



OSARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION
A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

DRAFT PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 2026

Approved by the Board of Directors



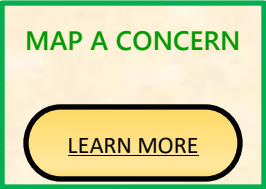
This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission,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

DRAFT

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Our goal at the Ozarks Transportation Organization is to have meaningful involvement in the transportation planning process. We encourage you to voice your ideas and opinions about specific actions or transportation issues at any time. Your comments are reviewed by staff and included in agendas for consideration by our Board of Directors and appropriate committees. Here is how you can join the conversation via the linked buttons to the OTO website:



WHAT WE DO WITH YOUR INPUT

The OTO solicits public comments for updates and major amendments to the requisite plans and key decision points in the planning process. Public comments for major plans are summarized along with an explanation of how comments were considered and, when appropriate, how they influenced the final version. Comments, opinions, or suggestions are presented to our Board of Directors to consider before they make any final decisions. In addition, public concerns are shared with MoDOT and local governments as appropriate. Meaningful public involvement is key to developing a sound and efficient transportation system that works for the people it serves.

Follow us on social media to stay up to date on what we are planning and keep us informed of your ideas and opinions.



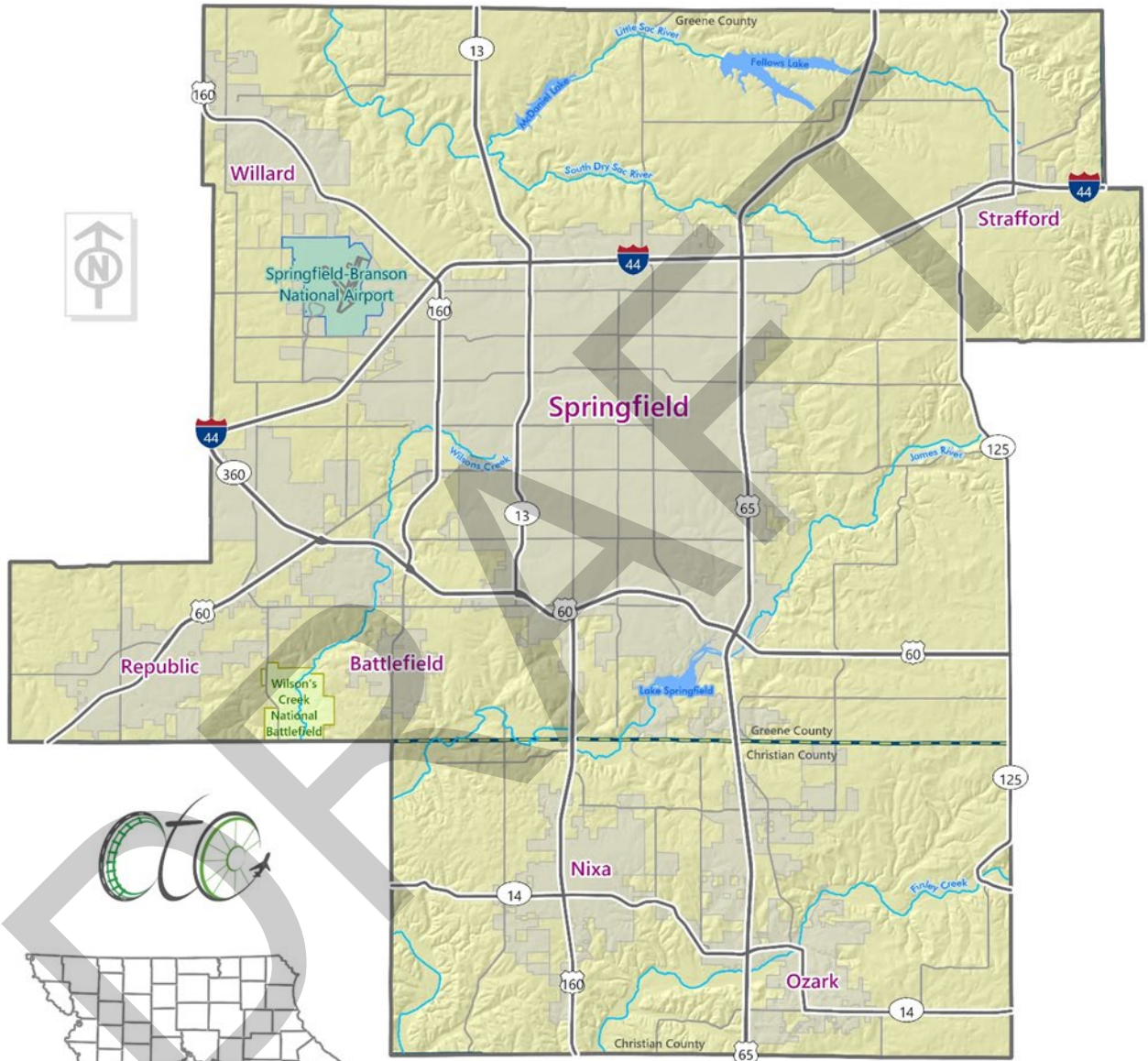
Summary of Changes

The OTO 2026 Public Participation Plan (PPP) is an update of the 2023 PPP. The OTO updates its PPP every three years to review current practices, evaluate outreach methods, and identify opportunities to improve public involvement in transportation planning activities. Several revisions have been made to the PPP that was approved by the OTO Board of Directors on July 20, 2023. Updates include:

- A section describing the evaluation of public participation was added to explain how the OTO reviews outreach activities, tracks participation trends, and uses public feedback to improve communication and engagement efforts.
- Content throughout the plan was updated to reflect current federal guidance, simplify descriptions and processes for better public understanding, and better document current OTO engagement practices.
- Results from the 2026 Interested Parties Public Participation Survey have been added as Appendix A.

Ozarks Transportation Organization MPO Study Area

Approved by the Governor of Missouri 2/8/2002



- | | |
|-------------------|-------------|
| Major Roadways | County Line |
| Arterial Roadways | Cities |
| Rivers | Lakes |

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Introduction

The Ozarks Transportation Organization (OTO) is the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving several communities in the Springfield, Missouri metro area including unincorporated parts of Christian and Greene counties.

As an MPO, the OTO conducts regional transportation planning and project programming within its study area. The mission of the OTO is: *To provide a forum for cooperative decision-making in support of an excellent regional transportation system.* The OTO serves as a forum for cooperative transportation decision-making by state and local officials and other interested parties in accordance with a process that is **comprehensive**, **cooperative**, and **continuous**. This process covers federal aid surface transportation projects and other regionally significant projects. The OTO Board of Directors includes local elected and appointed representatives from Christian and Greene counties, as well as the cities of Battlefield, Nixa, Ozark, Republic, Springfield, Strafford, and Willard, representatives from public transportation agencies, and four citizen representatives.

The OTO is responsible for four major transportation plans and programs: [Long-Range Transportation Plan](#) (LRTP); [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIP); [Unified Planning Work Program](#) (UPWP); and [Public Participation Plan](#) (PPP). In addition, the OTO is responsible for preparing [other transportation plans and studies](#) as needed.

The OTO must adopt an LRTP covering at least 20 years and update it every five years. The TIP selects projects from the LRTP to fund for construction and must also be adopted by the Board of Directors. No federal transportation money can be spent on a project unless it is in the LRTP and the TIP. In addition to the LRTP and TIP, the OTO is required to prepare a Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), and other plans and studies including a plan for public participation. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) documents policies and processes implemented by the OTO to provide a path for meaningful involvement of individuals, public agencies, and other interested parties in OTO's transportation planning processes.

The OTO must comply with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) requirements that MPOs, "*include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs.*" (23 CFR §450.316)

To achieve broad public access, the OTO adheres to [other regulations](#) that require MPOs be proactive in involving residents, stakeholders, and interested parties throughout the metropolitan planning area. The OTO strives to provide meaningful opportunities for involvement in transportation decision-making regardless of a person's race, color, national origin, age, disability, income level, language proficiency, or other personal or economic characteristics. Consistent with guidance and requirements from the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), including the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA), the OTO seeks to reduce barriers to participation and provide accessible opportunities for public involvement throughout the transportation planning process. The following laws and regulations form the legal framework for OTO's public participation plan:

- 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 450.316 outlines the participation requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), including the development of a public participation plan
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin. Title VI applies to all organizations that receive federal funding;
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1991 prohibit discrimination based on a disability by public and private sector parties;

OTO believes that broad public participation strengthens transportation decision-making and helps plans, programs, and projects better reflect the needs and priorities of the region. Public engagement activities are intended to help identify community priorities,

emerging transportation needs, and establish long-term regional goals that influence transportation planning and investment decisions. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) establishes the framework for an inclusive, accessible, and transparent public engagement process in the OTO's transportation planning activities. The PPP identifies strategies, tools, and procedures the OTO will use to encourage early, continuous, and meaningful public participation and to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach efforts and public involvement activities.

Public involvement is an ongoing effort at the OTO. Whether it is a component of a major plan update, posting agendas for committee meetings, reviewing roadway concerns received from the citizens, or sending press releases to local media to notify the press and citizens of studies and proposed projects. Because public involvement is an ongoing effort at OTO, this plan is intended to provide staff with a common framework for communicating with individuals and stakeholders and reducing barriers to meaningful public engagement.

The remainder of the plan includes goals and policy objectives to ensure effective public involvement processes are in place for OTO planning activities and to hold ourselves accountable. Additional sections of the plan include methods for communicating with and gathering input from the public, public participation requirements for specific plans and activities required of MPOs, and finally, the processes and workflows the OTO employs are illustrated to provide structure and continuity for public engagement in the various activities of our transportation planning efforts.

Policy Objectives

The U.S. Department of Transportation defines public participation as an integral part of the transportation process that helps to ensure that decisions are made in consideration of and to benefit public needs and preferences. Furthermore, it states that “conducting meaningful public participation involves seeking public input at specific and key points in the decision-making process, where such input has a real potential to help shape the final decision or set of actions.” To ensure and encourage meaningful and continuous public involvement in transportation decision-making, the OTO will adhere to the following public participation policy objectives:

- The OTO will give the public a reasonable opportunity to participate in planning activities and allow time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of the LRTP, TIP, and other appropriate transportation plans and projects.
- The OTO will review and consider public comments received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP and, when possible, explain how public input influenced decisions or plan development.
- The OTO will provide reasonable public access to timely information, plans, reports, and studies and maintain open channels of communication for citizens to comment or report a concern.
- The OTO will develop planning material that is easily understood and visually engaging and strive to ensure citizens have the information necessary to deliver informed input.
- When the OTO prepares visualizations of transportation issues, it will do so with the public in mind.

- The OTO will make public information including technical information and meeting notices, available in electronically accessible formats and means on the OTO website, as appropriate.
- When conducting public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered, the OTO will consider that meeting locations are accessible by public transportation, if available, and meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- The OTO will strive to demonstrate that public concerns are considered, questions are addressed, and comments are taken into consideration. Upon receiving public comments, the OTO will respond as appropriate and provide comments or content summaries to appropriate boards, committees, project sponsors, and partner agencies when relevant to their decision-making or responsibilities.
- The OTO will maintain an up-to-date database of contacts to ensure that interested parties have reasonable opportunities to comment on the transportation planning process and products.
- The OTO will seek out input from and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, limited English-speaking persons, and persons with disabilities who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

Methods of Community Engagement

The Resources listed here are the methods the OTO uses to engage and communicate with the individuals and stakeholders served. These methods are not exclusive of one another and may be combined depending on the type of planning activity, the intended audience, and the level of public involvement needed. The OTO will strive to utilize the most effective and appropriate engagement methods to reach affected communities and encourage meaningful public participation.

Virtual Public Involvement

The OTO employs virtual public involvement tools that make public participation more convenient and affordable than in-person public meetings. In-person meetings may conflict with work and school schedules or are less accessible to individuals that rely on transit or have disabilities. OTO utilizes different platforms to live stream Technical Planning Committee and Board of Directors meetings. When meetings are livestreamed or recorded, the OTO will strive to make the recordings available through the utilized platforms as resources allow. Public comments may be submitted through established comment methods identified by OTO. This example illustrates how virtual public involvement has emerged to provide increased transparency and access to transportation planning activities at the OTO. While there are many methods employed at the OTO to disseminate information and gather input from the public and other interested parties, OTO staff are always looking for new and innovative software and apps to enhance and improve public engagement.

[The OTO Website](#)

The OTO website provides information about upcoming meetings and agendas, recent reports, maps, and information about OTO policies. Work products, such as the PPP, UPWP, TIP, and LRTP are available on the site. The site also features a "What we do" page which contains information regarding what a MPO does, and a "Who we are" page which provides information about the OTO and its committees. The site also serves as the domain for staff email accounts along with a comment email account to collect public input and feedback. The comment email is monitored by the OTO's planners and

administrative staff. OTO periodically reviews and updates the website to improve access to information for residents, stakeholders and interested parties.

["Give Us Your Input"](#)

This is a page on the OTO website where the public can map a concern, leave a comment, access surveys, and learn about current planning activities and meeting dates. Notifications are sent to the comment email when comments are submitted. In addition, a discussion board has been embedded on this page where people can leave general comments for discussion moderated by OTO staff.

[News & Updates](#)

This is another component of the "Give Us Your Input" page on the OTO website. News & Updates is a blog post where the OTO staff can post information and announcements to which the public are directed to add a comment or a question.

[Interactive TIP Tool](#)

This is a web-based service that helps individuals find information about transportation projects planned for the next four years in the metro area. The tool allows users to search for project information and can be accessed from the TIP page on the OTO website. Using this tool, the TIP can be searched by project name, location, project type or agency, and TIP number. The tool also features a map viewer for projects. Comments submitted through the tool may be used to inform OTO staff and project sponsors and may be included in formal comment summaries when submitted during an active public comment period.

[The OTO Logo](#)

The OTO logo is prominently featured on work products and correspondence. The logo helps the public recognize documents and activities associated with the OTO. This allows individuals to identify OTO work products and become familiar with its role in the region.

[Social Media](#)

OTO utilizes social media platforms like [Facebook](#) and [X](#) to share information regarding meetings, events, planning activities, surveys, and other opportunities for public

involvement. Social media may be used to distribute links to relevant documents, project information, and engagement tools, as well as to encourage public comments and participation. Platforms and communication methods may evolve over time and the examples identified in this plan are representative of the types of tools that may be utilized.

ArcGIS Online Organization

The OTO publishes interactive web maps and apps through its ArcGIS Online Organization account. A [base map](#) consisting of layers for the transportation network, including sidewalks, trails, transit routes, and roads is available from the OTO website. Viewers can access roadway attributes for volume, capacity, peak hour travel speeds, etc. Natural features and land use information is also included in the map. OTO publishes other applications that visualize transportation related topics that include, but are not limited to growth trends, congestion management and growth models. The OTO works to make published applications available on the OTO website under "Our Resources." In addition, the OTO continually explores new web maps and applications that help visualize transportation processes and outcomes to better inform and involve the public and stakeholders.

OTO Contacts Database

The OTO maintains a contact database of businesses, governmental agencies, community-based organizations, committee members, and other interested parties. The database includes committee membership, mailing information, phone numbers, email addresses and websites. The database is used for maintaining up-to-date contact information for committee membership, and special interest groups. The database is used for meeting and survey announcements as well as other project specific notifications.

Press Releases

Formal press releases are sent to local media contacts to announce upcoming OTO BOD and TPC meetings, comment periods for plan documents, and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the OTO or the OTO committees. OTO may choose to also purchase legal ads and/or paid advertisements as necessary.

Surveys

The OTO uses web-based applications to generate electronic surveys. Hyperlinks to the survey are then shared via email, social media, press releases, and the OTO website. Hard copies may also be produced and distributed at public meetings, and community events and can be made available at the OTO office upon request.

Public Meetings/Community Events

Public meetings are generally open and informal, with project team members interacting with the public on a one-on-one basis. Informational materials such as brochures and fact sheets may be provided at these meetings. The OTO may coordinate with other local agencies to be on hand to supply information and support. Informational tables at community events where transportation issues are not the focus are ways to solicit comment from individuals who are not usually involved in the transportation planning process.

Posters and Flyers

Posters and flyers can be used to announce meetings and events and are distributed to public places such as City Halls, libraries, community centers, City Utilities buses and City Utilities bus transfer stations for display. Posters and flyers can be used to reach a larger audience than other notification methods.

Requirements for Planning Activities

There are specific plans that reflect the core functions of the OTO MPO. The LRTP, TIP, UPWP, and PPP comprise the core plans of the OTO. Participation processes are identified for each of these plans. Public participation strategies for other plans and studies are also addressed.

This section describes public participation considerations for OTO primary planning activities. When notice, comment period, or approval requirements apply, they are identified in the applicable subsection. The following also identifies how the OTO provides

for individuals and interested parties to be involved in the planning process. Interested parties are defined in 23 CFR § 450.316. Those that are applicable to the OTO MPO include:

- Individuals;
- Affected public agencies;
- Representatives of public transportation employees;
- Freight shippers;
- Providers of freight transportation services;
- Private providers of transportation;
- Representatives of users of public transportation;
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities;
- Representatives of people with disabilities;
- Federal, state, and local agencies responsible for land-use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation, and other environmental issues;
- Parties that have an interest in the planning and development of the transportation network including affected public agencies and private organizations in the OTO planning area;
- Traditionally underserved populations, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- Other interested parties.

[Long-Range Transportation Plan](#)

The LRTP is essential in the development of a sound transportation network. Although long-range in scope, the plan provides direction and sets policies for day-to-day decision-making. The LRTP builds on past transportation planning conducted by the OTO. All

transportation modes including passenger air travel and freight movement are discussed in the document. The plan advocates for transportation policies and strategies developed via public involvement and assists in prioritizing transportation improvements over a minimum 20 year planning horizon.

A specific public participation plan will be written to outline the public participation process at the outset of LRTP updates. The process for LRTP updates will generally use a broad range of the participation techniques employed by the OTO. Public meetings and community events may be utilized as outreach efforts within different member communities during each complete update. Opportunities for public involvement do not stop with the adoption of the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Although the LRTP must be completely updated at least every five years while in Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) air quality attainment (four years when in non-attainment), amendments are periodically made to the LRTP as new projects, funding, or programs arise.

Amendments to the LRTP require a 15-day public notice and comment period prior to consideration by the OTO Board of Directors. Only chapters containing the proposed amendments are presented for public comment and approval.

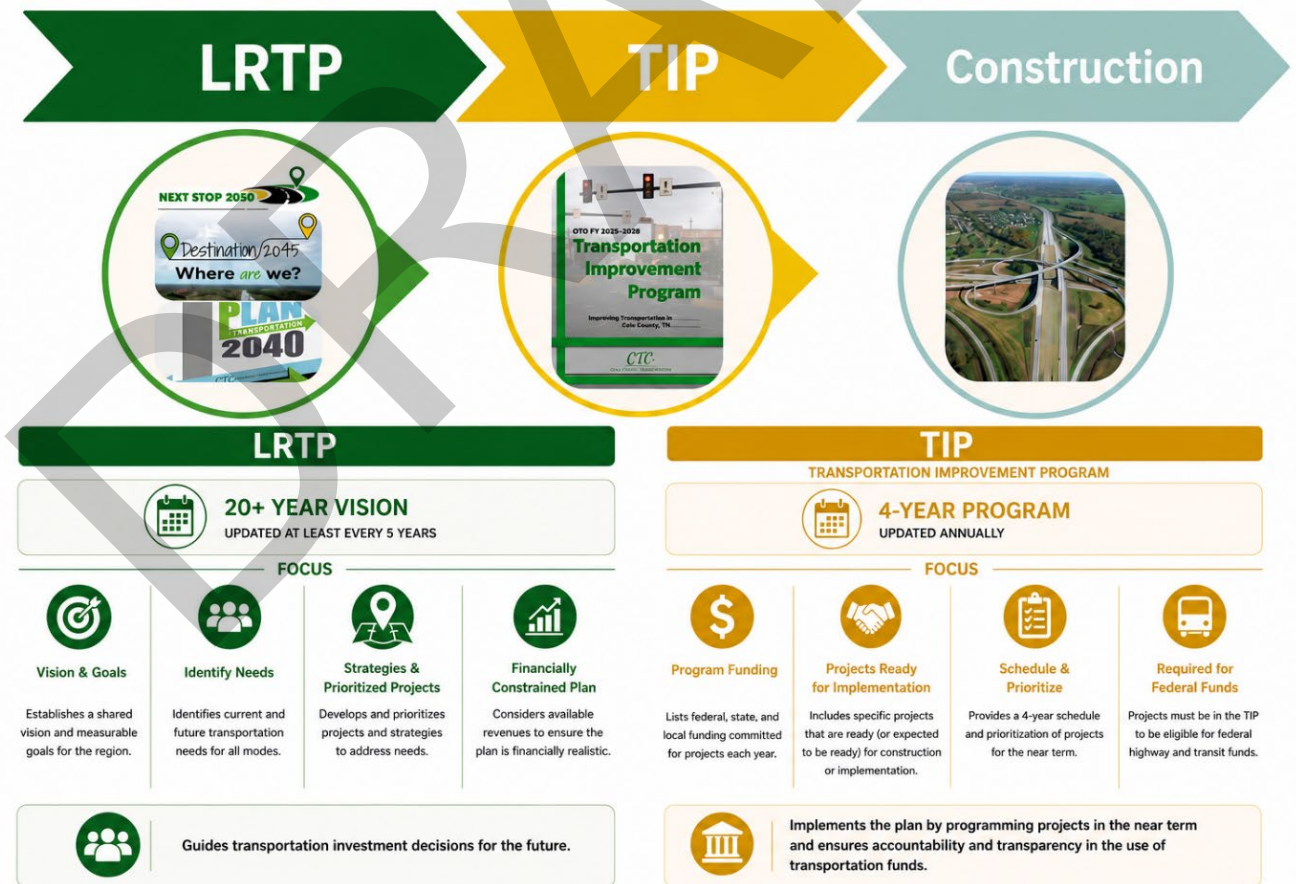
Revisions to the LRTP Requiring Amendments:

- Addition or deletion of any project (except as noted in the Administrative Modifications section below).
- Substantial changes to the scope of a project (e.g., changing the type of project such as rehabilitation to expansion).
- Moving a project between the unconstrained and constrained lists
- Changes to the Major Thoroughfare Plan.
- Increases to a project's total cost estimate greater than 25 percent (or any amount greater than \$2,000,000).
- Changes in the termini of a capacity project of any length or any project in which the total length increases by more than 1/4-mile.

Notice of Administrative Modifications, which are approved by staff, will be provided to the Board of Directors, MoDOT, and U.S. DOT. Administrative modification is a revision that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. An administrative modification does not require public review and comment, a re-demonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination.

Revisions to the LRTP Allowed as Administrative Modifications:

- Increases in a project’s cost estimate less than 25 percent (up to \$2,000,000).
- Minor changes to the scope of a project.
- Minor increases to the termini of a non-capacity project (no more than ¼-mile).
- Moving a project to another time band, provided fiscal constraint is maintained;
- Adding a project to the unconstrained list.
- Technical corrections.



Transportation Improvement Program

The TIP is the short-range capital improvement program for the transportation system within the OTO study area. The TIP is a financially constrained four-year program outlining the most immediate implementation priorities for transportation projects and is updated annually. The TIP serves to program the expenditure of federal, state, and local transportation funds. To receive federal highway or transit funds a project must be included in the TIP. The TIP, as approved by the Board of Directors and the Missouri Department of Transportation, constitutes the selection document for project implementation. The first year of projects in the TIP represent the agreed list of projects eligible for implementation.

The OTO consults with city and county governments within its study area during the annual TIP development process. When developing the TIP, the OTO is required to consult with (1) agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the planning area, (2) recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53, (3) government agencies and non-profit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services, and (4) recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 204, and this process shall be documented in the intra-agency memorandum of understanding.

Agencies submitting projects for the TIP are responsible for conducting any project-level public involvement required by their own policies, funding requirements, or applicable law prior to or during the project development. Other required agencies that are consulted during the TIP development process include:

[City Utilities of Springfield](#) - In January of 2015, CU Transit and the OTO executed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) wherein, CU agreed to rely on the locally adopted public participation process requirements for the TIP as outlined in the PPP in lieu of the process required to develop its Program of Projects (POP). Per the MOU with CU, the OTO public participation process for the TIP satisfies CU's public participation process for the POP and has agreed to the following:

- The OTO will be responsible to conduct the project selection process and to publish the annual Program of Projects for the FTA 5307 and 5339 programs;
- The OTO will conduct the public participation process for the Springfield Urbanized Area for the FTA 5307 and 5339 programs;
- The OTO's public participation plan should state that the OTO's public participation process satisfies CU's public participation process;
- CU will assist the OTO with the public involvement process by allowing notices for public input opportunities to be placed in CU buses and facilities at no charge to the OTO;
- CU will rely on the OTO's public involvement process for the TIP and requires public notices be published annually by the OTO. If the proposed POP is not amended, the OTO must include a statement that the proposed program will be the final program, unless amended, and satisfies the requirements regarding the final POP;
- The OTO's public notice for the TIP must have an explicit statement that public notice of public involvement activities and time established for public review of and comments on the TIP will satisfy the POP requirements;
- CU will rely on the public involvement process for the TIP conducted by the OTO to satisfy Section 5307 and 5339 public involvement requirements for the POP;
- CU will report performance measure indicators to the OTO for reporting to the USDOT and informing the public of the improved performance of the transportation system resulting from federal investment.

A public hearing is required prior to implementing either an increase in Transit fares or a significant reduction in service. A significant reduction in service is defined by the following criteria:

- A decrease of 25 percent or more in the revenue miles of route, either at one time or cumulative during any twelve-month period; or
- An increase in headways for a route of more than 15 minutes; or

- A re-routing that will last more than 180 days and decrease the revenue miles of a route by 25 percent or more.

Partner Agency Processes

[OATS Transit](#) - OATS uses public involvement procedures to select projects for inclusion in the TIP. The three methods used to solicit and gain public input include:

- A public notice;
- Input from advisory groups like county partnerships or other transportation groups; and
- The Southwest Missouri Office on Aging.

[The Missouri Department of Transportation](#) – MoDOT SW District, regional planning commissions (RPCs), MPOs, and city and county officials form partnerships to gather and evaluate local input on transportation needs. Public comments concerning transportation needs are gathered from county-wide public meetings, calls to MoDOT's customer service center, public surveys, and comments received by local officials from their constituents. The local officials, generally in conjunction with the RPC and MPO, use these comments in their process for identifying and prioritizing transportation needs in this region. Each RPC and MPO develop a prioritized list of needs for MoDOT's consideration in programming.

The TIP Public Involvement Process

Ahead of the TIP update process and upon completion of the annual STIP prioritization process, the OTO provides notice to the agencies and groups considered interested parties and to agencies that have previously submitted projects to the MPO. The notice shall include information concerning the transportation issues and processes used in developing a TIP submittal. This notice will provide the information required to propose projects for inclusion in the TIP and the timetable to be followed. The OTO staff will be available to give these agencies and groups any assistance they might require in developing projects for submittal for the TIP.

The draft TIP is made available for comment for 30 days prior to Board of Directors approval. A legal notice can be placed in a newspaper of general circulation such as the *Springfield News-Leader* and/or other community papers. The draft TIP is made available on the OTO website, and at the OTO offices. Additional paper copies or review locations, such as a branch of the Springfield-Greene County Library, CU Transit office, or the MoDOT SW District office may be used as appropriate. Any public comment received during this review period will be considered by OTO staff and will be presented to the Board of Directors as part of the approval process.

Project sponsors may find it necessary to request revisions to the adopted TIP. TIP amendments and administrative modifications are defined pursuant to 23 CFR § 450.104. TIP revisions are classified as Formal Amendments and Administrative Modifications. When a proposed change meets more than one category, the highest applicable level of review shall apply. OTO staff may elevate any proposed revision to a Formal Amendment when the change has policy significance, affects regional priorities, raises public interest, or warrants committee and Board consideration. Formal TIP Amendments are major revisions which require official approval by the OTO Board of Directors. This is followed by submission to MoDOT for approval by the Governor of Missouri and subsequent approval by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA).

Formal TIP Amendments require a public comment period of 15 days prior to consideration by the OTO Board of Directors. Notice is announced by press release, Board & TPC agendas, and on the OTO website.

Revisions Requiring Formal TIP Amendments:

1. Addition or deletion of any project (except as noted in the Administrative Modifications section).
2. Changes in a project's total programmed amount that exceed the applicable administrative modification thresholds and are not otherwise specifically allowed as an administrative modification.

3. Substantial changes to the scope of a project (e.g. changing the number of through traffic lanes, changing the type of project such as from rehabilitation to system expansion).
4. Changes in the termini of a capacity improvement project of any length OR any project in which the total length changes more than 1/4 mile.
5. Moving a project into or out of the first four Federal Fiscal Years of a TIP, except as allowed in Administrative Modification #19.
6. Changes in a project's fund source(s) from non-Federal to Federal, unless the fund sources(s) change from Advanced Construction to an identified Federal funding source.
7. Changes in the availability (adding or deleting funds by Congressional action) of earmarked (special appropriation) funds.

TIP Administrative Modifications are minor revisions which can simply be made by OTO staff after verification that the change(s) falls into this category. More than one administrative modification can be made to a project if meeting the described allowances. Notification of administrative modifications will be provided to the Technical Committee, Board of Directors, MoDOT and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA). TIP Administrative Modifications will require no public comment period. The OTO staff ensures fiscal constraint is maintained.

Revisions Allowed as Administrative Modifications:

1. For existing LPA projects already included in the TIP with a total programmed project cost under \$1,000,000, changes in total programmed amount may be processed administratively, provided the project remains under \$1,000,000 after the change and no other formal amendment trigger applies.
2. For MoDOT projects and LPA projects with a total programmed project cost of \$1,000,000 or more, changes in a project's total programmed amount may be processed administratively if the change is 25% or less, up to a maximum programmed amount change of \$2,000,000, provided no other formal amendment trigger applies.

3. Adding a project that is 100% state, local, private, or other non-federal funding, provided it is not regionally significant, is included for informational purposes or coordination purposes, does not require federal action, and does not affect fiscal constraint or regional project selection. If OTO staff determines that the project may be of regional interest or may warrant public review, the project shall be processed as a Formal Amendment.
4. Adding emergency repair projects or emergency relief funding in response to a declared disaster, emergency event, sudden infrastructure failure, or urgent safety condition requiring immediate repair or restoration, provided the project is consistent with applicable federal and state eligibility requirements and does not create a new regionally significant capacity project. Examples may include emergency bridge repair, roadway washout repair, flood damage repair, slope failure repair, or other work necessary to restore essential transportation function or protect public safety.
5. Adding a project to the TIP which is split from a "parent project," provided the overall scope of work intended to be accomplished does not change. As part of the same administrative modification, funding may be distributed between the parent and split projects and may be revised within the applicable administrative modification thresholds.
6. Combining two or more projects already in the TIP, provided the overall scope of work intended to be accomplished does not change. As part of the same administrative modification, funding may be combined or redistributed between the projects and may be revised within the applicable administrative modification thresholds.
7. Minor changes to the scope of a project that do not substantially alter the project purpose, transportation function, environmental footprint, or public understanding of the project. Examples may include adding or modifying sidewalks, ADA improvements, crosswalks, bicycle accommodations, transit amenities, lighting, drainage, guardrail, retaining walls, signal equipment, ITS elements, access

management features, or other design details developed through project scoping or engineering.

8. Minor changes to the termini of a non-capacity project, meaning a change that increases or decreases the total length of the project by no more than 1/4 mile, provided the change does not substantially alter the project purpose, affected corridor, or public understanding of the project.
9. Adding or deleting a project development phase of a project, such as environmental, PE/design, ROW, utilities, construction, or other phase, without major changes to the scope of the project, provided any associated funding change is within the applicable administrative modification thresholds and fiscal constraint is maintained.
10. Moving funds between development phases of a project, such as environmental, PE/design, ROW, utilities, construction, or other phase, without major changes to the scope of the project, provided any associated funding change is within the applicable administrative modification thresholds and fiscal constraint is maintained.
11. Moving a project's funds to another fiscal year, provided they are not being moved into or out of the first four fiscal years of the TIP, except as described in Number 19.
12. Changes to funding sources between eligible federal funding categories or between state and local sources may be processed administratively, provided the project remains eligible for the revised funding source, the change does not increase federal funding beyond the applicable administrative modification thresholds, does not add federal funds to a previously non-federal project, and does not alter the project scope, termini, or regional priority.
13. Changes in a project's fund source(s) from federal to non-federal with no changes to the project's scope (however, the disposition of the "freed-up" Federal funds remain under the authority of the OTO and are subject to TIP Revisions as appropriate).

14. Changes from Advance Construction to Federal funding or from Federal funding to Advance Construction.
15. Changing a project's lead agency when agreed upon by the two agencies affected.
16. Changes to an existing project's local, state, or other non-federal funds, including non-matching funds, regardless of amount, to reflect updated cost estimates, negotiated engineering service contracts, accepted bid awards, contract awards, or other project-development or delivery costs, provided the change does not increase federal funds or include a scope or termini change beyond what is otherwise allowed administratively. Documentation of the revised cost, award, contract, or local funding commitment must be provided before the change is processed administratively. OTO staff may elevate the change to a Formal Amendment if the cost increase indicates a substantial change in project scope, project intent, or regional priority.
17. Adding or revising funding or project components located outside the OTO Metropolitan Planning Area, regardless of amount, when the funding or components have been approved through another MPO TIP or the MoDOT STIP. Documentation or notification of the prior approval must be received before the change is processed administratively. The change may not substantially alter the scope, termini, funding, or regional priority of the portion of the project located within the OTO area.
18. Adding a project or funding to the TIP, regardless of amount, when OTO has previously approved a resolution, certification, letter of commitment, or other official action committing to add the project or funding to the TIP upon receipt of a federal discretionary grant or similar competitive funding award. Documentation of the award must be received before the change is processed administratively. The administrative modification must be consistent with the project scope, funding purpose, funding sources, funding amounts, and conditions described in the prior OTO action. No additional federal, state, local, or private funding may be added through this provision unless that funding was included in the prior OTO action or is otherwise allowed as an administrative modification.

19. Revising or reinstating a previously approved project or project phase that is no longer shown in the active published TIP for the limited purpose of processing an obligation, award, closeout, or other project-delivery funding action, provided the project or phase was included in a prior approved TIP, the project has proceeded toward delivery, the change does not substantially alter the approved scope or termini, and the funding change is otherwise allowed as an administrative modification.

20. Technical Corrections.

[Unified Planning Work Program](#)

The UPWP is a description of the proposed activities of the OTO for the upcoming fiscal year. The program is prepared annually and serves as a basis for requesting federal planning funds from the USDOT through MoDOT. All tasks are to be completed by OTO staff unless otherwise identified.

The UPWP serves as a management tool for scheduling, budgeting, and monitoring the planning activities of the participating agencies. This document is prepared by OTO staff with assistance from various agencies including MoDOT, FHWA, the FTA, CU Transit, and members of the OTO TPC, which is made up of representatives from each of the nine OTO jurisdictions.

The UPWP for the coming year is usually completed prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year for TPC review. A 15-day public comment period is required for the UPWP. The UPWP draft document is made available on the OTO website and can be made available at the OTO office for public comment. A press release announcing the comment period is sent out, posted on the OTO website, and posted at the OTO office. An effective means of incorporating public input into the UPWP is to review comments received from the previous year that relate to similar new projects. When developing the work program, the UPWP project manager should take this public comment into consideration.

UPWP formal amendments can happen after the UPWP is approved. If a formal amendment is necessary, OTO staff will follow the same processes as for the approval of the plan.

UPWP Administrative Modifications are minor adjustments which can simply be made by OTO staff after verification that the change(s) falls into this category and do not require a formal amendment of the UPWP. No public input is required for administrative modifications.

Adjustments allowed under UPWP Administrative Modifications:

1. Technical Corrections, including, but not limited to, spelling errors, formatting mistakes, and updating dated information.
2. Changes in scope of work that do not involve any increase or decrease in the amount of compensation.
3. Budget component overruns of thirty percent (30%) or less, if the total budget amount of the UPWP is not increased.
4. Adding TEAP awards for member jurisdictions.

[Public Participation Plan](#)

The PPP provides a framework to guide the public participation process in transportation planning activities at the OTO, such as the UPWP, LRTP, TIP, and a range of programs and special studies, including major investment studies. This plan specifies the OTO's policy objectives and techniques to be considered and employed in improving the public participation process.

Updates to the PPP itself involve an inclusive public participation process. The process will be designed to be consistent with the goals of the currently adopted PPP and may include new or unused methods for engaging the public, particularly to evaluate and validate the effectiveness of current strategies.

Once a final draft of an updated PPP is complete, OTO staff will post it to the OTO website and, upon request, make a hard copy available at the OTO office. A press release announcing a 45-day public comment and review period will be sent out. Comments received by the OTO will be considered in the final review by the Board of Directors prior to its adoption.

[Other Plans and Studies](#)

The OTO Transit Coordination Plan (TCP) fulfills the federal requirements of a Human Services Transportation Plan (HSTP) as outlined in federal regulations. The TCP is intended to identify needs and gaps in human service transportation services for seniors and individuals with disabilities in the OTO study area. The TCP is used to guide the use of funds from the Section 5310 Enhanced Mobility for Seniors and Individuals with Disabilities Program.

A draft of the TCP is posted on the OTO website, and a paper copy can be made available in the OTO office prior to the commencement of a 30-day public comment period. A press release is sent out providing public notice of the comment period. Figure 1 provides a summary of the public participation process for the OTO's core planning documents.

Several other plans and projects that the OTO develops as needed include, but are not limited to, the [OTO Title VI/ADA program](#), the [Annual Listing of Obligated Projects](#) (ALOP), the [Limited English Proficiency Plan](#), the Congestion Management Process, and the Performance Measures Report. When public comment is required or appropriate, OTO will provide public notice and a comment period of at least 15 days unless a different timeframe is specified elsewhere in this plan or by applicable requirements. Informational reports may be posted or distributed without a formal comment period.

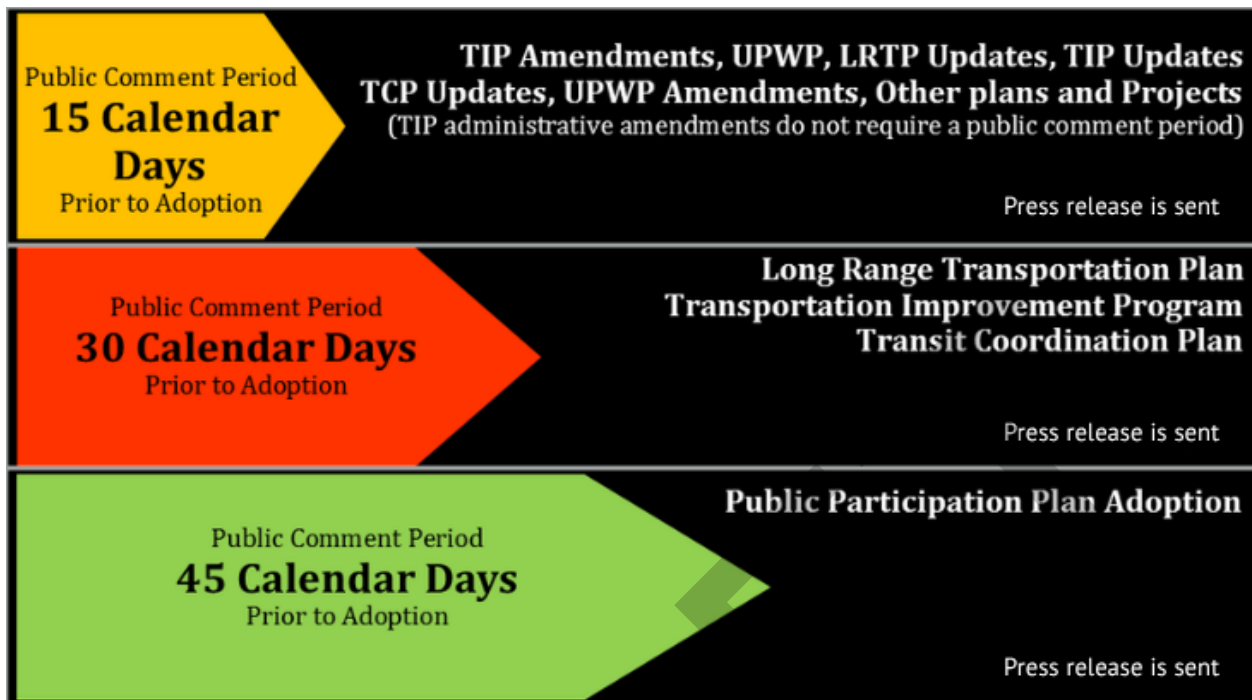


Figure 1 Public Comment Periods for Specific Plans and Purposes

Public Meetings

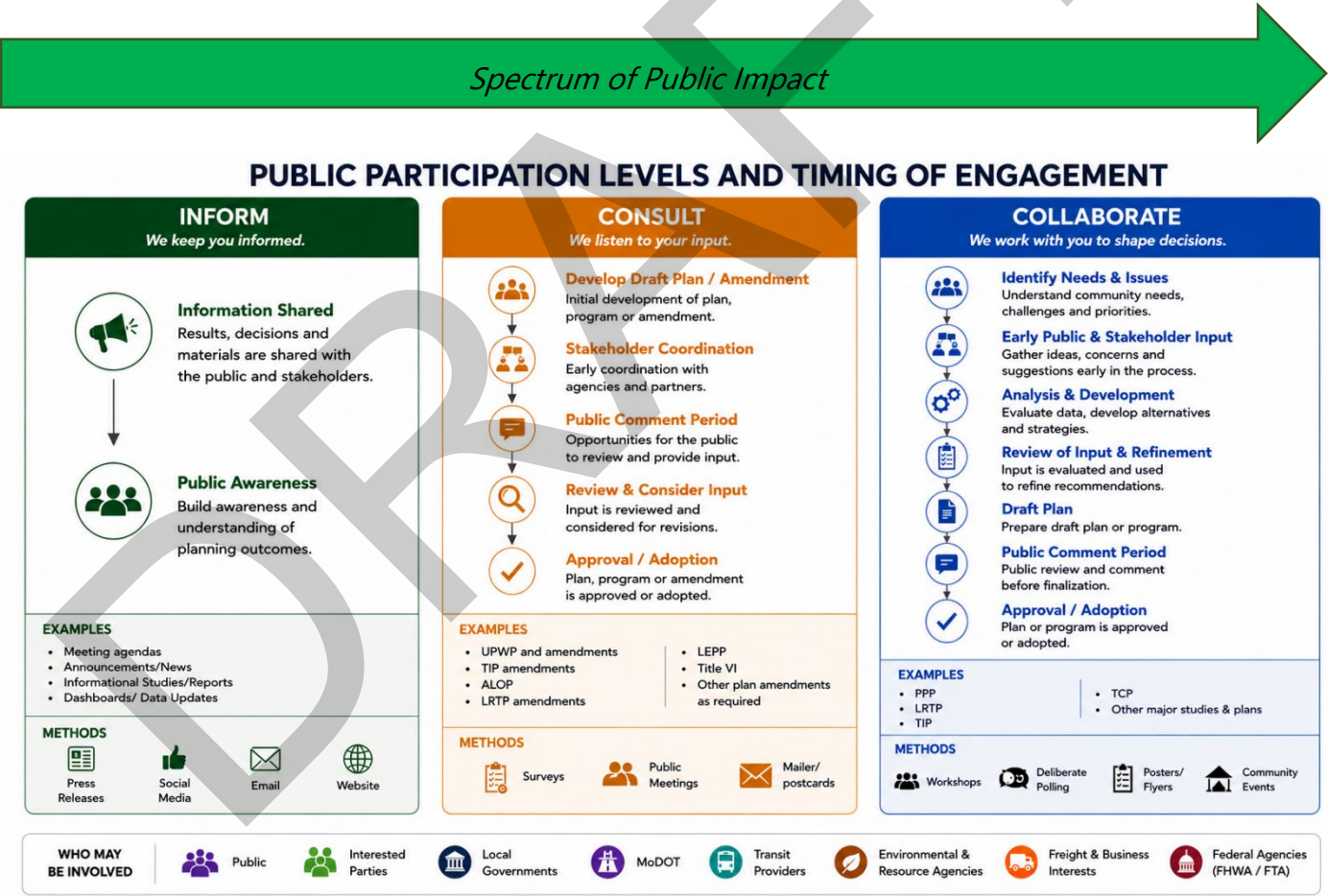
The [OTO Board of Directors](#) and all other committee meetings are open to the public. The OTO Board of Directors and Technical Planning Committee agendas, meeting notes or minutes and other meeting materials are routinely posted on the OTO website. Press releases are sent out and agendas are posted in public spaces, including the OTO office, at least 24 hours prior to the meeting date. Best practice for the OTO is to send the agenda to meetings one week prior to the meeting.

The Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee and Local Coordinating Board for Transit committee agendas and meeting minutes are routinely posted to the OTO website and posted in a public space at the OTO offices. Other ad-hoc and subcommittee meeting agendas are posted in a public space at the OTO offices, in accordance with applicable notice requirements and OTO practices.

OTO may choose to conduct public meetings in alternative ways, such as online meetings or video conferencing. In these instances, the OTO will post notice of the meeting on its website in addition to a public space in the OTO office and it will ensure that it clearly states on the agenda and meeting notice how to access the meeting.

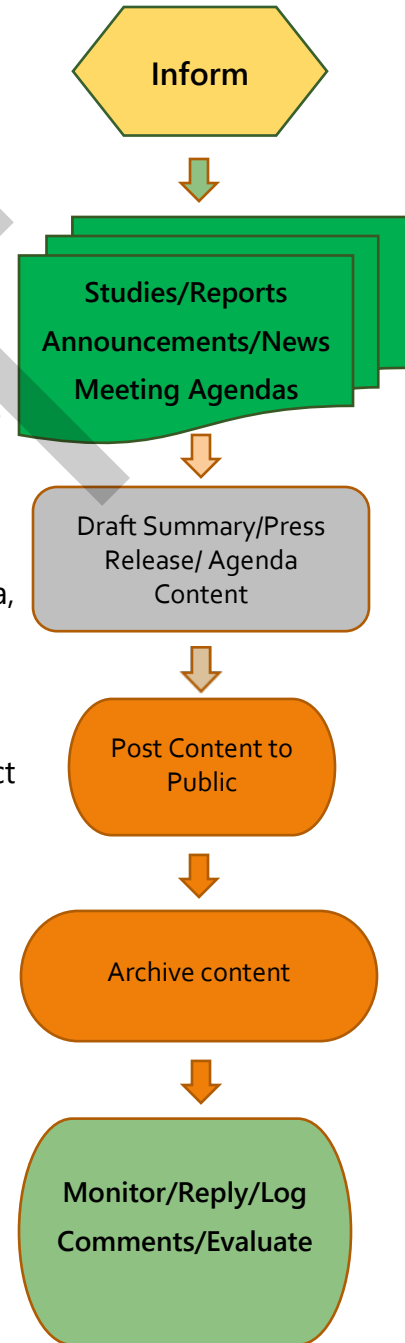
Public Participation Process

The goal of this framework is to provide structure and continuity for public engagement across OTO's transportation planning activities. The appropriate levels of public participation will vary depending on the type of activity, the level of public impact, applicable requirements, and the opportunity for public input to meaningfully inform the outcome. The table below describes a general spectrum of participation levels. Where specific notice, comment period, or approval requirements apply, they are identified in the applicable plan or activity section of this document.



Inform

- The inform level can be a standalone process for public awareness and capacity building. The inform process, however, is also a component of higher levels on the participation spectrum. This process will be used to inform the public of surveys, public meetings, and comment periods for plans and studies that require a higher level of public impact.
- Examples of planning processes or documents that fall under the inform process are studies, reports, announcements or news and meeting agendas.
- OTO staff responsible for a project or task will prepare an agenda, summary or draft press release with key information for public use. This information will be distributed through appropriate outlets, which may include the OTO website, social media, a direct email to interested parties, email to media contacts and meeting packets, and postings at the OTO office.
- OTO will retain public-facing materials, such as agendas, notices, summaries, and press releases, consistent with applicable record retention practices.
- OTO staff will monitor, respond and log comments received through this process as able to and appropriate and will determine how comments should be shared.

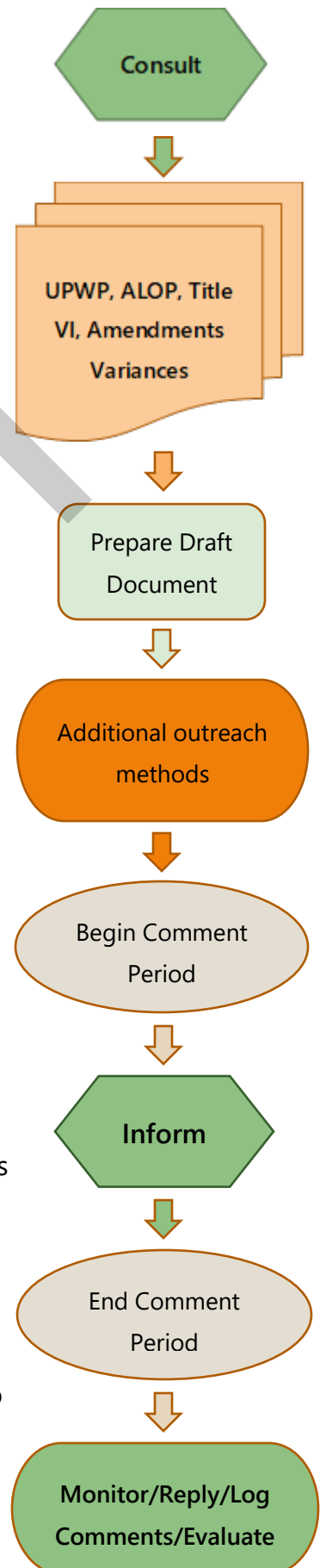


Consult

- The **Consult** level includes plans, policies, and amendments when OTO is **requesting public review and comment** before action is taken. The consult process **includes Inform-level** activities, so the public understands what is being considered, how to comment, and when comments are due.

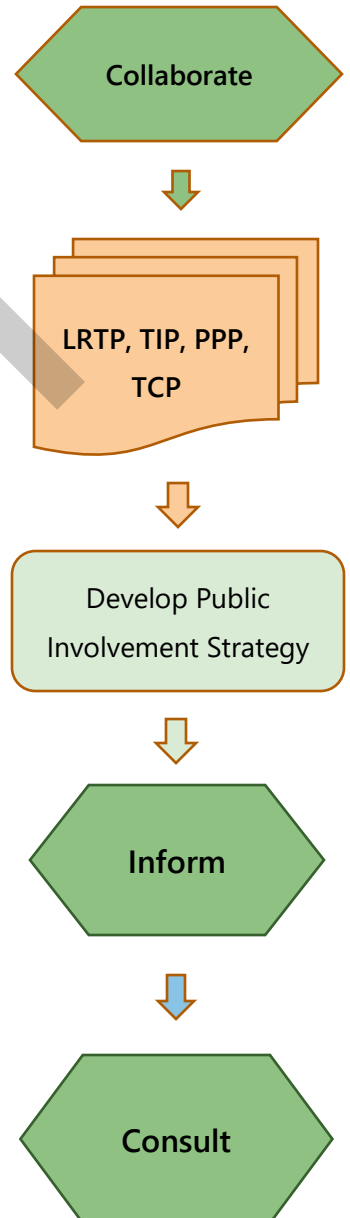
The UPWP, UPWP amendments, TIP amendments, LRTP amendments, and other actions identified in this plan have **required public comment periods** of specified lengths.

- Examples of planning processes or documents that fall under the consult process are the UPWP, ALOP, Title VI Plan, Amendments and Variances.
- Depending on the activity, OTO may use additional outreach methods beyond Inform-level notification, such as surveys, public meetings, workshops, direct outreach to affected stakeholders, mailers/ postcards, poster/flyers, or community events.
- Consult-level activities build on the Inform-level by using appropriate notification and information-sharing methods before requesting public review and comment.
- At the end of the comment period, OTO staff will review comments received and determine the appropriate method for documenting and sharing public input. Depending on the activity, comments may be summarized by the key theme, included in meeting materials, retained in the project file, or used to inform revisions to the plan, project, amendment or recommendation.



Collaborate

- **Collaboration** is the most intensive level of participation described in this plan and **includes** appropriate **Inform-** and **Consult-**level activities. At this level, OTO **seeks public and stakeholder input early** enough in the process to help **identify** needs, **shape** alternatives, **refine** priorities, and **inform** recommendations before a draft plan or final action is prepared.
- Major plans and studies at the collaborate level may include a project-specific public involvement strategy with outreach and engagement activities designed to **encourage participation**, **increase public awareness**, and **reach affected or traditionally underserved communities**. The methods used will vary depending on the type of plan or study, the level of public impact, available resources, and the opportunity for public input to meaningfully inform the outcome.
- Examples of Collaborate-level activities may include LRTP updates, PPP updates, TCP updates, major TIP development or funding prioritization efforts, and other major plans or studies. Final recommendations remain subject to the applicable committee review, public comment period, and Board of Directors approval.



Evaluation of Public Participation

Regularly reviewing and evaluating public participation efforts is important to ensure that the public has meaningful opportunities to participate in transportation planning activities. The OTO evaluates its public involvement efforts to understand how effectively information is shared with the public, how people participate in planning activities, and what improvements may help increase public awareness and engagement.

The OTO prepares periodic evaluations of its public participation activities to document outreach efforts, participation trends, and the effectiveness of different communication methods. The evaluation process helps the OTO understand how the public receives information, how comments and feedback are submitted, and which outreach methods are most successful in reaching residents and interested parties throughout the region. The results of these evaluations are used to improve future public involvement activities and identify action items for continued improvement.

As part of the evaluation process, the OTO tracks a variety of performance measures related to public engagement and communication. These measures may include:

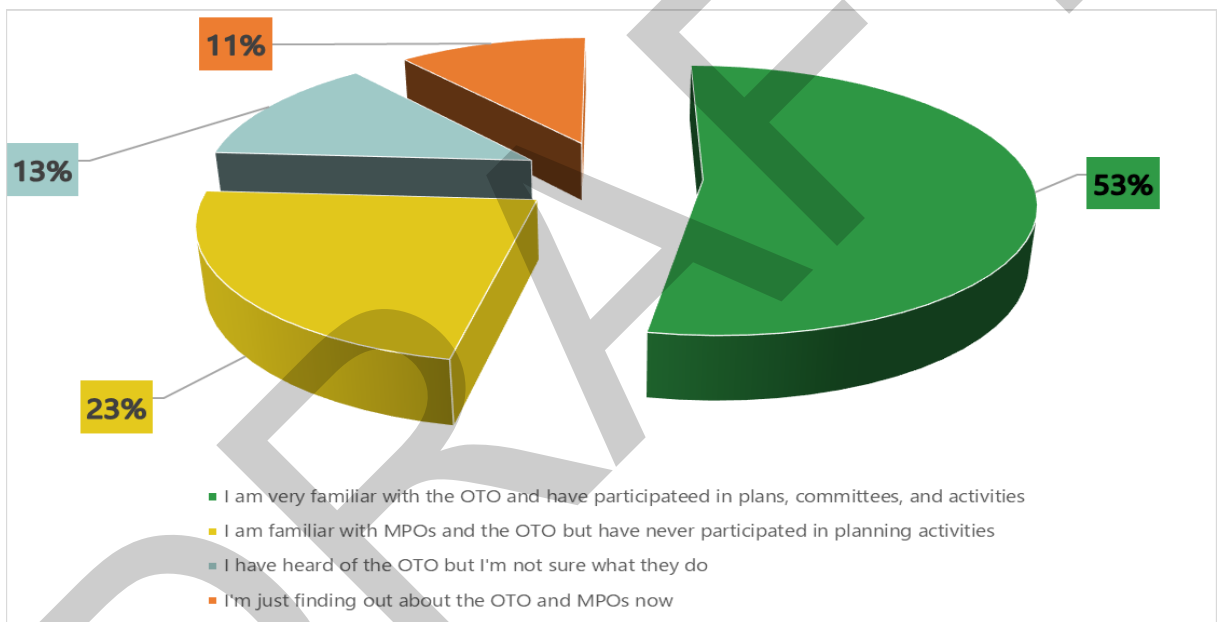
- Public comments received;
- Website and online engagement activity;
- Participation in surveys and public meetings;
- Media coverage and press releases;
- Social media engagement; and
- Attendance at community events and outreach activities.

The evaluation process also helps the OTO identify opportunities to improve communication and public understanding of transportation planning activities. Based on evaluation findings, the OTO may update outreach methods, improve accessibility to information, expand communication efforts, or develop new strategies to better inform and involve the public in transportation decision-making.

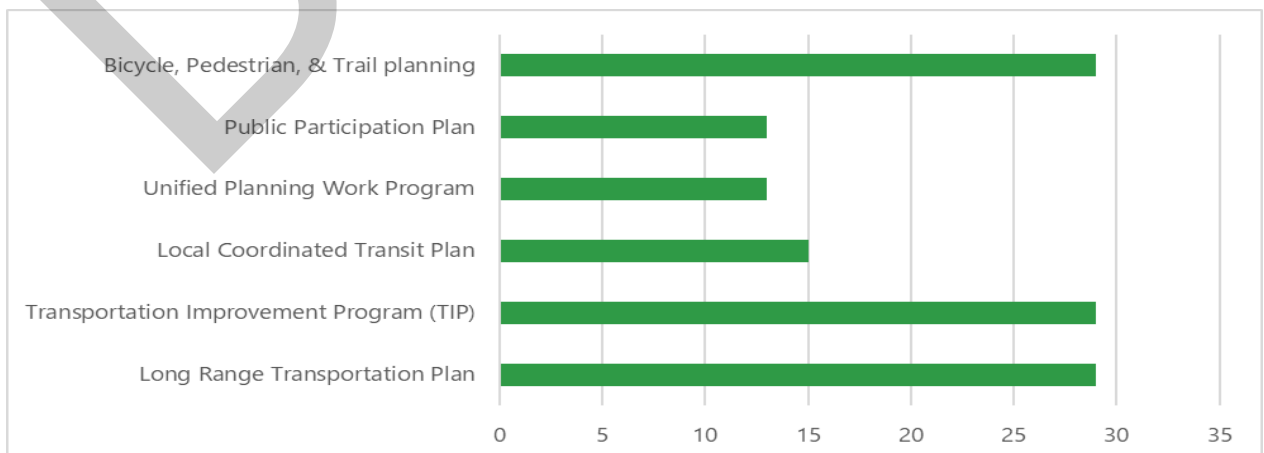
Appendix A: Interested Party Survey Results

Interested parties were consulted during the preparation of the 2026 Public Participation Plan update via an electronic survey. A link to the survey was sent to 578 email accounts representing interested parties as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations and posted to Facebook, X and the OTO-website. The 8-question survey was active from April 6 – May 12, 2026, and resulted in 47 completed surveys.

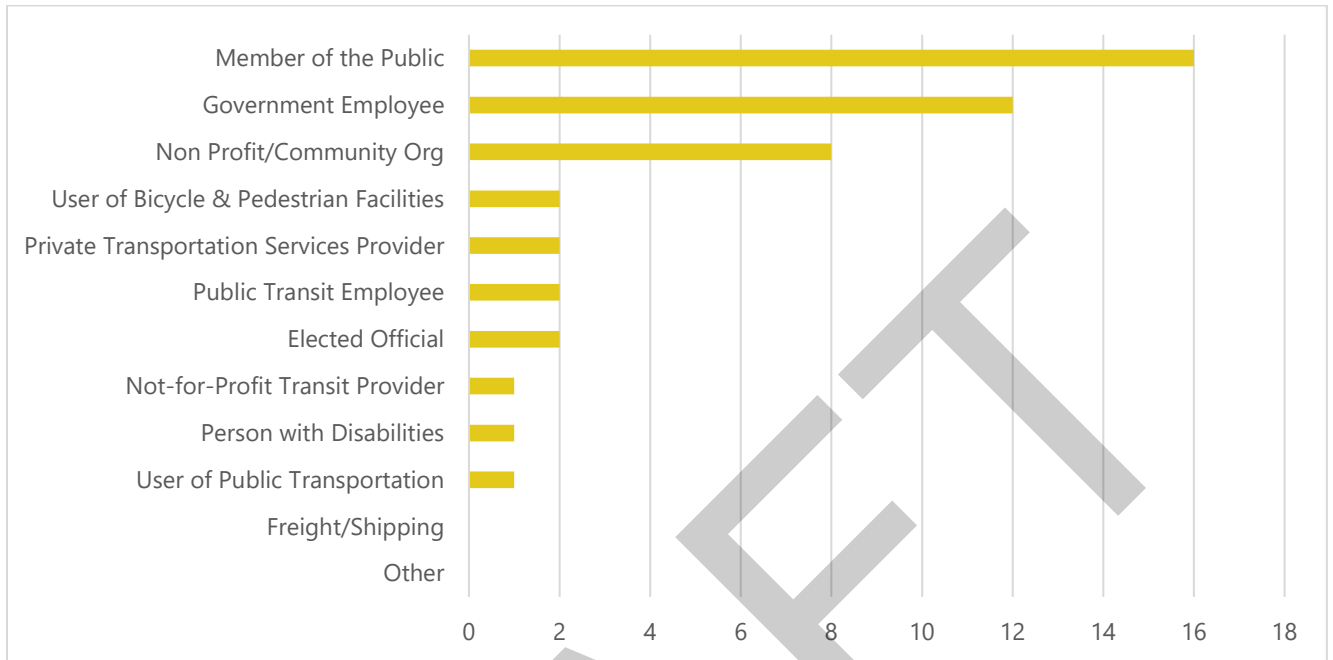
- Question 1: How familiar are you with the Ozarks Transportation Organization and its role in the region?



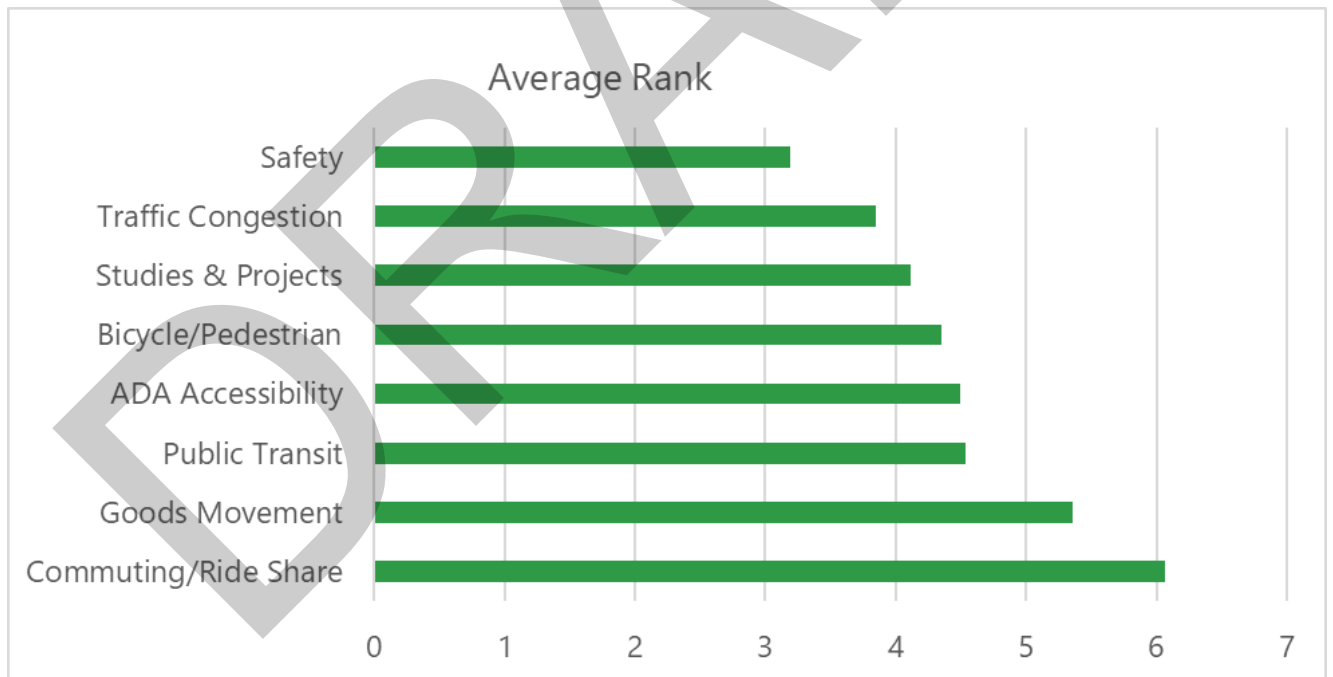
- Question 2: Which of these OTO plans or activities are you familiar with?



- Question 3: Which of the following best describes you?



- Question 4: Please rank (1 – 8) the following in order of interest



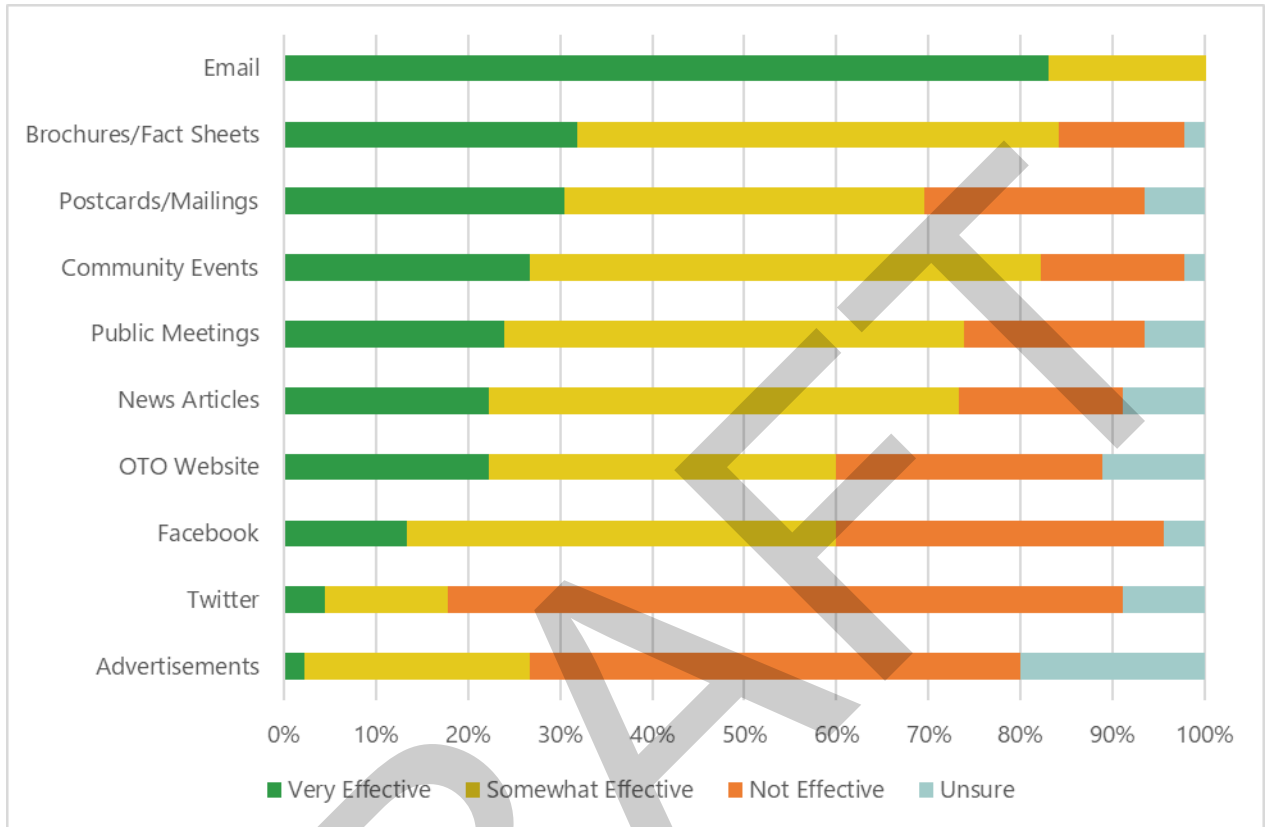
- Question 5: How best would you describe your current involvement with the transportation planning process?



- Question 6: What barriers if any prevent you from becoming more involved with the OTO and MPO planning activities?



- Question 7: How effective are each of the following methods for getting information to you?



- Question 8: How effective are each of these methods for gathering your comments?

