular radio stations, and a combination of print and online 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.

### **Partnerships**

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.

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.

## 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
- Legal advertisements and notices
- Paid advertisements
- Posters and flyers
- Media releases
- Presentations
- Social media
- TPO, project and program websites
- QR codes
- Videos

## TRANSPARENT, USER-FRIENDLY PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES

### **Understandable and Interesting Language / No Jargon**

Meeting notices and materials will use appropriate, understandable language. We will avoid acronyms and other technical jargon as much as possible (for a helpful Transportation Planning Glossary, see Appendix E). We strive 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. We use tools such as the Flesch Reading Ease Score and the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level Score 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. The most recent update to the long-range plan, Mobility Plan 2045, is a good example of this. While still a lengthy document with substantial appendices, the plan itself is shorter than previous iterations. Additionally, we produced executive summaries in both English and Spanish to communicate the central concepts to the public and refer them to the main document for comprehensive information.

### **Use of Visual Tools**

We use visualization techniques to enhance the public's understanding of the TPO's work whenever possible. This includes using graphics, video, and Geographic Information Systems (GIS), which are all very effective ways to communicate complex technical material and ideas in an easily digested format.

While the use of visual tools to clarify complex work has become more common in the TPO's daily work, it is worth noting the importance of these practices, especially in the Mobility Plan and the TIP. The most recent version of the Mobility Plan included visuals throughout. Instead of simply providing a list of projects, an interactive map was made available that allowed the public to search for projects of interest based on location. It also allowed individuals to comment on that project directly on the map to provide an easier way to participate in project selection and encourage a greater number of comments.

Videos are another tool that were once used occasionally and have recently become more commonplace. The global pandemic was the catalyst to begin using this tool more, but staff recognized how effective the medium can be in getting increased participation in general. Staff created informational videos for Mobility Plan 2045 and shared meeting videos for meetings related to the Mobility Plan as well as for standing Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings. Mobility Plan specific videos were viewed more than 1,000 times, and standing meeting videos were viewed more than 550 times.



## SECTION IV: 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 Projects;
- 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. Supplementary information may also be incorporated into planning documents by way of an addendum, described in Appendix E. The current Mobility Plan is available for viewing online as well as at the TPO office.

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has outlined several key decision points that should be met by the TPO during the development of this long-range plan. The chart below lists key decision points and methods for public engagement for each. The TPO is committed to engaging the public and will use the methods outlined below. The TPO may choose to engage with the public through additional opportunities beyond what is listed.

|  | <b><i>Standing Meeting<br/>(Technical Committee,<br/>Executive Board,<br/>Advisor Committee)</i></b> | <b><i>Additional Public Meeting/<br/>Event</i></b> | <b><i>Surveys/<br/>Questionnaires</i></b> | <b><i>Media Release</i></b> | <b><i>Social Media</i></b> | <b><i>News Item on TPO Website</i></b> | <b><i>Include in TPO Newsletter</i></b> |
|--|--|--|---|-----------------------------|----------------------------|--|---|
| <b><i>Endorse Vision &amp; Goals</i></b>                       | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Approve Socioeconomic Data Projections</i></b>           | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Approve Evaluation Criteria</i></b>                      | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Evaluate Transportation Deficiencies</i></b>             | X  | X  | X   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Evaluate Performance Measures</i></b>                    | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Evaluate Plan Scenarios</i></b>                          | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Adopt Preferred Plan Scenarios/<br/>Project List</i></b> | X  | X  | X   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Make Conformity Determination by TPO</i></b>             | X  |  |   |                             | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |
| <b><i>Adopt RMP by TPO</i></b>                                 | X  |  |   | X                           | X                          | X                                      | X                                       |

The TPO continues to solicit input from the public after the draft Mobility Plan has been developed. Outreach methods used to take the Plan from the initial draft to final adoption are outlined below.

| <b>Activity</b>                      | <b>Technique(s)</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Draft Document:</b>               | Drafts are made available online ( <a href="http://www.knoxmobility.org">www.knoxmobility.org</a> ) and at the TPO office.  |
| <b>Comment Opportunities:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At public meetings</li> <li>• At events throughout the region</li> <li>• Via e-mail</li> <li>• By USPS mail to the TPO office</li> <li>• By phone on a dedicated voicemail line</li> <li>• In person at the TPO office</li> <li>• During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, and public meetings held specifically for Mobility Plan updates)</li> <li>• Through mail- or web-based surveys and questionnaires (may be used to gather information about specific projects in some cases)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Comment Period:</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• For projects exempt from air quality conformity, the public comment period for Mobility Plan amendments will be ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting.</li> <li>• A minimum of 30 days is required prior to adoption for Mobility Plan amendments that involve projects non-exempt from air quality conformity and projects that require a short air quality conformity determination.</li> <li>• The public comment period begins with public notice. <sup>1</sup></li> </ul>                                      |
| <b>Public Meeting(s):</b>            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public meetings are held during the public comment period.</li> <li>• Separate meetings are held for the draft plan and the final Mobility Plan.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Public Meeting Notice:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting, announcements will be disseminated. Seven to 10 days prior to the public meeting, a media release may be sent. Meetings may also be posted on community calendars.</li> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the public meeting, paid media advertisement and/or a public notice may be published in appropriate local newspapers. <sup>2</sup></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Amendment Notice:</b>             | Amendment notices will be sent through web announcements, public notice in appropriate local newspapers, and regularly scheduled meetings.  |
| <b>Summary of Comments Received:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All public comments will be made available online.</li> <li>• A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the Mobility Plan update.</li> <li>• Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final Mobility Plan. <sup>3</sup></li> <li>• Meeting and event summaries, comments and responses, survey reports, and more will be reported on the Mobility Plan website.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Final, Adopted Document:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final document is made available on the Mobility Plan website and at the TPO office.</li> </ul>  |

|                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
|                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Evaluation Technique(s):</b> | 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.              |

The Mobility Plan incorporates community input that is received from development of the Plan through final adoption. This is done through project prioritization that is determined based on feedback from public comments and surveys and the Technical Committee. The TPO keeps track of all comments and will respond to specific questions. Comments are shared with the public on the Mobility Plan website and in the Appendices of the final document.

#### 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. Supplementary information may also be incorporated into planning documents by way of an addendum, described in Appendix E. The current TIP is available for viewing online as well as at the TPO office.

The FHWA has outlined several key decision points that should be met by MPOs during the development of the TIP. The chart below lists key decision points and methods for public engagement for each.

|   | <b><i>Standing Meeting<br/>(Technical Committee,<br/>Executive Board,<br/>Advisor Committee)</i></b> | <b><i>Surveys/<br/>Questionnaires</i></b> | <b><i>Media<br/>Release</i></b> | <b><i>Social<br/>Media</i></b> | <b><i>News<br/>Item on<br/>TPO<br/>Website</i></b> | <b><i>Include in<br/>TPO<br/>Newsletter</i></b> |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|---|
| <b><i>Call for<br/>Projects with<br/>Local<br/>Governments<br/>and Public</i></b> | X  |   | X                               | X                              | X  | X   |



|                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Approve Project List from RMP</b>  | X |   |   |   |   |   |
| <b>Approve Project Prioritization</b> | X | X |   | X | X | X |
| <b>Reach Consensus on Draft TIP</b>   | X |   |   | X | X | X |
| <b>Adopt TIP by MPO</b>               | X |   | X | X | X | X |

The TIP also incorporates community input through project prioritization that is determined based on feedback from public surveys and the Technical Committee through the Mobility Plan process. The TPO continues to solicit input from the public after the draft TIP has been developed. Outreach methods used to take the Plan from the initial draft to final adoption are outlined below. Methods are also outlined for the amendment process. Staff reviews all comments as they are submitted, responds to specific questions, and shares them in the Appendices of the final document.

#### **Adopting a New TIP**

| <b>Activity</b>                      | <b>Technique(s)</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Draft Document:</b>               | Drafts are made available online ( <a href="http://www.knoxtpo.org">www.knoxtpo.org</a> ) and at the TPO office.   |
| <b>Comment Opportunities:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At public meetings</li> <li>• Via e-mail</li> <li>• By USPS mail to the TPO office</li> <li>• In person at the TPO office</li> <li>• During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, and public meetings held specifically for TIP updates)</li> <li>• Online questionnaires (may be used to gather information about specific projects in some cases)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Comment Period:</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 30 days is required prior to adoption for TIP updates.<sup>1</sup></li> <li>• The public comment period begins with public notice.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Public Meeting:</b>               | Public meetings may be held during the public comment period.  |
| <b>Public Meeting Notice:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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.</li> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice may be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Summary of Comments Received:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the TIP update.</li> </ul>  |

|                                 |  |
|---------------------------------|--|
|                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final TIP.<sup>3</sup></li> </ul>  |
| <b>Final, Adopted Document:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The final document is made available online (<a href="http://www.knoxtpo.org">www.knoxtpo.org</a>) and at the TPO office.</li> <li>Information will also be shared on social media, in the TPO newsletter, and with partnering agencies and organizations.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Evaluation Technique(s):</b> | 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

| <b>Activity</b>                      | <b>Technique(s)</b>   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Draft TIP Pages:</b>              | Draft TIP project pages are made available online ( <a href="http://www.knoxtpo.org">www.knoxtpo.org</a> ) and at the TPO office.   |
| <b>Comment Opportunities:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Via e-mail</li> <li>By USPS mail to the TPO office</li> <li>In person or at the TPO office</li> <li>During standing meetings (Technical Committee, Executive Board, and public meetings held specifically for TIP updates)</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Comment Period:</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>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.</li> <li>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.</li> <li>The public comment period begins with public notice.<sup>4</sup></li> </ul> |
| <b>Public Meeting:</b>               | Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings scheduled during the comment period are open to the public and serve as public meetings.   |
| <b>Public Meeting Notice:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars.</li> <li>Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice may be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>   |
| <b>Amendment Notice:</b>             | Amendment notices will be posted on the TIP project page on the TPO website.  |
| <b>Summary of Comments Received:</b> | A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the TIP update.   |
| <b>Evaluation Technique(s):</b>      | 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.  |

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 on the TPO website. Public comments on the draft TPWP are welcomed and can be submitted online or in person at the Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings. If any comments are received, a summary is made available on the TPO website and provided to the Technical Committee and Executive Board.

#### ANNUAL LISTING OF OBLIGATED PROJECTS

Ninety days after the end of the fiscal year, the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects 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 TPO controlled (or sub-allocated) federally funded projects. The solicitation cycle will typically last 90 days. The selected projects will be added to the TIP.

| <b>Activity</b>                      | <b>Technique(s)</b>  |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Comment Opportunities:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At public meetings</li> <li>• Via e-mail</li> <li>• By USPS mail to the TPO office</li> <li>• In person or at the TPO office</li> <li>• During standing meetings (Technical Committee and Executive Board)</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Comment Period:</b>               | A minimum of 14 days is required.  |
| <b>Public Meeting:</b>               | Public meetings may be held during the public comment period.  |
| <b>Public Meeting Notice:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars.</li> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice may be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Summary of Comments Received:</b> | A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the final project selection.   |
| <b>Final, Adopted Document:</b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final document will be made available online and at the TPO office.</li> <li>• Upon adoption of the final document, interested parties will be notified that the document is available on the TPO website.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Evaluation Technique(s):</b>      | 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 processes, including funding for projects, studies, plans, and committee actions.

| <b>Activity</b>               | <b>Technique(s)</b>   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| <b>Draft Document:</b>        | A draft of the plan is made available online ( <a href="http://www.knoxtpo.org">www.knoxtpo.org</a> ) and at the TPO office.  |
| <b>Comment Opportunities:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At public meetings</li> <li>• Via e-mail</li> <li>• By USPS mail to the TPO office</li> <li>• In person or at the TPO office</li> <li>• During standing meetings (Technical Committee or Executive Board)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Comment Period:</b>        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum of 45 days is required prior to adoption.</li> <li>• The public comment period begins with public notice.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Public Meeting:</b>        | Public meetings may be held during the public comment period.   |
| <b>Public Meeting Notice:</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, a web announcement will be posted. Meetings also may be posted on community calendars.</li> </ul>   |



|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ten to 14 days prior to the meeting, public notice may be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers.<sup>2</sup></li> </ul>  |
| <b><i>Summary of Comments Received:</i></b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A public comment summary memo will be made available prior to the Executive Board meeting for the Outreach Plan update.</li> <li>• Written and verbal comments are summarized and incorporated into the final Outreach Plan.</li> </ul>  |
| <b><i>Final, Adopted Document:</i></b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The final document will be made available online and at the TPO office.</li> <li>• Upon adoption of the final document, interested parties will be notified that the document is available on the TPO website.</li> </ul>  |
| <b><i>Evaluation Technique(s):</i></b>      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Outreach Plan will be evaluated regularly by TPO staff in consultation with ongoing input received from the public on the outreach process.</li> <li>• All comments and suggestions made by the public will be recorded and taken into consideration when improvement strategies are discussed.</li> <li>• 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.</li> </ul> |

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Unexpected 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 V: 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.

### 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.

### 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.

### EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

In addition to a commitment to using these general methods for engaging the public, the TPO will track outreach efforts for specific plans and projects as outlined in Section V in order to measure the effectiveness of these methods for achieving the goals for outreach, listed in Section I. The TPO includes an overview of this information in Planning's Annual Report, including some of the information listed below for both the TPO as a whole and specific programs.

#### Measuring Visibility

- Number of TPO newsletters sent
- Number of newspaper advertisements/public notices placed
  - Number placed in newspapers with minority audiences
- Number of publications available on TPO website
- Number of meetings broadcast on Community Television of Knoxville
- Number of press releases sent
- Number of media mentions
- Number of social media followers

#### Measuring Participation Opportunities

- Number of surveys sent
- Number of public meetings and events held
- Number of participants at meetings and events
- Number of views of meeting recordings
- Number of standing monthly Technical Committee and Executive Board meetings

- Number of draft plans made available for comment on TPO website
- Number of participation opportunities held in communities identified as a priority populations

### **Measuring Public Interest & Feedback**

- Number of comments received on TPO website
- Number of comments received on social media
- Number of written and oral comments received
- Number of visitors to the TPO website
- Number of survey responses

### **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. Any resulting public input will 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.

In addition to being made available to the public, the TPO will share the draft plan with the Technical Committee and Executive Board at standing meetings. These groups are encouraged to share the information with their contacts and constituents to comment on the plan. The TPO also submits the draft plan to TDOT, FHWA and FTA for comments. All comments are addressed and a summary of those comments will be made available to the Technical Committee and Executive Board before they adopt the final plan.

Please submit comments to:

#### **Ally Ketron, Communications and Outreach Coordinator**

Knoxville Regional TPO

400 W. Main St., Suite 403

Knoxville, TN 37902

Phone: (865) 215-3234

E-mail: [ally.ketron@knoxplanning.org](mailto:ally.ketron@knoxplanning.org)

Or comment in person:

- Technical Committee Meeting September 14, 2021

This meeting is located in the Small Assembly Room of the City/County Building, 400 W. Main St., Knoxville, TN at 9:00 a.m.