
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN 2023



The Ozarks Transportation Organization

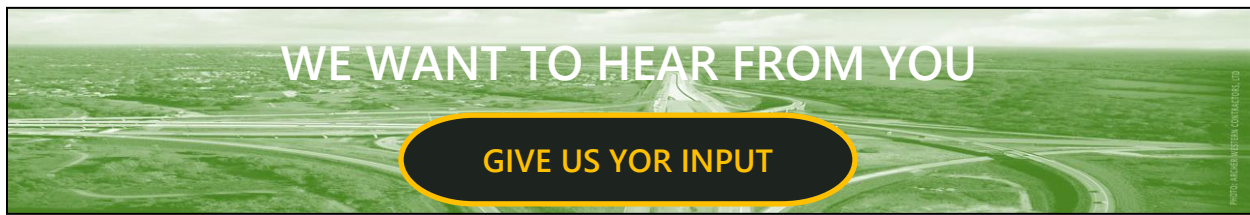
A Metropolitan Planning Organization

Pending Approval by the Board of Directors

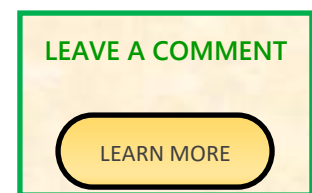
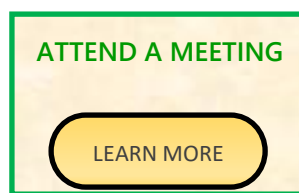
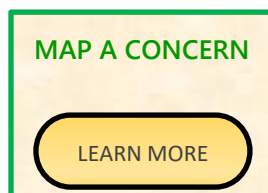
This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation. The opinions, findings, and conclusions expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the Missouri Highways and Transportation Commission, 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 all the requisite plans and key decision points in the planning process. Public comments for major plans are summarized with an explanation of how they were integrated into the final version. All 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.



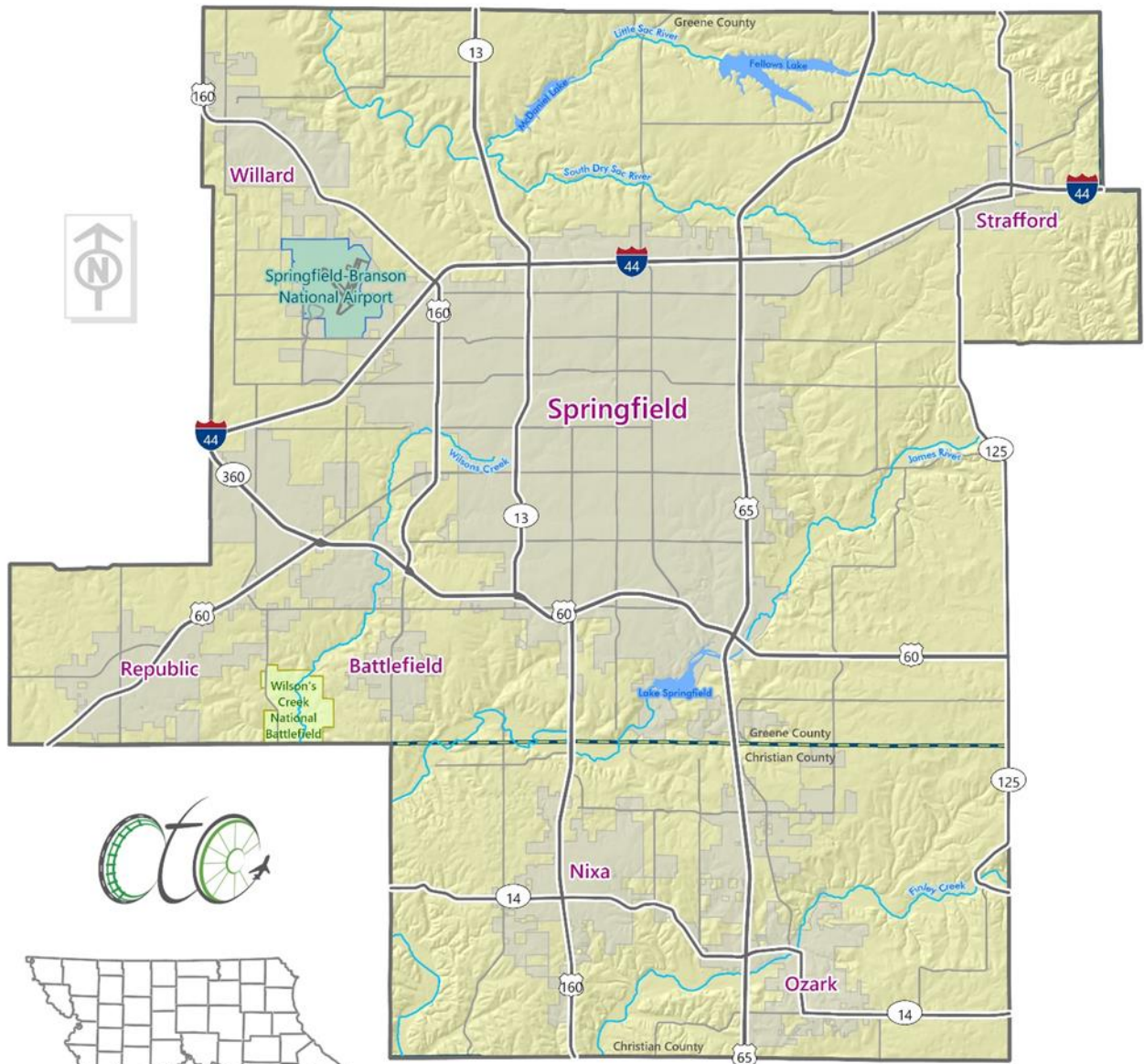
Executive Summary

The OTO 2023 Public Participation Plan (PPP) is an update of the 2020 PPP. The OTO updates its PPP every three years to ensure that we are employing the latest techniques and utilizing the most up-to-date resources to keep the public involved with and informed of our planning activities. Several revisions have been made to the PPP that was approved by the OTO Board of Directors on August 20, 2020. Updates include:

- A section describing Virtual Public Engagement has been added to the Methods of Engagement section of the plan;
- Policy objectives have been reformatted and included in a new section with the same title;
- Content throughout the plan was updated in consultation with [Promising Practices for Meaningful Public Involvement in Transportation Decision-Making](#), U.S. Department of Transportation, 2022 and Transportation Research Board's National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) Report 710: [Practical Approaches for Involving Traditionally Underserved Populations in Transportation Decision-making](#), 2012;
- The OTO has developed a supporting tool, a [Social Equity Index](#) was developed using GIS software and U.S. Census Bureau data as a first step in involving traditionally underserved populations by identifying equity areas for targeted engagement.
- Results from the 2023 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.

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 full public access, the OTO adheres to [other regulations](#) that require MPOs be proactive in involving underserved populations in the planning process. Traditionally underserved can be defined as low-income and minority populations including Hispanics/Latinos, African Americans/Blacks, Asian Americans, Native American/ Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders. Populations recognized in Title VI and other civil rights legislation, executive orders, and transportation legislation are those with limited English proficiency, low-literacy populations, seniors, persons with disabilities, and transit-dependent populations are considered underserved groups in the transportation decision-making process.

- 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;
- In 1994, Executive Order 12898, required federal agencies make environmental justice part of their mission by identifying and addressing, disproportionately high and adverse effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations;
- In 2000, Executive Order 13166 gave Title VI discrimination protection to people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP).


We at the OTO believe that it is important to give people the opportunity to have a meaningful impact on the development of plans and programs that affect them. The PPP provides direction and documents the process for inclusive community engagement for the OTO transportation planning activities. In addition, the PPP is how the OTO will maintain compliance with federal regulations and measure the effectiveness of procedures and strategies aimed at supporting early and continuous involvement of the public.

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. As such, all staff members must have the capacity to effectively communicate with individuals and stakeholders and reduce barriers to meaningful public engagement. This plan document is intended to be a useful guide to all OTO staff members no matter their role in the planning process.

The remainder of the plan includes goals and policy objectives to ensure effective public involvement for the planning activities at the OTO are in place 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.

Public Participation Goals

At the OTO MPO, the level of public participation required for activities in the planning process changes according to what is to be accomplished. The International Association for Public Participation developed a spectrum for increasing levels of public impact. The table below describes the spectrum which helps define the public's role and engagement in the transportation planning process.



	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
Goal	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problems, alternatives, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public issues and concerns are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place the final decision-making in the hands of the Public

Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation "Spectrum of Participation" www.iap2.org.

The progressive spectrum of public impact applies to the different work products and day-to-day engagement activities at the OTO. These categories and goals are aligned with various planning activities, tools, and workflows to ensure that early and continuous public participation is achieved in support of the OTO mission. More detail is provided in the "Planning Process" section of the plan.

Policy Objectives

The U.S. Department of Transportation defines meaningful public involvement as, "...a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and acts on that feedback to incorporate into a project, program, or plan." To ensure that individuals and communities have an equitable voice in transportation decision-making processes, practitioners should address barriers to meaningful public involvement, especially in historically underserved communities. To remove barriers to meaningful public participation, the OTO will adhere to the following set of 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 demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.
- 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 all citizens have the information necessary to deliver informed input.

- The OTO will prepare visualizations of transportation issues including charts, graphs, aerial photos, maps, analyses, physical models, and computer simulations with the public in mind.
- Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means on the OTO website.
- The OTO will strive to ensure that when conducting public meetings where matters related to transportation programs are being considered, they are connected to transit and meet Americans with Disabilities Act requirements.
- The OTO will strive to demonstrate that public concerns are addressed, questions are answered, and comments are taken into consideration. Upon receiving public comments, the OTO will respond in a timely manner and provide copies of comments to appropriate boards, committees, and related agencies.
- The OTO will maintain an up-to-date database of contacts to ensure that all 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 we serve.

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. In 2020, the OTO began utilizing Facebook to live broadcast Technical Planning Committee and Board of Director meetings moderating and communicating comments in real-time due to COVID-19 stay-at-home orders. The broadcasts remain available on the OTO's Facebook page. 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 was redesigned in 2019. The new design 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 an "About Us" page which contains information regarding "What is an MPO?" 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. The comment account also receives automated notifications when comments are submitted on other web-based public input tools. In addition, the comment account is the primary account for sending

press releases, news, announcements, and agendas to the press, interested parties, and committees.

[“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 or agency, and TIP number. The tool also features a map viewer for projects.

[The OTO Logo](#)

The OTO logo is prominently featured on all 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

[Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) are used to announce meetings and events. Posts provide the opportunity to share links to pertinent information and survey sites. Social media platforms can also invite public comments and participation on the sites themselves.

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. Other applications include the OTO Equity Index. [The Equity Index app](#) includes American Community Survey data for 13 classes of traditionally underrepresented, transportation disadvantaged, and vulnerable populations.

OTO Contacts Database

The OTO maintains a comprehensive database of businesses, governmental agencies, community-based organizations, 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, special interest groups, Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (DBE), as well as minority and low-income 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 meetings, comment periods for plan documents, and to provide information on specific issues being considered by the OTO or the OTO committees.

Newspaper Ads

Press releases may result in media coverage of the OTO activities but in most cases, they do not guarantee publication of information. Thus, the OTO purchases legal advertisements for announcements of comment periods for some planning documents. These legal ads serve to document compliance with the required comment period length for specific plans and plan/TIP amendments. When seeking public input for LRTP updates and the annual TIP process the OTO has purchased regular ad space in the print editions of the *Springfield News-Leader* and the *Christian County Headliner*. Additionally, the OTO reviews and considers publications in circulation at the time an ad is needed.

Surveys

The OTO uses web-based applications to generate electronic surveys. Hyperlinks to the survey are then disseminated via email, social media, press releases, and the OTO website. Hard copies are also produced and distributed at public meetings, community events, and the OTO office. In addition, post card mailings are used to publicize surveys and comment periods and include QR codes for mobile devices.

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. 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 are 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 of the plan defines 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:

- Elected officials;
- Local government staff;
- Transportation agencies (airport, transit, etc.);
- Local media (TV, radio, print, etc.);
- Civic groups;
- Special interest groups;
- Libraries (for public display);
- 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 in the OTO planning area;
- Private freight shippers;
- Representatives of public transportation employees;
- Providers of freight transportation services;

- Private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs;
- Representatives of users of public transportation;
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities;
- Representatives of people with disabilities;
- Members of minority populations;
- Representatives of Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations;
- Public school district representatives within the OTO planning area;
- Representatives of colleges and universities; and
- Representatives of large employers.

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 the next 25 to 30 years.

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 use nearly the full range of the participation techniques employed by the OTO. A series of public meetings will be held throughout the region for each complete update. Events will be publicized using display advertisements in the *Springfield News-Leader* and other community newspapers. 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 ¼-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 all city and county governments within its study area during the annual TIP development process. The projects submitted by local governments are all part of their respective Capital Improvement Programs (CIP) where required. 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.

Depending on their area of concern, the following boards hold public hearings on the proposed projects: Airport Board; Park Board; and Planning and Zoning Commission/Board. 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.

The OTO advertises City Utilities' POP each year in the *Springfield News-Leader*. 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.

[Missouri State University](#) - MSU utilizes the Transit Shuttle Advisory Committee for public involvement in the selection of projects to be included in the TIP. This committee includes representatives of the student body, faculty, administration, and transit operations.

[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 an advisory group; 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.

Agencies submitting projects for inclusion in the TIP will include written documentation of the public involvement procedures used by that agency in selecting projects to include in the TIP and/or for federal funding, e.g., projects for which FTA Section 5307 funding is sought. If written or oral comments that question the need, scope or scheduling of TIP projects or that propose alternative projects are received during the TIP preparation process, the submitting agency will submit a summary analysis report on the disposition of the comments which will be made a part of the approved TIP.

The draft TIP is made available for comment for 30 days prior to Board of Director approval. A legal notice is placed in the *Springfield News-Leader* and/or other community papers. The draft TIP is made available on the OTO website, at the OTO offices, and at the Springfield-Greene County Library, CU Transit office, and the MoDOT SW District office. Any public comment received during this review period will be considered by the OTO staff and will be presented to the Technical Planning Committee and 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 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).

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 TIP Amendments:

1. Addition or deletion of any project (except as noted in the Administrative Modifications section);
2. 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);
3. Changes in the availability (adding or deleting funds by Congressional action) of earmarked (special appropriation) funds;
4. Moving a project into or out of the first four Federal Fiscal Years of a TIP;
5. Changes in a project's total programmed amount greater than 25% (or any amount greater than \$2,000,000);
6. Changes in a project's fund source(s) from non-Federal to Federal, unless the fund source(s) change from Advanced Construction to an identified Federal funding source; and
7. 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.

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. Changes in a project's total programmed amount less than 25% (up to \$2,000,000);

2. Minor changes to the scope of a project;
3. Minor changes to the termini of a non-capacity project (one that increases or decreases the total length of the project by no more than 1/4 mile);
4. Adding or deleting a project development phase of a project (Environmental Assessment, PE Design, ROW, Construction, or other) without major changes to the scope of the project;
5. Moving funds between development phases of a project (Environmental Assessment, PE Design, ROW, Construction, or other) without major changes to the scope of the project;
6. 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;
7. Minor changes to funding sources between federal funding categories or between state and local sources;
8. 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);
9. Changes from Advance Construction to Federal funding or from Federal funding to Advance Construction;
10. Changing a project's lead agency when agreed upon by the two agencies affected;
11. Changes made to an existing project's amount of local or state non-matching funds provided no other funding, scoping or termini changes (beyond what is allowed administratively) are being made to the project;
12. Changes made to an existing project's programmed federal funds, to reflect the actual amount awarded by the federal agency and the corresponding required matching funds (up to 25% or \$2,000,000);
13. Adding a project to the TIP which is split from a "parent project" provided the cumulative total amount of Federal funding in each funding category in the parent and split projects remains intact and the overall scope of work intended to be accomplished does not change (an additional administrative modification may be made to the split project, as allowed elsewhere in this list);

14. Combining two or more projects already in the TIP provided the cumulative, total amount of federal funding in each funding category of the combined projects remains intact and the overall scope of work intended to be accomplished does not change; and
15. 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 draft of the new UPWP for the coming year is usually completed by March 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 at the OTO office for public comment. A press release announcing the comment period is sent to media contacts, posted on the OTO website, and posted in full view of the public 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.

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 shall meet the goals of the currently adopted Public Participation Plan and strive to employ new and/or underused methods for engaging the public, particularly to evaluate and validate the effectiveness of strategies outlined in the current plan.

Once a final draft of an updated PPP is complete, OTO staff will post it to the OTO website and maintain a hard copy at the OTO office. A press release announcing a 45-day public comment and review period will be sent to media contacts and a legal notice will be placed in the *Springfield News-Leader*. All 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) enacted under MAP-21 and the recently adopted FAST Act. 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 is made available in the OTO office prior to the commencement of a 30-day public comment period. A press release is sent to media contacts providing public notice of the comment period. In addition, a legal notice is placed in the *Springfield News-Leader* and/or other community papers. 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, the

[Limited English Proficiency Plan](#), the Congestion Management Process, and the Performance Measures Report. These other plans and reports require a press release notifying the public of at least a 15-day comment period.

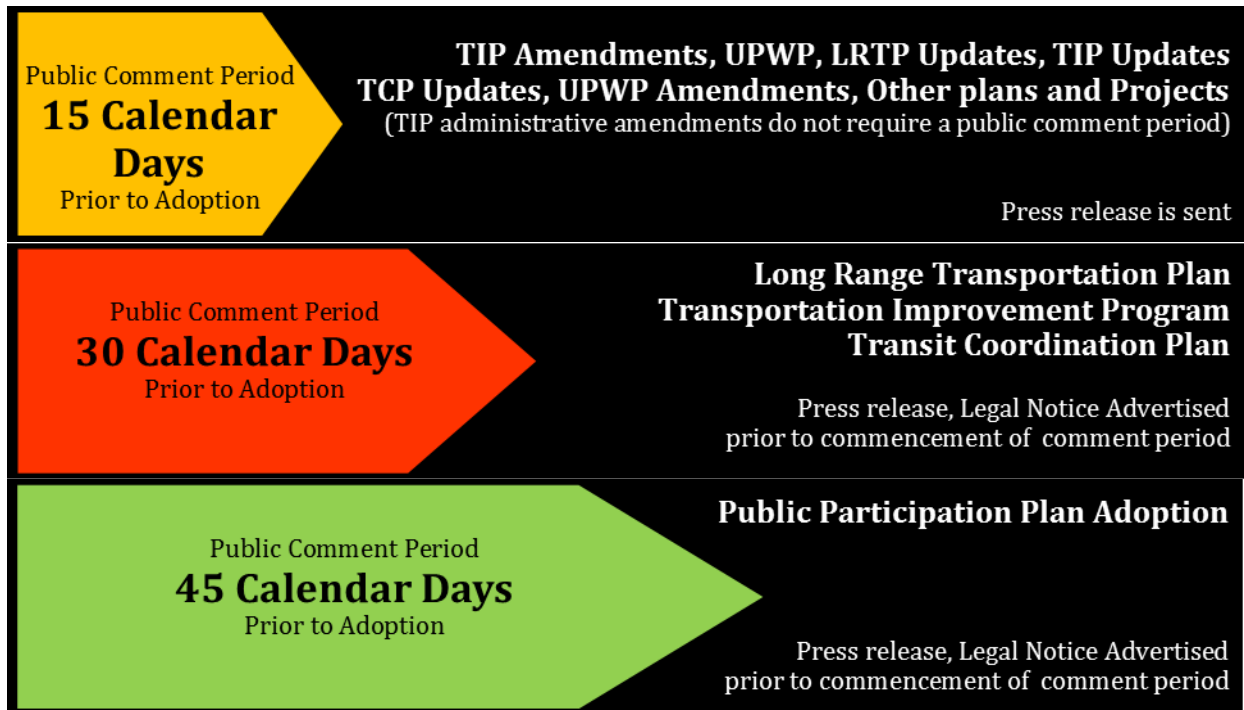


Figure 1 Public Comment Periods for Specific Plans and Purposes

Public Meetings

The [OTO Board of Directors](#) and [Technical Planning Committee](#) meetings are considered public meetings. Other meetings where the OTO leadership conducts business, such as the Executive Committee meetings are also considered public meetings. Press releases are sent to media contacts and agendas are posted in public spaces, including the OTO office, at least one week prior to the meeting date. The body of the press release is posted to the News & Updates section of the OTO website where the public can comment on the content. The URL for the posting is then sent via Facebook and Twitter.

When circumstances arise that prohibit in-person public meetings, such as a public health crisis or other emergencies, the OTO adheres to [Missouri Sunshine Law](#) guidance that provides means for public bodies to conduct public meetings in alternative ways, such as


online meetings or video conferencing. In these instances, the OTO may conduct an “E-meeting” via email where committee members can motion, second, and vote on agenda action items and takes advantage of our website and social media pages to post recordings or live streams of public meetings.

If the OTO chooses to have an online (E-meeting) meeting staff will need to ensure that the meeting notice references the change from the usual method. If the meeting will be held online, “§ 610.020.1, RSMo, requires that the body **‘post a notice of the meeting on its website in addition to its principal office.’** Section [610.020.1, RSMo](#), further requires that the body **‘shall notify the public how to access that meeting.’**” Staff will still need to provide a meeting agenda in the same manner as the standard in-person meeting notice.

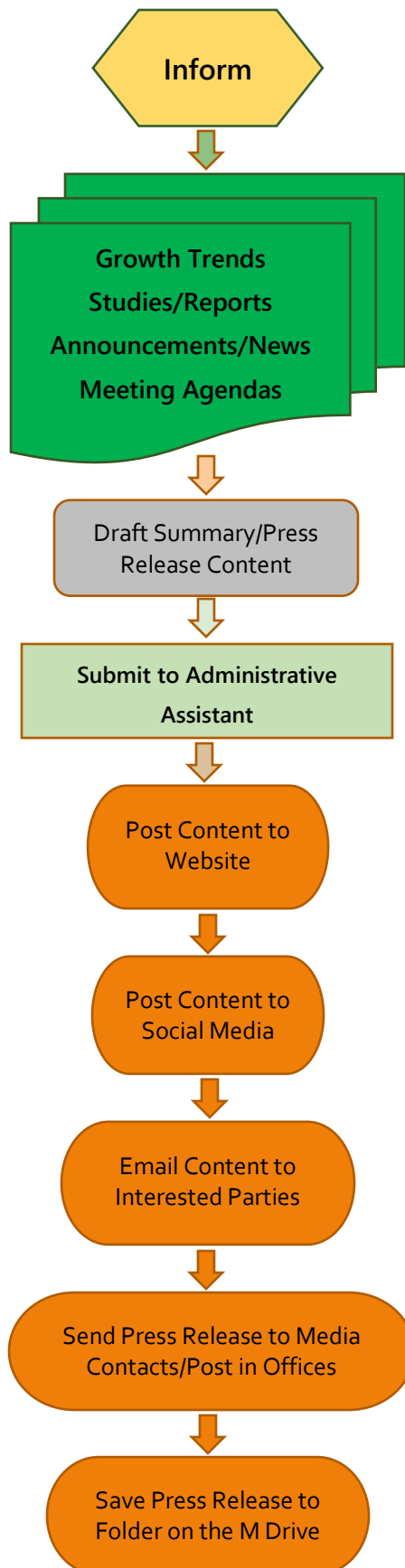
The Sunshine Law does not preclude voice-votes during online or video conferencing, however, roll call voting will be conducted for all action items. Generally, under [§610.015, RSMo](#), an elected member of a public governmental body can only participate in a roll call vote if they are physically present or participating via video conferencing. This also means that a quorum of the public governmental body must be present in-person or via video conferencing for a roll call vote to be held.

Public Participation Process

The goal of this outline is to provide structure and continuity for public engagement for various activities of transportation planning conducted by the OTO. The level of public participation required for activities in the planning process changes according to what is to be accomplished. The table below describes a spectrum of participation for an increasing level of public impact. This document provides an outline of the public participation process to be followed for each level of participation on the spectrum.

Spectrum of Public Impact 			
	Inform	Consult	Collaborate
Type of Plan, Study or Activity	Meeting agendas, Announcements/News, Growth Trends, Studies/Reports, CMP	UPWP, DBE Goals, ALOP, LEPP, Title VI, Amendments	TIP, LRTP, PPP, TCP, Other Studies & Plans
Tools	Press Releases, Social Media, Email, Website	Surveys, Public Meetings, Mailer/postcards, Legal Ads, Blog posts	Workshops, Deliberate Polling, Posters/Flyers, Media Ads, Community Events

Source: Adapted from the International Association for Public Participation "Spectrum of Participation" www.iap2.org.



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.

The lead OTO staff person responsible for the project or task will **prepare a summary or draft press release** with key information for public consumption. The press release/summary will submit information to the communications clerk.

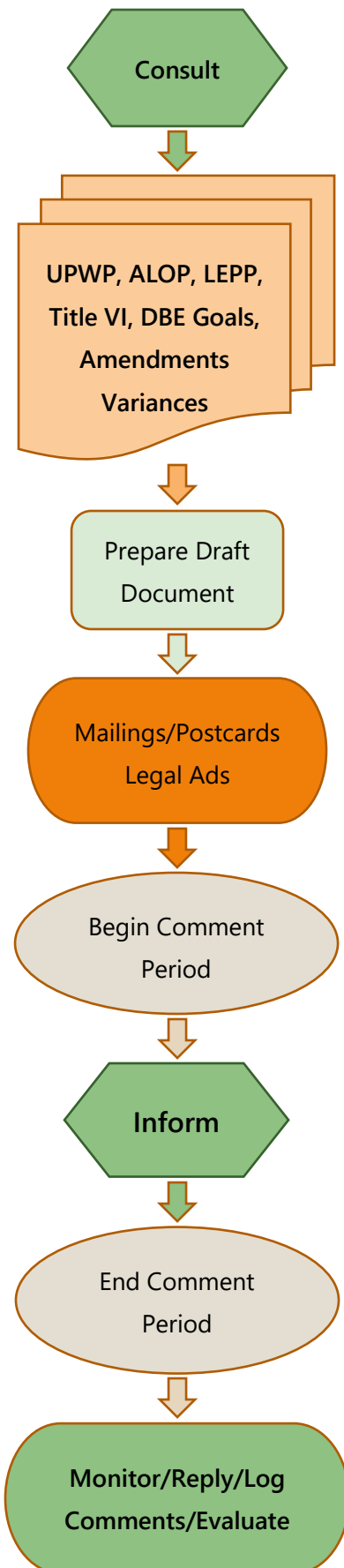
The **administrative assistant** is the position at the OTO that will be responsible for the execution of the process.

All announcements and/or reports will be **posted to the OTO website**, in the OTO office, or other public venues (Library, MoDOT office, etc.).

Summary content will be posted on **Facebook and Twitter** accounts with **links to the content at the OTO website**.

An **email** announcing completion of reports or meeting agendas will be sent to **Interested Parties** if applicable

The **press release** will be emailed to **media contacts** and posted in the OTO offices when applicable.



The **consult** level on the participation spectrum includes plans and policies where **public comments are being solicited**.

The consult process **includes** the **inform** process to make the public aware of the how, when, and what regarding the requested feedback.

The UPWP, UPWP Amendments, TIP Amendments have **required comment periods** of specified lengths as per the **Code of Federal Regulations** as presented in the OTO **Public Participation Plan**.

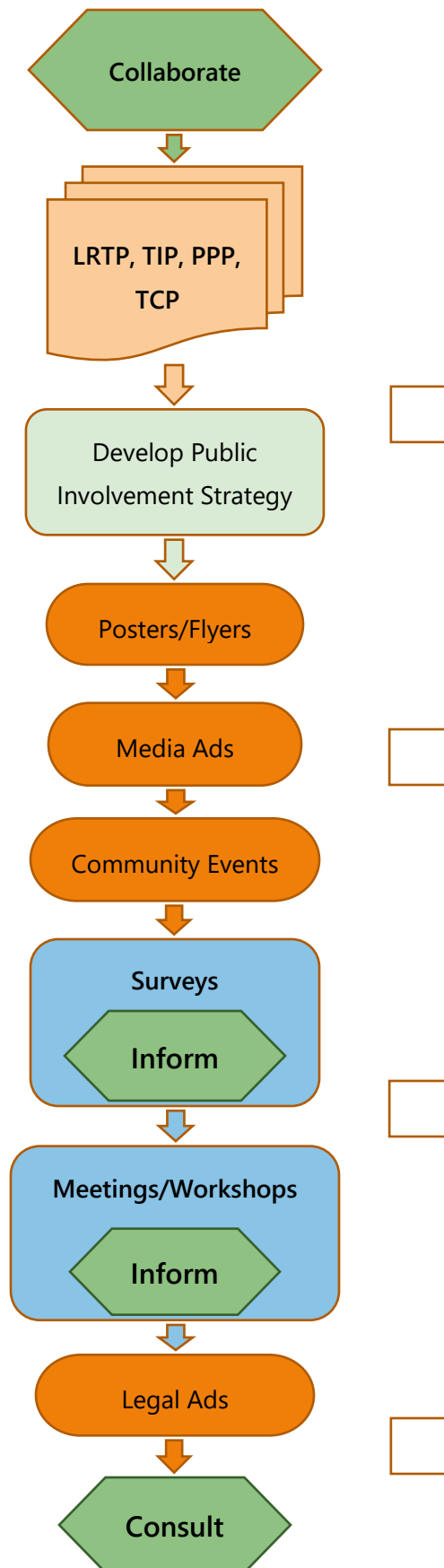
The OTO staff member responsible for the project or task will prepare a **draft document** to be made available **for public comment**.

These tools were not included in the **inform** process. These are **options** to elicit comment from **targeted stakeholder groups** or **document a comment period** which is necessary for some projects in the consult level of participation.

Draft content containing information about **when** the comment period begins and ends, **where** the documents can be accessed, and **how** to comment.

The **inform** process should be initiated as a sub-routine for the consult level of participation. Information should be submitted to the **administrative assistant** for **dissemination**.

At the end of the comment period, all **comments** will be **logged** into a central location and summarized. An explanation of how they impacted the plan or project will be prepared by the OTO staff member responsible for the project or plan and **included as an appendix** to the document.



Collaboration is the highest level of participation on the spectrum. This level **includes** both lower participation levels, **inform and consult**. At the collaboration level the **public** is actively **engaged** through **surveys** and **meetings** to provide **feedback** and **guide** the direction of the plan.

Most of the **plans** and **studies** at the collaboration level **include** the development of a **strategy** for public involvement. If **surveys** are included, they are created with specific content depending on the plan. Information for **meetings and workshops** must be prepared in advance to frame the issues for discussion. The strategy also must include a **“get the word out”** marketing campaign to make the public aware of planning activities.

The **Long-Range Transportation Plan** requires the highest levels of public engagement at the OTO. Public involvement tools that may be included in the strategy for plans and studies at the collaboration level include **direct marketing** with **promotional ads** as well as **posters and flyers** to **create awareness** of planning activities and **build capacity** for participation.

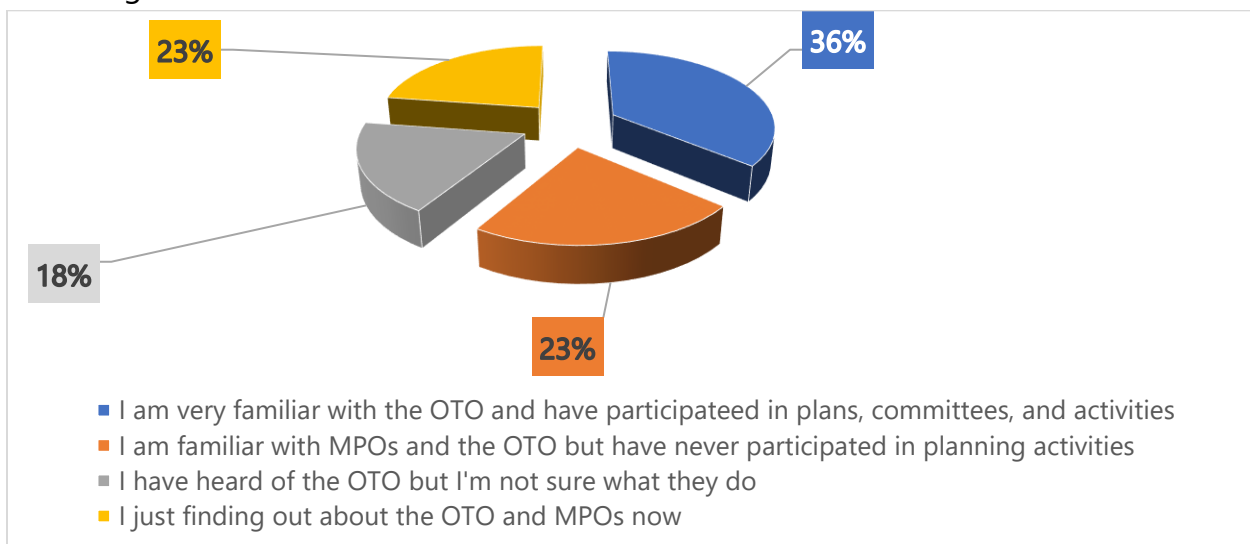
The **inform** process should be initiated for each **meeting, workshop** and/or **survey**. The inform process for these **high-level public involvement mechanisms** can be **enhanced** from its lower level base to include **direct marketing** tools to **“get the word out”** about these opportunities that are **vital** to the collaboration process and **successful plans**.

The **consult** process is initiated **after planning activities** have been completed and a plan document has been drafted to **allow for public comments before plans are adopted** or approved by the BOD. **Legal ads** should be integrated into the process for plans with required comment period lengths set forth in the Code of Federal Regulations as per the PPP.

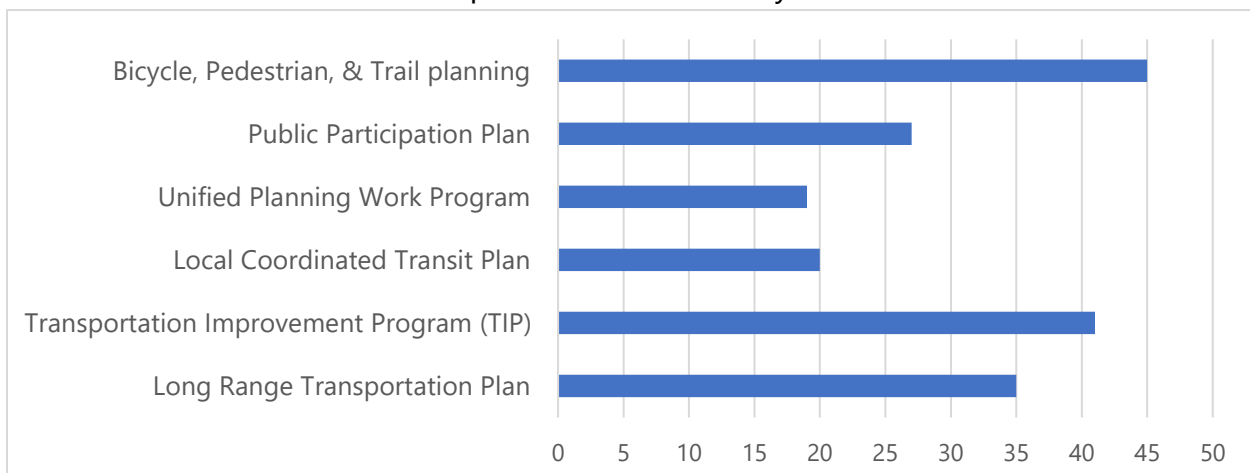
Appendix A: Interested Party Survey Results

Interested parties were consulted during the preparation of the 2023 Public Participation Plan update via an electronic survey. A link to the survey was sent to 305 email accounts representing interested parties as defined in the Code of Federal Regulations and posted to Facebook and Twitter. The 8-question survey was active from April 8 – April 28, 2023 and resulted in 80 completed surveys.

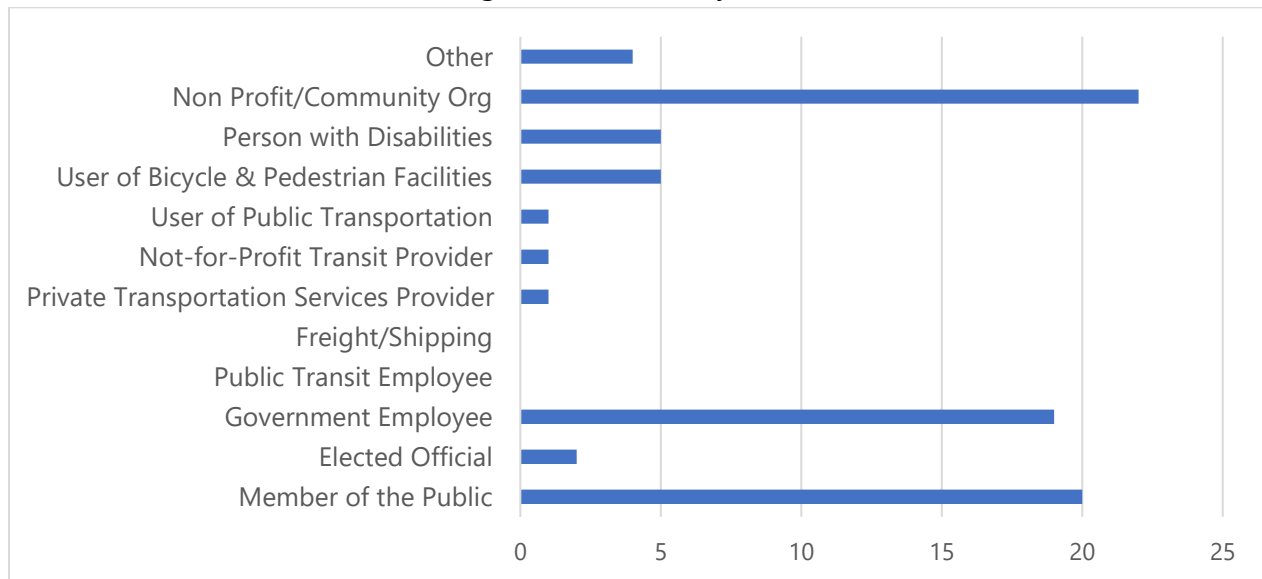
Question 1: How familiar are you with the Ozarks Transportation Organization and its role in the region?



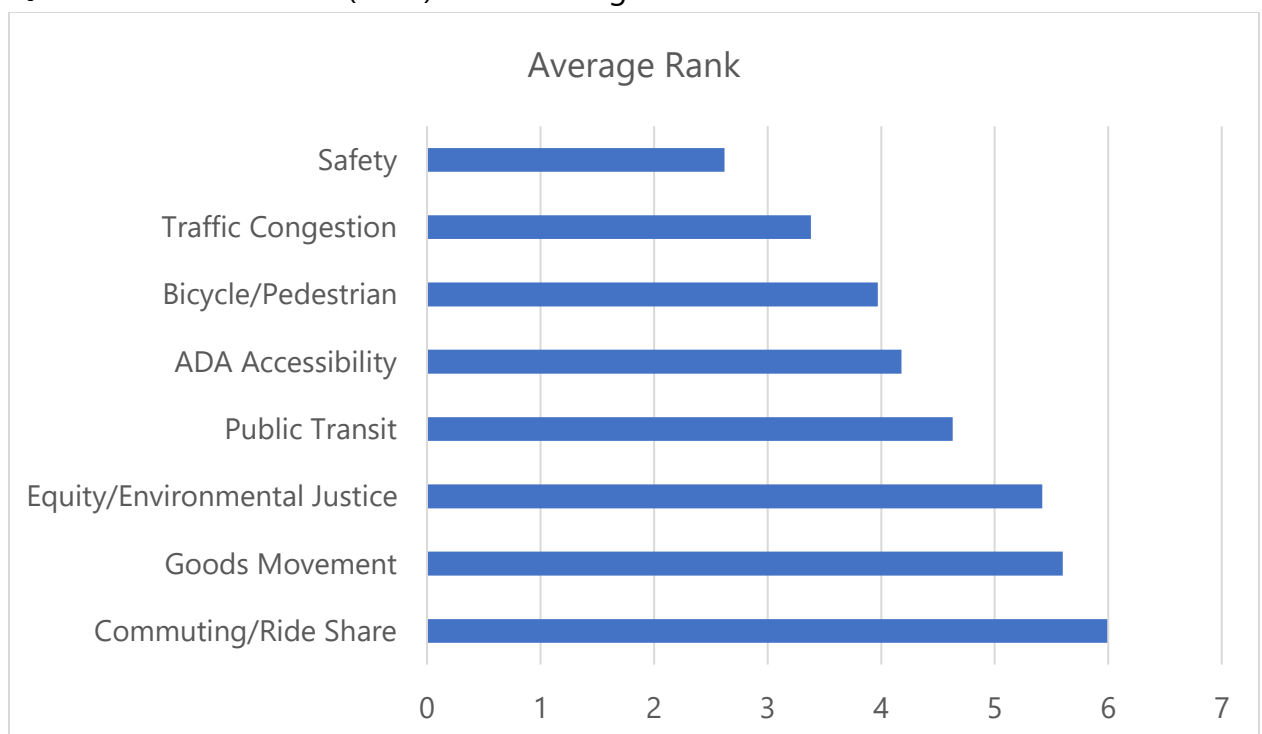
Question 2: Which of these OTO plans or activities are you familiar?



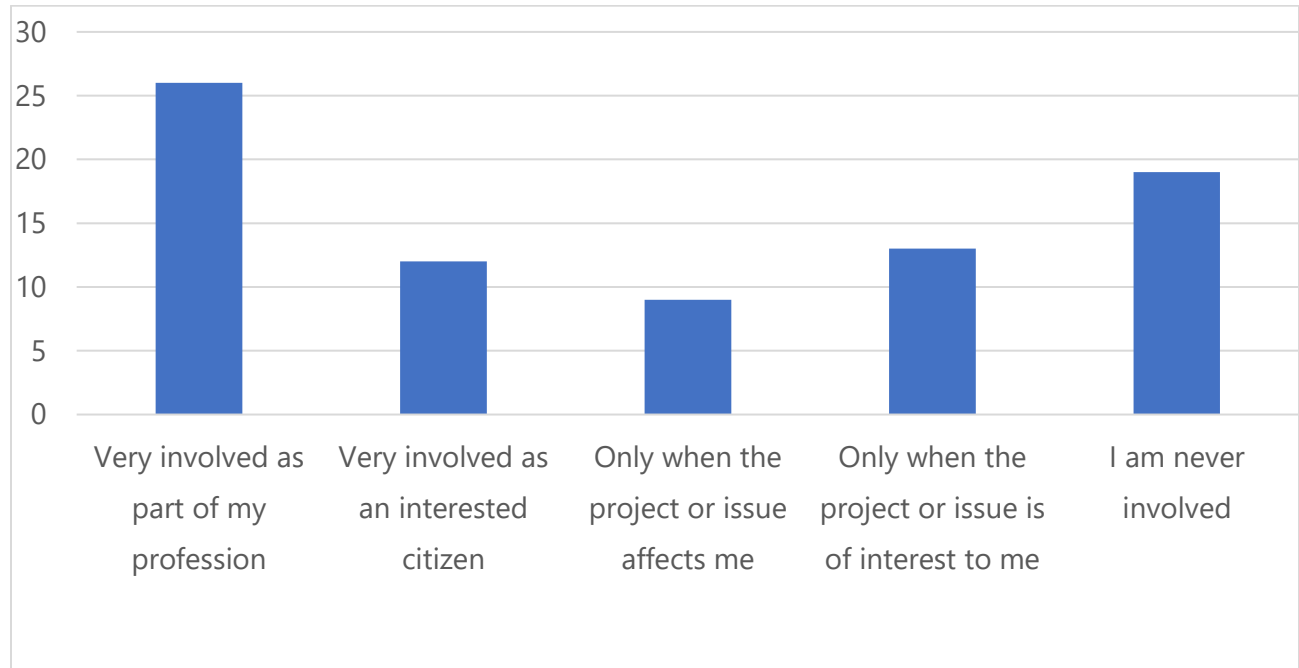
Question 3: Which of the following best describes you?



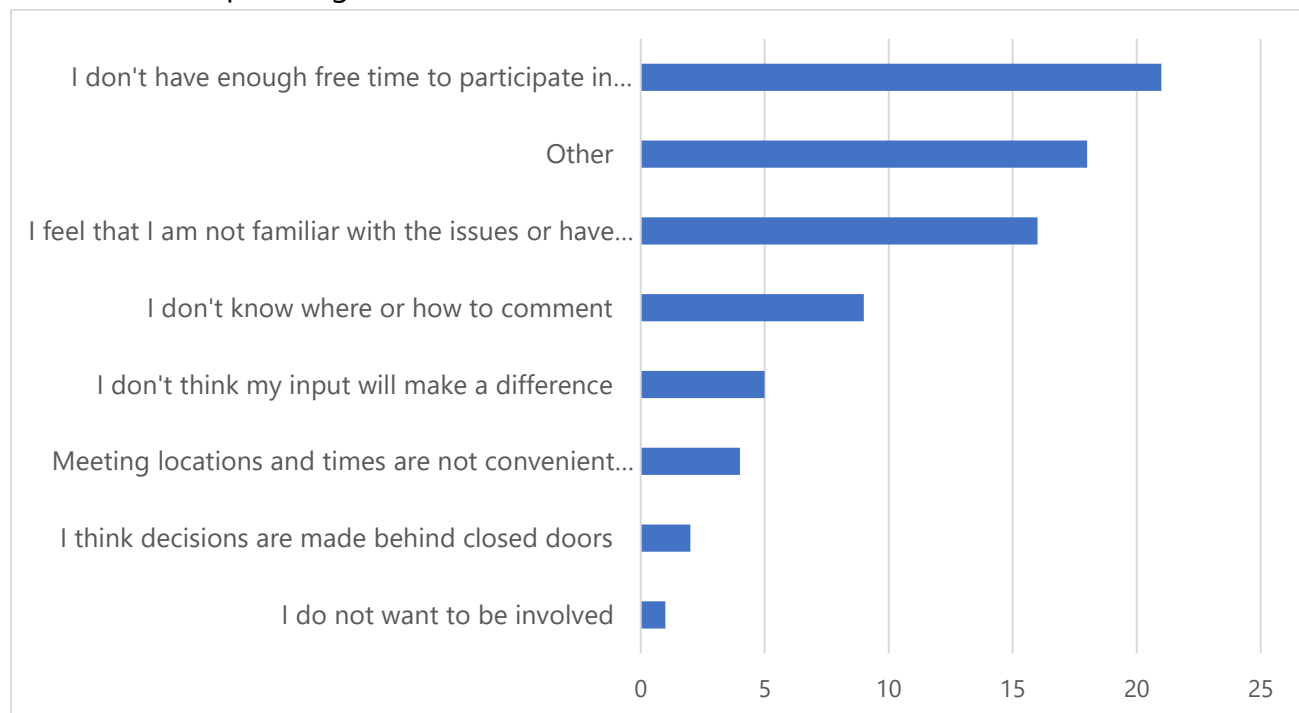
Question 4: Please rank (1 – 7) the following in order of interest



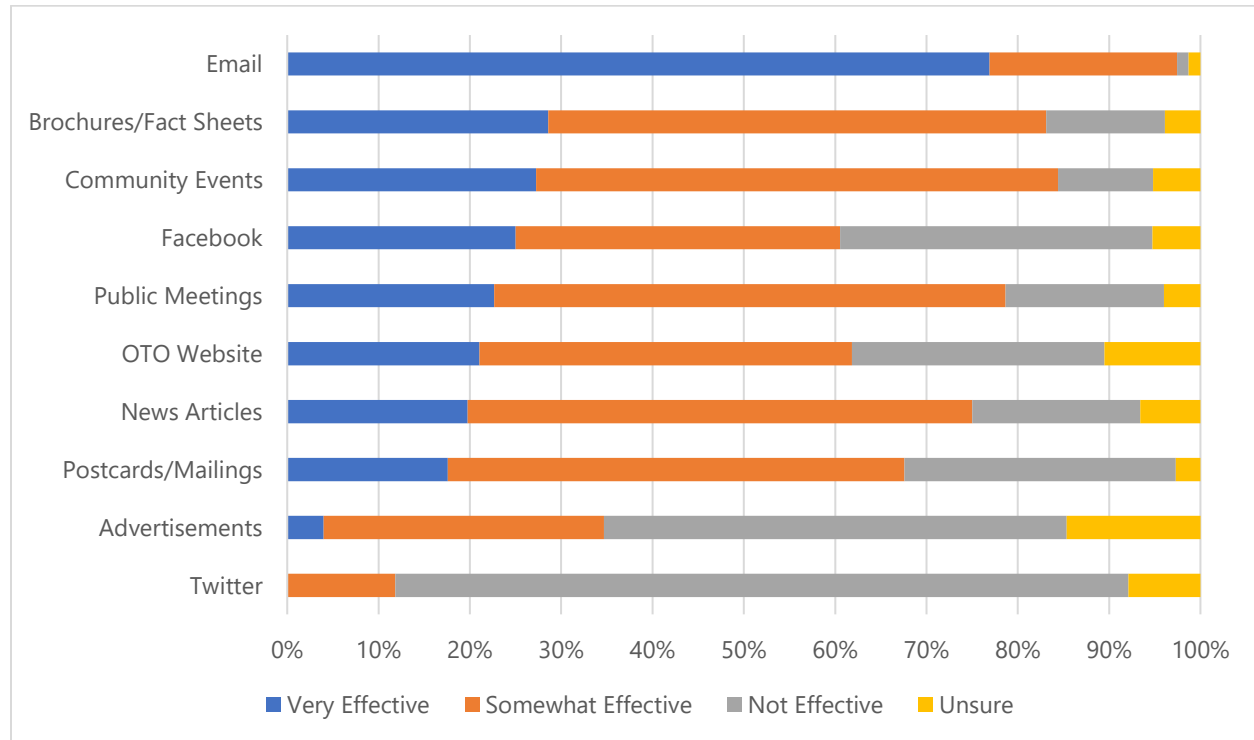
Question 5: How best would you describe your current involvement with the transportation planning process?



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?

