

Michiana Area Council of Governments

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

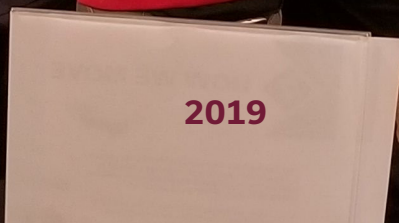
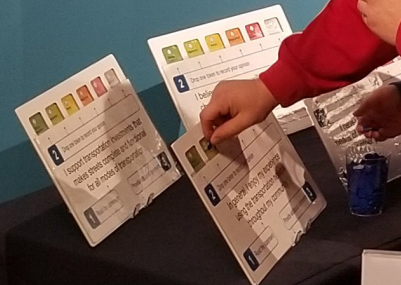


STORE TRAVEL NEEDS

ESTABLISH PRIORITIES
that will inform policies and transportation projects

All so that our region can better plan investments and growth for our transportation system.

ING PROCESS



Michiana Area Council of Governments

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
Mission	3
Purpose	3
Goals	4
EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES	6
Engagement Strategy Framework	7
Environmental Justice	9
ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS	10
ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURES	13
General Procedures	14
Metropolitan Transportation Plan	15
Transportation Improvement Program	16
Public Engagement Plan	17
Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan	18
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy	19
Interurban Trolley Fare and Service Modifications	19
Other Significant Activities/Products	19
ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION	20
APPENDIX	23
Appendix A: Code of Federal Regulations for Public Involvement	A-1
Appendix B: Environmental Justice & Title VI Program	B-1
Appendix C: Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Language Assistance Plan	C-1
Appendix D: Engagement Strategy Framework Workshop Example	D-1
Appendix E: Engagement Techniques and Tools Example List	E-1
Appendix F: Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment and Administrative Modification Policy	F-1



INTRODUCTION

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MISSION

The Michiana Area Council of Governments (MACOG) is a voluntary organization of local governments that studies and attempts to resolve for the benefit of each member and the region, areas of interlocal issues, which includes but is not limited to transportation, transit, economic development, environment, and other issues that impact the region.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the Public Engagement Plan (PEP) is to outline the regional planning process and describe opportunities to get involved. This includes information about the strategies deployed to engage the public and stakeholders, and the specific timelines and requirements for public comment during the development and adoptions of the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) plans and programs and the Interurban Trolley. Appendix A includes the Code of Federal Regulations that pertains to public involvement for MPOs.

Public engagement is a process designed to build trust among local residents and regional leaders by creating opportunities to be informed, contribute, and collaborate in the collective efforts of the broader community. There is no “cookie cutter” or “one-size fits all” approach to planning and public engagement. Every planning process must create unique opportunities to build relationships and use creative outreach approaches to ensure the plan meets the goals and objectives of the community. If done well, an effective engagement process will inspire action from community members, organizations, and leaders to implement the plan.



GOALS

To achieve an effective public engagement strategy, MACOG identified the following major goals to implement in our public engagement efforts.

1. **Reach beyond the self-selectors** by bringing more voices to the table through targeted outreach to include all residents in the planning process.
 - a. Meet with organizations that work with targeted population groups to discuss how to collaborate in order to bring their voices to regional issues.
 - b. Use a variety of outlets (media, flyers, notices, etc.) to publicize opportunities for public engagement and express the importance of each persons involvement.
 - c. Increase awareness of regional issues through surveys, articles, flyers, events, etc. in order to demonstrate their relevance to individuals.

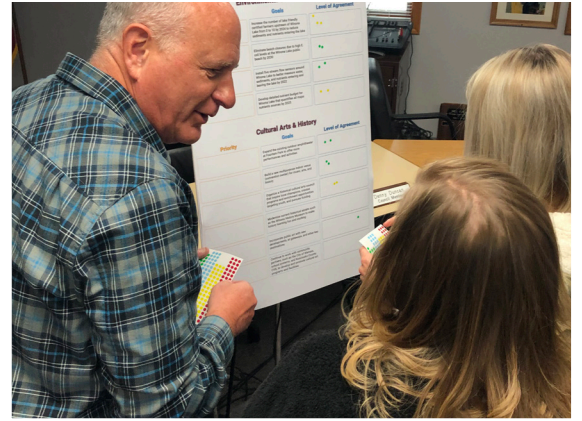
2. **Lower the barriers to entry** by providing accessible engagement formats and making it understandable, relatable, and convenient for all residents.
 - a. Printed materials (public notices, documents, etc.) and meetings will be available in multiple languages according to the most recent Limited English Proficiency Plan (see Appendix C).
 - b. Limit the use of technical jargon in public materials and meetings in order to increase the understanding of participants.
 - c. Consider time and location of public meetings and outreach to make it convenient for all residents.



3. **Actively listen and dialogue** by engaging in early and continual conversations in order to better understand the complete picture.
 - a. Each planning activity will begin with outlining the most appropriate tools and techniques to develop a dialogue with key stakeholders.
 - b. Provide ongoing opportunities (online and in-person) to listen to concerns on regional issues.

4. **Provide meaningful feedback** by following up with residents to build trust and ensure their voices are heard.
 - a. Use email, social media, and traditional media platforms to create consistent communication with stakeholders and the public about the progress and results of planning projects and regional initiatives, especially when public input is sought.
 - b. Increase the distribution of the MACOGazette and continue to create relevant, engaging, and meaningful content discussing regional issues.
 - c. Provide feedback and analysis on input received through surveys and comments on a web platform for the public to review, utilize, and share.

5. **Inspire action** by creating ownership in community leaders and residents to continue to carry the process through implementation.
 - a. Consider ways to develop local and regional leaders on regional issues through committees, workshops, educational opportunities, etc. to empower individuals and groups toward action and implementation.
 - b. Use storytelling and visual techniques to promote local and regional cooperation, highlighting progress and successes.





EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

MACOG fosters effective public participation by creating a customized engagement strategy and applying the best-suited techniques and tools to a given project. There are numerous levels at which engagement with the public might vary based on the project, the stakeholders, and the decisions being made. The potential public influence increases at each level, from informing, to contributing, and to collaborating.

ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY FRAMEWORK

Not all public engagement activities are the same. Depending on several key elements, the level the public can be engaged will vary. To create an effective public engagement strategy, MACOG must first consider what the desired outcome of the action is and how the public can influence the outcome. Using the following framework, MACOG can create a customized strategy to achieve the unique requirements of the plan.

THE COMMUNITY

The Community element lists the range of stakeholder perspectives that should be involved in a plan or project. The stakeholders should be those who have a mutual interest and/or are impacted by the outcome. Additionally, local or regional organizations with missions and goals that align with or are significantly divergent from the plan would be a key stakeholder. Special consideration should be given to groups of people who are often under-represented in the planning process. The final consideration should be given to potential partners, either for planning, communicating, or implementing the outcomes.

THE SUBJECT

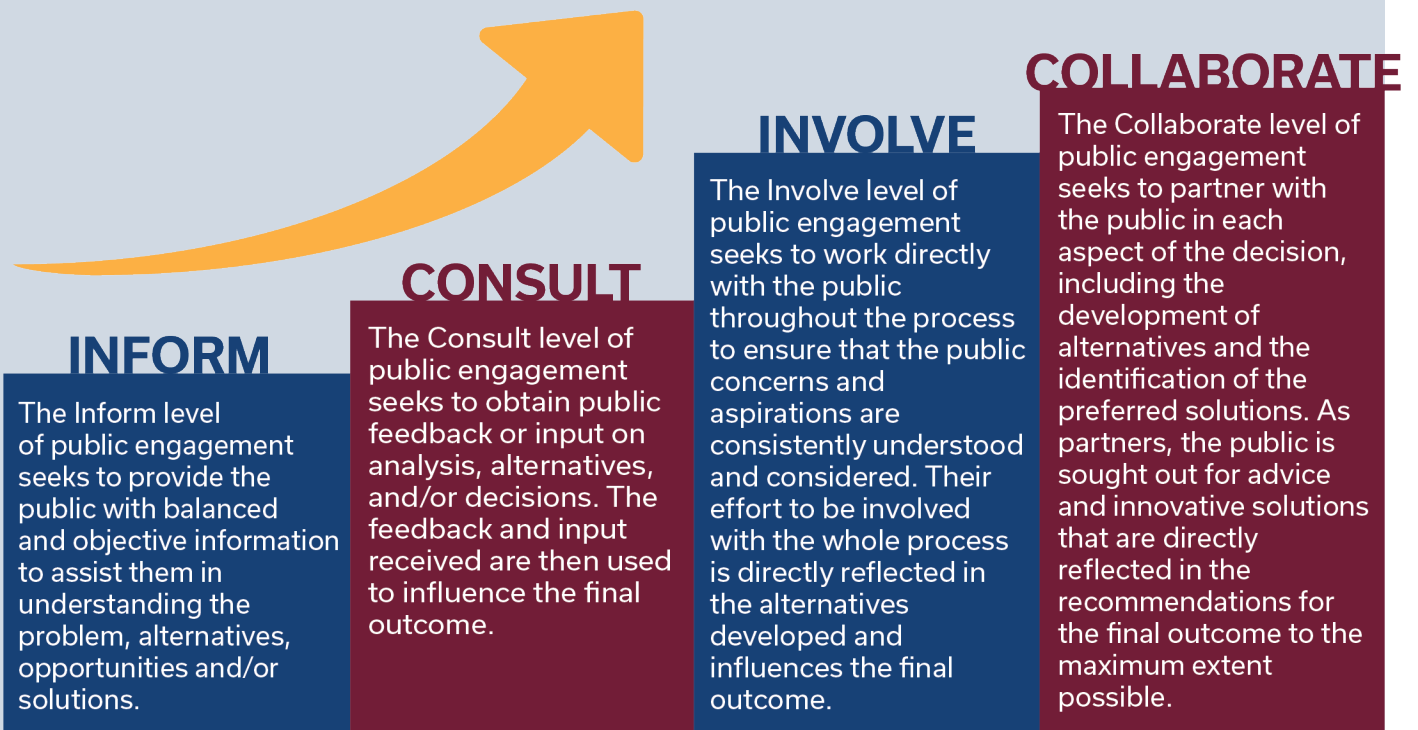
The Subject element identifies the specific information that is missing, misunderstood, or is needed to make a decision. Depending on the stakeholder, this information can vary. It is critical to understand exactly what each stakeholder brings and what he or she will need to be able to understand the purpose and contribute to the final decisions.

THE RESULT

The Result element defines what success looks like for each particular stakeholder and what the end action will be. Understanding each stakeholder's version of success will help identify potential conflicts among them, direct efforts toward common solutions, and focus the plan toward results. Beginning with the end in mind will help motivate everyone involved to work through the process and come to a realization of the final outcomes.

THE LEVEL

The Level element identifies at what level the public wants to be engaged. There are numerous levels at which engagement with the public might vary based on the project, the stakeholders, and the decisions being made. The potential public influence on the decision or action being considered increases at each level of engagement. There are four levels of public engagement: Inform, Consult, Involve, and Collaborate.



THE SETTING

The Setting element determines when and where engagement can happen for these stakeholders. Each stakeholder will have a different place that is most appropriate or comfortable to be engaged. Further, the time activities are scheduled can prevent certain groups from participating. Careful consideration should be given when planning engagement opportunities to encourage the greatest amount of participation.

The public engagement strategy will include multiple levels of engagement, depending on the process and the stakeholders involved. Using the basic framework, MACOG will attempt to select appropriate techniques and tools to achieve the desired public engagement goal for each plan or activity. See Appendix D for the example Engagement Framework worksheet.

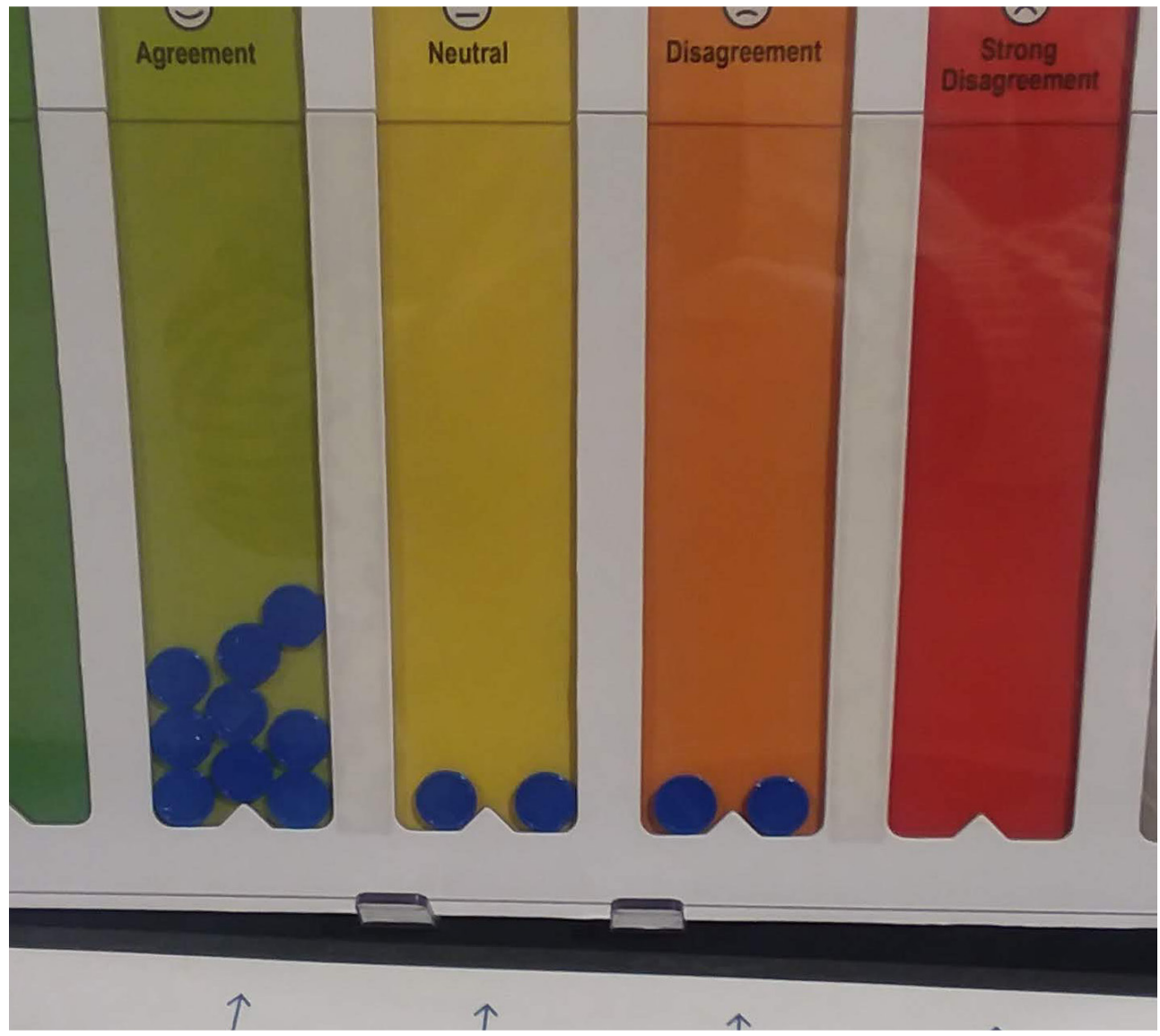
ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

For much of the regional population, there are opportunities to be engaged in the regional planning process at the level they desire. However, there are populations that may have indicators of potential disadvantage in being engaged in the planning process. Traditionally these population groups include:

- Non-Hispanic Minorities
- Hispanics
- Households in Poverty
- Persons with Limited English Proficiency
- Elderly over 65 years of age
- Carless Households
- Persons with Disabilities

Using data from the U.S. Census, MACOG uses a people-and place-based approach that locates selected population groups in the region. Appendix B describes the process and policy to identify Environmental Justice populations in the region. MACOG will use the population groups above to enhance engagement and outreach efforts in order to reach beyond the traditional stakeholder to hear from all parties and groups. MACOG will use this information in coordination with the engagement level to inform staff of appropriate locations and organizations with which MACOG should conduct enhanced outreach.





EFFECTIVE TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES AND TOOLS

To facilitate public engagement, a number of tools or techniques are used to create opportunities for the public to be informed, to contribute, and to collaborate. The combination of various tools will create the customized engagement strategy best suited for the desired goals and the stakeholders involved with the plan. See an example list of techniques and tools in Appendix E.

INFORM

Tools to inform the public include techniques that provide members of the public with information they need to understand the project, the decision-making process, and to provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. When selecting and designing tools to inform, it is important to consider the following:

- Who needs the information?
- What is the target audience's current level of knowledge and understanding of the project?
- What information is needed for the public to understand and provide meaningful input to the project?
- What are the most direct and effective ways to communicate this information?
- What are the target audience's preferences for receiving information?



CONTRIBUTE

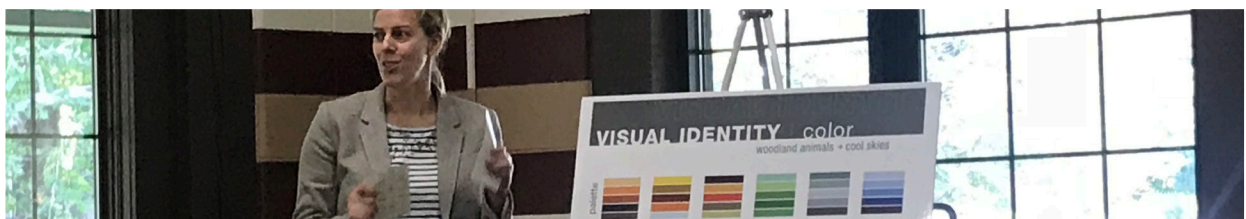
Tools for the public to contribute include techniques that provide the public with the opportunity to provide input to the decision-making process. With these tools, the public can share information and express their opinions and perspectives for consideration in decision-making. Not all the tools have to be used at an in-person event. When selecting a tool, it is important to match it to the situation and desired outcome of the project. Consider the following:

- Are you required to have some form of public meeting in the process?
- Do you need to present information to the public and be available to answer questions or receive comments?
- Do stakeholders or members of the public need or want to hear or learn from other perspectives?
- Do you need to build trust among stakeholders?
- Do you want stakeholders to engage with you and one another in problem solving?
- Are there members of the community that need additional outreach to ensure their opinions are heard?

COLLABORATE

Tools for collaboration include techniques that bring diverse groups of stakeholders together to engage in shared learning and decision-making. Collaboration cannot be done quickly and requires consistent sets of participants who work together over the duration of the process. It is important for participants to work and learn together developing a relationship and building trust. Consider the following when designing a collaborative process:

- Who needs to be included for the final consensus?
- How will you include a diverse group of stakeholders that are a part of the process and ensure their voices are heard?
- Are all key interests willing and able to participate?
- Are there trust or other issues that must be addressed before the process can begin?
- What are the key decisions that must be made to achieve consensus?



ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURES



ENGAGEMENT PROCEDURES

MACOG continuously develops and updates several programs and plans. In exercising its authority to guide the expenditure of federal transportation funds, it is critical for its public participation process to provide complete information, timely public notice, and to support continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and programs.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

The following section describes the procedures for providing public participation related to these transportation-related activities, and provides general engagement guidance for other MACOG activities. MACOG intends to use our engagement strategy to solicit input early and include input in the initial draft of these documents.

APPROVAL PROCESS

1. MACOG staff conducts initial public engagement and plan development.
2. MACOG staff prepares Draft document.
3. Public Comment Period & Public Open House.
4. Revisions to draft based on significant public comment and consultation as required by the EPA Transportation conformity regulations with the Interagency Consultation Group (ICG).
5. Final approval recommendation by the Transportation Technical Advisory Committee (TTAC).
6. Final approval by the Policy Board.
7. Submission to the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT).
8. Approval by INDOT and submission to Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and/or Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

For the public comment periods, MACOG will actively reach out to inform the public that a draft has been prepared and solicit comments. Public Comments are accepted by email, online comment form, mail, fax, or handed in personally. Additionally, MACOG will have at least one public open house where the public can make comments. Comments are included, anonymously, in the appendices of documents and shared with the appropriate parties. It is the goal that by the time the first draft of any document is prepared, the public has had many opportunities to have their voices heard and reflected in the plan.

PUBLIC NOTICES

A public notice will be published in various regional, local, and minority newspapers announcing the public comment period. In addition to the published notice, meetings will be publicized by a press release, email distribution, on our MACOG website and on our MACOG Facebook page.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) like MACOG, develop a Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), which is a long-range, minimum 20-year, transportation vision. It serves to guide the responsible investment of local, state, and federal transportation dollars for roads and highways, transit, and active transportation infrastructure.

The Transportation Plan should include long-range and short-range program strategies and actions that lead to the development of an integrated intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient movement of people and goods. It is updated on a five-year cycle, with MACOG coordinating the development of the MTP with local, state, and federal partners. See Table 1 for milestone details for the development of the MTP.

TABLE 1: METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION PLAN MILESTONES

MILESTONE	ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	PUBLICIZING METHOD	MACOG PUBLIC COMMENT LENGTH
Start of the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	N/A
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Workshops • Pop-Ups Events • Surveys • Community Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email Distribution • Social Media • Flyers 	N/A
Plan Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Period • Public Open House • Available on Website, Office & select Libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Notice • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	30 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption
Amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Period • Public Open House (if necessary) • Available on Website & Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Notice • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	30 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a federally required, short-range plan that provides information regarding the schedule of multimodal transportation projects that are federally funded or deemed regionally significant in the MACOG region. Projects listed are developed in cooperation with the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT), transit providers, local jurisdictions, and the public.

Development of a TIP is a federal requirement as defined by the current highway bill, Fixing America’s Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act). The TIP is required to be cooperatively developed every two years, compatible with the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). MACOG works with local jurisdictions, INDOT, and the public to identify projects that will be included in the program. The program must be fiscally constrained, meaning only the amount of funding that can be reasonably anticipated is programmed and relates to the Michiana on the Move: 2045 Transportation Plan. See Table 2 for milestone details for the development of the TIP.

TABLE 2: TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM MILESTONES

MILESTONE	ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	PUBLICIZING METHOD	MACOG PUBLIC COMMENT LENGTH
Start of the Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform the Public 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	N/A
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email Distribution • Board Meeting Updates 	N/A
Plan Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Period • Public Open House • Available on Website, Office & select Libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Notice • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	30 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption
Amendments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available on Website & Office • Occur at regular Policy Board & TTAC meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Notice on Website • Social Media 	7 days, ending the day before approval (when-ever possible)

TIP Amendments & Administrative Modifications

Schedule and funding adjustments are an inevitable part of the project development process. To remain a continuously updated and current planning document, Amendments and Administrative Modifications provide an instrument of change to the adopted document. The TTAC and Policy Board reviews all Administrative Modifications and approves Amendments at their regularly scheduled, public meetings.

Amendments represent a major change to the approved TIP and will have a 7-day public comment period (certain circumstances may shorten the established comment period). The amendments will be posted on our website and a notice will be sent to local media contacts and on our Facebook page. An Administrative Modification, however, is a minor change to the TIP and does not require public engagement. For additional information on TIP Amendment Process, see Appendix F.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN

The Public Engagement Plan (PEP) outlines the strategies and techniques utilized to provide and receive information from the public on transportation planning and programming process including funding for projects, studies, plans, and committee actions. See Table 3 for milestone details for the development of the Public Engagement Plan.

TABLE 3: PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN MILESTONES

MILESTONE	ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	PUBLICIZING METHOD	MACOG PUBLIC COMMENT LENGTH
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal review of Engagement effectiveness Review with Policy Board and TTAC 	N/A	N/A
Plan Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment Period Public Open House Surveys Pop-Up Events Available on Website and in Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legal Notice Email Distribution Press Release Social Media 	45 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption

COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

The Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan (Coordinated Plan) provides a short-range plan for the implementation of public transit and social service transportation concepts in the region. It identifies the initial gaps, needs strategies, and activities necessary to provide public transit in Elkhart, Kosciusko, Marshall, and St. Joseph Counties. The Coordinated plan is required to include the following:

- An inventory of current transit providers in the four-county area, including public, private, and non-profit providers;
- An assessment of transit needs for older adults, individuals with disabilities, and persons with low income;
- Strategies, projects and/or activities to address identified gaps between current services and opportunities to improve service efficiency; and
- A prioritization process for selecting projects to implement specific strategies or activities for potential funding.

See Table 4 for milestone details for the development of the Coordinated Plan.

TABLE 4: COORDINATED PLAN MILESTONES

MILESTONE	ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	PUBLICIZING METHOD	MACOG PUBLIC COMMENT LENGTH
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder Workshops • Pop-Ups Events • Surveys • Community Presentations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website • Email Distribution • Social Media • Flyers 	N/A
Plan Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Period • Public Open House • Available on Website, Office & select Libraries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Notice • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	30 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption

COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS)

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) outlines the goals and strategies for the region to facilitate economic development. It is a requirement for the U.S. Economic Development Administration. See Table 5 for milestone details for the development of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

TABLE 5: COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES MILESTONES

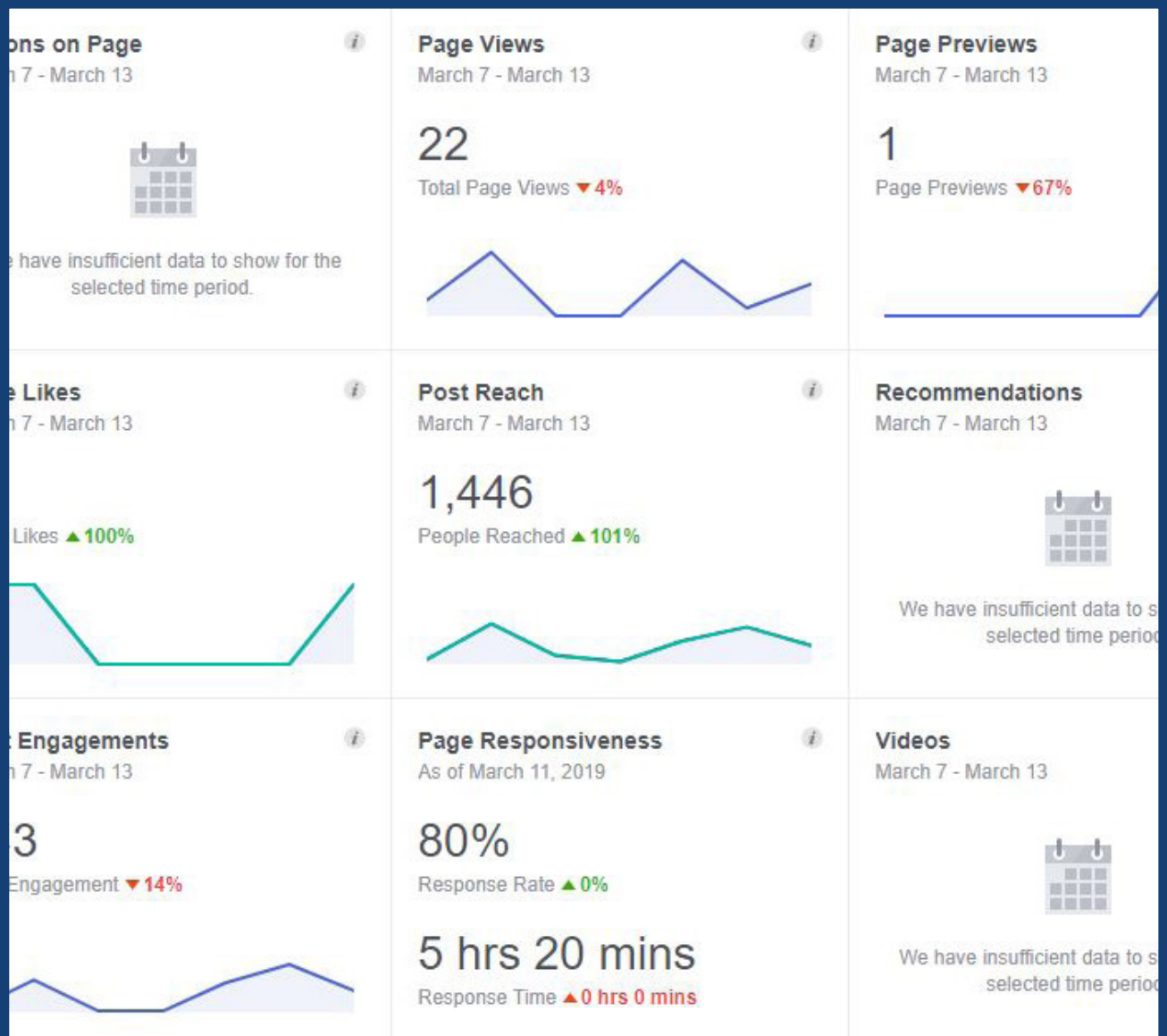
MILESTONE	ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES	PUBLICIZING METHOD	MACOG PUBLIC COMMENT LENGTH
Plan Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Steering Committee • Stakeholder Workshops 	N/A	N/A
Plan Approval	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment Period • Public Open House • Available on Website and in Office 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal Notice • Email Distribution • Press Release • Social Media 	30 days, generally to end one week prior to tentative plan adoption

INTERURBAN TROLLEY FARE AND SERVICE MODIFICATIONS

MACOG oversees the administration and operation of the Interurban Trolley, the fixed-route transit system in Elkhart and Goshen, and the complementary ADA Access service. MACOG's approach to public engagement for the Interurban Trolley is the same as other plans and projects. These public engagement procedures require legal notices at a minimum and comment periods for these changes. MACOG staff strives to go beyond the minimums with additional engagement activities including pop-up events, on-board questionnaires, and online opportunities.

OTHER SIGNIFICANT ACTIVITIES/PRODUCTS

MACOG will likely undertake additional significant activities not outlined previously. This may include Major Corridor Studies, Active Transportation efforts, Policy Updates, Comprehensive Plans, and other non-transportation-related activities. On a case-by-case basis, MACOG will develop appropriate public engagement strategies.



ENGAGEMENT EVALUATION

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The PEP is not a static document, but an ongoing strategy that is reviewed and updated based on our experiences and the changing circumstances of the region. MACOG will evaluate the public engagement process on an ongoing basis to ensure that the program is as effective as possible in facilitating full and open access to planning processes and that all interested persons are given the opportunity to participate.

MACOG will use both quantitative and qualitative measures to assess the effectiveness of the overall engagement program and specific strategies. Quantitative measures include the following:

QUANTITATIVE

MEASURING VISIBILITY

- Number of MACOGazettes distributed (printed and email versions)
- Number of news releases produced
- Number of visitors on the MACOG website
- Number of Followers, Post Reach, and Post Engagement on MACOG Social Media platforms

MEASURING ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- Number of and geographic distribution of public meetings & outreach opportunities, including those used to reach Environmental Justice populations
- Number of invitees and attendees to a MACOG hosted event

MEASURING INPUT AND FEEDBACK

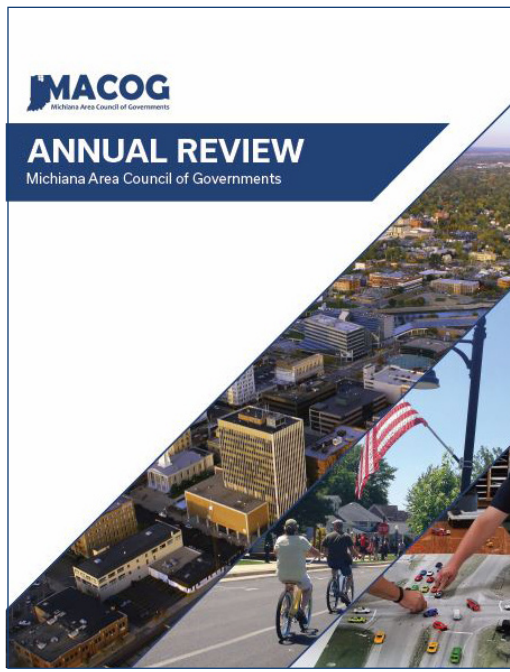
- Number of and geographic distribution of comments received through online engagement tools and in-person events

MACOG staff will collect the quantitative measures on a continual basis, following meetings and activities relating to public engagement. Depending on the measure, MACOG will issue surveys, questionnaires, and track engagement opportunities in order to quantify the effectiveness.

Qualitative measures will also be used to supplement the more quantitative measures. These include:

QUALITATIVE

- Effectiveness of different meeting formats
- Public understanding of the process
- Quality of the comments received and use of the input in developing the plans
- Effectiveness of notification and communication tools
- Effectiveness of visualization tools and techniques used



MACOG will develop a questionnaire that members of staff and some partner organizations could complete to evaluate the engagement process. Additionally, MACOG will consider a public engagement survey to receive feedback on the effectiveness of the various techniques and strategies used.

MACOG's Annual Review will contain a summary of public participation throughout the year, and will be presented to MACOG Policy Board and be available on our website. The Public Engagement Plan will be updated and revised to maintain its effectiveness and relevance with changing circumstances of the region.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PLAN



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