

# Chapter 10

## Public Involvement



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## Public Participation Plan

The MPO initially adopted a Public Involvement Plan in 1993 which included steps to conduct a proactive public involvement process. In 2009, the MPO adopted a new Public Participation Plan (PPP) to outline the ways public involvement is incorporated into MPO activities, including the Long-Range Transportation Plan.

As detailed in the PPP, there are a number of federal and state requirements the MPO adheres to in order to ensure an open and transparent planning process. These include FAST Act requirements, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, the Iowa Open Meetings Law, and the Iowa Public Records Law. In addition, the MPO has several ongoing activities that form the basis of interaction with the public. These include:



- Monthly joint Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings which are open to the public.
- Work sessions, focus groups, open houses, public input meetings, and public hearings as applicable during the development of major transportation planning documents.
- Publication of transportation articles in the quarterly INRCOG newsletter, which is mailed to over 400 local officials and citizens.
- Notices of opportunities for public input shared via MailChimp marketing program.
- Provision of information and interviews with area media as requested.
- Presentations to city councils, planning commissions, and county supervisors as needed.
- Presentations to local service clubs and other groups and organizations.
- Information, transportation plans, and notices of opportunities for public input shared on INRCOG's website [www.inrcog.org](http://www.inrcog.org) and Facebook page.

The public involvement process utilized for the development of the 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan was guided by the PPP which sets minimum requirements for public involvement opportunities. Public involvement actions required include the following:

- Notices and Public Meetings
  - A minimum of three public input sessions will be held regarding the draft LRTP.
  - At least one public input session will be held in an area identified as being a low-income or minority neighborhood. All meetings will be held in accessible facilities.
  - Notices for public input sessions will be advertised through local media sources. Notices may be posted at governmental offices, public libraries, post offices, on transit buses, at the INRCOG Center, and online on the INRCOG website. Notices may also be sent to organizations serving traditionally underserved populations, such as minority, low-income,

and elderly populations. LRTP draft copies will be available at the INRCOG Center, on the INRCOG website, and upon request.

- Any person with sight, reading, or language barriers should contact the MPO at least 48 hours prior to a session and arrangements will be made for accommodation.
- **Public Comment Period**
  - Written and oral comments will be solicited during the public input sessions. The public will also have at least a fifteen-day (15) comment period following the final public input session to submit comments via fax, letter, or email.
  - A public hearing will be held at a regularly scheduled MPO meeting following the public input sessions to summarize public comments and responses. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days and no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.
- **Final LRTP**
  - Following the public hearing, the MPO will adopt a final version of the LRTP, including a summary of comments and responses.
  - A final version of the LRTP will be submitted to the Iowa DOT and the FHWA.
  - The final LRTP will be available on the INRCOG website, at the INRCOG Center, and upon request.
  - The public participation process associated with the LRTP will be evaluated and updated as needed.
- **Revisions**
  - The LRTP is a long-range planning document, and all projects in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be included in the LRTP. The TIP is updated annually, and projects in it may be moved forward or backward in time or change in cost or scope. Therefore, the LRTP may be revised between full document updates to reflect current project information.
  - Other amendments to the LRTP will be made as needed.
  - Amendments will require a public hearing to be held at a regularly scheduled MPO meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) days and no less than four (4) days before the date of the hearing.

## Public Involvement Efforts

### Focus Groups

The planning process for the 2045 LRTP started in 2017 with a series of focus group meetings. Focus groups for various modal elements have been utilized for previous LRTP updates, and the list of previous participants was used as a starting point for establishing focus groups for this update. Focus groups serve as the primary working groups for development of various projects and chapters for the Plan. Focus Groups utilized for this planning effort included Land Use, and Bicycle and Pedestrian.



The focus groups were used to develop the major themes of the document, determine what issues to address in the chapters, and review the draft chapters for this document. Topics covered by the focus groups included:

- Land Use
  - Travel Demand Model development, including road network and traffic analysis zones (TAZs).
  - Determination of methodology for forecasting population and employment.
  - Allocation of forecasted population and employment.
  - Discussion of fiscal constraint methodology, particularly for the Surface Transportation Block Grant (STBG) Program, and City and County Bridge programs.
  - Submittal and prioritization of road and bridge projects for the fiscally constrained LRTP.
  - Recommendation of road and bridge projects to include in the fiscally constrained LRTP.
- Bicycle and Pedestrian
  - Review of MPO Bikeway Plan
  - Recommendation of non-motorized projects to include in the LRTP.

In addition to the focus groups, four additional standing committees were utilized during plan development for topics related to specific chapters. These groups included the following:

- The Transit Advisory Committee was used to discuss passenger transportation issues. This group meets at least twice annually as part of the Passenger Transportation Plan process.
- The Black Hawk County Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Committee was utilized to discuss any potential environmental impacts.
- The Waterloo Complete Streets Advisory Committee and Cedar Falls Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee were used to review the MPO Bikeway Plan.

#### **Policy Board and Technical Committee**

Monthly joint Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings were used to discuss the LRTP update throughout 2017 and 2018. Discussion topics during this time included updates on the travel demand model and socioeconomic forecasts, reports from the focus groups, revenue forecasts, road and bridge project recommendations from the Land Use Focus Group, and review of draft chapters. MPO meetings are open to the public and advertised through local media and the INRCOG Facebook page.

#### **National Household Travel Survey Add-on**

The MPO participated in the 2017 National Household Travel Survey (NHTS) Add-on. The NHTS is a periodic national survey used to assist transportation planners and policy makers who need comprehensive data on travel and transportation patterns in the United States. Data is collected on daily trips taken by households and individuals in those households over a 24-hour period. States and MPOs can participate in the Add-on Program to obtain additional samples of the household travel survey within their respective geographic boundaries. Add-on participants are also



provided the opportunity to add six questions unique to their needs. The survey produced responses from a total of 1,221 households consisting of 2,450 individuals specifically from the Black Hawk County MPO.

Results from the survey can be reviewed one variable at a time, or multiple variables can be cross tabulated to identify unique trends.

Methods of visualizing the NHTS Add-on data are still being developed. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) along with Oak Ridge National Laboratories and MacroSys are working with MPOs and DOTs to further develop the online NHTS tool so users can generate maps based on the survey data as well as the origin-destination travel data. These advanced tools will allow the MPO to display a variety of trends within the MPO area quickly and easily. Survey data will be displayed using a customized geography developed by MPO staff specific to the MPO area. This custom geography divides the MPO area into 37 areas based largely on land uses and natural breaks in the landscape, e.g. rivers, highways. It is the goal of the MPO to produce a report on the NHTS Add-on data to provide a more guided and comprehensive analysis of the results. Additional information can be found in Chapters 4 and 5.

### Airline Highway Transportation Survey

In 2018, MET Transit partnered with INRCOG, the RTC, and the Greater Cedar Valley Alliance and Chamber (GCVAC) to conduct a survey of businesses in the Airline Highway industrial area. This was a follow-up to a survey GCVAC had conducted in 2017 which found that public transit was ranked the lowest of all community services in the six-county area surveyed. Additional information can be found in Chapter 4.

### Special Outreach Survey

A total of 187 non-English speaking and 20 homeless residents took part in the Special Outreach Survey conducted by INRCOG in 2015. The survey was intended to identify transportation needs and challenges faced by these unique populations. Half of all respondents were from either Myanmar or Thailand. There was also significant representation from the Congo, Mexico, Guatemala, and Bosnia. Surveys were administered by staff members at Hawkeye Community College Metro Center, Operation Threshold, and Black Hawk-Grundy Mental Health. Most non-English speaking respondents have some measurable understanding of English, though there were inherent challenges involved with surveying this population. Accordingly, data from this survey is not statistically-significant. Additional information can be found in Chapter 5.



### **Pedestrian Master Plan Survey**

A statistically significant mail-out survey was conducted by INRCOG staff from May to July 2015. A total of 2,000 survey forms were mailed to randomly selected households in the Black Hawk County metropolitan area. The survey was conducted using the Pedestrian and Bicycle Survey (PABS) method. A random sample of household mailing addresses was obtained from LeadsPlease. Advance postcards were sent to each household about one week prior to the survey itself. A cover letter, survey form, and a map of the metropolitan area were mailed to each household along with a paid return envelope. Follow-up postcards were sent about two weeks later to households that had not yet responded. Survey recipients were also given the option to complete the survey online. A total of 344 responses were received. The Pedestrian Master Plan is expected to be completed in the spring 2019. Additional information on the Plan be found in Chapter 5.

### **Pedestrian Master Plan Public Input Meetings**

In November and December 2016, six public input meetings were held in Waterloo and Cedar Falls to obtain input on draft project recommendations. Meeting locations included the non-traditional locations of Crossroads Shopping Center and the Cedar Valley SportsPlex in Waterloo. These locations were selected to achieve a wider range of public contact by going to where people are already congregating. 92 survey responses were received in total from the input meetings. The surveys included a matrix of every draft project recommendation, and respondents were asked to indicate whether they “strongly support”, “somewhat support”, “somewhat oppose”, or “strongly oppose” each project.

### **Website and Social Media**

The INRCOG website [www.inrcog.org](http://www.inrcog.org) was used throughout the development of this Plan. Draft chapters were posted on the website as they were completed, and staff contact information was provided to any person who wished to comment on draft materials. Other information on the transportation planning process and additional transportation documents are available on the website. The final LRTP will be posted online and will be available at the INRCOG office. The INRCOG Facebook page was also used to notify the public of draft materials and opportunities for input.

### **Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Input Meetings**

In October 2018, three public input meetings were held on the draft 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. Meetings were held at the INRCOG Center, Cedar Falls City Hall, and the Cedar Valley SportsPlex in Waterloo. The SportsPlex was chosen as a meeting location to achieve a wider range of public contact by going to where people are already congregating. The meetings were advertised via a news release, flyers posted at public places, the INRCOG website and Facebook page, and an email blast through MailChimp to the INRCOG mailing list. There were a variety of displays related to the LRTP available for review. Attendees were also provided the opportunity to submit formal written comments. Meeting attendance for the three meetings can be found in the Appendix along with a summary of public comments received.



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#### **Opportunity for Public Input**

The Black Hawk County Metropolitan Area Transportation Policy Board (MPO) will be holding public input open houses on the draft 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Plan serves as a mechanism for the MPO to examine its current transportation networks across all modes, and to chart a course for the maintenance and improvement of each mode based on anticipated needs and revenues. Please view the draft chapters by visiting [www.inrcog.org](http://www.inrcog.org).

INRCOG will be holding **Public Input Meetings** on Tuesday, October 2 from 12:00-1:30 p.m. at INRCOG and 4:30-6:00 p.m. at Cedar Falls City Hall, and Wednesday, October 3 from 4:30-6:00 p.m. at the Cedar Valley SportsPlex. The meetings will be open house format with no presentation.

Comments will be accepted on the draft Plan until the MPO holds a public hearing and considers adoption of a final version of the document on Thursday, November 8, 2018 at 10:00 a.m. at INRCOG.

Please submit all comments on the draft MPO 2045 Long-Range Transportation Plan to Kyle Durant, Transportation Planner II: [kdurant@inrcog.org](mailto:kdurant@inrcog.org) or (319) 235-0311.

INRCOG public input meetings are open to all individuals. Any persons with a special need requiring a reasonable accommodation to participate should contact INRCOG at (319) 235-0311 at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting.



### External Stakeholder Consultation

Several Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies were notified when the draft LRTP document was available for review. Feedback on topics relevant to their field of expertise was requested. Agencies notified include the following:

- Black Hawk County Conservation Board
- Black Hawk County Emergency Management
- Federal Highway Administration, Iowa Division
- Federal Transit Administration, Region 7
- Greater Cedar Valley Alliance & Chamber
- Hawkeye Community College
- Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship
- Iowa Department on Aging
- Iowa Department for the Blind
- Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs
- Iowa Department of Education
- Iowa Department of Human Rights
- Iowa Department of Human Services
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- Iowa Department of Public Health
- Iowa Department of Public Safety
- Iowa Department of Transportation, Office of Systems Planning
- Iowa Department of Transportation, District 2
- Iowa Department of Veterans' Affairs
- Iowa Economic Development Authority
- Iowa Homeland Security and Emergency Management
- Iowa Tourism Office
- Iowa Utilities Board
- Iowa Workforce Development
- MET Transit Authority
- Office of the State Archaeologist
- Sac & Fox Tribe of the Mississippi
- State Historical Society of Iowa
- University of Northern Iowa
- U.S Army Corps of Engineers, Rock Island District
- U.S Environmental Protection Agency, Region 7
- U.S Department of Agriculture – Natural Resources Conservation Service
- U.S Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs, Midwest Regional Office
- U.S Fish and Wildlife Service, Illinois-Iowa Field Office
- Waterloo Regional Airport