

BAY COUNTY TRANSPORTATION PLANNING ORGANIZATION
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN
STAFFED BY THE EMERALD COAST REGIONAL COUNCIL



Public Participation Plan

Bay County Transportation Planning Organization

2021

Bay County Transportation Planning Organization

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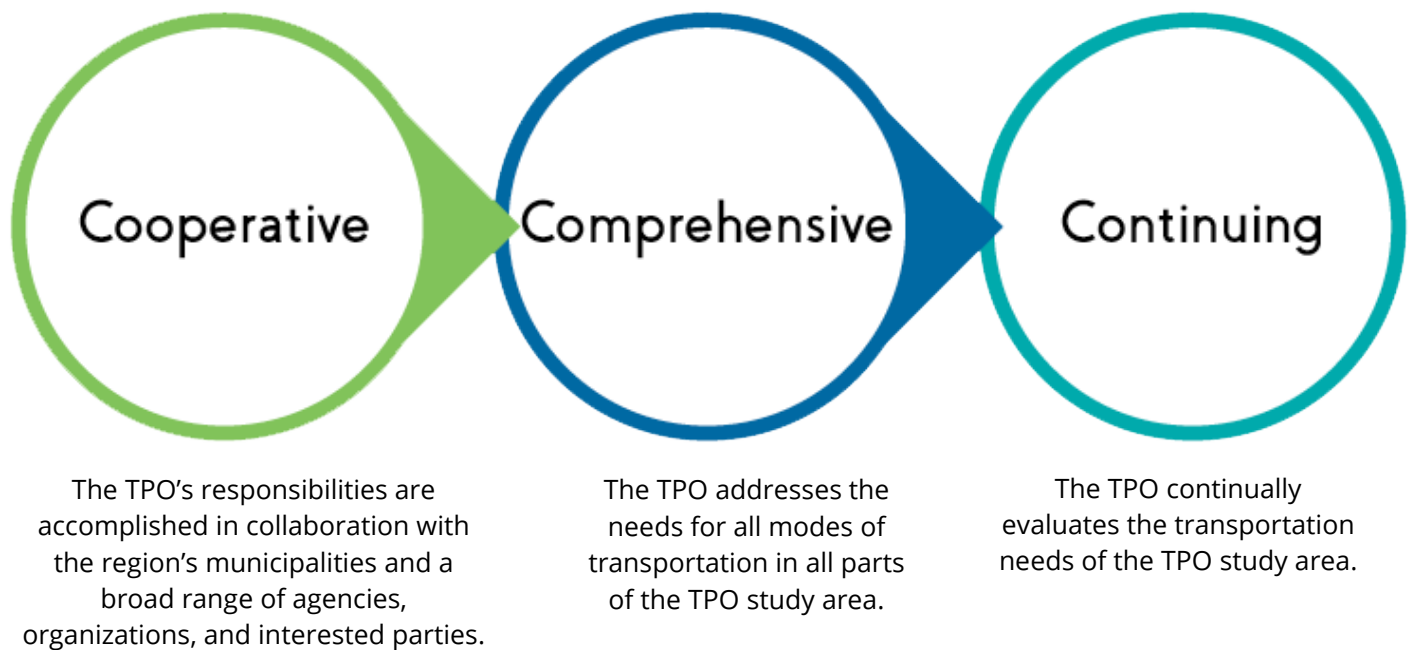
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SUMMARY

The transportation planning process blends technical analysis and input from public and private transportation partners to identify priorities, choices, and risks to the transportation system within the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) study area. It is also used to distribute resources for future investments. Long-range planning is required to be eligible for federal and state transportation funding assistance, given the vast amount of money invested in the system each year.

A TPO is designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. This process is accomplished through a forum of **cooperative**, **comprehensive**, and **continuing** transportation decision making.



TPOs are established in a study area with a population of 50,000 or more, determined by the U.S. Census. The Bay County TPO is the policy board for the urbanized areas within Bay County, Fla. The principal responsibilities of the Bay County TPO include the development of a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), a 20-year Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), a five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a Congestion Management Process (CMP), a Public Participation Plan (PPP), and related planning studies and projects deemed necessary to address transportation issues in the Bay County TPO study area.

The Bay County TPO created the Public Participation Plan (PPP) to provide guidelines for achieving optimal engagement of the public when developing major planning documents and programs. Quality public participation is solicited early and continues throughout the planning process, helping to avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative project impacts while providing the best solutions for the community. Public input is often used in the development of plan or program goals, objectives, criteria, and overall recommendations to the TPO board.

The primary goals of the Bay County TPO PPP are to:

Inform the Public *Inform the public, to the maximum extent possible with available resources, of opportunities to participate in the transportation decision-making process.*

Involve the Public *Involve the public early and often in the transportation planning process.*

Include the Public *Reach out to the geographical, organizational, and demographic communities that compose the TPO study area to increase the public's opportunity to participate in developing transportation plans and services.*

Improve the Public Participation Process *Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation process.*

The PPP is assessed on a quarterly basis to ensure effectiveness as trends and technologies change. All major or minor changes proposed for the plan are reviewed annually and implementation of major updates initiate a 45-day review period. Changes to the plan are posted online and a link to the document with changes is provided to the TPO board, advisory committees, interested parties, and partners.

Preparation of this document was supported in part with funds provided by FHWA, FTA, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) through a cooperative agreement with the Bay County TPO. Development of the plan was made possible by leadership from the Bay County TPO; public comments; and input, review, and discussion provided by the Bay County Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) and Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC).

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www.ecrc.org/BayTPO



Call and leave your input!

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Intent of the Public Participation Plan

The test of successful public participation is the level of early awareness and the quantity, quality, and relevance of feedback received. A process that involves the public in a project's beginning stages fosters buy-in and better overall acceptance of plans and programs.



The PPP is designed to identify strategies to gather public input most effectively for the Bay County TPO to use throughout the planning process and in the development of transportation plans and programs. Techniques for most effectively reaching the public are reviewed and updated to meet changing technologies and trends. The appropriate level of public involvement will vary by product. The minimum requirements for TPO core products and plans are addressed in the *TPO Works Plans and Programs* section of this document. The strategies and techniques for reaching the public are assessed for effectiveness using the methodology outlined in the *Assessment of Public Participation Strategies* section of this plan.

Bay County TPO Policy on Public Participation

The Code of Federal Regulations (450.316(b)(1)) and the Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Handbook outline public involvement requirements for defining a process for involving the public in the transportation planning process. The Bay County TPO is committed to providing stakeholders with opportunities to provide input for transportation plans and programs. Likewise, the FHWA and FDOT encourage the TPO to solicit public input in all efforts.

It is the policy of the Bay County TPO to:

- Provide complete and easy to understood information for all segments of the public, particularly those affected by the outcomes and/or special populations
- Support early and continuous involvement of the public in the development and implementation of transportation plans and programs
- Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation process



Federal Requirements for Public Participation

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act was signed into law on Dec. 4, 2015. The FAST Act authorizes \$305 billion over fiscal year (FY) 2016 - 2020 for federal-aid highways, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, as well as research, technology, and statistics programs.

The FAST Act:

- Maintains focus on safety (keeping intact the established structure of various highway-related programs)
- Continues efforts to streamline project delivery
- Provides a dedicated source of federal funds for freight projects

The FAST Act allows states and local governments to move forward with critical transportation projects with confidence that they will have a federal partner long term. The FAST Act is the first long-term surface transportation authorization enacted in the last 10 years that provides long-term funding certainty. Policies and programs of the FAST Act are administered by FHWA. Learn more about the FAST Act at <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/fastact>.

The Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21), enacted in 2012, included provisions to make federal surface transportation more streamlined, performance-based, multimodal, and to address challenges facing the U.S. transportation system. This includes improving safety, maintaining infrastructure condition, reducing traffic congestion, improving efficiency of the system, freight movement, protecting the environment, and reducing delays in project delivery. The FAST Act builds on changes made by MAP-21.

Setting the course for transportation investment in highways, the FAST Act:

- Improves mobility on America's highways
- Creates jobs and supports economic growth
- Accelerates project delivery and promotes innovation

These changes will improve innovation and efficiency in the development of projects from the planning and environmental review process, through project delivery.



Achieving the Best Public Participation

Federal and state laws require the transportation planning process to include proactive public participation that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to key decisions.

The Bay County TPO maintains public participation opportunities for transportation plans and programs for impacted communities through a wide range of methods, including but not limited to, board and advisory committees, public meetings and workshops, specialized outreach to community organizations, continuous public comment opportunities, news releases, eblasts, enewsletters, and social media.

Staff works to maintain good relationships with members of the local media to raise awareness of public participation opportunities in transportation planning.

The TPO holds meetings at locations easily accessible to the geographically diverse urbanized area of Panama City, Fla. All meetings are noticed for the public and promoted through local media. When possible, public meetings and workshops are held at facilities offering free public parking and accessibility to transit. All public meetings and workshops of the Bay County TPO and its advisory committees are held in Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant venues. Locations must be accessible and meet the Florida Building code Chapter 11 accessibility standards of design, per Florida Statute 286.26.

All public notices and media promotion provide the following notice for reasonable accommodations in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act:

Additionally, the Bay County TPO provides an opportunity for the public to comment at public meetings during public forum. The Bay County TPO recognizes the importance of reaching out to communities through social media tools such as [Facebook](#). Often, they provide an efficient medium to communicate with the public. Incorporation of these media is determined on a case-by-case basis. Comments with abusive language or those deemed off topic may be deleted at the discretion of Bay County TPO staff. For more details about the social media policy, contact [Public Involvement](#) at 850-332-7976.

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations to access meeting, and for limited English proficiency, are available upon request. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services should contact [Public Involvement](#) toll-free 800-226-8914 or TTY 711, at least 48 hours in advance. Para informacion en espanol, puede llamar a Ada Clark al 850-332-7976, ext. 278 o TTY 711. Si necesita acomodaciones especiales, por favor llame 48 horas de antemano.

Participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who believe they have been discriminated against on these conditions may file a complaint with the [Title VI Coordinator](#), 850-332-7976, ext. 220.



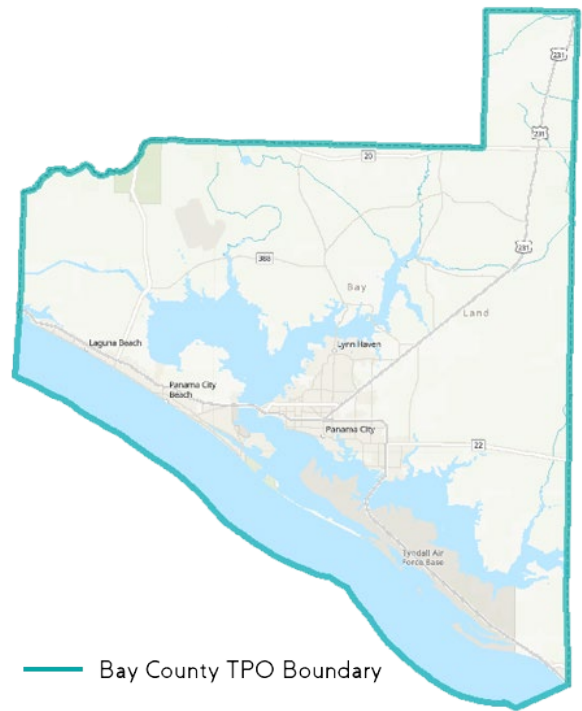
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

History

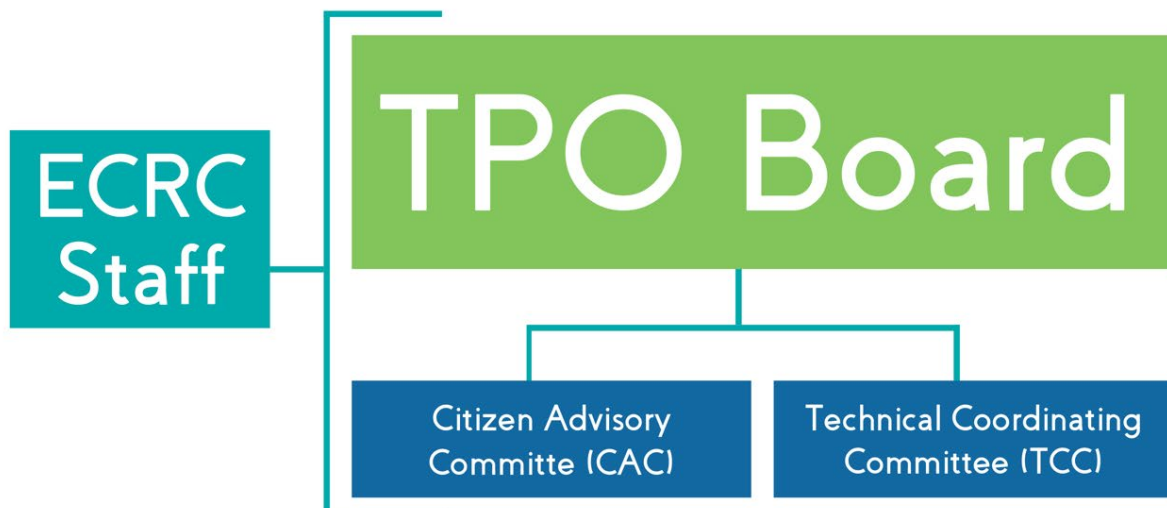
In 1981, the Panama City Urbanized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created under the authority of Chapter 163 of the Florida Statutes, as a mechanism to conduct a **cooperative**, **comprehensive**, and **continuing** planning process for the transportation needs of the Panama City urbanized area.

Due to growth in the region, the Panama City Urbanized MPO is now known as the Bay County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO). The Bay County TPO board is the governing body for the transportation planning process, consisting of elected officials representing the following local governments: Bay County, Callaway, Lynn Haven, Mexico Beach, Panama City, Panama City Beach, and Parker.

The Bay County TPO now includes the entire county in addition to the urbanized area. Authority is granted under the amended 23 USC 134 in Section 1201(a) §134 (F)(2)(a) (Coordination in Multistate Areas). The TPO staff is comprised of a CEO, Transportation Manager, TPO Coordinator, Transportation Planners, Public Involvement Coordinators, Public Relations Manager, accounting, and administrative staff support. In addition, two advisory committees report directly to the TPO Board to ensure citizen participation and technical expertise are included in the transportation planning process. The following information provides a brief description of these committees.



TPO Structure



Transportation Planning Organization Board

The Bay County TPO is the local, intergovernmental transportation policy board for Bay County, Fla. The board is comprised of local government officials who make decisions regarding transportation at the regional level. The TPO works to increase safety, security, accessibility, mobility, and connectivity for people and goods.

Membership of the Bay County TPO board is comprised of elected officials from the following municipalities:

BAY COUNTY TPO MEMBERSHIP

MUNICIPALITY	NUMBER OF REPRESENTATIVE SEATS
Bay County	5
City of Callaway	2
City of Lynn Haven	2
City of Mexico Beach	1
City of Panama City	5
City of Panama City Beach	2
City of Parker	1
City of Springfield	1

The number of representatives for each area is based on urban population.



The TPO board meets a minimum of five times a year, on the fourth Wednesday of the meeting month at 3:30 p.m. The TPO meeting schedule can be found **online** at www.ecrc.org/BayTPOMeeting. A print copy of the TPO schedule is available **upon request**.

Citizen Advisory Committee

The Bay County CAC is comprised of members of the public who express an interest in transportation planning. Prospective members complete an application process and must be recommended for approval by the CAC and ultimately approved by the TPO board. Following approval, members serve at the pleasure of the TPO board. A maximum of 30 voting members may serve on the CAC.

Citizens are welcome to apply directly through the TPO website for membership. General applications will be held for one year and verified for updated information annually.

The CAC application is available online at www.ecrc.org/BayPublicInvolvement.



The CAC meets a minimum of five times per year, prior to the TPO Board. The meeting schedule can be found on the ECRC website at www.ecrc.org/BayTPOMeetings. A print copy of the TPO schedule is available **upon request**.

Technical Coordinating Committee

The Bay County TCC is comprised of local government technical staff, membership is appointed by the local governments. This committee participates in the planning process by providing technical advice to the TPO board on local transportation efforts, issues, and priorities.



The TCC meets a minimum of five times per year, prior to the TPO Board. The meeting schedule can be found on the ECRC website at www.ecrc.org/BayTPOMeetings. A print copy of the TPO schedule is available **upon request**.

Interested Parties

Community members can receive updates from the Bay County TPO on information regarding public meetings, plans, programs, and committees. To subscribe visit www.ecrc.org/BaySubscribe.

All public meetings and workshops are publicly noticed seven days in advance through; the Okaloosa-Walton TPO website calendar, digital eblast to interested parties list, and news release to local media. Okaloosa-Walton TPO board, committees, and other public agendas, as well as meeting schedules can be found online at www.ecrc.org/BayTPO. A printed copy of the TPO schedule and public meeting agendas are available upon request.

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Stakeholders

A stakeholder is defined as any person or group that is affected by transportation plans or programs, including those who may not be aware they are affected.

The following groups and individuals are considered stakeholders in the transportation planning process and the audience for various communication tools and outreach efforts:

- Transportation agencies; freight and passenger railroads; logistics providers
- Media
- Homeowners/neighborhood associations
- Civic and advocacy groups
- Business community
- Interested parties expressing an interest in transportation planning
- Area Chambers of Commerce and Economic Development Agencies
- Environmental groups
- Pedestrian and bicycle users
- Special populations and groups
- Large employers
- Boards of education
- Other stakeholders identified by the TPO in outreach efforts

Governments and Agencies

In developing TPO plans and programs, the TPO will consult with governments, agencies, and officials responsible for other planning activities within the TPO study area that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process with such planning activities. In addition, the TPO will develop the transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area. [23 C.F.R. 450.316(a)(3)(b)]

The TPO will include appropriate Tribal governments, Federal land management agencies, state and local land use management and environmental agencies including historic preservation in all phases of the TPO plans and programs. Technical staff from such agencies will be encouraged to provide input based on agency plans, mitigation strategies, policies and/or programs. This input may be provided by electronic communication, participation on committees, or one-on-one meetings.

Although there are no public lands and/or Indian Tribal lands in the Bay County TPO study area, the TPO strives to include tribal governments for insight on planning efforts such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, Project Priorities, and other products. Generally, correspondence between the TPO and Native American tribes is conducted using electronic communications. The following Native American tribes are included:

- Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida
- Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians
- Muscogee (Creek) Nation
- Poarch Band of Creek Indians
- Seminole Tribe of Florida

TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Each public participation process provides an opportunity to develop methods to reach traditionally underserved populations, such as minorities and low-income. Potential underserved populations may also include youth, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens.



Identification of Special Populations

U.S. Census data is used to identify the Bay County TPO study area demographics which include, race, age, and limited English proficiency communities. Coordinating with agencies throughout the study area that serve special populations aids in the identification of traditionally underserved populations.

Outreach efforts are recorded via interactive map with demographic data and projects, with emphasized attention paid to special populations that may be affected by TPO plans and programs. Mapping this data shows corresponding projects relative to communities that would be most impacted and allows staff to identify populations most affected by the plans and programs. The interactive map, along with U.S. Census demographic data, is utilized to focus outreach efforts in communities of traditionally underserved and limited English proficiency populations. Enhanced outreach methods, such as community pop-up events, can be implemented to involve traditionally hard to reach populations in the transportation planning process. Additionally, the [Citizen Advisory Committee](#) ensures all members of the public have every opportunity to be involved in the transportation planning process.



Environmental Justice

In 1994, a presidential executive order directed federal agencies to address the effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

The Bay County TPO's environmental justice initiatives accomplish this by adhering to three fundamental principles:

- To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse health and environmental effects (including social and economic) on minority populations and low-income populations
- To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process
- To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations

Properly implemented, environmental justice principles and procedures improve all levels of transportation decision-making. It enhances the public participation process, strengthens community-based partnerships, and provides minority and low-income populations with opportunities to improve the quality of transportation in their lives. Further, environmental justice assists to avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on underserved populations and mitigates avoidable negative impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phases.

Any proposed projects entered into the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) environmental screening tool allow for the opportunity to incorporate environmental considerations into transportation planning and engage resource agencies and support the environmental policy of FDOT "to help preserve and enhance Florida's natural, physical, cultural, and social environment as we develop, implement, and maintain transportation facilities and services" ([Policy No.: 000- 625-001-I](#)). The [ETDM tool](#) provides citizens with the opportunity to direct comments to FDOT, resource agencies, and other stakeholders. The opportunity for early input and consideration of the environment in transportation planning will be included in the LRTP process as needed.



Title VI, ADA, and LEP

The Bay County TPO is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, denied the benefits of, or otherwise subjected to discrimination under any of its programs, activities, or services on the basis of race, color, or national origin. All persons, regardless of their citizenship, are covered under this regulation. In addition, the Bay County TPO prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in its employment and business opportunities.

As an FTA and FDOT fund recipient, the Bay County TPO will ensure that its programs, policies, and activities comply with both FTA and FDOT Title VI Regulations of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The Bay County TPO will not condone retaliation against an individual for his/her involvement in asserting his/her rights pursuant to Title VI or because he/she filed a complaint or participated in an investigation under Title VI, and/or these regulations.

The Bay County TPO's Title VI Policy and Plan outlines policy of inclusivity and procedure for handling complaints of discrimination. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan, included in the Title VI Policy and Plan, identifies limited English proficient populations in the Bay County TPO study area and provides guidelines to ensure that information and services are accessible to LEP persons. With adequate notice, the TPO provides assistance to citizens who are hearing and visually impaired, of limited English proficiency, transportation disadvantaged, or have other specifically special needs, at all public meetings and workshops. For more details, please review the [Title VI Policy and Plan](#).



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOALS AND TECHNIQUES

Goal 1: Inform the Public

Inform the public, to the maximum extent possible with available resources, of opportunities to participate in the transportation decision-making process.



Techniques:

- Provide meeting agendas to TPO board and advisory committee members
- Provide adequate public notice by:
 - Posting all public meetings and workshops on the TPO website calendar and community calendars (where available)
 - Sending news releases via email to local media, including special population media outlets
 - Sending meeting notices via email to community groups, organizations, and other stakeholders through the interested contact parties list (interested parties may subscribe [online](#))
 - Placing a public notice in the Federal Administrative Register for review and adoption of core documents and amendments to core products*
- Include the website URL on all TPO meeting and workshop posts and news releases, so that the public can easily access meeting information
- Include provisions in public notices for interested persons to respond by phone or email
- Set up educational displays at public events, including those in traditionally underserved communities
- Speak at local organizations, schools, neighborhoods, and other interested groups about transportation planning
- Give interviews on local TV/radio news programs to educate the public regarding transportation planning issues and the role of residents
- Publish updates in the TPO enewsletter to inform the public of the TPO's accomplishments and to solicit public participation
- Make all information available at Emerald Coast Regional Council or by mail for interested parties with no computer access
- Schedule pop-up events in various communities to reach broader demographic of the study area
- Implement virtual workshops and etown halls whenever possible to allow remote engagement in the transportation process
- Host nontraditional outreach and workshops to garner input from special populations
- Utilize social media, when appropriate, to promote participation opportunities, workshops, and meetings

***Core products include:** Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Congestion Management Process (CMP), and Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Emergency Meetings

The TPO or advisory committee Chairman may call for an emergency meeting of their respective board or committee when, in their opinion, an emergency exists which requires immediate action. When such meetings are called, each member shall be notified of the meeting date, time, location, and purpose. No business, other than the notified purpose, shall be addressed at that meeting.

If after reasonable diligence, it becomes impossible to give notice to each member, such failure shall not affect the legality of the emergency meeting if a quorum is present. The minutes of each emergency meeting shall show the manner and method by which notice of such meeting was given to each member of the TPO.

Emergency meetings should be scheduled to allow seven day public notice, whenever possible, and will be noticed as described above. In the event seven days public notice is not possible, at least a 24-hour advance public notice of the emergency meeting shall be given to local media services before the time the meeting is held.

Special Meetings

A special meeting may be called by the TPO or advisory committee Chairman or a majority of the voting members at a regular meeting. When such meetings are called, each member shall be notified of the meeting date, time, location, and purpose. No business, other than the notified purpose, shall be addressed at that meeting.

In the event that the Chairman wishes to cancel or change the time of a special meeting, advance notice of such cancellation or change shall be made as soon as practicable or at least 24 hours prior to when such meeting was to have taken place.

Special meetings should be scheduled to allow seven day public notice, whenever possible, and will be noticed as described above.

Goal 2: Involve the Public

Involve the public early and often in the transportation planning process.

Techniques:

- Maintain active advisory committees allowing residents the opportunity to participate in the continuous planning process
- Review CAC composition to ensure that equitable representation is maintained for the region
- Include a feature on the TPO's [website](#) allowing the public to email staff with questions or comments
- Create surveys, when appropriate to be administered at TPO meetings, workshops, events, etc.
- Ensure all digital comments are responded to by forwarding to the appropriate member of the transportation planning team
- Inform TPO board members of recommendations from the CAC and TCC
- Allocate time for public comment on the TPO board and committees' agenda

Goal 3: Include the Public

Reach out to the geographical, organizational, and demographic communities of the TPO study area to increase the public's opportunity to participate in developing transportation plans and services.

Techniques:

- Participate in community outreach events, maintaining a focus to include traditionally underserved communities
- Take advantage of training opportunities and learn from the experiences of other TPOs
- Learn about the communities that comprise the TPO area by attending festivals, special events, lectures, etc. that highlight the diversity of the area
- Continually add interested parties to email database
- Coordinate with local government redevelopment agencies and non-profit agencies that serve special populations
- Include in TPO public notices that upon request, with adequate notice, assistance will be provided to the hearing and visually impaired, those with limited English proficiency, the transportation disadvantaged, and others requiring specific special assistance

Goal 4: Improve the Public Participation Process

Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation process.

Techniques:

- Identify opportunities to improve and create innovative strategies that will reach greater and more diverse populations in the study area
- Conduct quarterly assessments of public participation techniques and adjust strategies as needed to improve effectiveness and reach set performance measure targets
- Utilize web-based analytics tools to track the performance of online public outreach strategies
- Continue expansion of regional interagency coordination of public participation activities, particularly when projects may directly involve residents from adjacent counties



Methods for Achieving Good Public Involvement

Public Meetings

- A summary of workshop reach, attendance, and comments to be discussed at quarterly assessment
- Provide adequate public notice by:
 - Posting all public meetings and workshops on the TPO website calendar and community calendars (where available)**
 - Sending news releases via email to local media, including special population media outlets**
 - Sending meeting notices via email to community groups, organizations, and other stakeholders through the interested contact parties list (interested parties may subscribe [online](#))**
 - Placing a public notice in the Federal Administrative Register for review and adoption of core documents and amendments to core products *

***Core products include:** Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Congestion Management Process (CMP), and Public Participation Plan (PPP).

**** Includes:** In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, reasonable accommodations to access meeting, and for limited English proficiency, are available upon request. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services should contact [Public Involvement](#) toll-free at 800-226-8914 or TTY 711, at least 48 hours in advance. Para informacion en espanol, puede llamar a Ada Clark al 850-332-7976, ext. 278 o TTY 711. Si necesita acomodaciones especiales, por favor llame 48 horas de antemano.

Participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, or family status. Persons who believe they have been discriminated against on these conditions may file a complaint with the [Title VI Coordinator](#), 850-332-7976, ext. 220.



Public Workshops

Same steps as public meetings (above) and may also include:

- Print collateral mailed to residents/property owners/business owners within project area of interest
- Social media promotion of the opportunity
- Tailored activities and presentations to include flip charts, maps, surveys, and/or handouts as needed

Online Workshops/Virtual Town Halls

Can be held independent of, or in coordination with, a standing public workshop or meeting. Same steps as public meetings (above) and may also include:

- Live Q & A session
- Live streaming of presentations
- Social media promotion of the opportunity

Nontraditional Outreach/Workshops

Same steps as public meetings (above) and may also include:

- Social media promotion of the opportunity
- Tailored activities and collateral to include flip charts, maps, surveys, and/or handouts as needed

Civic Outreach

- Eblasts to TPO board and advisory committees, partners, stakeholders, community groups, and interested parties (subscribe online at www.ecrc.org)
- Tailored activities and presentations to include flip charts, maps, surveys, and/or handouts as needed

Networking Events

- Tailored collateral to include handouts as needed

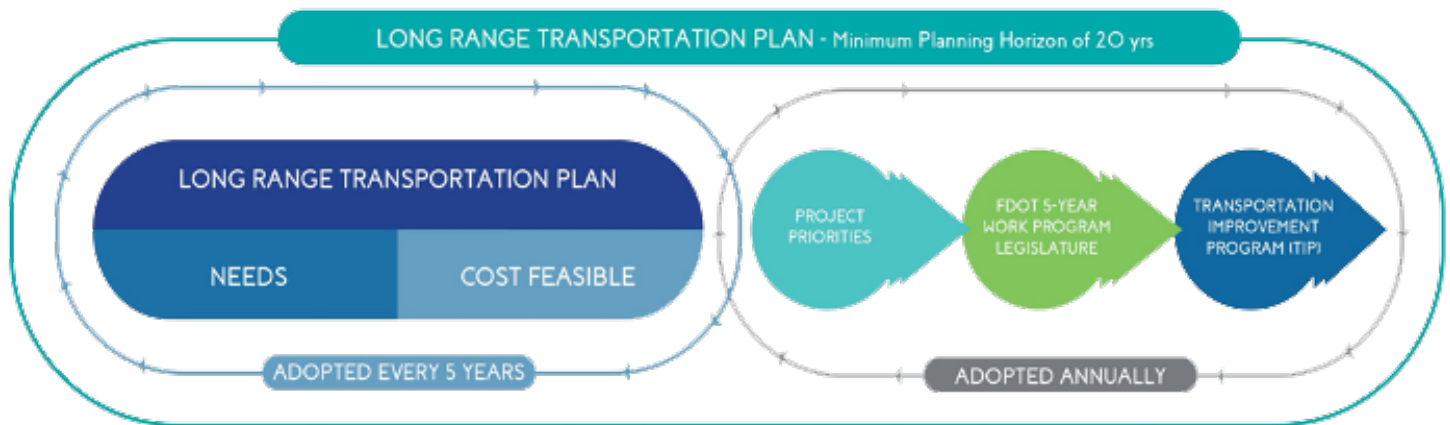
Educational Institution Outreach

- Simplified and tailored activities and collateral to include flip charts, maps, surveys, and/or handouts
- Educational activities, such as StreetMix, will be used to educate students on the transportation planning process



TPO WORK PLANS AND PROGRAMS

The Bay County TPO continuously develops and updates several plans and programs. In exercising its authority to guide the expenditure of federal and state transportation funds, it is critical for the PPP to provide complete information and timely public notice, and to support continuing involvement of the public in the development of plans and programs. The Bay County TPO operates on an annual cycle with a fiscal year of July 1 through June 30.

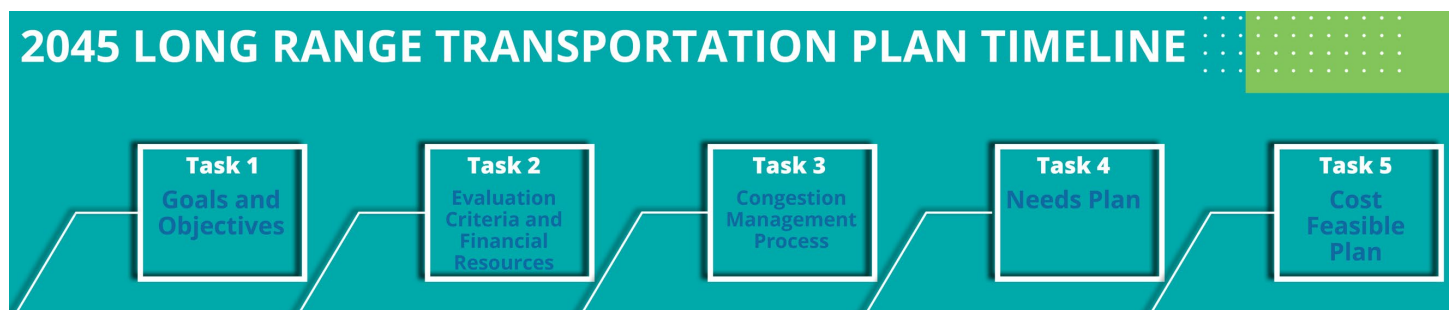


The graphic above displays the TPO process.

Long Range Transportation Plan

The Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is a federally required plan, updated every five years, that addresses future transportation needs for a minimum of twenty years. The LRTP, a major product of the TPO, details a variety of tasks to be accomplished during the on a 21-month update process, including the tasks outlined in the following infographic:

Public involvement strategies for each LRTP update should include a variety of outreach activities designed to solicit feedback, which aid in the development of LRTP goals, objectives, evaluation criteria, and the final plan. Public involvement strategies should be implemented in all stages of the process to garner input from stakeholders of all ages, communities, and interests, and must subscribe to the following explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes, as outlined by the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR 450.316) and the MPO Handbook.



The graphic above displays the LRTP Update process, that occurs every 5 years.

Public Involvement strategies for LRTP are:

- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the LRTP on the [website](#) and at the TPO office at West Florida Regional Planning Council
- Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decisions, such as but not limited to the approval of the LRTP
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during plan development process
- Employ visualization techniques to describe the LRTP
- Make the LRTP and any associated information available on the TPO website
- Hold public meetings at convenient times and accessible locations
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to, low-income and minority households
- Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under 23 C.F.R. Subpart B
- Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan
- When significant written and oral comments are received on a draft LRTP (including the financial plan) as a result of public involvement, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final LRTP
- If the final LRTP differs significantly from the one made available for public comment or raises new material issues, an additional opportunity for public comment must be made available

General techniques for LRTP Update:

- Review the previous major update process public participation report, quarterly assessment reports, etc.
- Research and review similar public involvement plans, new methods, and trends for community outreach
- Develop a slogan, message, and design collateral
- Develop public participation timeline that outlines specific milestones for engaging the public
- Develop list of partners, stakeholders, and community groups to engage in the update process
- Develop and distribute of E-Blasts
- Strategic use of traditional and social media
- Develop effective visual aids such as maps, charts, and graphs
- Develop surveys and comments cards
- Coordinate presentations at regular local government and community organizations' meetings
- Coordinate focused outreach to engage special populations
- Coordinate Steering Committee meetings
- Coordinate public workshops at key points in the development of the long range transportation plan
- Develop Public Involvement Report to document all aspects of the public involvement efforts during the development of the plan update
- Include in public notice of the TPO board meeting when draft LRTP is to be presented for review and adoption

Any proposed project entered in [FDOT's ETDM](#) environmental screening tool provides stakeholders the opportunity for public comment.

Strategies used by the TPO may include:

Outreach

- Identification of stakeholders, organizations, special populations, tribal organizations, and media outlets
- News releases/articles
- Radio/TV interviews
- Public Notices
- Creation and distribution of surveys, as deemed necessary
- Public open houses, workshops, and forums
- Presentations to specific groups
- Comment cards
- Use of GIS maps
- Visualization techniques, such as educational videos, maps, interactive activities, renderings, etc.

Awareness/Education

- Enewsletters
- Email marketing
- Social media
- Dedicated section on the TPO website

Documentation

- Compilation of comments
 - Photos of outreach activities
 - Oral and written comments to be posted to the website along with drafts
 - Documentation of outreach opportunity assessment*
- *More details of the quarterly assessment process can be found on page 31.



Project Priorities and Transportation Improvement Program

The Project Priorities result from the LRTP's Cost Feasible Plan and are reviewed with the public and the TPO board and advisory committees annually. Once adopted by the TPO board, the Project Priorities are given to FDOT to develop the Five-Year Work Program. From the Five-Year Work Program, the TPO develops the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), which contains all transportation programs and projects scheduled during the next five-year cycle. The TIP is revised annually and is available, in interactive format, on the TPO's [website](#).

The Project Priorities and TIP must be developed by the TPO in consultation with all interested parties and, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for the following, as outlined by the Code of Federal Regulation (CFR 450.316) and the MPO Handbook:

- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used
- Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decisions, such as but not limited to the approval of the TIP/Project Priorities
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during plan development process
- Make the TIP and Project Priorities drafts and final documents available on the TPO [website](#)
- Hold public meetings at convenient times and accessible locations
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to, low-income and minority households
- Coordinate with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under 23 C.F.R. Subpart B, as described in the [FDOT MPO Program Management Handbook](#)
- Periodically review the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan
- When significant written and oral comments are received on a draft TIP or Project Priorities as a result of public involvement, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final documents
- If the final Project Priorities/TIP differ significantly from the one made available for public comment or raises new material issues, an additional opportunity for public comment must be made available
- When the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) includes Indian tribal lands, the TPO shall appropriately involve the Indian tribal government(s)
- When the MPA includes federal public lands, the TPO shall appropriately involve the federal government

General techniques proven effective include:

- Provide a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft Project Priorities documents
- Promote development of the Project Priorities and TIP through news releases and social media, and eblast to TPO board and advisory committees, partners, stakeholders, community groups, and interested parties (subscribe [online](#))
- Hold public workshop(s) and implement additional project-specific outreach, as needed, to special populations during the Project Priorities process
- Coordinate public outreach to community groups (with emphasis on the underserved)
- Include public input collected at workshops in the draft Project Priorities and TIP
- Include in the public notice of the TPO board meeting when the draft Project Priorities and TIP are to be presented for review and adoption
- Provide the public with an opportunity to comment during public forum when the draft Project Priorities and TIP are presented for review and adoption to the TPO board and advisory committee meetings
- Publish adopted Project Priorities and TIP interactive site (provided by FDOT) on [website](#)

As previously described with the LRTP, any proposed project entered into the [FDOT's ETDM](#) environmental screening tool provides stakeholders the opportunity for public comment.

Unified Planning Work Program

The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is the document that details the tasks assigned to the TPO staff and the projected funding to cover those tasks within the fiscal year. The plan covers a two-year period but is revised annually to refine task descriptions and reflect changes necessary within the forecasted financial management schedule. The UPWP must be made available for comment to the public, federal agencies, and interested parties.

Below are some of the steps utilized to update and revise the UPWP:

- Provide a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft UPWP
- Include in the public notice of TPO board meeting when draft is to be presented for review and adoption
- Provide the public with an opportunity to comment during public forum when the draft is presented for review and adoption
- Publish adopted document online at www.ecrc.org/BayTPO

Amendments

Amendments are revisions that may involve the addition or deletion of a major project, a major change in project cost, or a major change in design concept or design scope. Amendments require a formal public review and comment period.

A 30-day formal comment period will be implemented for major LRTP amendments and the public participation procedures may vary based on the nature of the amendment. TPO board staff, with TPO board consultation, will make this determination based on the project, the nature of the change, the number of counties affected, and the impact on the planning process. Because of the wide variability in what an amendment can include, the TPO reserves the right to determine what participation techniques are appropriate, recognizing that outreach measures should fit the amendment content. At all times, the

public, interested parties, policy makers, and partners are able to obtain the full extent of information about each project change. Review and adoption of amendments to core documents, by the TPO board, will be noticed in the Florida Administrative Register.

Below are some of the steps utilized for amendments to major documents or plans:

- Provide a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft document or plan
- Include in the public notice of the TPO board meeting when the draft document or plan is to be presented for review and adoption
- Provide the public with an opportunity to comment during public forum when the draft document or plan is presented for review and adoption
- Publish adopted document on website at www.ecrc.org, a print copy of amendments are available upon request

Administrative Modifications

Administrative modifications to the PPP, LRTP, TIP, or UPWP are minor revisions and do not require public review but must be included in the public notice for the TPO board meeting when the modification is presented for review and adoption.

Additional TPO Projects and Plans

Public involvement strategies and techniques vary widely depending on the depth and detail of a project or plan. Examples include the Congestion Management Process, Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan, Regional Freight Plan, and Corridor Management Plans. Project specific public participation elements will be included early in the planning process.

The Bay County TPO's primary public participation elements include:

- Provide a 30-day public review and comment period for the draft document or plan
- Include in the public notice of the TPO board meeting when the draft document or plan is to be presented for review and adoption
- Provide the public with an opportunity to comment during public forum when the draft document or plan is presented for review and adoption
- Publish adopted document on website at www.ecrc.org, a print copy of the current plan is available upon request

The infographics on the following pages are provided by FDOT, and describe the relationship between the TPO and their planning documents:



There are key milestones in many of the plans and programs produced by the TPO. Learn when the best time to #GetInvolved with the tables on the following page.

Public Participation Opportunities	Public Comment Period	Public Notice	Schedule
Transportation Planning Organization Board	Every meeting	Seven days prior to meeting	Meets at least six times per year
Citizen Advisory Committee	Every meeting	Seven days prior to meeting	Meets at least six times per year
Technical Coordinating Committee	Every meeting	Seven days prior to meeting	Meets at least six times per year
Freight Advisory Working Group	Every meeting	Seven days prior to meeting	Meets on an as needed basis
Public Access	www.ecrc.org/FLALTPO		

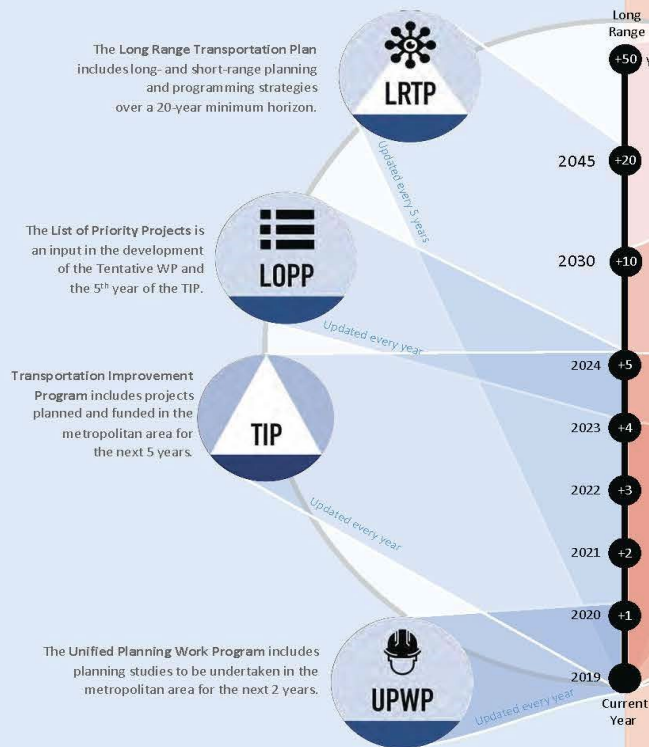
Program Adoption and Amendment Timeline	Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Congestion Management Process (CMP)	Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Project Priorities
Program Update Schedule	Every 2 years	Every 5 years	Every year	Minor Update: Every year Major Update Every 5 years	Every year	Every year
Adoption Public Comment Period	30 days prior to TPO board adoption		14 days prior to TPO board adoption	30 days prior to TPO board adoption	45 days prior to TPO board adoption	30 days prior to TPO Board adoption
Adoption Public Notice Period	7 days prior to TPO board review and adoption					
Program Amendments Schedule	As needed			N/A	Annual	N/A
Amendments Public Comment Period	7 days prior to TPO board review and adoption			N/A	45 days prior to TPO board adoption	N/A
Amendment Adoption and Review Public Notice Period	7 days public notice					
Public Access to Document	www.ecrc.org					

TPO/MPO Program Management

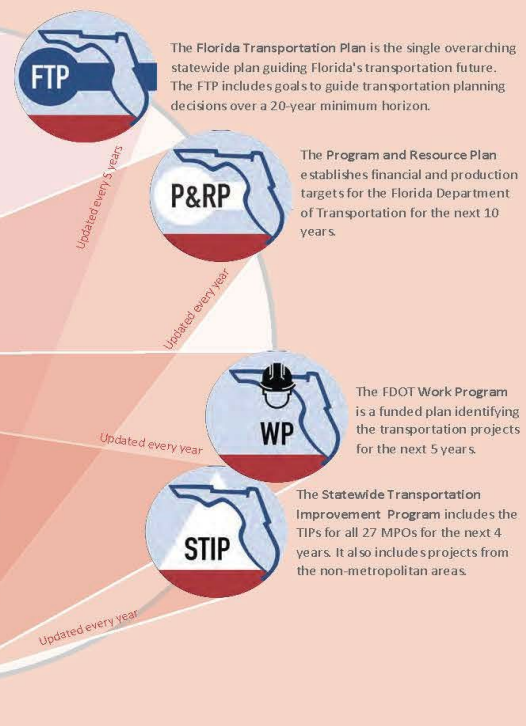
How TPO and FDOT Planning Documents work together to move Florida forward



Planning Documents

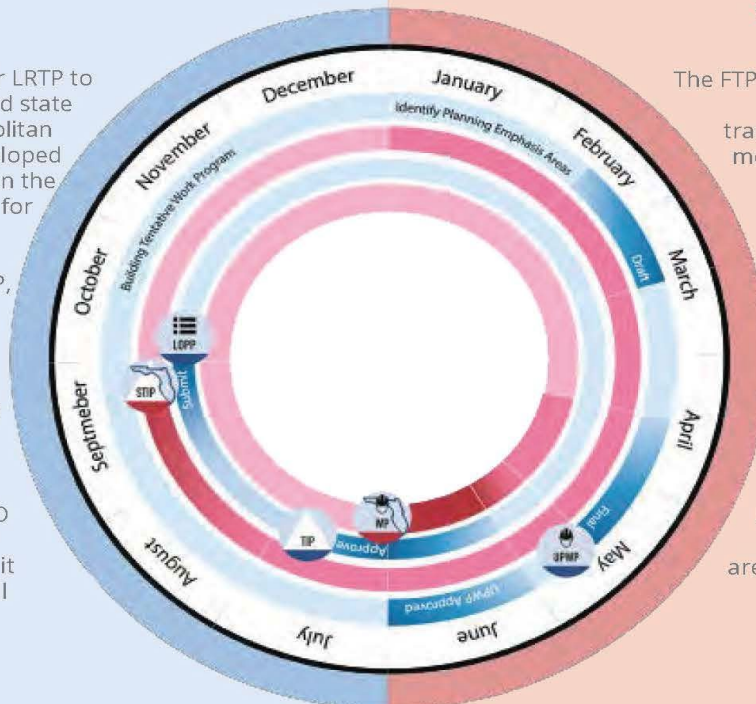


Planning Documents



TPO Planning

The TPOs develop their L RTP to implement national and state goals for their metropolitan area. Projects are developed and must be included in the L RTP to be considered for funding. The LOPP is used to inform the development of the TIP, which must be consistent with the L RTP. The projects included in the TIP are funded and completed through the Work Program (WP). The UPWP describes what planning work the MPO will do, when it will be completed, how much it will cost, and how it will be paid for.

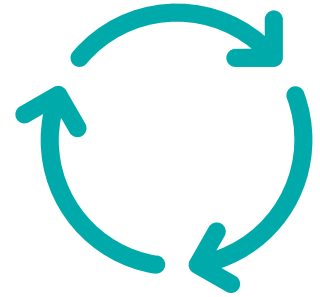


Statewide Planning

The FTP is a long-term plan that sets goals to guide transportation decisions to meet the needs of Florida. The next 10 years of funding for programs are identified in the P&RP. All 27 TIPs are combined together, along with FDOT's other non-metropolitan statewide projects, to form the STIP. To be eligible for federal funding, projects must be included in the L RTP, TIP, and STIP. Projects are funded and completed through the Work Program (WP).

CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS

It is critical that staff remain knowledgeable of proper actions to take when situations occur. The TPO and advisory committees are staffed by the Emerald Coast Regional and will follow the agency's Council Continuity of Operations Plan (with Emergency Preparedness Plan), adopted on April 23, 2020. This plan can be located on the [ECRC website](#). The TPO will also implement guidance from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and other state MPOs/Partners.



It is possible, that during special circumstances, such as a declared State of Emergency, the TPO may be required to take immediate action to respond to urgent requests that cannot be delayed for a meeting and quorum to be established. Resolution FL-AL 20-11, adopted in May 2020, authorized the Emerald Coast Regional Council's Executive Director the authority to amend documents for consistency purposes, revise the UPWP and/or TIP as appropriate, and to submit information reports, applications, or documents of behalf of the TPO as deemed essential by the Florida Department of Transportation and/or the Federal Highway Administration.

under the special circumstances occurring during a declared county, state or federal State of Emergency, the Bay County TPO may be required to take immediate action to respond to urgent requests that cannot be delayed until a meeting and quorum can be established.

Organizational Procedure:

Outlined briefly below are the ECRC's procedures for various threats that may be faced while doing business that will directly impact the TPO.

Essential Functions: When the ECRC COOP is executed, the CEO must determine which ECRC functions are essential and need to be carried on during the event. For each of the essential functions that must carry on, the CEO must also identify a party responsible for that function; typically, this would be the employee already charged with that function.

Security: Upon evacuation of the offices, the doors should be locked, and any alarms should be armed. The CEO, in conjunction with the Emergency Management Coordinator, shall continuously monitor the situation and take all additional security measures deemed necessary. Staff should not return to the evacuated facility until the CEO and Emergency Management Coordinator deem it is safe.

Regional Board Meeting Continuity: The ECRC serves as the staffing agency for several regional boards. It is necessary to ensure that these boards are still able to convene and continue to do business however possible during a state of emergency. The CEO will establish meeting protocols based on the parameters outlined by all city, county, or gubernatorial emergency declarations and guidance. Staff will strive to conduct meetings and keep the public updated and involved through all available means of communication and technology available. The ECRC will maintain communication with all board members and all partners during an emergency declaration.

Reconstitution: Once the CEO and Emergency Management Coordinator have indicated the emergency event is over and/or when the facility is deemed safe for use, normal personnel actions and procedures may resume. As part of the reconstitution, an after-action report including a review of actions taken before, during, and after the event will be conducted by the CEO.

Public Health and Infectious Disease Response and Recovery

Once the risk level is established, appropriate policies will take effect at all public facing events, and office space. Social distancing measures could take the form of:

- Modifying the frequency and type of face-to-face encounters at public events or meetings (e.g., placing moratoriums on handshaking, substituting videoconferences for face-to-face meetings, staggering breaks, and modified work hours to minimize the number of people interacting with each other)
- Posting infection control guidelines in the office and via email
- Establishing flexible outreach efforts (digital or virtual components)
- Promoting physical distancing between staff and participants to maintain appropriate spatial separation between individuals as instructed
- Implementing strategies that request and enable employees with influenza to stay home at the first sign of symptoms.
- The CEO and EMC will monitor any resurgence of a community outbreak and communicate current events to ECRC staff accordingly. Human Resources will also monitor any federal and state reimbursements, unemployment, or other aid provided due to the disruption. More details are provided in ECRC's COOP.

Adverse Weather Conditions

Adverse weather conditions may produce unsafe conditions to travel to and from TPO events (i.e. workshops, meetings, conferences, etc). These conditions include tornadoes, heavy rain events, flooding, ice, and snow. From the TPO's perspective, protecting the community is of utmost importance. Each weather event will be different in terms of planning and preparation time. The CEO and/or EMC will determine when staff should prepare to cancel or reschedule TPO events and when it is possible to resume regular operations.

Hurricanes

As a hurricane approaches, the CEO and/or EMC will determine when should prepare to cancel or reschedule TPO events and when it is possible to resume regular operations. Information for agency operations in the event of a hurricane is outlined in **the ECRC COOP***.

* More details for Emergency Meetings and Special Meetings can be found on page 16.

Communication Components:

Staff will send notification of organization emergency status via the following channels:

- Email/Phone calls to TPO and advisory committees
- Notice updated on website and website calendar
- Social media post (if needed)
- Other Platforms: news release, eblast to interested parties, etc. (if needed)

Training and Education

It is extremely important that every employee has knowledge of operational procedures dealing with emergencies. Training details are outlined, in detail, in the ECRC COOP.

Virtual Tools

In some instances, it may be necessary for ECRC employees to work remotely at home or from another location away from the ECRC offices. The following hardware, software and online resources are available to employees to allow work to continue efficiently while away from the office:

- **Website** – The ECRC website may be accessed at www.ecrc.org.
- **GoToMeeting or GoToWebinar** – Meetings may be held with other ECRC staff and/or external parties via Microsoft Teams, GoToMeeting or GoToWebinar. The public will be provided with a meeting link to attend virtually as well as a call-in number to participate via phone.
- **Live Stream** – Meetings may be live streamed on the ECRC website or recorded and uploaded. All TPO Meetings are livestreamed for virtual public participation or can be watched at a later time by visiting the ECRC Virtual Meetings webpage at <https://www.gotostage.com/channel/ecrc>.
- **Facebook Posts** – Meetings may be promoted via Facebook for virtual public notice, meeting registrations and engagement.
- **Eblast/Subscribe** – The TPO sends notification emails to an interested parties distribution list. The community is encouraged to subscribe to receive TPO related updates.
- **News Release** – The TPO sends notification emails to a distribution list of radio, TV and other media within the study area. Please email publicinvolvement@ecrc.org to recommend local or regional media contacts.
- **Comment Phone Line** – Comments can be submitted by calling 850-637-1131. The phone line encourages the recording of the community member's name, zip code, meeting and item they wish to address on the voice message.
- **eComment Form** – Comments can be submitted by online form at www.ecrc.org/BayeComment.
- **Public Forum webpage** – The TPO has a webpage that is dedicated to outlining, in detail, the different channels for submitting input, questions, etc. at www.ecrc.org/BAYPublicForum.

ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

The Bay County TPO staff must assess the effectiveness of public participation strategies to ensure that funds and time are well invested, and public participation goals are achieved. It is standard practice that all TPO plans and programs require an evaluation of public outreach activities on a quarterly basis. If the assessment reveals that the public participation goals are not being achieved, the techniques may be modified or changed. Quarterly assessment meetings are held internally for transportation and other program staff to assess all outreach opportunities and plan or program specific goals. The assessment meetings give staff an opportunity to develop, evaluate, and modify goals.



Evaluation Tools

Several evaluation tools will be utilized to track metrics of public participation efforts. The Public Outreach Evaluation Form will be utilized to record qualitative and quantitative data. Public Outreach Evaluation Forms will be recorded and assessed quarterly. The Interactive Outreach Map will be updated quarterly with the plotting of outreach efforts. The map will be used in the assessment of areas in need of outreach and environmental justice impacts of the TPO's plans and programs. The Interactive Outreach Map will develop a baseline for outreach efforts and aid in the development of public participation goals. The map is available [online](#). Questionnaires, distributed to participants at meetings, via the web or by mail, is the final evaluation tool that will be utilized in tracking metrics.

Evaluation Metrics

The Bay County TPO's public participation activities can be evaluated through numerous methods. Currently, the TPO tracks the following metrics:

- Number and quality of outreach opportunities
- Estimated reach and attendance of outreach opportunity
- Number of social media followers and posts
- Number of newsletter subscribers and newsletters/email blasts
- Number of news release subscribers (media as well as groups and organizations) and number of news releases distributed
- Number of attendees at public workshops
- Number and geographic distribution of CAC members
- Number of completed surveys and/or comments

Performance Measures

Performance measures are used in defining and monitoring objective indicators to assess and report the performance of public involvement efforts. The performance methodology, for public participation, aids in the identification of appropriate goals and objectives that could provide an effective framework for assessing and reaching public participation goals.

The following performance measures focus on desired outcomes and advance strategic objectives:

Equity - Provide equitable access to transportation decision-making.

Indicator E-1: *Access to information and participation opportunities by persons with disabilities*

Target: [100%] of disabled persons that requested accommodations were satisfied with efforts made to accommodate their needs

Target: [100%] of meetings, events and project-related information sources are accessible to persons with disabilities

Data and Measurement: This information will be tracked by noting the number of requests received for special accommodations for each meeting location or related to project information and the number of events (meetings, hearings, workshops) involving a public notice by the agency that provided special accommodations during a given year. A survey or comment form will be provided to those who required accommodation to assess their satisfaction with agency accommodations. Meetings, events and project-related information source accessibility to persons with disabilities, will be recorded on the Public Involvement Evaluation Form.

Indicator E-2: *Convenience of meetings and events to public transportation, where available*

Target: [60%] of public involvement events are within [1/8 mile] of a transit stop.

Data and Measurement: This information will be tracked by noting the number of meetings held within 1/8 mile of a transit stop for meetings and events that are held in areas that have public transit.

Indicator E-3: *Geographic dispersion of involvement opportunities*

Target: At least one meeting or opportunity is located in each affected neighborhood within the study area.

Data and Measurement: This information will be tracked using the Interactive Outreach Map

Note: this target pertains to corridor or area specific projects or actions.

Target: At least one meeting or opportunity is located in each county with the TPO study area.

Indicator E-4: *Convenience of meeting or event time*

Target: At least [75%] of participants and invitees felt the meeting or event was held at a convenient time.

Data and Measurement: This information will be tracked using responses to questionnaires that are administered at the meeting or distributed via the web or by mail.

Indicator E-5: *Convenience of meeting or event location*

Target: At least [75%] of participants and invitees felt the meeting or event was held at a convenient location.

Data and Measurement: This information will be tracked using responses to questionnaires that are administered at the meeting or distributed via the web or by mail.

Method - Use a variety of methods to involve and engage the public.

Indicator M-1: *Perception of the value of methods used (e.g., public meeting, one-on-one meeting, agency presentation, online, mailings, other.)*

Target: [60%] of participants agree [insert technique*] was of value in capturing their input.

Target: [60%] of participants agree [insert technique*] was of value in conveying project information.

Target: [60%] of project managers agree [insert technique*] was of value in capturing public input.

Target: [60%] of project managers agree [insert technique*] was of value in conveying project information.

*Techniques will be determined based on outreach activity, project, and outreach audience.

Data and Measurement : This information will be tracked using responses to questionnaires that are distributed to participants at meetings, via the web or by mail.



APPENDIX I

LIST OF ACRONYMS

Americans with Disabilities Act	ADA
Citizens Advisory Committee	CAC
Efficient Transportation Decision Making	ETDM
Federal Highway Administration	FHWA
Federal Transit Administration	FTA
Florida Department of Transportation	FDOT
Limited English Proficiency	LEP
Long Range Transportation Plan	L RTP
Metropolitan Planning Area	MPA
Metropolitan Planning Organization	MRPO
Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century	MAP-21
Public Participation Plan	PPP
Technical Coordinating Committee	TCC
Transportation Improvement Program	TIP
Transportation Management Area	TMA
Transportation Planning Organization	TPO
Unified Planning Work Program	UPWP



Public Involvement Evaluation	
Activity:	
Date/Location:	
Intended Audience:	
Estimated Reach:	
Activity Attendance:	
Project/Program Promoted:	
Description of Activity:	
Materials/Tools Used:	
Results:	
Overall Assessment:	
Recommendations:	

APPENDIX III

The Bay County TPO Title VI Policy and Plan can be found online by visiting: [The Bay County TPO Title VI Policy and Plan](#).

Please contact public involvement staff to obtain a print copy of the document.