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## PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 2024

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New Orleans Regional Planning Commission for Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. John the Baptist, St. Tammany, and Tangipahoa Parishes.



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## 1. About the Regional Planning Commission

In addition to the eight member parishes the State of Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development and representatives from the region's transportation operators, such as the Louis Armstrong International Airport, the Regional Transit Authority and Jefferson Transit, also have seats on the Board as part of the Transportation Policy Committee. The Transportation Policy Committee acts as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) governing board and voting body which is supported by a professional planning staff.

This map illustrates the New Orleans Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) and its surrounding regions. The map includes the following features:

- Legend:**
  - MPO - Urbanized Areas Census 2010 (Yellow)
  - MPO - Urbanized Areas Adjusted (Smoothed) RPC/LADOTD 2013 (Orange)
  - MPA - Metropolitan Planning Study Areas (2016 update) (Green)
  - Regional Planning Commission Member Parishes (Black outline)
- Geographic Labels:**
  - States:** LOUISIANA, MISSISSIPPI
  - Parishes:** TANGIPAHOA, ST. TAMMANY, ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST, ORLEANS, ST. CHARLES, ST. BERNARD, PLAQUEMINES, JEFFERSON, Lafourche, Terrebonne.
  - Cities/Towns:** Hammond, Ponchatoula, Madisonville, Mandeville, Slidell, New Orleans, Kenner, Chalmette, Gretna, Belle Chasse, Bertrاندville, Yscloskey, Larose, Latite, Pointe a la Hache, Empire, Venice, Leeville, Grand Isle, Biloxi, Gulfport, Pass Christian, Bay St. Louis.
  - Lakes:** Lake Maurepas, Lake Pontchartrain, Lake Borgne, Lake Eugene, Lake Salvador.
  - Sounds:** Mississippi Sound, Chandeaur Sound, Breton Sound.
  - Rivers:** Pearl River, Mississippi River.
- Infrastructure:** Major highways (Interstates 10, 55, 59, 90, 51, 190, 22, 12, 61, 510, 45, 39, 23, 1; State Routes 90, 51, 12, 61, 510, 45, 39, 23, 1) and local roads are shown.
- Urbanized Areas:** The map highlights several urbanized areas, including the South Tangipahoa Urbanized Area, Mandeville/Covington Urbanized Area, Slidell Urbanized Area, New Orleans Urbanized Area, and the New Orleans Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA) itself.



## 2. Core Planning Responsibilities

As an MPO the RPC is responsible for the four major transportation plans and programs listed in this section. In addition, the RPC is responsible for preparing or assisting with other special transportation plans and studies in addition to a multitude of programs including Safety, Emergency Preparedness, Economic Development, Brown-fields, Clean City/Clean Fuel, Watershed, and more.

**Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP):** The Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) is the chief legal document reflecting the objectives, resources, fundamental planning process, and project implementation schedule for the region over the next 30 years. It must be revised every five years so incoming or newly identified projects and priorities can be updated. The latest update describes the regional vision for transportation for the years (2023-2052) Projects in the plan are organized into three tiers:

- ◆ Tier I (FY 23-26): Covers projects expected to advance to construction in the next four years. These projects comprise the Transportation Improvement Program.
- ◆ Tier II (FY 27-36): Lays out projects currently in the planning and development phase that are expected to advance based on funding.
- ◆ Tier III (FY 37-52): Long-range projects that are more complex to implement due to funding availability or other factors. (23 C.F.R. 450.324)

**Transportation Improvement Plans (TIP):** TIPs consist of priority lists of projects (both highway and transit) which are advancing towards construction over the five-year planning period of the MTP. Projects found in the TIPs evolve through the transportation planning process and are contained in the region's long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan.

The TIP and the State TIP (STIP) contains projects proposed for federal funding. TIPs and STIP are products of a consensus-building process

carried out jointly by the RPC and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD). Both documents are updated every two years. TIPs are reviewed annually by the RPC and selected revisions are permitted, following formal amendment procedures.

Projects contained in the TIPs derive from Phase I of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. Projects are largely maintenance-oriented consisting of roadway rehabilitation, overlay, and traffic signalization. Bus transit and rail rehabilitation and extensions are also emphasized along with intermodal facilities development. (23 C.F.R. 450.326)

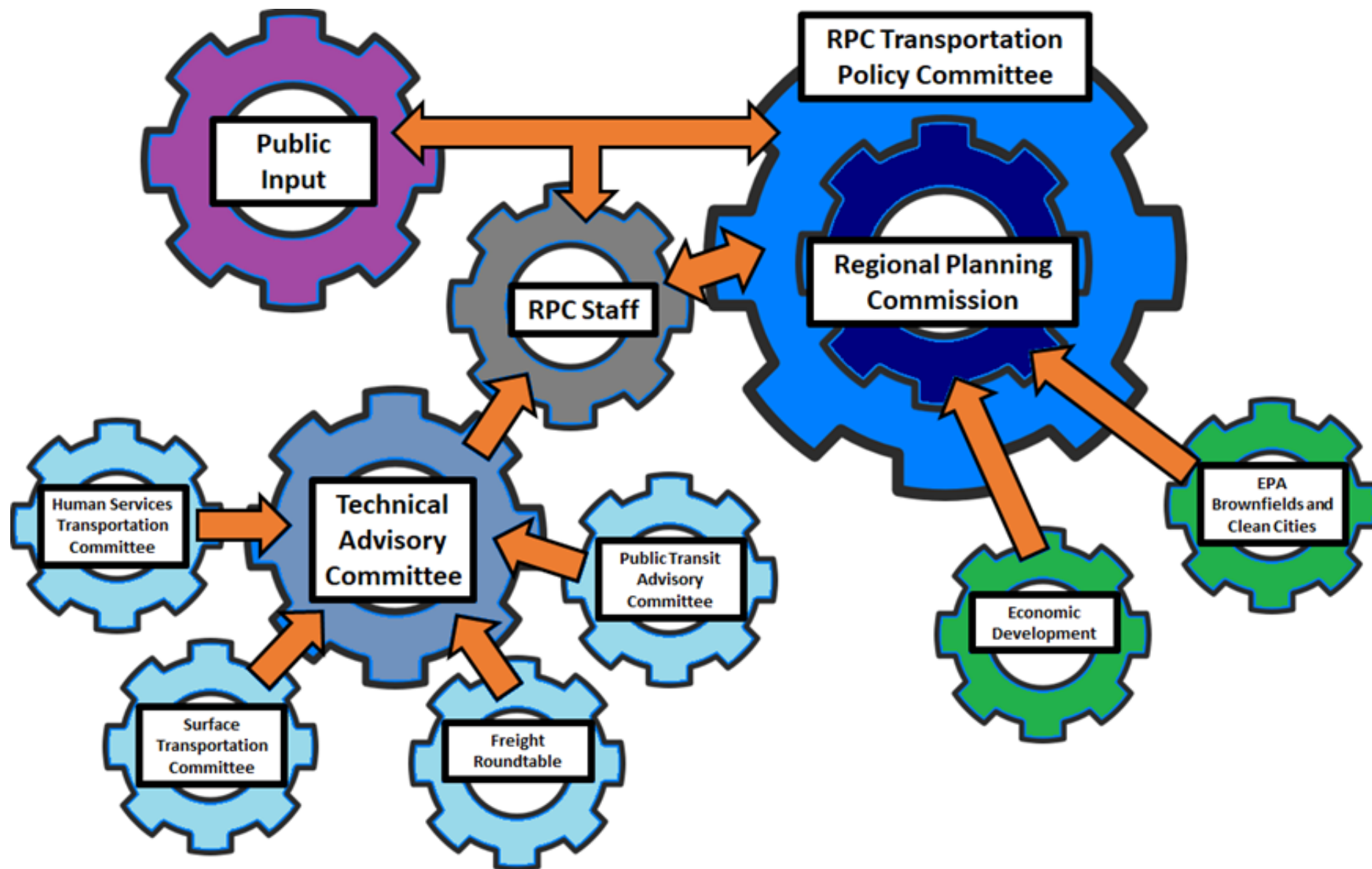
**Unified Planning work Program (UPWP):** The Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) describes the federally funded planning activities the Regional Planning Commission will conduct and products to be created during the current fiscal year. The UPWP covers four Urbanized Areas (UAs) in southeast Louisiana: New Orleans, South Tangipahoa, Slidell, and Mandeville-Covington.

Activities described in the document reflect one year of a multi-year program to implement the strategies and achieve the objectives of the MTP. These strategies are derived from federal mandates, as codified in legislation, conducted in the context of a continuing, comprehensive, locally focused planning process. (23 C.F.R. 450.308)

**Public Participation Plan (PPP):** The PPP identifies the RPC's public participation methods, the strategies for public engagement and outreach, and state and federal regulations regarding public participation. The PPP is evaluated annually and updated every five (5) years. (23 C.F.R. 450.316)

The RPC also maintains a Title VI Non-Discrimination Program and Language Assistance Plan. Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or national origin under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance, while Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, entitled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations" further extends Title VI protections to low-income populations.

### 3. New Orleans Regional Planning Commission Structure and Relationships



## **Regional Planning Commission**

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) represents the New Orleans metropolitan area on matters of regional importance, including transportation, economic development, and the environment.

RPC is the governing board of one of Louisiana's Planning and Development Districts. Membership of the RPC includes elected officials and citizen members from eight parishes.

## **Transportation Policy Committee**

The Transportation Policy (TPC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for four urbanized areas in southeast Louisiana: New Orleans, Hammond-Ponchatoula, Mandeville-Covington, and Slidell.

MPOs are created by Federal Law, and are responsible for coordinating transportation planning and funding across multiple jurisdictions. Membership in the TPC includes the RPC board, as well as local mayors and representatives from the maritime, freight, aviation industries, and public transportation providers.

## **Non-MPO Responsibilities**

Outside, though always in coordination with the work of the MPO, RPC is involved in other federal and state initiatives dedicated to the betterment of the region.

RPC partners with the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the state office of Economic Development, the Delta Regional Authority, and other local and regional economic development alliances to coordinate regional economic interests and pursue funding for economic development.

## **Technical Advisory Working Group (TAG)**

The Technical Advisory Working Group provides input in to the metropolitan planning process. The TAG assists in setting planning policy and priorities and recommends studies for inclusion in the UPWP.

The TAG also provides a forum for collaboration and peer support for technical staff from throughout the region.

Membership includes local departments of public works and planning, representatives from LADOTD, FHWA, and FTA, transit agencies, and groups that advocate for better transportation infrastructure and for traditionally under-represented populations.

## **Technical Advisory Subgroups**

The TAG is advised by subgroups, each of which represents a specific policy initiative of the MPO. These include a roundtable for freight and freight related topics, a working group of public transportation leadership, a committee that coordinates efforts among local and state transportation implementing agencies, and a committee that represents transportation needs for the elderly and the disabled. Other subcommittees may be formed on an ad hoc basis as needed.

## **Staff**

The RPC staff includes professionals with expertise in planning, environmental sciences, public outreach, accounting, and geographic information systems. With input from the public and from the TAC, staff advises the RPC and the TPC on planning priorities, ensures that all federal and state planning requirements are met, and ensures sound stewardship of local and federal funding.

## **Public Input**

Whether conducting studies on local streets, finding ways to foster a more equitable transportation system, or creating a thirty-year long-range plan, the public is the most important stakeholder in the metropolitan planning process. Opportunities for public input are available at every level of the planning process.

## Section 2 —Introduction to Public Participation

*The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) shall develop and use a documented public participation plan that defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, private transportation providers, users of the transportation system, and others with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process in accordance with 23 C.F.R Section 450.316 (MPO Rules and Operating Procedures, amended March 6th, 2019)*

### 1. Purpose

This plan outlines the public participation goals and techniques to be used in the New Orleans eight parish region transportation planning and programming processes. This plan revises the previous plan, dated May 2021. The revised plan reflects the RPC's ongoing commitment to actively evaluate and improve the public involvement process and to ensure compliance with updated Federal requirements.

Public participation in the transportation planning process is vital for many reasons:

*Citizens have the right to participate in planning and investment decisions that affect their daily lives. Public participation that begins early in the planning process and is maintained throughout the life of the plan or project helps to avoid, minimize, and mitigate negative impacts. Plans that are developed with citizen participation are more likely to have community support, increasing their chances of implementation.*

Citizen participation strengthens the democratic process and improves the likelihood that plans will be successfully implemented. When the public involvement process is implemented correctly, it builds a public understanding and knowledge about decisions, identifies public concerns and values, and helps to develop consensus, resolve conflicts, and produce better decisions.

The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) is committed to providing ample opportunities for all current and future residents of the region to learn about and provide feedback on issues, plans, and projects under consideration in the region. The RPC is further committed to ensuring that traditionally underserved populations that have historically faced challenges and barriers have meaningful opportunities to participate in the planning and programming processes; the RPC will strive to address environmental justice issues at all stages of the planning process. This plan is a guide for the RPC to identify key stakeholders and proactive public engagement strategies to meet the public participation goals of the agency, while also informing the public and other stakeholders on opportunities to get involved in the planning process.





## 2. Federal Public Participation Requirements

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, the federal surface transportation funding and authorization bill was signed in 2024 and continues to support previous federal public participation guidelines. MPOs are required to develop a public participation plan identifying reasonable opportunities for the public and all interested stakeholders to be involved in and comment on the contents of the long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program. In addition to the MTP and TIP, this Public Participation Plan outlines public participation requirements and outreach methods for all the RPC's core planning processes.

The IIJA also requires that MPOs identify a broad and inclusive list of stakeholders that must be provided with the opportunity to comment and be involved in the planning process. These stakeholders, including the public, affected government agencies, transportation disadvantaged populations, providers of transportation and more. MPO's are also required to coordinate with the statewide transportation planning, public participation, and consultation processes.

Additionally, the IIJA also requires that MPOs conduct public meetings at convenient and accessible locations at convenient times, use visualizations such as maps and charts to help describe plans, and make public information available in electronically accessible formats.

## Section 3 Public Involvement Goals

To help achieve broader public understanding and consensus on transportation plans, programs, and projects, the following major goals are identified for the public participation efforts of the RPC:

1. **Inform-** Provide timely, objective information to keep the public informed about RPC's ongoing transportation planning and project programming processes throughout the region.
2. **Involve-** Create inclusive opportunities for the public to provide comments and feedback for consideration at key decision-making points in the planning and programming process, with an emphasis on actively seeking out input from traditionally underserved populations.
3. **Comprehend-** Broaden the mutual understanding of priorities and concerns of all involved and impacted by the RPC's planning and programming activities.
4. **Engage-** Collaborate with local communities and other stakeholders in an interactive process to develop plans and programs that are reflective of the values of the region.
5. **Improve-** Continuously seek ways to improve information, involvement, and engagement through annual evaluation of the public participation process.



## Section 4 Identification of Stakeholders

The RPC considers all who live, work, or travel through the 8-parish region as stakeholders potentially effected by transportation planning decisions. The following are stakeholder groups that are important participants in the transportation planning and programming process.

**General Public** All residents within the RPC’s planning area utilize and are affected by the region’s transportation system daily. Persons representing special interest groups often make up a large proportion of those participating in public involvement activities. It is helpful to involve as many members of the public as possible to get a broader perspective of the “average citizen.”

### **Minority and Low-Income Populations**

According to 2017-2021 Census American Community Survey (ACS) five-year estimates, the minority population within the RPC’s planning area is approximately 44% of the total population, while about 17.5% of households are classified as “low-income” (i.e., with incomes less than 150% of the federal poverty level), and 3.79% of households do not have access to a motor vehicle.

Minority and low-income populations are protected population groups under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act (42 U.S.C. 2000d-1), the President’s Executive Order 12898, issued in 1994, entitled “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”, and a subsequent U.S. Department of Transportation order. Title VI prohibits discrimination on the basis of race or national origin under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. The EJ Order further amplified Title VI and added low-income populations to the protected list. The MPO maintains a list of organizations representing or working with racial and ethnic minorities.

### **Limited English Proficient (LEP)**

According to the 2017-2021 ACS five-year data, around 2.6% of the urban area’s population report they speak or understand English less than “very well,” and of those, over 40% speak Spanish or Vietnamese. The RPC is developing a Language Assistance Plan to outline policies and procedures that will be used to address the needs of LEP persons.

Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”, requires any agency receiving federal funds to establish a means of including Limited English Proficiency persons in the agency’s decision-making processes and ensuring meaningful access to the information and services the agency provides. The Department of Justice issued guidelines to assist agencies in complying with this requirement. The steps required to ensure “meaningful access” depend upon a number of factors, including the number of LEP persons that may be impacted, the importance of the service provided, and the resources available to the agency.

### **Elderly, Persons with a Disability, and the Transportation Disadvantaged**

U.S. Department of Transportation planning regulations require MPOs to “seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems.” In this spirit, the MPO includes the elderly, persons with a disability, and those without access to an automobile as additional target population groups for inclusion in public involvement efforts and for transportation needs assessments. The RPC has a contact list of organizations representing the elderly and persons with disabilities as well as agency staff working with these groups.

According to 2017-2021 ACS five-year data, 15.92% of the region's population was aged 65 and over. The 2019 5-year ACS also estimated 15.9% non-institutionalized population experienced a disability; 36.98% of the population 65 or older experience a disability. The 2017-2021 ACS estimates over 3.79% of the region's population lives in a household without access to an automobile.

### **Local Jurisdictions and Public Agencies**

Coordinating the RPC's transportation and other planning processes with local, parish, and state transportation planning and other planning activities affected by transportation is essential. Examples of activities affected by transportation include land use growth, economic development, safety/security operations, and environmental protection. Thus, local, parish, state, and federal officials and agency staff are important stakeholders. The IJJA places an emphasis on consultation and coordination with these officials and staff.

**Private Businesses, Special Interest Groups, and Other Organizations** Special interest groups are stakeholders. Representatives of these organizations are helpful in the planning process by bringing perspectives and extensive knowledge of their issue areas. Examples of these groups include bicycle, pedestrian, and transit advocacy organizations; chambers of commerce; environmental organizations; neighborhood associations, social aid and pleasure clubs, etc. The RPC maintains contact lists of these organizations, which are updated periodically.

## Section 5 Public Involvement Methods

The RPC uses a wide variety of outreach and engagement methods to reach and interact with the stakeholders identified in Section 4. The various methods and tools the RPC may use to accomplish the public participation goals listed earlier are detailed below, as funding and resources permit. These methods are also summarized by plan type in Figure 2, which further categorizes methods as primary or supplemental methods. Primary methods include traditional outreach and engagement methods, which are “tried and true” and often expected by stakeholders. Supplemental methods will be used to further enhance traditional engagement methods and will be utilized based upon need or request as time, funding, and logistics allow. The RPC seeks to balance traditional, in-person engagement and tools with innovative digital methods as well. The following listing of methods is not intended to be exhaustive, and the RPC may facilitate or participate in other public involvement opportunities that may not be known or available at this time.

**RPC Website:** [www.norpc.org](http://www.norpc.org)

The RPC website provides up-to-date information on the following:

- ♦ RPC/TPC Board meeting schedules, agenda, minutes, and other important notices
- ♦ Requests for Qualifications
- ♦ Current and past plans, projects, and publications within the current MTP planning cycle.
- ♦ GIS data and maps (obligated projects, demographics, traffic counts, etc.)
- ♦ Public comment and feedback forms

The website is used both as a communication tool and as platform to submit public comments during planning processes. There is a general comment form as well as contact information for RPC staff.

### Email Notifications

The RPC maintains a database of contacts which serves as the foundation for the mailing lists. Emails are generated using proprietary email marketing software. Efforts will continue to add to and edit current email lists to ensure adequate reach to as many people as possible, including underserved populations. Meeting sign-in sheets, phone call logs, and email correspondence will provide opportunities to expand email lists. In addition, for those seeking to be more involved in RPC planning efforts, they are able to register for information updates using the *Get Involved* page on the website.

The e-mail lists are used to announce upcoming meetings, distribute public informational materials, provide information about the RPC’s activities, and identify potential citizen advisory committee members. The lists may also be used for questionnaires/surveys and flyers. Program leads and project managers will develop and maintain mailing lists tailored to specific outreach needs.

Quarterly newsletters will be published on the RPC website and distributed via email using an email. These newsletters will contain information about current transportation planning initiatives, ongoing programs, upcoming meetings, and general RPC news.



### **Public Hearings—When vote required**

The RPC/TPC Board and any other governing body required by law to establish a quorum shall schedule and hold public hearings on all matters requiring an official vote on policy or implementation. Public hearings are meetings where the public is invited to provide on-the-record comments and testimony on an issue. Participants may also submit written comments as part of the public hearing process. *This includes but is not exclusive to the RPC/TPC board meetings held monthly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday.*

Public hearing notices must be posted a minimum of seven (7) days before a meeting via website and newspaper. Meeting agendas, minutes, and other documents must also be posted concurrently.

### **Public Meetings**

Public meetings will be held throughout the eight-parish region at various stages of transportation planning and program development. Public meetings allow RPC staff to present and illustrate information, alternatives, and recommendations and are a primary vehicle for receiving public comment.

Public meetings will be held at times and in areas convenient to potentially affected citizens. Convenient time generally means in the evening after typical work hours, but other times will be considered. Most meetings will be held in locations with convenient access by transit and bicycle as well as by car. However, in the interest of holding meetings throughout the regional planning area, this will not always be possible. The locations of all meetings will be in locations that are accessible by persons with disabilities.

### **Virtual meetings**

Virtual tools and platforms can efficiently be made accessible to communities, at a lower cost than traditional public engagement methods. By removing significant barriers of transportation, access to childcare, and general time constraints virtual meetings allow for more participation in the planning process. Using professional online meeting soft-

ware the RPC will conduct virtual meetings that coincide w/ or supplement in person meetings as conditions warrant in person meetings.

### **Fliers**

Fliers will be used to announce upcoming meetings for programs and projects. The fliers will be produced in a digital format and distributed via e-mail to the specified e-mail lists. The meeting flyer will generally contain a brief description of the purpose of the meeting(s), the time(s) and location(s) and contact information and the website address where additional information can be obtained.

The format of the meetings whether virtual or in person will vary, but will typically include “open houses,” small group discussion, and large group question/answer or comment sessions.

### **Fact Sheets and Informational Brochures**

Fact sheets and other informational brochures will be used to provide easily digestible formats, including but not limited to the use of graphics or other visualization techniques. Fact sheets can be distributed at meetings, on the RPC website, social media accounts, and through other avenues.

### **Community Event/Tabling**

Throughout the region there are numerous festivals, markets, and community events hosted year-round. These events are great opportunities to interact with the public allowing team members to go to them instead of asking them to come to meetings. Along with events RPC and team members can develop strategies to table at specified points known for high levels of foot traffic to reach constituents. Ex: Bus stops, libraries, schools, etc. Materials presented at tabling events may include infographics, surveys, and other interactive exhibits.



## Social Media

The RPC maintains project specific Facebook pages.

RPC social media accounts are currently used to:

- ◆ Keep the public informed about upcoming meetings and events; also allowing for registration.
- ◆ Raise awareness and engage.
- ◆ Solicit general input.
- ◆ Inform and educate the public.
- ◆ Livestream public meetings

RPC will continue to work on developing strategies to increase reach and social media following to further efforts in planning.

## Media Outreach

Various media strategies will be employed to generate public interest and disseminate information as widely as possible. These may include press releases to local media (newspaper, television, radio), editorial board meetings, public service announcements (PSAs), social media, and possibly videotaping of some meetings. Daily and weekly newspapers may be solicited for publishing supplements with information about projects. Consistent with our stakeholder identification process in section 4 placement of ads or other announcements in minority publications in English and Spanish while and Vietnamese will also be considered when necessary based on LEP analysis found in the Title VI plan.

## Focus Groups and Workshops

Focus groups are small groups of stakeholders brought together for a facilitated discussion to provide more in-depth feedback on a topic or plan and gather user specific comments and concerns. Focus groups may also participate in workshops using small group exercises and discussion questions. These methods are helpful to engage targeted stakeholder groups such as environmental justice populations and vulnerable roadway users to ensure that all voices are part of the planning process.

## Surveys

Surveys will be considered when specific input from the public is desired. Surveys can be used to assist in making decisions that reflect the values, priorities, and desires of area citizens. These will typically be online surveys, but paper surveys, phone surveys, and other methods may be used as needed or requested.

## Presentations to Civic Groups, Local Transportation Committees, and Other Associations

Presentations will be given to, or meetings held with organizational groups and associations, upon request. Depending upon the nature of the request, these presentations may focus on specific planning initiatives, or be more general and educational in nature. In addition, those groups and associations that have newsletters will be identified, and announcements and information sent to them to expand the reach of the RPCs communication efforts.

## Emerging Public Engagement Tools

In an increasingly digital world, new online tools and applications for engaging the public, gathering feedback, and sharing information are constantly emerging. The MPO will stay up to date on these emerging tools, and will seek to find opportunities to pilot new or innovative outreach methods as appropriate



## Section 6: Inclusive Participation: Title VI & Environmental Justice

The RPC is committed to ensuring that all persons, including minority and low-income populations and those with disability or language barriers, have meaningful opportunities to participate in RPC planning and programming processes. The RPC will strive to address environmental justice issues at all stages of the planning process. This includes implementing the following strategies to identify and mitigate potential barriers faced by traditionally under-served groups and engage them in the decision-making process.

### Step 1: Identification

During the RPC project scoping process, management and staff determine the Project Limits for the study. The scope and project limit geographic file will be forwarded to the GIS staff and the Title VI coordinator to establish the Area of Interest (AOI), i.e., the areas adjacent to the project limits that have populations that may be impacted by a project. The area of interest will necessarily be coterminous with existing census boundaries. Geographically referenced data will be used to provide:

- ◆ A demographic profile for Title VI study area based on federal guidelines.
- ◆ An Environmental Justice profile for Title VI study area based on federal guidelines.
- ◆ A determination of socially vulnerable communities within the Title VI study area using the internal SVI model as needed.

To determine the AOI, GIS staff will use RPC templates to create a buffer zone for the project limits based upon the project limits file and the scope. Generally, for bike and pedestrian projects this may be a one-and-a-half-mile buffer of the project limits. For more auto, truck, freight studies the buffer zone may be three miles or more. A draft buffer zone will be used to intersect and select Census geography joined to demographic data for initial consideration. Using the most

up to date ACS 5 2017-2021 year estimates demographic layers including but not limited to Environmental Justice Awareness block groups (RPC layer designation following federal guidelines), minority populations, Hispanic/Latino populations, limited English proficiency households, population in poverty, families in poverty, households in poverty, populations under 18 years of age, elderly populations, and median household income will be used to provide initial AOI data. Several iterations may be necessary to determine the proper project area to best cover populations that may be affected by the study and determine if Environmental Justice Awareness areas closely adjacent need also be included.

This draft will be reviewed internally at RPC in map and data format with management and the project manager. Once this draft AOI and data are established, the AOI map and basic data layers will be shared in the initial project team meeting. Further editing of the area and/or demographic themes may be required post project team meeting. Upon completion of the AOI, the project manager and Title VI coordinator will work together to determine what measures are to be taken to ensure compliance and equitable representation. These measures will be used to guide internal work and external work via consultants.

## Step 2: Mitigation

After identifying communities within a planning area that may face barriers in the participation processes the RPC will in “Good Faith Effort” deploy the following strategies to ensure equitable representation:

- ◆ Seek representatives of minority, disability, and low-income groups to be identified and an effort will be made to include them on the board and advisory teams and in RPC mailings.
- ◆ Whenever possible, meetings will be held at locations accessible to persons with a disability, bus riders, and bicyclists, and that are convenient to neighborhoods with a concentration of minority and low-income persons.
- ◆ Translators/interpreters will be provided for meetings, if requested.
- ◆ As a part of RPC’s annual limited English proficiency four factor analysis found in the agencies Title VI Policy document a statement is included at the bottom of all meeting notices in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese indicating that an interpreter, materials in alternate formats, or other accommodations will be made available, if requested at least 48 hours prior to the meeting. A separate language assessment is done for individual study/planning projects to determine additional language needs.
- ◆ Information, including meeting notices and press releases, will be provided to minority news media.
- ◆ Meeting materials relevant to ensure equal participation will be translated based on LEP assessment for given project areas.
- ◆ Vital documents, as identified by the Title VI plan per request.

## Section 6: Plan Evaluation and Tracking

The RPC will evaluate the effectiveness of its public engagement methods yearly in order to optimize outreach strategies, identify opportunities to expand or improve outreach and engagement methods, and refine or replace outreach strategies that are ineffective.

The RPC will complete an evaluation form for all public information meetings, hearings, open houses, and other public engagement activities it hosts or participates in. Information that will be tracked will include method(s) used, number of participants, stakeholder groups in attendance, how the event was advertised, comments that were received and any general notes on what could be improved for future events. Meeting attendees will also be provided with comment forms to evaluate meeting content, methods, and other general feedback. This information will be summarized annually, as well as additional measures including number of website hits, social media reach, and media coverage as available. The RPC will also conduct a more detailed evaluation of the public participation plan at least every three years and make changes or additions in the components or strategies, as deemed necessary.







## Section 7 — Individual Plan Outreach

### 1. Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)

The RPC's Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) serves as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the region of southeast Louisiana that includes each of the four Urbanized Areas in the region: the New Orleans UA, Mandeville-Covington UA, South Tangipahoa UA, and Slidell UA. In this capacity the agency is responsible for planning the metropolitan transportation system and programming the expenditure of federal transportation funds allocated to the region. The RPC's mandate for regional transportation planning is established in a series of agreements with local governments, state, and federal legislation. The Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, passed in 2015, provided requirements and guidance for the RPC's programs from 2016-2021. The FAST Act was recently replaced with the Infrastructure, Investment, and Jobs Act (IIJA), passed in November 2021, which outlines new programs and requirements for federally funded transportation projects that will govern the RPC's metropolitan transportation process.

Regional transportation planning is accomplished through close coordination with a variety of partners, including elected officials; local agencies; the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA); the Federal Transit Administration (FTA); the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (LADOTD); other state and federal agencies; public transit providers; community and advocacy groups; and the public. The Transportation Policy Committee (TPC), which includes representatives from various transportation interests in the region, including transit agencies, railroads, airports, ports, and over the road

freight, as described in section 1 serves as the MPO policy board for the RPC.

During the MTP development process, the RPC consults with partner agencies such as parishes and cities, as well as the public. All comments and feedback received during the MTP's development are logged and tracked in a general database. Public meetings are held at locations accessible to each UA and comments solicited are included in the final MTP product.

### 2. Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is adopted every four years by the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC). This document is prepared cooperatively by the RPC, acting in its legal capacity pursuant to 23 CFR 450 as the Metropolitan Planning Organization for the New Orleans Urbanized Areas, and the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development (DOTD) and affected transit operators. The current TIP consists of a priority list of projects that are being advanced toward construction over the four-year period from Federal Fiscal Year 2023 to Federal Fiscal Year 2026. Projects found in the TIP have evolved through the transportation planning process and are contained in the region's long-range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP). The RPC reviews the TIP annually and selected revisions are permitted, following formal amendment procedures. The TIP may be viewed on RPC's website at [www.norpc.org](http://www.norpc.org).

Both the local TIP and State TIP (STIP) are identical documents containing a common set of projects proposed for federal funding. The TIP and STIP are products of a consensus building process carried out jointly by the RPC and DOTD, and both are on a four-year update cycle. Citizens and other interested parties are invited to review and comment on the document.

Candidate projects for MTP and TIP consideration come from various sources, including RPC's public outreach initiative, input from business, civic, and community organizations, state and local governmental entities, and other transportation stakeholders. Projects are first screened by RPC for technical merit and consistency with the region's adopted transportation goals and the ten planning factors which guide the implementation of the nation's transportation bill, the FAST Act of 2015 and its successor legislation, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act of 2021 (IIJA, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)). Following the initial project screening process, potential projects are accepted into the MTP for further evaluation and refinement. During the planning phase, projects undergo a series of rigorous technical analyses to determine overall feasibility, environmental consequences, project costs, and potential funding sources before being advanced into final design, project letting, and construction implementation.

### 3. MTP & TIP Stakeholder and Public Engagement Process

The purpose of the MTP and TIP is to guide the decision-making process for infrastructure maintenance, improvements, and other investments for the region. To reflect the community's diverse values, interests, and needs the RPC in conjunction with data collection uses a multitude of outreach strategies to encapsulate a broader regional vision.

The goals of the public outreach process are:

1. Develop an input and feedback loop with professionals from various fields as a means of creating a more holistic and integrated approach to transportation planning.
2. Encourage early and consistent involvement of stakeholders and the public throughout the planning process.
3. Provide opportunity for the public and stakeholders to engage in a meaningful manner with emphasis on designated Title VI and Environmental Justice populations.

4. Provide clear, timely, and accurate information as the process progresses.
5. Use a broad spectrum of techniques to gather meaningful input from the various targeted audiences.
6. Develop methods of gathering and incorporating feedback from all target audiences in a way that is useful in constructing the final product.

**Stakeholder Identification** the RPC serves a multitude of stakeholders within the region spanning from local units of government, special interest groups, business consortiums, to the general public. These various stakeholders are engaged based on the level of impact the plan has on a given entity/individual, cross disciplinary knowledge for added context, and general education purposes. Stakeholder groups are broken into the following categories:

1. Primary: DOTD, Parish leaders, municipal government, and other government agencies
2. Secondary: Transportation related special interest groups, business development, cross disciplinary organizations, and technical advisory groups
3. General Public: Community groups and individual

#### Engagement Process

After identifying and categorizing stakeholders, outreach is conducted within a six-month period divided into three phases. Each phase is designed for a particular level of engagement based on the three identified categories listed above. As outreach progresses each phase is designed to lay the foundation for the next.

## 4. MTP/TIP Engagement Process

After identifying and categorizing stakeholders, outreach is conducted within a six-month period divided into three phases. Each phase is designed for a particular level of engagement based on the three identified categories listed above. As outreach progresses each phase is designed to lay the foundation for the next.

**Phase 1** targets primary stakeholders using methods described as Comprehend and Engage. Strategies include conducting meetings with parish level staff, municipal government staff and implementation entities to discuss:

- ◆ Current planning documents include comprehensive municipal or parish plans, land use plans, transportation plans, hazard mitigation plans, and others.
- ◆ General transportation planning processes and policies, including Complete Streets or climate plans.
- ◆ Current or anticipated areas of population or economic growth
- ◆ Transportation issues, needs, and priorities

**Phase 2** targets secondary stakeholders using methods described as Involve and Comprehend. Strategies include meetings and presentations with entities that represent public interest in regard to transportation or cross disciplinary entities or agencies and special interest groups whose efforts intersect with transportation decisions. Building from the prior phase discussions are centered around:

- ◆ Transportation and economic development
- ◆ Housing
- ◆ Environmental impact
- ◆ Impact on communities and accessibility
- ◆ Impact of decisions on vulnerable and disadvantaged communities

At the culmination of phase 1 and 2, goals and strategies are developed using input received from stakeholders listed above.

**Phase 3** targets the general public using methods of Involve and Inform. Strategies include educational newsletters, public meetings, and public hearings providing opportunity for comment on draft plan, goals and strategies, and the project list.

### Evaluation and Common Themes

All comments and feedback received during the MTP's development are logged and tracked in a general database. This database is used to assess comments for

- ◆ Common themes
- ◆ Frequency
- ◆ Outliers
- ◆ Specific areas of concern

Stakeholder input is then analyzed to help guide the development of priorities and strategies, as well as identifying potential projects. Frequent and common themes provide a greater understanding of universal issues and priorities among parishes, municipalities, and other stakeholders.

## 5. Public Notice and Comment Process for Individual Plans

The following is the public notice and comment process for updates and amendments to the MTP:

1. A public notice will be distributed via e-mail to local units of government and contact lists of stakeholders to begin a 30-day comment period.
2. A public notice is printed in the newspaper of record, notifying the public of the availability of draft plans online and in local libraries, and of the time and location of public hearings.
3. The public notice and a copy of the draft MTP/TIP update or amendment will be posted on the RPCs website.
4. A public hearing notice will be posted on the RPC's website. Public hearings are hosted in each UA, at the general body meeting for the RPC, and virtually to ensure access.
5. A public hearing will be held before the RPC general body meeting at the end of the comment period. Comments received on the plan prior to the hearing and any proposed revisions based on the comments will be communicated to the board. Any comments received at the hearing will be recorded in the minutes, which is standard practice for any public hearing.
6. The MTP/TIP will be adopted by the RPC general body meeting with any revisions based upon all of the comments received.
7. The final MTP/TIP report will be published and posted on the RPCs web site.
8. A summary of all significant comments received and responses to them will be incorporated into the final reports.

## 6. Annual Transit Program of Projects

The Program of Projects (POP) is the annual distribution of FTA Section 5307 and 5339 funds among the region's transit grantees, and a description of the transit projects funded by those programs that will be included in the Transportation Improvement Program.

The projects that are listed therein are prepared primarily through each transit grantee's consultative transit planning process, in coordination with RPC's own consultative TIP development public participation process as described in this guide. Transit grantees are responsible, through their own consultative public process, for providing ample opportunity to private enterprises, social services, and the general public to participate in the development of their agency's program of projects before submittal to the RPC. RPC maintains its own process for TIP development through its Technical Advisory Group.

RPC advertises the Program of Projects for the region in local media venues pursuant to guidelines established under 49 USC 5307, 49 USC 5309, and in accordance with FTA Circular 8100.1D, Chapter II, Sections 8(a) and 8(b). This notice provides at least 30 days for all interested private or public entities another opportunity to provide comments, either by mail, phone, or at the next RPC meeting.

The public notice for the TIP will state that public involvement activities and time established for public review and comments on the TIP will satisfy the POP requirements.

This process satisfies the grantee's public participation requirements for the Program of Projects for the following recipients:

- ◆ Jefferson Parish Transit
- ◆ Plaquemines Parish
- ◆ Regional Transit Authority - Ferry Operations
- ◆ River Parishes Transit Authority (St. John and St. Charles Parishes)
- ◆ St. Bernard Urban Rapid Transit St. Tammany Parish
- ◆ Tangipahoa Parish

RPC does not advertise the program of projects for the Regional Transit Authority as said agency is a Designated Recipient per Federal Transit Administration guidelines and undertakes a separate process.



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