

Public Participation Plan

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Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
July XX, 2010

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1 Introduction

The Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) provides a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process for the greater Des Moines metropolitan area. As part of a successful 3-C transportation planning process, the MPO solicits public review and comment on the work, projects, and products proposed and created by the MPO. The MPO's *Public Participation Plan* (PPP) intends to promote this effort by defining a process that provides citizens, stakeholder groups, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process. The MPO developed this PPP in consultation with the public and other interested parties. Included in this PPP are the MPO's policies and procedures for conducting public outreach, scheduling public meetings, and incorporating public input into the transportation planning process.

2 Regulations and Requirements

2.1 FEDERAL TRANSPORTATION PLANNING PROCESS

Title 23 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations, Section 450 (23 CFR 450) states that MPOs are to carry out:

“... a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive multimodal transportation planning process, including the development of a metropolitan transportation plan, that encourages and promotes the safe and efficient development, management, and operation of surface transportation systems to serve the mobility needs of people and freight and foster economic growth and development, while minimizing transportation related fuel consumption and air pollution.”

2.2 TITLE VI OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS ACT OF 1964

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or natural origin in programs that receive federal financial assistance. The MPO addresses Title VI concerns in Appendix A of the PPP. To learn more about Title VI, visit www.usdoj.gov and search for Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

2.3 EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898 – ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

In 1994, President Bill Clinton issued Executive Order 12898, which addresses environmental injustices in minority and low-income areas. It ensures the right that all people receive equal treatment with regard to environmental justice issues. To read more about Executive Order 12898, visit www.epa.gov/fedrgstr/eo/eo12898.htm.

2.4 OPEN MEETINGS LAW

The State of Iowa established the Open Meetings Law of Iowa in 1999. It states that meetings of governments should be open to the public. The Open Meetings Law, though, does permit some meetings to be conducted in closed session. In regard to the MPO, the Open Meetings Law only applies to meetings of the Executive Committee and the Policy Committee. Where the Open Meetings Law applies, the MPO staff keeps minutes as public records that reflect the date, time, members present, and the actions taken during the meeting. The staff may keep additional records

from meetings that are also public records. Organizations must store public records in an accessible form for public inspection. To read more about Chapter 21 Open Meetings Law of Iowa, visit www.legis.state.ia.us/IACODE/1999/21.

2.5 PUBLIC RECORD LAWS

The State of Iowa also established the Public Records Law of Iowa in 1999. This legislation, with certain statutory exceptions, ensures that every person has a right to examine public records and to copy them. To read more about Chapter 22 Public Records Law of Iowa visit, www.legis.state.ia.us/IACODE/1999/22.

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3 Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization

Collaborating with the Iowa Department of Transportation (DOT), the Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority (DART), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and numerous other agencies, the members of the MPO seek to provide an efficient and equitable surface transportation system for the greater Des Moines metropolitan area.

The MPO includes sixteen voting member cities: Altoona, Ankeny, Bondurant, Carlisle, Clive, Des Moines, Grimes, Johnston, Mitchellville, Norwalk, Pleasant Hill, Polk City, Urbandale, Waukee, West Des Moines, and Windsor Heights. The MPO has two associate, non-voting members: the cities of Cumming and Indianola. Furthermore, the MPO includes unincorporated portions of three member counties: Dallas, Polk, and Warren. The MPO also includes voting membership for DART and non-voting membership for the Heart of Iowa Regional Transit Agency (HIRTA) and the Des Moines International Airport (DSM).

With representation from the participating governments, the MPO consists of three committees, the Transportation Technical Committee (TTC), the Executive Committee, and the Transportation Policy Committee, referred to as the MPO.

The MPO TTC is comprised of city and county engineers, public works directors, community planning directors, DSM staff, DART staff, HIRTA staff, and advisors from the Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA. This committee makes technical recommendations to the MPO Executive Committee.

MPO Executive Committee representatives include the MPO Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary/Treasurer, three At-Large Members, and an Ex-Officio. The MPO Executive Committee reviews transportation policy-related topics and recommends action to the MPO.

The MPO acts upon the recommendations from the MPO Executive Committee. The majority of MPO representatives are local elected officials, city administrators, city managers, DART officials, and advisors from the DSM, HIRTA, Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA.

A full-time professional planning staff supports the three MPO committees and makes recommendations to the MPO TTC. The MPO staff coordinates and prepares the committee meetings, keeps the committees informed of projects and programs, and develops the MPO's final work products and reports.

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4 Public Outreach

4.1 STAKEHOLDERS AND PUBLIC GROUPS

The MPO identified the following groups and individuals as having potential interest in public input and involvement opportunities:

- Neighborhood organizations;
- The Greater Des Moines Partnership, Chambers of Commerce, and other business groups;
- Private transportation providers;
- Groups representing travel modes – trucking, railroad, transit, bicycle, pedestrian;
- Advocacy groups for the disadvantaged, disabled, and/or minority groups;
- Transportation providers for groups that lack access to private vehicles;
- Media – newspapers, television, radio;
- Governmental agencies;
- Schools, environmental organizations, social action groups, and hospitals; and,
- Organizations or individuals interested in the public hearings for major projects, or organizations and individuals that provide comments relating to public hearings for major projects.

4.2 OUTREACH TECHNIQUES

The MPO's public outreach effort consists of three primary components: public meetings, publications, and the MPO website. The TTC, Executive Committee, and the MPO meet monthly. Additionally, the MPO hosts a number of regular roundtable meetings to discuss topics such as freight, public transportation, bicycle and pedestrian transportation, traffic management, and the environment. These roundtables consist of various stakeholders who have a special interest in the topics and work to represent their constituents through the transportation planning process. Additionally, these roundtables provide recommendations and comments to the MPO during the development of major transportation planning projects. All of the TTC, Executive Committee, MPO, and roundtable meetings are open to the public.

The MPO holds the Citizen Transportation Congress semi-annually in an effort to educate the public about the role the MPO plays in the community and to gather comments from the public regarding general transportation issues. The MPO also schedules public meetings for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), with

the intent of disseminating information to the public and soliciting public review and comment on these important documents. Moreover, the MPO holds public meetings to solicit public review and comment on amendments to the MTP and TIP, and to gather feedback on the development of other planning products. When practical and feasible, the MPO supplements public meetings with other public outreach techniques, such as publicly circulated surveys regarding current topics and concerns. The MPO provides the results of any such surveys to the public.

The MPO newsletter, *InTouch*, provides information and updates on plans, programs, and public discussions. Each issue of *InTouch* provides a listing of upcoming MPO events, a summary of recent MPO happenings, and contact information for the MPO staff. In addition to these quarterly newsletter mailings, the MPO publishes special editions of *InTouch* throughout the year to notify the public of scheduled public meetings and events. Any article included in *InTouch* may be used, with the permission of the MPO, in newsletters published by the stakeholders and public groups listed above. The MPO offers both paper and electronic copies of *InTouch*.

Occasionally, the MPO publishes other documents, such as pamphlets, informational brochures, and fact sheets. These materials provide summary information to the public regarding the MPO in general and important transportation planning issues and activities. Like *InTouch*, these documents are available in paper and electronic formats.

The MPO website, www.dmampo.org, contains MPO news as well as information about upcoming events, MPO members and staff, the organization of the MPO, and employment opportunities. The website details MPO activities and committees. Meeting agendas and minutes are available, as is a listing of committee representation. Additionally, the MPO website features a library containing documents, maps, newsletters, press releases, and related documents. The MPO also developed a comment form in order for citizens to leave feedback regarding planning products. In order to further engage the public, educational opportunities related to MPO activities are listed on the website. The MPO regularly updates the website in order to engage citizens.

The MPO also maintains a blog, *MPO on the Go*, which can be found at www.dmampo.wordpress.com. The MPO maintains this blog in an effort to educate area citizens and to improve upon our public participation strategies. The blog features links to a variety of transportation-related articles that may pertain to specific projects in the Des Moines metropolitan

area, to state-level transportation matters, or to national transportation topics. The MPO also utilizes *MPO on the Go* as a tool to educate the public about general planning-related issues occurring in the metropolitan area. Periodically, the MPO requests opinions regarding these posted news items to understand the public perspective. Likewise, when preparing planning products, the MPO may request input from the public via the MPO blog.

During the spring of 2010, the MPO launched a series of online surveys, entitled “The MPO Wants to Know.” These surveys assist the MPO in its understanding of what individuals in the Des Moines metropolitan area think regarding various transportation-related topics. In turn, the MPO is able to incorporate these notions into future plans and projects. A list of available surveys and survey results is available at www.dmampo.org/user/survey.html.

4.3 PUBLIC NOTICE

The MPO provides adequate notice for public meetings and times for public review and comment, particularly as these activities relate to proposed drafts of the MTP and the TIP. The MPO makes notifications and announcements of all upcoming public meetings approximately four weeks in advance of the scheduled meeting via special editions of *InTouch* and postings to the MPO website. The MPO publishes legal notice of public meetings and public review and comment periods in the *Des Moines Register* approximately one week in advance. In addition, the MPO posts meetings agendas and minutes in accordance with the Open Meetings Law of Iowa. The MPO distributes press releases for upcoming public meetings to local media outlets and encourages them to advertise the dates, times, and locations of public meetings and public review and comment periods. The MPO also announces meetings via young professional groups in the Des Moines metropolitan area.

4.4 AVAILABILITY OF INFORMATION

In order to provide reasonable access to information about transportation topics and processes, the MPO posts all publications, meeting notices, and other related information on its website, www.dmampo.org. The MPO posts such publications in PDF format, which uses the free, downloadable Adobe Reader^{®1} software. However, the MPO will provide hard copies of any document upon request. The MPO is available to make presentations about transportation-related

¹ Adobe Reader[®] software allows for the sharing of electronic documents. The software is available for download at <http://get.adobe.com/reader/>.

topics to the stakeholders and public groups listed above. To request a hard copy of a document or to schedule a presentation call (515) 334-0075, fax (515) 334-0098, or email dmampo@dmampo.org.

4.5 PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT

The MPO provides a public review and comment period of 45 calendar days prior to the adoption of the MTP, TIP, PPP, and any other planning document. The MPO hosts public meetings across the greater Des Moines metropolitan area to discuss these documents with the public. In an effort to provide information to the public and solicit public input, public meetings take place during the development of the MTP and during the review periods of the TIP and MTP drafts. Additional public meetings take place as needed.

4.6 VISUALIZATION TECHNIQUES

The MPO incorporates visualization techniques into public outreach activities. The MPO uses large, legible maps during public meetings regarding the development of the MTP and TIP to help demonstrate the location and impact of possible transportation improvements and various network alternatives. Other useful visual aides may include graphs representing various types of data and flow charts to depict the transportation planning process. The MPO also provides online maps that depict the location of various planning activities and transportation projects in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area.

4.7 ACCOMODATIONS FOR UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

The MPO reaches out to populations that are traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems that may face challenges accessing employment and other services. These populations may include low-income and minority households, persons with disabilities, and persons with limited English proficiency. The MPO schedules public meetings at *Americans with Disabilities Act* compliant facilities and at convenient and accessible locations and times. Furthermore, the MPO strives to conduct public meetings at locales along public transportation routes.

The MPO circulates newsletters to all foreign language media outlets in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area, and to stakeholder groups representing low-income, minority, and disabled populations. The MPO also works individually with those needing language translation of

MPO plans or publications to a language other than English. The MPO will need a minimum of two weeks notice to best provide for any special accommodations that may be necessary. Additional information on the MPO's nondiscrimination obligations and procedures for investigating and tracking Title VI complaints can be found in Appendix A of this PPP, or are available upon request by calling (515) 334-0075, or by emailing to dmampo@dmampo.org.

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5 Public Meeting Schedule

Regularly scheduled meetings of the MPO committees are as follows:

- The TTC meets on the first Thursday of every month at 9:30 a.m. at the Des Moines Botanical Center;
- The Executive Committee meets on the second Wednesday of every month at 11:30 a.m. in the Conference Room of the MPO office;
- The MPO meets on the third Thursday of every month at 4:00 p.m. at the Des Moines Botanical Center; and,
- The various roundtable groups and subcommittees meeting times and locations vary. The MPO posts the meeting times and locations on the MPO website at www.dmampo.org.

All meetings of the MPO TTC, MPO Executive Committee, MPO, and roundtable groups and subcommittees are open to the public. Members of the public may request time on the agenda of the TTC or the MPO to comment on specific subjects of interest to the representatives. Citizens should provide two weeks advance notice for requested agenda time. Additionally, the MPO Chair may appoint new subcommittees and working groups to address specific transportation-related topics or areas of interest.

The MPO's public meetings to receive comments on the proposed TIP occur annually. The four-year TIP is developed at the request of the FHWA and identifies regionally significant transportation improvements. It contains four years of transportation improvements the MPO member governments and participating agencies anticipate implementing using federal transportation funds. The MPO holds other public meetings throughout the year, as necessary, to allow for comment on proposed amendments to the approved TIP.

Several public meetings occur in conjunction with the update of the MTP. The MTP addresses transportation planning issues over a twenty year period, at a minimum, and undergoes updates at least every five years. Amendments to the approved MTP also require a public meeting. Because these meetings are infrequent, the MPO schedules them on an as-needed basis.

Additionally, the MPO schedules other public meetings for specific projects or planning-related activities on an as needed basis.

6 Public Input

The MPO accepts input and comments from the public through a variety of means. Members of the public may make comments by calling the MPO at (515) 334-0075. Written comments may be:

- Presented at public meetings;
- Faxed to the MPO at (515) 334-0098;
- Entered on the website comment form at www.dmampo.org/comments.html;
- Emailed to dmampo@dmampo.org; or,
- Mailed to the MPO, Merle Hay Centre – 6200 Aurora Avenue, Suite 300W, Urbandale, IA 50322-2866.

The public may submit comments to their respective TTC or MPO representatives, which are listed on the MPO website, for transmittal to the respective full committees. Citizens can make comments on MPO plans, reports, and programs at public meetings. Additionally, members of the public or a representative of a group with expressed comments on a particular topic may request the MPO Chair appoint them to serve as a citizen representative on the appropriate subcommittee of the TTC or the MPO. Citizens or representatives of special interest groups may request time on a TTC or MPO agenda to offer input to the full committees. The MPO staff shares all public comments and input with the TTC, the Executive Committee, and the MPO either in verbal or written form.

The MPO accepts and considers public input and comments received during the public participation process. When the MPO receives significant written or oral comments regarding the MTP or TIP draft through the public participation process, the MPO includes a summary on the disposition of those comments in the final document. In those instances where a final MTP or TIP differs significantly from the version made available for public comment, the MPO provides an additional opportunity for further public comment on the final version. Additional public comment periods are always at least fifteen calendar days long.

MPO staff is available to speak to public groups, such as neighborhood associations, as another venue for public input. Please contact the MPO office for more information or to schedule a presentation.

7 Coordination and Consultation

The MPO coordinates public participation efforts with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation process, as necessary. The MTP and TIP are developed with due consideration of other related planning activities in the Des Moines metropolitan area, and the MPO consults and/or coordinates with other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities that may be impacted or affected by transportation. Additionally, the MPO involves the appropriate Federal land management agencies in the development of the MTP and TIP, as necessary.

8 Evaluation

The MPO periodically reviews the PPP in order to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures outlined in this document. Following evaluation of the outputs and outcomes of the PPP, the MPO may revise these procedures to incorporate new and innovative ways to involve the public and ensure a full and open participation process. In particular, the MPO will document information regarding attendance at public meetings, record the number of requests or complaints associated with special populations, and solicit feedback on the use of visual aides at public meetings. The MPO reviews this information every year and evaluates the need to revise these procedures.

9 Contact Information

The MPO believes in the role of the public in the 3-C transportation planning process, welcoming all comments from citizens or groups concerning transportation issues. Citizens can contact the MPO by:

Mail: Des Moines Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
Merle Hay Centre – 6200 Aurora Avenue, Suite 300W
Urbandale, IA 50322-2866

Phone: (515) 334-0075

Fax: (515) 334-0098

E-mail: dmampo@dmampo.org

Website: www.dmampo.org/comments.html

Appendix A

Title VI/ADA Procedures

NONDISCRIMINATION OBLIGATIONS

The MPO is obligated to manage its programs and provide planning services to the greater Des Moines metropolitan area without regard to race, color, and national origin. The MPO is further obligated to avoid discrimination based on handicap or disability.

ACCOMMODATIONS

The MPO schedules public meetings at convenient and accessible locations, and at times and facilities compliant with the *Americans with Disabilities Act*. The MPO sends newsletters to all foreign language media outlets in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area, as well as to stakeholder groups representing low-income, minority, and disabled populations.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons are those people in the greater Des Moines metropolitan area that may have difficulty interpreting documents prepared by the MPO in English. The MPO analyzed language proficiency statistics from the 2000 decennial Census and found relatively small LEP populations within the Des Moines metropolitan area. According to the Census, 3.9% of the MPO population speaks Spanish, 2.6% speaks other Indo-European languages, 2.1% speaks Asian or Pacific Islander languages, and 0.4% speaks other languages. The following chart details the ability of these groups to speak English “well.”

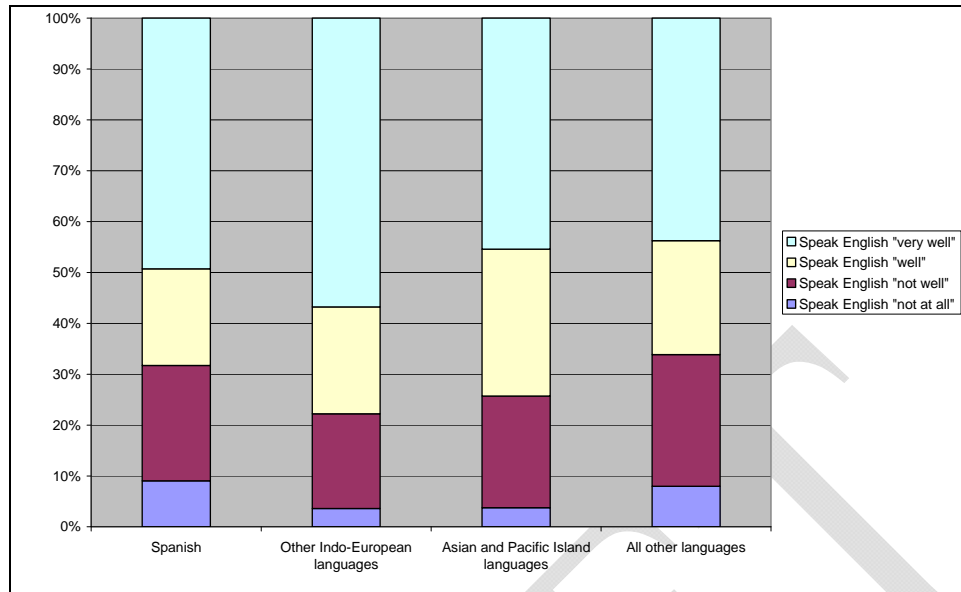


Figure 9.1 Ability to speak English.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau's 2000 Census.

In total, persons speaking English “not well” or “not at all” total 2.5% of the total MPO population. The Spanish speaking population was the greatest segment of the MPO that have difficulties understanding English, totaling 1.2% of the MPO population.

With these concerns in mind, the MPO is committed to providing its materials to all citizens within the MPO planning area boundary. The MPO encourages LEP persons to contact the MPO for translation services of MPO documents. Upon request, the MPO will work with local organizations to obtain translations of the desired documents within a reasonable period. The MPO also will ensure that a notice of the availability of translation services is included in relevant MPO documents and written in the language of large LEP populations.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURES

Persons wishing to file a formal discrimination complaint may do so by completing the Title VI Complaint Form, which is available by contacting the MPO. Persons should send the form to the MPO's designated Title VI Coordinator, Stephanie Ripperger. Within ten calendar days, the MPO will forward this form and any additional information to the Iowa DOT Title VI Coordinator, Roger Bierbaum. The Iowa DOT will conduct an investigation into the complaint and make a recommendation to the FHWA, which will make the final determination. The Iowa DOT and the

MPO will inform the person filing the complaint of the final determination.

RECORD KEEPING

The MPO's civil rights specialist maintains a log of all complaints and the disposition of those complaints. The MPO maintains files of each complaint for a period of no less than seven years. The MPO staff annually provides a summary of discrimination complaints to the MPO Policy Committee. At the time of this publication, the MPO has yet to receive any discrimination complaints.

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MPO Public Participation Process Summary

Planning Document or Activity	Public Participation Procedures
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Public input meetings will be held during the development of the MTP; ○ The draft and final MTP will be made available on the MPO website; ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of the public comment period; ○ Forty-five calendar day public comment and review period; and, ○ At least one public input meeting will be held for the completed draft MTP.
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The draft and final TIP will be made available on the MPO website; ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of the public comment period; ○ Forty-five calendar day public comment and review period; and, ○ At least one public input meeting will be held for the draft TIP.
MTP and TIP Amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The proposed MTP and TIP Amendments will be made available on the MPO website; ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of public comment periods; ○ Forty-five calendar day public comment and review period; and, ○ At least one public input meeting will be held for proposed MTP and TIP Amendments.
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The draft and final PPP will be made available on the MPO website; ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of the public comment period; ○ Forty-five calendar day public comment and review period; and, ○ At least one public input meeting will be held for the draft PPP.
Congestion Management Process, Corridor Studies and Other Significant Planning Documents or Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ These documents will be made available on the MPO website; ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of the public comment period; and, ○ Forty-five calendar day public comment and review period.
Additional Public Comment Period, as necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legal notice will be published one week prior to the beginning of the public comment period; and, ○ At least a fifteen Calendar Day public comment and review period.