

Chapter 3

Public Participation & Consultation

Public Participation Plan

Introduction & Purpose

Public participation is a critical part of the planning process. Without the involvement of local citizens, designing a program that effectively meets the needs of the public can be difficult. The Region 2 Planning Commission (R2PC), as the state designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Jackson County census-designated Urbanized Area, acting through the Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study/Jackson MPO actively seeks to incorporate the involvement of the public in its planning efforts pursuant to the Public Participation Plan that is designed to accomplish the following goals:

- Comply with the public participation requirements of the FAST ACT federal transportation legislation.
- Provide opportunities for Jackson County residents and citizen-based organizations to identify priorities, discuss views, and provide input into plans, projects, or policies of the MPO.
- Listen, inform, and educate citizens about the MPO's planning initiatives.
- Achieve participation and partnership among the public, the Region 2 Planning Commission, the Michigan Department of Transportation, Federal Highways Administration, and local governmental jurisdictions in the planning and execution of projects.

The purpose of this document is to provide a clear directive for the public participation activities undertaken by JACTS as it pertains to the MPO's primary responsibilities that include the development and implementation of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Annual Unified Work Program (UWP).

This is accomplished by adhering to the following principles:

- Early and continuous involvement
- Reasonable public availability of technical data and other information
- Collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria, and mitigation needs
- Open meetings where matters related to transportation policies, programs, and projects are being considered
- Open access to the decision-making process prior to closure

Compliance with Federal Requirements

The JACTS Public Participation Plan was originally adopted in 1994 to meet the requirements of the 1991 Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA). In 1998, ISTEA was succeeded by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). These federal acts required that MPOs develop and use a proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement in development of metropolitan transportation plans and transportation improvement programs. In 2006, the Safe, Affordable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act – A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) expanded public participation provisions requiring MPOs to develop enhanced participation plans, have public meetings at accessible locations and at convenient times, include visualization techniques in transportation plans and TIPs, and make plans available online. “Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century” (MAP-21) further emphasizes these requirements when it passed in 2012, and the FAST Act continues to stress the importance of public participation.

Description of Public Participation Activities

JACTS will consult with governmental units within the MPO, local economic development organizations, freight related businesses, non-motorized transportation organizations, local transportation providers, and other interested parties in the development of the LRTP, TIP, and the UWP. The Jackson MPO will also conduct outreach, public comment periods, and public meetings.

The three documents in the above paragraph will be published for a minimum of 30 days to receive public comment before adoption. For any amendments that are deemed necessary once any of the publications are adopted, the Jackson MPO shall publish at least one notice in a local news publication of general circulation within the Jackson Urbanized Area prior to approval of the amendment.

The JACTS Participation Plan consists of the following tools:

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| 1. Notice of Meetings and Public Comment Periods | 5. Outreach |
| 2. Annual Report | 6. Visualization Techniques |
| 3. Public Hearings | 7. Environmental Justice |
| 4. Internet, Newspaper & Other Media | 8. Development and Analysis |
| | 9. Performance Measures |

1. Notice of Meetings & Public Comment Periods

The Jackson MPO maintains two standing committees to advise R2PC, the designated MPO for Jackson County. The JACTS Technical Committee members include engineers, planners, and other technical staff from the Jackson County Airport, transit agencies and local units of government within the metropolitan area boundary, representatives from MDOT, and the Federal Highway Administration. The committee reviews plans and programs, and makes technical recommendations to the JACTS Policy Committee.

The JACTS Policy Committee members are elected and appointed officials representing local units of government within the metropolitan area boundary. The Policy Committee acts on recommendations from the Technical Committee, and recommends formal action to the R2PC.

The R2PC is composed of the local units of government within Jackson, Hillsdale, and Lenawee counties that contribute annually to the operating costs of the commission. All members of the R2PC have representation on the R2PC Board and final authority over all Jackson MPO decisions. All meetings of JACTS and the MPO are open to the public and held at locations which comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) regulations. Individuals with disabilities may request aids/services within a reasonable time period to participate in the meeting. A public comment item is included on all agendas for any person wishing to address committee members.

Meeting notifications including date, location, and agenda are published in the local newspaper (*Jackson Citizen Patriot*) and its digital presence www.mlive.com along with the R2PC website www.region2planning.com. Meeting notices are also mailed and/or emailed to each unit of government within the MPO boundary. Interested citizens may also have their name added to the agency mailing list to receive meeting notifications.

a. Special Meetings, Workshops, and Public Meetings

Although the majority of the MPO's business can be conducted at regularly scheduled meetings, when significant planning initiatives arise including updating the LRTP or developing the TIP, staff may conduct special meetings, workshops, or public meetings, and will be administered in the same manner as regularly scheduled meetings.

When public comments are received on plans, programs, or other MPO activities, they are summarized and forwarded to the JACTS Committees and the R2PC prior to any formal action to adopt or approve the plan, study, or project by the MPO. Copies of comments are kept on file and are available for public review. Comments requesting a formal response are answered within 30 days.

2. Annual Report

The agency's annual report reviews and highlights the activities that the Commission has undertaken during the previous fiscal year and is distributed to the R2PC membership and all governmental jurisdictions, agencies, committee members, and individuals included on the R2PC's general mailing list. The report is published and presented at the R2PC annual meeting, and is available on the agency's website.

The report is a summary of the previous year's activities in transportation, community planning, and traffic safety. Content includes updates on planning studies, completed and upcoming roadway construction projects, and other general information concerning the activities of the R2PC. The report also contains the names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of the staff members.

3. Public Meetings

Before approving any federally required document, the Jackson MPO will conduct a public meeting to solicit comments. Such meetings will take place during the regularly scheduled JACTS meeting, unless deemed otherwise by the JACTS Policy Committee.

Notice of the opportunity for public comment will be administered in the same manner as notice of regularly scheduled meetings. To supplement the opportunity for public comment, the Jackson MPO may also engage in hosting public information/open house meetings in publicly convenient and accessible locations.

4. Internet, Newspaper, & Other Media

Staff will use the internet and the newspaper to inform the public of the development of transportation planning processes and products, such as the LRTP and the TIP. The internet and email will be used as a regular part of the public participation notification process, as they have a broad public reach. Notices will also go out to the public by means of the newspaper, on the radio, and at community institutions like libraries, churches, and schools to help bridge the digital divide to reach the public without internet access when appropriate.

5. Outreach Activities

Staff will attempt to identify and contact special interest groups in the community to assure their opportunity to have input and to encourage the involvement of persons who have traditionally been under-served. This would include organizations such as minority populations, low-income populations, private transportation providers, and others. These groups will receive a direct mailing which describes the transportation planning process and their opportunity for input. This includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- public agencies
- private transportation providers
- law enforcement agencies
- providers of freight transportation
- railroad companies
- environmental organizations
- major employers
- chambers of commerce
- travel and tourism offices
- human service agencies
- interested citizens
- agencies & organizations that represent:
 - the elderly
 - the disabled
 - non-motorized users
 - minority groups
 - low-income populations

This list will be continuously updated and groups may be added at any time.

These groups may be notified when:

- (1) a particular agenda item directly impacts an agency or their clientele
- (2) planning and development of a major project such as an update of the Long Range Transportation Plan or TIP
- (3) at the request of a JACTS committee member.

6. Visualization Techniques

R2PC will utilize a variety of visualization activities to collect, inform, and educate the public regarding transportation projects, plans, and programs. The activities may include mapping through Geographic Information Systems (GIS), computer model simulations, and photographs. As technology continues to change, visualization techniques will evolve to improve interaction with the public.

7. Environmental Justice

In April 1997, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) issued the environmental justice order to address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low Income Populations (DOT Order 5610.2). The order describes the process for incorporating environmental justice principles into all DOT programs, policies, and activities.

Environmental justice (EJ) is an important part of the planning process and must be considered in the development of the LRTP, TIP, and other JACTS projects. There are three fundamental principles of environmental justice:

1. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority and low-income populations;
2. To ensure the full and a fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process; and
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of, benefits by minority and low-income populations.

Staff will identify residential, employment, and transportation patterns of low-income and minority populations so that their needs can be identified and addressed and the benefits and burdens of transportation are fairly distributed.

Staff will continue to evaluate and improve the Public Participation Plan to eliminate barriers to low-income and minority involvement. However, the Jackson MPO cannot do this alone. Agencies and individuals who are connected to these communities are welcomed to participate and facilitate public involvement. Only by the participation of these individuals and groups can JACTS/R2PC advance the letter, spirit, and intent of environmental justice in transportation.

8. Development & Analysis

The Jackson MPO will continue to analyze and update the demographic profile of the transportation planning area that includes the location of minority and low-income populations as required by environmental justice legislation. Maps will be developed showing the proposed LRTP projects in relationship with these areas.

9. Performance Measures

R2PC will determine the success of the Public Participation Plan by evaluating the number and diversity of citizens involved in the public involvement process.

Consultation

MAP-21, the previous federal transportation bill, requires that the Jackson MPO consult with federal, state, and local entities that are responsible for the following:

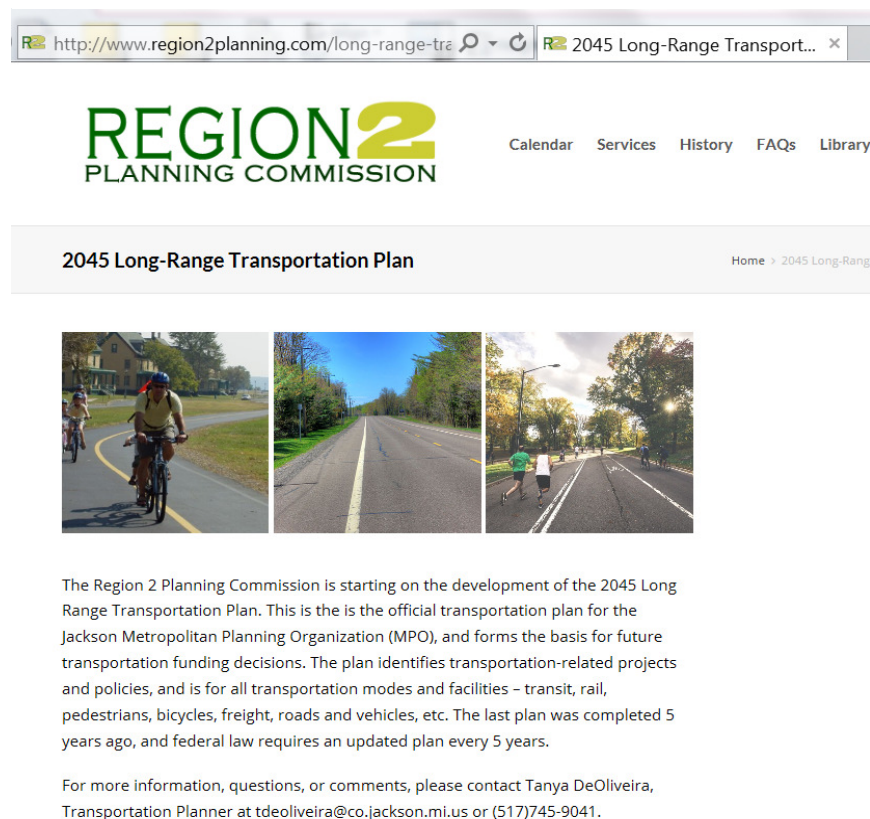
- Economic growth and development
- Environmental protection
- Airport operations
- Freight movement
- Land use management
- Natural resources
- Conservation
- Historic preservation
- Human service transportation providers

The goal of this process is to eliminate or minimize conflicts with other agencies' plans and programs that impact transportation.

Public Participation & Consultation

There were multiple opportunities for public input throughout the planning process. Monthly updates were given at the JACTS Technical and Policy Meetings, and those meetings were advertised in the printed and digital editions of the local newspaper (Citizen Patriot/MLIVE.COM). The JACTS meetings were also advertised on the Region 2 Planning Commission website. A Project Steering Committee was developed and met a few times to gather specific public input. A project contact list was also developed and used to push out notifications that public comment periods were open on draft chapters of the plan.

Figure 3-1
Project Website Homepage



Public Outreach

A memo, dated August 16, 2017, was provided to the following agencies notifying them of the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Public Kickoff Meeting on August 29, 2017:

- American Legion
- AMTRAK
- Baker College
- The Brooklyn Exponent
- Center for Women
- City of Jackson
- City of Jackson City Council
- City of Jackson Taxi Companies
- County of Jackson
- The County Press
- Davis Insurance Agency
- Eastside Neighborhood Resource Center
- The Enterprise Group
- Environmental Protection Agency
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Friends of the Falling Water Trail
- Greater Jackson Habitat for Humanity
- Greyhound Bus Service
- Greyhound Lines, Inc.
- Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study Policy Committee
- Jackson Area Comprehensive Transportation Study Technical Committee
- Jackson Area Transportation Authority
- The Jackson Blazer
- Jackson Citizen Patriot
- Jackson Citizens for Life
- Jackson City Council
- Jackson County Airport/Reynolds Field
- Jackson County Board of Commissioners
- Jackson County Chamber of Commerce
- Jackson County Townships, Cities, and Villages
- Jackson College
- Jackson County Convention and Visitor's Bureau
- Jackson County Department on Aging
- Jackson County Michigan State University Extension
- Jackson County Department of Transportation
- Jackson County Drain Commissioner
- Jackson County Food Bank
- Jackson County Health Department
- Jackson County Intermediate School District
- Jackson County Legal News
- Jackson County Legislators
- Jackson County Medical Care Facility
- Jackson County Parks Department
- Jackson County Planning Commission
- Jackson County Police Departments
- Jackson County Township Supervisors
- Jackson District Library
- Jackson Downtown Development Authority
- Jackson Historic District Commission
- Jackson Human Relations Commission
- Jackson Interfaith Shelter
- Jackson Public Schools
- JTV
- Legal Services of South Central Michigan
- Lifeways
- Michigan Department of Agriculture
- Michigan Department of Environmental Quality
- Michigan Department of Health & Human Services
- Michigan Department of Natural Resources
- Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget
- Michigan Department of Transportation
- Michigan Economic Development Corporation
- Michigan Rehab Services
- Michigan State Housing Development Authority
- Michigan State University
- NAACP
- National Park Service
- National Trust for Historic Preservation
- Norfolk Southern Corporation
- Region 2 Area Agency on Aging
- Region 2 Planning Commission
- Ripstra & Scheppelman Surveyors
- The Salvation Army
- Seventh Day Adventist Community Services
- Sierra Club, Michigan Chapter
- South Central Michigan Works
- Spring Arbor University
- Springport Signal
- United Cerebral Palsy of Michigan
- USDA
- United States Fish & Wildlife Service
- United States Geological Survey
- United Way of Jackson
- Walkable Communities Coalition
- YMCA

Region 2 Planning Commission staff also made presentations to announce the planning project and to gather public input in the early fall of 2017 to the Jackson County Board of Commissioners, the Jackson County Planning Commission, and at the Jackson County Supervisor’s meeting.

Public notices for the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Public Kickoff Meeting were placed in the Jackson Citizen Patriot/MLive, City of Jackson City Hall, Jackson County Tower Building, Jackson Public Library District Offices, and on the Region 2 Planning Commission website. Translation services were available for non-English speakers. These entities were also notified each time a final draft chapter of the plan was made available for public comment, when the final public meetings were held in the spring of 2018, and when the final draft plan was available to review.

A memo notifying parties on the project contact list were distributed via email or mail for the following project updates. A copy of these memos, and other related ones, is available in the appendix.

Table 3-1 Meeting Date & Notification Table

Date	Plan Milestone Notification	Groups Notified
<i>August 16, 2017</i>	August 29, 2017 Public Kickoff Meeting	-Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition
<i>September 1, 2017</i>	“Transportation Participation Plan” draft review	-JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com.
<i>November 16, 2017</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Existing Conditions of the Transportation System” draft chapter	-Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition
<i>December 14, 2017</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Socio-Economic Conditions” draft chapter	-Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition
<i>December 27, 2017</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Coordination with State and Local Transportation” draft chapter	-Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition

<i>January 10, 2018</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Environmental Mitigation” and “Travel Demand Modeling and Forecasting” draft chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition
<i>January 23, 2018</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Hazards” and “Operations and Management” draft chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition
<i>March 12, 2018</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Vision, Goals, & Objectives,” “Environmental Justice,” and “Roadway Congestion, Deficiencies, & Recommended Projects” draft chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition -Jackson County Planning Commission
<i>March 22, 2018</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Performance Measures & System Performance Report” and “Consultation” draft chapters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition -Jackson County Planning Commission
<i>March 27, 2018</i>	Public Comment Period Open for review of “Financial Analysis draft chapter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition -Jackson County Planning Commission
<i>April 3, 2018</i>	Notice for final public meetings and final draft plan available for review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Project Contact List -Project Steering Committee -JACTS Technical Committee -JACTS Policy Committee -Region 2 Planning Com. -Walkable Communities Coalition -Jackson County Planning Commission

Project Steering Committee

The 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan Steering Committee was assembled to provide specific input into the project. Steering Committee meetings were held on July 20, 2017, October 19, 2017 and February 2, 2018 to discuss the plan and provide opportunity for public engagement. The committee was arranged to gather input from agencies who represent local communities, Act 51 Agencies, county-wide transit services, aging population, mobility impairment, advocates for non-motorized transportation, traffic safety, and state transportation. Membership included representatives from:

- Region 2 Planning Commission
- JACTS Policy Committee
- Jackson County Department of Transportation
- City of Jackson Engineering Division
- Jackson Area Transportation Authority
- Jackson County Department on Aging
- Disability Connections
- Traffic Safety Committee
- Walkable Communities Coalition
- MDOT
- Region 2 Planning Commission Staff

Response/Comments

A list of the public comments that the Region 2 Planning Commission received during the planning process are on the next page:

Public Comments

- “For the seniors and persons with disabilities that we serve through Region 2 Area Agency on Aging, the biggest hurdle we have is lack of public transportation outside of Jackson City limits. We serve people in all of the outlying villages and cities that very much need access to transportation for medical care, shopping, and socialization. There are issues including increased hospital emergency room visits because people are not able to receive easier access to routine medical care. Being socially isolated and dependent on others for transportation leads to feelings of hopelessness and increase in depression, and there is an increase in the rate of substance use, opioid use, and suicide in older adults. I’m not sure if this fits, but I thought this needs to be added to the Jackson Area Plan under the following:

Emergency Management, Natural Disasters and the Transportation System Chapter

**Figure 3-2
Project Website
Meeting Announcement**



The Region 2 Planning Commission is looking for comments, edits and/or questions on the draft of The Emergency Management, Natural Disasters and the Transportation System chapter of the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan. The chapter addresses how state, regional and local agencies are reducing the vulnerability of the transportation infrastructure to natural disasters.”

- “Does your plan include improving Blackman Road by actually paving it rather than just plugging holes? It is a main road going north out of Jackson, and to my knowledge it has not been improved beyond plugging holes and pouring gravel on hot tar since it was laid as a gravel on tar project many years ago. It needs ASPHALT PAVEMENT not just more tar and gravel.”
- A public citizen submitted a notable history of transit in Jackson in reaction to the plan being developed and a call for public comment. The information was historical, and there were no comments on the plan as it was out for review.

There were no comments from the Consultation agencies.

Conclusion

The R2PC Public Participation Plan will be reviewed and monitored on a regular basis to maintain its timeliness and effectiveness. Following the principles of the Public Participation Plan will ensure the opportunity for access by the public and encourage proactive public participation in all aspects of the transportation planning process. This increased access for local citizens and other groups will help foster the continuous improvement of the Jackson MPO plans and programs to best serve the citizens of Jackson County.

Comments or questions concerning the Public Participation Plan should be directed to:

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