

Chapter 10

Public Involvement

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The RTA initially adopted a Public Involvement Plan in 1993, which included steps to conduct a proactive public involvement process. This plan was updated in 2001 and again in 2007. In 2009, the RTA adopted a new Public Participation Plan (PPP) to outline the ways public involvement is incorporated into RTA activities, including the LRTP.

As detailed in the PPP, there are a number of federal and state requirements the RTA adheres to in order to ensure an open and transparent planning process. These include MAP-21 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 Meeting Law, and the Iowa Public Records Law. The RTA also has several ongoing activities that form the basis of RTA interaction with the public. These include the following:

- Monthly meetings which are open to the public
- Work sessions, focus groups, open houses, public input sessions, and public hearings as applicable during the development of major documents
- Publication of transportation articles in the quarterly INRCOG newsletter (mailed to over 400 local officials and citizens)
- 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 and transportation plans available on INRCOG's website (www.inrcog.org)

The public involvement process utilized for the development of the 2040 LRTP was guided by the PPP, which sets minimum requirements for public input opportunities. Public input 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.

- **Public Comment Period**
 - Written and oral comments will be solicited during the public input sessions. The public will also have at least a 15 day 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 RTA meeting following the public input sessions to summarize public comments and responses. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than 20 days and no less than 4 days before the date of the hearing.
- **Final LRTP**
 - Following the public hearing, the RTA 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 TIP should first 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 RTA meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than 20 days and no less than 4 days before the date of the hearing.

PUBLIC INPUT FOR THE LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN

RTA Meetings

Regular monthly meetings of the RTA Policy Board and Technical Committee were used to discuss the LRTP update. Discussion topics during these meetings have included reports from focus groups and review of draft chapters. RTA meetings are always open to the public and are advertised through local media.

Public Input Survey

In an effort to obtain additional input from the general public, an online survey was developed for the LRTP. The survey was conducted through the website www.surveymonkey.com. The website enabled the creation of the survey questions and choices, the creation of a link for users to click to access the survey, and analysis of results. The survey was accessible through a link on the INRCOG website which was posted for the month of April, 2012.

Methods of informing the public of the survey included mass email distribution from INRCOG staff and the RTA, promotion at various meetings during the time of survey availability, and a press release that went to all INRCOG media contacts in the region. The survey was also shared through the INRCOG newsletter, social media, and was posted on some jurisdictions' websites. Paper surveys were made available at the INRCOG office.

The survey consisted of 12 transportation questions and 7 demographic questions. There were a range of questions, from the overall condition of various types of transportation infrastructure to questions about the future of the transportation system. In addition to a couple open-ended questions, there were also several opportunities to submit written comments. A total of 194 surveys were submitted. The document *Iowa Northland Regional Transportation Authority 2012 Public Input Survey* details the results for each question including tables, graphs, and a listing of written comments. *Appendix II* includes a shorter version of the full survey report.

<http://inrcog.org/pdf/RTA-Survey.pdf>

Regional Bicycle Accommodation Plan Public Input Meetings

To help guide the development of the Regional Bicycle Accommodation Plan, INRCOG staff conducted public input meetings at four locations in the Iowa Northland Region. Meeting locations included Fredericksburg, Waverly, Jesup, and Parkersburg. The primary goals of these meetings were to identify and discuss bicycle facility needs in the region, and to discuss the on-road bicycle compatibility assessment. These meetings were open to the public and were advertised through local media as well as the INRCOG website and Facebook page. Input from these meetings was utilized to develop the Regional Bicycle Accommodation Plan. Entities that were represented at the meetings included trail committees, county engineers, city representatives, local tourism, local businesses, and INRCOG. Complete lists of meeting attendees can be found in *Appendix II*. A summary of public comments received can be found in *Appendix IV*.

Additional Public Input Meetings

In November 2015, three public input meetings were held on the Long Range Transportation Plan update. Meetings were held in Allison, Tripoli, and Independence, with the intent of providing access to all sectors of the community, including minority and low-income populations. The meetings were advertised via a news release and subsequent articles in local newspapers, flyers posted at public places, the INRCOG website, and through flyer distribution to local agencies. There were a variety of displays related to the LRTP available for review at the meetings. Attendees were also able to submit formal written comments. Meeting attendance for the three meetings can be found in *Appendix II*. A summary of public comments received can be found in *Appendix IV*.

INRCOG Website

The INRCOG website (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 the chapters. Also, the INRCOG website was used as the location for the link to the online survey. Other information on the transportation planning process and other transportation documents are also available on the website. The final LRTP will be posted online and will be available at the INRCOG office.

Additional Public Input Opportunities

For the development of this document, the RTA utilized focus groups as needed. These groups included Highway, Safety, Intermodal/Land Use/Economic Development, and Bicycle/Pedestrian. Current membership for all RTA committees can be found in *Appendix I*.

Certain agencies were notified when the draft LRTP document was available for review in November 2015. Feedback on topics relevant to their field of expertise was requested. Agencies notified include the following:

- Iowa Department of Transportation
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Iowa Department of Natural Resources
- County Conservations
- County Engineers

Additional standing committees were utilized during the development of this plan for topics related to specific chapters, and are described as follows:

- Passenger transportation issues were discussed by the Transit Advisory Committee, which meets semi-annually as part of the Passenger Transportation Plan process.
- The Black Hawk County, Buchanan County, and Bremer County Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) Committees were utilized to discuss non-motorized projects throughout the region.