

Chapter II

Public and Stakeholder Engagement

In this chapter, the reader should find:

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Public and Stakeholder Engagement

In the first month of the 2045 LRTP process, Danville MPO's consultants developed a Public Involvement Plan to guide public and stakeholder engagement activities. This charter document was consistent with the MPO's Public Involvement Participation Plan and Title VI Plan, to uphold MPO policies and federal requirements. This engagement plan entailed detailed goals, strategies, and guidelines for documenting results. Despite the COVID 19 pandemic, which interfered with in-person strategies, the 2045 process surpassed the 2040 process in terms of the number of comments collected and resources spent on public involvement. This chapter describes the engagement process, which spanned fourteen months, while the Appendix documents results, and all comments received.

Public Engagement Goals

Five engagement goals were central to the 2045 Public Involvement Plan. Each engagement strategy accomplished at least one goal. Each stage of the planning process emphasized one or more goals at a time, based on the need for primary data collection from engagement.

Goal A: Educate and Inform

This goal applied to all phases of the planning process. Throughout the 2045 update, there was an emphasis on communicating the importance of the LRTP and participating in the process. Main engagement strategies included the project website: www.danvillempo2045.com, newsletter materials, press releases, and public intercepts.

Goal B: Needs and Opportunities

In the initial phases of the process, engagement strategies were intended to identify transportation needs and opportunities. This engagement was comprised of more open-ended questions, to

TITLE VI PLAN - ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



MPO Policy Statement and Authorities

"The Danville MPO further assures that every effort will be made to ensure nondiscrimination in all of its programs and activities, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. In the event the Danville MPO distributes federal-aid funds to another government entity, the Danville MPO will include Title VI language in all written agreements and will monitor for compliance. The Danville MPO Administrator is responsible for ensuring implementation of the organization's Title VI Plan, and is responsible for the overall administration of the Title VI Plan and assurances. The authorities that provide guidance on Title VI and related nondiscrimination laws, regulations, and executive orders can be found in the 'Title VI and Other nondiscrimination Laws' section of this document."

identify areas of concern and perceived transportation deficiencies. One objective was to attain a local knowledge of the community and its transportation system. Engagement tools included a comments page on the 2045 website: www.danvillempo2045.com, comment postcards, the first open house event, and interviews with stakeholders.

Goal C: Goals and Measures

In the second phase of the 2045 process, public and stakeholder involvement helped to determine a system of goals and performance measures to evaluate projects. Engagement tools included online surveys and public intercept strategies.

Goal D: Project Selection

In the next phase, the MPO evaluated new and existing transportation recommendations with the approved set of performance measures from Phase II. Public engagement focused on collecting feedback on the prioritized list of recommendations. Engagement tools included online comment options on the site: www.danvillempo2045.com, a virtual open house, and a final round of review with MPO and local officials.

Goal E: Draft and Final Plan

The MPO posted draft versions of the plan at public locations and online. Review of the plan included a public hearing at the August 2020 meeting.

Public Engagement Strategies

Per the MPO's PPP and the federal code, the 2045 process involved a diverse assortment of engagement strategies. The MPO's consultants tailored these approaches to the needs of each stage in the process and to the defined engagement goals.

MPO Meetings

The MPO Policy Board, consisting of local and state officials, serves as the governing body of the Danville MPO. Its membership consists of three members from the Pittsylvania County Board of Supervisors, two members from the Danville City Council, the Danville City Manager, and a member from the Virginia Department of Transportation (VDOT). With non-voting members that represent localities and state agencies, the board meetings double as Technical Committee meetings.

D-MPO PROCESS DOCUMENTS



Two MPO documents guided the 2045 Public Involvement Plan and subsequent engagement efforts. The MPO's Public Involvement Participation Plan and the Title VI Plan are federally required documents that establish equitable engagement approaches for all MPO processes, including updates to the LRTP. See Appendix D for documentation on how the 2045 process complied with these documents.

Public Involvement Participation Plan

The Public Involvement Participation Plan, sometimes referred to as the Public Participation Plan or PPP, is intended to facilitate reasonable opportunities for the public to be informed and involved in Danville MPO's transportation planning processes for the urbanized area. The plan detailed strategies for engaging the public and identified stakeholders to help identify highway, transit, pedestrian, bike, and other transportation needs in the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

Title VI Plan: Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) have a longstanding policy to actively ensure nondiscrimination under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act in federally funded activities. The Danville MPO, as a sub-recipient of federal assistance, is required to comply with Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination laws, as well as to provide an overview of how the Danville MPO addresses Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice and Executive Order 13166 on Limited English Proficiency (LEP). The purpose of this Title VI Plan is to describe the measures taken by the Danville MPO to assure compliance with the rules and regulations associated with Title VI and subsequent nondiscrimination laws, Environmental Justice, and LEP.

Meeting Schedule

The MPO Policy Board met eight times throughout the process, allowing for public comments at each meeting.

- **Meeting #1 (April 18, 2019):** The first meeting was an official kickoff for the process, as the Board reviewed the project schedule and scope of work.
- **Meeting #2 (July 18, 2019):** Project consultants presented a “State of the System” report that explored existing conditions throughout the MPO area.
- **Meeting #3 (October 9, 2019):** The Policy Board discussed an initial framework of goals, measures, and targets.
- **Meeting #4 (December 18, 2019):** The Board approved the 2045 goals and performance measures, along with the weighted values that would be applied to project evaluation.
- **Meeting #5 (March 18, 2020):** The consultant team presented a candidate list of projects that would be evaluated with the approved 2045 performance measures.
- **Meeting #6 (June 24, 2020):** The MPO Policy Board reviewed the draft project lists and initial draft of the 2045 LRTP document.
- **Meeting #7 (August 20, 2020):** The Danville MPO held a public hearing, where the Policy Board formally adopted the 2045 LRTP.

Project Website

The MPO’s consultants developed a project website that provided information on the 2045 LRTP update (**Figure 7**). The website included a public comment box to allow for general comments online. In later stages of the 2045 update, the website offered further review of the draft list of projects and the draft plan. EPR, p.c. inserted the required notices per the Title VI Plan.

NOTICES PROVIDED



Title VI Plan: Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC

“In order to comply with 49 CFR Section 21.9(d), the Danville MPO shall provide information to the public regarding their Title VI obligations and apprise members of the public for the protections against discrimination afforded to them by Title VI. The paragraph below will be inserted into all significant publications that are distributed to the public, such as future versions, and updates of the Long-Range Transportation Plan...”

“The Danville Metropolitan Planning Organization fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For more information, or to obtain a Discrimination Complaint Form, see www.wppdc.org or call (276) 638-2987.”

Newsletters and Press Releases

Staff shared project information in MPO newsletters and press releases. These notices included staff phone numbers and addresses that allowed the public to forward comments to the MPO. Per the Public Involvement Participation Plan and Notification Procedures Manual, the notices included proper language.

Surveys

The MPO’s consultants developed two community survey instruments. The first collected feedback on Goals and Performance Measures, in late 2019. There were no recorded responses to this first round, but over 50 participants responded to the second survey that collected information on specific transportation needs through an online map. The second survey occurred in the spring of 2020. Consultants developed heatmaps of public comments and overlaid those with projects to correlate public feedback with project selection.

Postcards

The consultants developed comment postcards and distributed them to stakeholder groups. These cards allowed individuals to send comments directly to the consultant team and allowed input from those that lack internet access. Through this strategy, staff received six responses, including feedback from visually impaired and senior residents in the region. These comments are documented in Appendix D.

Stakeholder Interviews

EPR, p.c. conducted stakeholder interviews before the first open house event early in the process. These interviews were intended to identify perceived transportation needs and deficiencies. During the 2045 process, Virginia's Office of Intermodal Planning and Investment (OIPI) began its update of the Statewide Transportation Plan, VTrans. As sub-consultant in that process, EPR, p.c. facilitated a half-day workshop with stakeholders from around the Danville MPO region. While this engagement served to provide input to VTrans, the event doubled as a stakeholder session with the 2045 process. Documentation of the VTrans event is in Appendix D. A final round of stakeholder interviews in the last phase of the process vetted the draft project lists.

Public Intercepts

The MPO's consultants planned a series of public intercept events that displayed 2045 materials at existing community events such as festivals and other public gatherings. Weather resulted in the cancelation of the first event, the annual "Market Monster Mash" on Halloween night. EPR, p.c. and MPO staff attended a "Food Truck Rodeo" event on November 2, 2019. In 2020, the MPO began preparations for a new series of intercepts but those plans were canceled due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

Figure 7 D-MPO's LRTP website



Open House Events

The MPO hosted a public open house event on June 27, 2019, to present the existing conditions analysis of the region's transportation system. This report resulted in **Chapter III: STATE OF THE SYSTEM**. EPR, p.c. contacted over 70 stakeholder groups from the PPP and Title VI Plan. Consultants also posted flyers in public spaces throughout the region. Despite the intensive outreach effort and an accessible location, there was limited attendance at the event. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the second public open house occurred as an online town hall, on July 7, 2020. During the town hall, the consultants presented the draft project list for public review. Appendix D documents both events.

Public Viewing

Prior to adoption, the MPO posted electronic and physical copies of the plan at least 30 days prior to the public hearing. Notices for public viewing complied with the MPO's engagement guidelines.

COVID 19 Pandemic

The 2045 Public Involvement Plan called for public intercepts and two public open house events. In March, just as MPO staff and consultant prepared to ramp up engagement efforts, the COVID-19 pandemic led to cancellations of public events and resulted in social distancing protocols across the nation. The June 27, 2019 event met the FHWA requirement as a "public meeting." The MPO's PPP requires an open house after the LRTP is drafted. A virtual event served to meet this requirement while maintaining public safety.

TITLE VI PLAN - ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY



"In addition to meetings and written communication as part of its efforts to reach out to low-income and minority communities, the MPO will utilize alternative methods of outreach, such as personal interviews, audio/video recording, and other feasible forms of communication."

Public Involvement Participation Plan and Notification Procedures Manual

"As the transportation plan is developed, the Danville MPO shall consult, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities in the planning area affected by transportation to coordinate planning functions to the maximum extent practicable.

"The implementation of the Danville MPO Public Involvement Participation Plan will be coordinated with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes developed, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPO urban transportation planning study area that is affected by transportation."

Engagement Calendar

The engagement calendar included the following dates:

Calendar Year 2019

- **April 17, 2019:** MPO Policy Board Meeting
- **June 2019:** Public Comment Postcards
- **June 2019:** Project Website goes Live
- **June 27, 2019:** Stakeholder Interviews
- **June 27, 2019:** Public Open House Event
- **July 18, 2019:** MPO Policy Board Meeting
- **August 1, 2019:** VTrans Stakeholder Workshop
- **Fall 2019:** Initial Survey goes Live
- **October 9, 2019:** MPO Policy Board Meeting
- **October 31, 2019:** Public Intercept, Market Monster Mash (Canceled due to weather)
- **November 2, 2019:** Public Intercept, Bridge Street Food Truck Rodeo
- **December 18, 2019:** MPO Policy Board Meeting

Calendar Year 2020

- **March 18, 2020:** MPO Policy Board Meeting
- **May 11, 2020:** Second Survey goes Live
- **June 24, 2020:** MPO Policy Board Meeting
- **July 7, 2020:** Virtual Public Open House
- **July 2020:** Public Display of Draft Plan
- **August 20, 2020:** MPO Policy Board Meeting

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PARTICIPATION PLAN AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES MANUAL



“Public meetings sponsored by the Danville MPO will be held at convenient and accessible locations and times. A citizen information forum period will be provided during each regular Policy Board meeting.”

“A meeting notice will be provided in printed form and electronically, where practicable, to local news media, one week in advance of each regular Policy Board meeting. Reasonable access to available information about Danville MPO sponsored transportation studies in the urban planning study area will also be provided.”

“Public notices advising citizens in the MPO urban planning study area of the availability of draft transportation plans and transportation improvement programs in local public libraries and public offices will be continued in addition to website availability.”

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Title VI Plan: Environmental Justice and Limited English Proficiency

“Include the Title VI Notice to the Public (see Appendix 2) in relevant press releases and on the West Piedmont Planning District Commission website.”

Documentation

Staff tracked all public engagement efforts and comments throughout the 2045 process. A Matrix of comments records feedback from the public and stakeholders. This Matrix also documents how each comment influenced the process. Appendix D also details strategies and results from the survey, open house events, VTrans workshop and all other engagement efforts.

Matrix of Public and Stakeholder Comments

To document the public and stakeholder engagement, Appendix D includes a matrix of all comments collected during the update process. This matrix consists of six columns that record the following:

- **Comment ID:** Each public and stakeholder comment received a numeric ID for easy reference.
- **Name:** The Matrix records the name of the individual who made the comment. If the individual did not include a name or asked for his/her name to be excluded from the record, staff recoded those entries as anonymous. Most comments fell under this category.
- **Comment:** The 2045 LRTP records every comment received in this process. These comments are direct quotes unless otherwise noted.
- **Source:** The Matrix record the source for each comment. Sources include the various strategies and platforms for engagement, such as the public open houses, postcard, website, interviews, etc.
- **How was this addressed:** The final column records how the 2045 LRTP addressed each comment. Some comments directly influenced the structure of this plan. Other comments helped validate project selection. Others were considered but did not directly influence the process due to various reasons that are listed.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PARTICIPATION PLAN AND NOTIFICATION PROCEDURES MANUAL

“When significant comments are received on the draft Danville MPO long-range transportation plan as a result of the Public Involvement Participation Plan a report on the disposition of comments shall be made a part of the final Danville MPO long-range transportation plan record.”

Themes of Engagement Results

The Matrix of Public and Stakeholder Comments highlights two main themes. First, participants in the process wanted to see bike and pedestrian accommodations. These comments centered on a desire for improved on-road facilities, such as new sidewalks, bike lanes, and safer crosswalks across major roadways. Respondents also asked for off-road facilities, such as extensions of the Riverwalk Trail. Finally, responses included comments on improved bike and pedestrian connections to important destinations, such as the train station. The second major theme was inter-regional transportation. Comments included greater connection to the North Carolina Research Triangle, inter-regional bus service, improved Amtrak service, and a shuttle to Halifax.

In response to the two main themes identified above, the 2045 LRTP contains the following features:

Bike and Pedestrian Connection

Inclusion of Bike and Pedestrian Features

For all other transportation projects listed in the Constrained and Visioning lists, the consultant team determined if there were any bike and pedestrian improvements included in the project descriptions. The project scoring process consisted of fifteen performance measures, including a measure for alternative forms of transportation. This methodology awarded points to all LRTP projects that included these features.

Road Diets and Modal Focus

The 2045 process involved an analysis of existing roadways to determine opportunities for road diets. The associated map illustrated modal focus, where existing roadways could be retrofitted with improved bike and pedestrian amenities.

MPO Guidance

Chapter IX provides guidance to MPO officials on further bike and pedestrian studies. This guidance details strategies for developing Strategic, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Timely recommendations that can feed into the 2050 LRTP update.

Inter-Regional Accessibility

Park and Ride Lots

The 2045 LRTP emphasized development of park and ride lots in **Chapter IX**. The Visioning List incorporates recommendations for further developing locations that better serve intra- and inter-regional transportation.

Regional Bus Service

Chapter IX discusses regional transit service to Halifax and other locations in southside Virginia.

Inter-Regional Bus Service

Chapter IX discusses maintenance of the new Virginia Breeze service coming to Danville. This section offers local and regional actions for tracking success of this service and encouraging ridership. **Chapter IX** also calls for the study of shuttle service or vanpooling to the research triangle in North Carolina.

Amtrak Service

The 2045 LRTP defines a clear set of goals for improving Amtrak service, offering improved hours of operation. With the Schoolfield Mill site and Mega Park developments, the region will require additional inter-regional service that will support those uses.