



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION
A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

Public Participation Plan 2025 Annual Evaluation

June 3, 2026



This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, the Federal Highway Administration, or the Federal Transit Administration.

Introduction

The Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) reviews its Public Participation Plan and public involvement activities each year. This evaluation is completed in accordance with the Public Participation Plan adopted by the Board of Directors on July 20, 2023, and federal requirements in 23 CFR 450.316. The evaluation helps OTO understand how well information is shared with the public, how people provide feedback, and where improvements can be made. Based on the findings, OTO develops action items to guide public involvement efforts over the next year.

Goal

The goal of this evaluation is to improve how information is shared with the public and how feedback is received on transportation issues and plans. Performance measures and action items are used to identify successes and areas where improvements can be made.

Previously Designated Action Items

As part of the 2024 Public Participation Plan Evaluation, four action items were identified to improve outreach and increase public involvement. The four items included:

- **Boost public awareness of OTO's work through an increased marketing approach that reaches broad audiences across various media platforms.**
- **Increase engagement with younger groups, such as college students, by using creative virtual and in-person methods that appeal to their interests and communication styles.**
- **Continue tracking public participation in engagement efforts, like surveys, to ensure that community input represents the region or study area fairly.**
- **Use interactive tools—like maps and visual aids—during public engagement to make information clearer and easier for people to understand.**

Performance Measures

OTO has tracked public participation performance measures for several years. This section summarizes the activities and communication methods that OTO monitors to better understand how information is shared and how people provide feedback.

Facebook Participation

Date	Followers	Men/Women (%)
August 2013	51	Not Available
August 2014	108	56/43
July 2016	175	54/43
March 2018	220	56/43
March 2020	437	44/55
March 2021	541	43/56
March 2022	550	44.5/55.5
March 2023	744	40/48
March 2024	776	56/44
March 2025	838	54/46
May 2026	871	45/55

Facebook Participation by Location

Date	Battlefield	Nixa	Ozark	Republic	Springfield	Willard	Strafford
August 2014	-	4	2	2	60	-	-
July 2016	15	5	11	7	72	-	-
March 2018	3	8	13	4	117	-	-
March 2020	3	21	41	13	207	-	-
March 2021	4	23	46	9	212	-	-
March 2022	20	30	47	38	208	-	-
March 2023	23	42	57	37	250	12	9
March 2024	29	57	57	38	259	14	11
March 2025	26	52	69	35	290	18	10
May 2026	5%	11%	14%	5%	52%	4%	-

Twitter/X Participation

Date	Followers	Following	Tweets
August 2014	57	241	284
July 2016	149	216	1,503
March 2018	185	219	1,712
March 2020	264	308	1,881
March 2021	264	309	1,964
March 2022	286	351	2,052
March 2023	280	344	2,137
March 2024	290	340	2,245

Date	Followers	Following	Tweets
March 2025	284	332	2,401
May 2026	287	330	2,535

Number of Meetings Open to the Public

OTO generally holds six meetings each year for the Board of Directors (BOD) and Technical Planning Committee (TPC). Quarterly meetings are usually the standard for other standing committees like the Local Coordinating Board for Transit (LCBT) and the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

All meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for people to share comments and concerns with OTO staff and committee members. Electronic or email meetings may also be held when needed. The table below shows the number of meetings held by each board and committee each year.

Meetings Held Annually

Year	BOD	TPC	LCBT	BPAC
2013	6	6	6	6
2014	7*	7*	9	5
2015	8*	8*	5	6
2016	7*	8	4	6
2017	9**	8*	6	11
2018	8*	7*	3	6
2019	6	7*	3	2
2020	6	7*	4	6
2021	6	8*	4*	6
2022	6	8*	3	4
2023	7	7*	4	7*
2024	7	7	5*	8
2025	6	8*	3	7

** Indicates an E-meeting was held during the year. **Includes Board of Directors Training Workshop.*

Press Releases Sent

The number of press releases sent each year depends on the planning activities and public comment opportunities taking place during that year.

Press releases sent out for **2012 - 41**

Press releases sent out for **2013 - 39**

Press releases sent out for **2014 - 41**
Press releases sent out for **2015 - 57**
Press releases sent out for **2016 - 53**
Press releases sent out for **2017 - 56**
Press releases sent out for **2018 - 54**
Press releases sent out for **2019 - 34**
Press releases sent out for **2020 – 45**
Press releases sent out for **2021 – 23**
Press releases sent out for **2022 – 43**
Press releases sent out for **2023 – 13**
Press releases sent out for **2024 – 24**
Press releases sent out for **2025 - 34**

Media Coverage of OTO

OTO maintains a log of media articles and stories where OTO was featured or mentioned. The log helps identify topics that receive media attention and track how often OTO planning activities are covered by local media.

- Media coverage from October 2014 to December 31, **2014 – 8**
- Media coverage from January 1, 2015 to December 31, **2015 – 20**
- Media coverage from January 1, 2016 to December 31, **2016 – 10**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2017 to December 31, **2017 – 12**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2018 to December 31, **2018 – 12**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2019 to December 31, **2019 – 13**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2020 to December 31, **2020 – 15**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2021 to December 31, **2021 – 20**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2022 to December 31, **2022 – 23**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2023 to December 31, **2023 – 12**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2024 to December 31, **2024 – 18**
- Media Coverage from January 1, 2025 to December 31, **2025 - 21**

Website Statistics

OTO has tracked website activity using Google Analytics since 2015. The table below summarizes website usage for ozarkstransportation.org. Beginning in 2023, Google Analytics

introduced a new metric called engaged sessions, which measures visits that include meaningful interaction with the website.

Analytics for the OTO website

Year	Sessions	Users	Page Views	Avg. Session Duration	Male/Female	Percent New Visitors
2015	7,454	4,918	14,926	2:19	54/45	63.3
2016	7,816	4,873	17,339	2:15	N/A	61.3
2017	6,189	3,677	14,041	2:06	57/43	83.9
2018	6,559	3,869	13,911	2:13	58/42	98.1
2019	7,300	4,413	17,338	2:13	55/44	88.8
2020	7,558	5,000	19,160	2:25	N/A	98
2021	14,171	9,987	28,128	1:24	N/A	100
2022	17,623	13,041	33,562	1:24	N/A	90.2
2023	7,491*	8,938	34,193	1:14	N/A	100
2024	7,313*	9,960	34,193	1:23	N/A	100
2025	6,552*	14,975	50,276	2:22	N/A	97.5

* Engaged sessions

Legal Ads

Legal ads are one of several methods OTO may use to inform the public about comment opportunities and other planning activities. Records of publication provide documentation of these outreach efforts.

Year	No. of Ads Printed
2012	4
2013	7
2014	3
2015	3
2016	6
2017	3
2018	3
2019	4
2020	1
2021	4
2022	3
2023	4

Year	No. of Ads Printed
2024	2
2025	1

Public Comment Log

OTO maintains a Public Comment Log to track comments and questions received from the public. To the extent possible, the log documents comments received by email, phone, website forms, social media, and in-person conversations. The log may include:

- Name
- Date and time of comment
- Phone number and/or email address
- Subject or topic of the comment
- Comment received
- Any response provided or action taken

OTO Logged Comments

Year	Comments Received
2013	70
2014	195
2015	63
2016	22
2017	40
2018	16
2019	20
2020	37
2021	187
2022	255
2023	86
2024	132
2025	141

Public Outreach in 2025

In 2025, OTO continued to reach out to the public in different ways. Public input for the upcoming Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update began at a community event in Ozark where people shared their opinions on transportation strengths and needs and gave

ideas on what transportation could look like in 2050. More than 250 comments were received during the event, and staff spoke with many additional people who did not leave a written comment. OTO also hosted an open house regarding the proposed removal of the FF Extension from the current Long-Range Transportation Plan. The open house was attended by 42 people, with almost half of attendees submitting a comment form. Furthermore, OTO moved livestreaming of Board of Directors and Technical Planning Committee meetings from Facebook to YouTube to make information easier accessible. Staff also attended several community events throughout the year and used billboard advertising to help more people learn about OTO and how to provide feedback on transportation issues.

Action Items for 2026

The following action items were identified to improve public participation in 2026. The updated list is based on progress made toward previous action items and the results of the performance measures. These action items identify areas where OTO can continue to improve how information is shared and how feedback is received. OTO staff will work on these items over the next year before the next Public Participation Plan Evaluation. These items include:

- Minimize the use of technical language in public notices, comment opportunities, surveys, and plan summaries to improve public understanding of transportation planning.
- Continue improving the accessibility of OTO documents, websites, and public involvement activities.
- Increase the use of graphics and visual tools to make transportation planning information easier to understand.
- Expand outreach through partnerships and community events to help more people learn about OTO activities and opportunities to participate.

Summary

The performance measures in this report now include data for the 2025 calendar year. These measures help OTO understand how people receive information, learn about transportation planning activities, and how they provide feedback on transportation issues and plans. A summary of findings from the performance measures includes:

- In 2025, 141 comments were logged compared to 132 in 2024. The majority was received via email or the comment form on OTO's website, followed by comments through the "Map It" feature and comments on Facebook.
- Website activity remained strong in 2025, with the highest number of users and page views recorded since OTO began tracking website statistics.
- Media coverage increased in 2025, with 21 news articles mentioning OTO compared to 18 in 2024. OTO also issued 34 press releases to keep the public informed about planning activities and opportunities for input.
- The number of followers on the OTO Facebook page continues to grow and reached its highest level since tracking began. While growth on X has remained relatively flat, OTO continues to use multiple platforms to share information and gather input.

OTO staff will continue working to improve how information is shared with the public and how comments are received on transportation issues and plans. The action items for 2026 focus on making information easier to understand and expanding opportunities for public involvement. The updated Public Participation Plan and implementation of these action items will help more people learn about transportation planning activities and share their ideas throughout the year.