

**Public Involvement
Action Plan**

**OF THE
LINCOLN METROPOLITAN
PLANNING ORGANIZATION
LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION
PLAN UPDATE 2015 – 2016**

As of October 13, 2015



**Lincoln
Metropolitan Planning
Organization**

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Introduction

The Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is initiating an update of its Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), and the general public must be involved in this process to enable the MPO to make informed decisions.

This public involvement action plan outlines the steps to implement the requirements of the Lincoln MPO Public Participation Plan of November 16, 2010, as amended on February 20, 2014. The goal of the MPO outreach activities is to ensure that all citizens regardless of race, color, religion, income status, national origin, age, gender, disability, marital status, or political affiliation, have an equal opportunity to participate in the MPO's decision-making process.

The MPO Public Participation Plan complies with the requirements of Federal Transportation Regulations in 23 CFR Part 450, and the preparation of the plan is based upon contact and feedback from 75 organizations, agencies and representatives, along with 115 neighborhood and homeowner associations. This action plan follows the methods of public engagement prescribed in the Lincoln MPO Public Participation Plan as amended on February 20, 2014.

Leadership of the LRTP Update and Public Involvement Action Plan

The Lincoln MPO staff is responsible for the Long Range Transportation Plan Update and directing the implementation of the Public Involvement Action Plan. A technical consultant, Felsburg, Holt and Ullevig (FHU) has been retained to assist the MPO in collecting data, performing analysis, and implementing this plan to create the update.

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 metropolitan area.
2. **Identify and evaluate alternative transportation improvement options:** Use data and planning methods to generate and evaluate alternatives. Planning studies and evaluations are included in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP).
3. **Prepare and maintain a Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP):** Develop and update an LRTP for the metropolitan area covering a planning horizon of at least twenty years that fosters (1) mobility and access for people and goods, (2) efficient system performance and preservation, (3) good quality of life, and (4) contains a fiscally constrained listing of projects and strategies based upon the MPO project selection process.
4. **Develop a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP):** Develop a short-range, four-year, fiscally constrained program of transportation improvements based on the LRTP. The TIP is designed to achieve the area's goals, using regulation, operation, management, and financial tools.
5. **Involve the public:** Involve the general public and other affected constituencies in the four essential functions listed above.

Guiding Principles of this Action Plan

1. Provide timely information about the LRTP update process to all affected stakeholders and the general public.
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the LRTP update.
3. Give adequate public notice of public participation activities and allow time for public review and comment on key decision points.
4. Encourage the public to provide specific input for what they want to see from the transportation system.
5. Provide written response to all applicable public input.
6. Solicit the needs of those traditionally underserved.
7. Provide a public comment period of at least 30 days prior to adoption of the LRTP update.

LRTP Update – Integrating Public Involvement into Technical Analysis Process

The LRTP update process is being completed in seven phases and is expected to take approximately 17 months to complete. There are four committees consisting of professional staff, appointed officials, and selected public stakeholders that will be integrally involved in consultation throughout the update process. These committees are:

- **Citizen Advisory Committee** – consisting of the Planning Commission
- **Oversight Planning Committee** – MPO professional staff
- **MPO Technical Committee** – established membership of the MPO including members from the Oversight Planning Committee
- **MPO Officials Committee** – established membership of the MPO

Several briefings for public officials will be held throughout the update process with the mayor and his staff.

The consultant will work with these committees to shape and frame the data collection and analysis steps of the update. Draft policies, priority lists, and strategies will be formed by the MPO and the consultant from the data analysis step. These committees will also interact with one another to form MPO recommendations that are brought before public officials for decisions.

Public participation will be integrated into this process to achieve two primary objectives.

1. Provide information and education for the general public on the need and components of the LRTP update process.
2. Enable the public to inform the analysis, prioritization, and recommendations steps to create sustainable policy decisions.

The goal of this public involvement action plan is to create public awareness, gain input for transportation system priorities and build support for the recommended priority projects identified in the LRTP update.

Public Participation Approach

A three-pronged public participation approach will be built upon the existing MPO committee and deliberative policy recommendations process. Each prong is designed to integrate into the technical analysis process and achieve the stated objectives and goal of this plan for the LRTP update.

The first prong is the use of eight public stakeholder focus groups. Each focus group session will include up to six to eight participants. Focus group participants will be recruited to represent the broad interests and diverse users of all aspects of the metropolitan area's transportation system. The focus groups will help to identify the current conditions of the transportation system and provide ideas for improvements, goals, and objectives for future conditions. Focus group participants will continue to receive information throughout the update process so that they are able to track how their input helped shape the recommendations to the MPO.

The second prong follows the completion of the focus group step and involves the dissemination of public information materials (fact sheets) throughout the LRTP update process and the use of three open-house-style public meetings. This prong will be implemented with three key themes and phases, which are:

1. The Need

- Identify current and future conditions including deficiencies and problems (travel model forecasts)
- Solicit ideas for transportation improvements, goals, and objectives

2. Analyze Findings and Identifying Priorities

- Evaluate transportation system analysis results
- Solicit input on strategies for allocating limited resources

3. Validating a Vision

- Solicit public feedback on draft LRTP Update recommendations

Open house public meetings will be highly interactive for the public to discuss their views with MPO staff and the consultant about current conditions and future needs. The public will be able to provide written comments as part of the official record of the meetings.

The third prong is to provide ongoing communication about the LRTP update process on the MPO website. The updates will occur in conjunction with the three public involvement phases identified in the second prong. The Lincoln MPO website address is: lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: mpo).

An overriding principle of the entire public participation approach is ensuring that the needs of the traditionally underserved are met in this update process. Traditionally underserved is loosely defined as low-income and minority households and those who face challenges accessing employment or other services, including but not limited to transportation systems. The Lincoln MPO will seek out and consider the needs of these populations by holding public meetings at public places and community centers, at varied times suitable to all, and at places that are publicly and handicap accessible. The public meetings will be held in locations

convenient to populations identified in the Environmental Justice Strategy of the MPO Public Participation Plan.

Timeframe for Public Participation Approaches

The public may contact the MPO at any time to request information and provide input concerning the LRTP Update or any other MPO matter. The public can contact the Lincoln MPO at:

Lincoln Metropolitan Planning Organization
555 South 10th Street, Suite 213
Lincoln, NE 68508
Phone: 402-441-6369
Email: mpo@lincoln.ne.gov

Focus Groups will be initiated in the January 2016 timeframe.

The dissemination of public information and conducting of open house public meetings will be initiated within these general timeframes:

- The Need – February 2016
- Analysis Findings and Identifying Priorities – May 2016
- Validating a Vision – September 2016

Public Input and Review

Public comments are an important procedure and a requirement under federal regulations. The public has the option of recording their opinions, whether in support or opposition, in various ways and at various times of the planning process. Opportunities through which the public can provide input include:

- Letters
- Feedback form
- Emails
- Comments at open public meetings

How to find out about Lincoln MPO meetings and events

Notification of MPO meetings, public hearings, public comment and review periods, and special events are provided in the following ways:

- 1 MPO Website.** Notice of upcoming meetings are posted on the MPO website at lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: mpo).
- 2 Email Lists.** To join our electronic mailing list, please complete the online request form at lincoln.ne.gov (keyword: mpo).
- 3 Press Releases.** Press releases are sent to the local newspaper about public hearings, open houses, and public meetings.

- 4 Public Notice.** Public notices are posted outside the City Clerk's office and at public libraries.

Measuring Effectiveness of the LRTP Update Public Involvement Action Plan

The Lincoln MPO seeks to improve its public participation processes by identifying strengths and weaknesses in its methods, gauging the level of participation of stakeholders and interested parties, and modifying its methods accordingly. The Federal Highway Administration also requires that the Lincoln MPO periodically evaluates the effectiveness of the public participation plan and process.

Continuous evaluation allows the MPO to revisit its strategies; highlight improvements needed in the public participation plan; identify additional outreach activities; and discontinue use of ineffective tools. This evaluation of specific plans and projects also helps keep public involvement dynamic.

In order to determine the effectiveness of the public involvement tools, evaluation and comparison to established performance goals is important.

This section of the plan provides various activities or methods that have been used in the past and some that will be incorporated in the future for evaluating the performance of a public involvement technique "Plan Strategies" on page 14 of the MPO's Public Participation Plan. One or more of these methods will be used by the MPO to measure effectiveness of its public process:

- **Tabulation of media coverage** – Keep a written and visual record of all advertisements, legal notices, newspaper notices, press conferences, press releases, and website publications for any Lincoln MPO project.
- **Surveys** – Surveys will be conducted either in person, by phone, mail, or e-mail.
- **Comment/feedback cards** – Public meetings will have feedback cards available for all. The feedback cards will also act as a survey to ascertain how the respondents learned about the meeting.
- **Website polling** – The Lincoln MPO website has a feedback form for all visitors. The public is encouraged to complete the feedback form to let the MPO know how it can improve any of its public participation strategies. The form also provides the option to join the stakeholder mailing list.
- Periodic review and updating of outreach mailing lists.

The table below is an extract from Page 24 of the MPO's Public Participation Plan and identifies performance goals and methods for meeting those goals for each public involvement tool used for this update.

| Public Involvement Tools Evaluation Table | | | |
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| Public Involvement Tools | Evaluation Criteria | Performance Goals | Improvement Opportunities |
| MPO Website – Message Boards | Number of hits | Min. of 90 hits per month; 5% increase in hits per quarter | |
| E-mail Announcements and Direct Mailings | Calls, letters, etc.; Number of persons contacted | Minimum of 5% of meeting attendees/ survey respondents indicated that they received the mailing -OR- Reach a minimum of 85% of persons that are affected by a project | Increase or decrease distribution to more accurately target affected areas; Use the most up-to-date information |
| Legal Advertisements | Required by law | NA | NA |
| Press Releases | Tabulation of coverage; Calls, letters, etc. | NA | Encourage publication of press releases by keeping the media informed |
| Posters and Flyers | Calls, letters, etc.; Number of persons reached | Min of 10% of meeting attendees/survey respondents indicate they saw a poster | Increase distribution to common areas visible to the general public |
| Small Group Meetings | Calls, letters, etc.; Met the expectations of the group | NA (These meetings are held at the request of affected groups.) | The meeting should be formatted to provide specific information requested by the group and should highlight issues that are of interest to the group |
| Open Houses | Attendance; Calls, letters, etc. | 3-5% of affected population (based on study area) should attend. | Schedule at convenient times and locations; Hold multiple workshops; Use other tools to increase awareness. |
| Citizens Advisory Committees | Attendance; Calls, letters, etc. | NA | Encourage members to attend the sessions |
| MPO Logo | Calls, letters, etc. | Recognition of the logo | The MPO logo should be used on all MPO products and publications, and on materials for all MPO sponsored activities |
| Comment Forms | Number of responses; Calls, letters, etc. | 60% of meeting attendees filled out form -OR- 2% of visitors to a website submitted a form -OR- 20% of mail recipients return the form | Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving comments in order to improve the planning process |
| Surveys | Calls, letters, etc.; Number of responses | 60% of contacted persons participate in the survey -OR- 20% of mail recipients return the survey | Encourage responses by explaining the importance of receiving comments in order to improve the planning process |
| Reports (Online and Paper Copies) | Calls, letters, etc.; Number of persons contacted | Positive comments | Make it available at more public locations |
| Meeting Agenda and Minutes | Calls, letters, etc. | Positive comments | Ensure timely availability of agenda and minutes |