

Public Participation Plan 2022 Annual Evaluation



OZARKS TRANSPORTATION ORGANIZATION

A METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION

April 1, 2023

This report was prepared in cooperation with the USDOT, including FHWA and FTA, as well as the Missouri Department of Transportation

Introduction

The effectiveness of the Ozarks Transportation Organization's Public Participation Plan and public involvement activities are documented and evaluated annually. This annual evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Public Participation Plan 2020 approved by the Board of Directors on August 20, 2020 and as required by Federal Law 20 CFR 450.316. Through these annual evaluations the OTO adjusts and modifies public involvement activities in a list of action items to be undertaken preceding the next annual evaluation.

Goal

Through continued evaluation, the OTO seeks to improve how information is provided to the public and to enhance public involvement and input. The goal of the evaluation is to utilize quantified performance measures in conjunction with a set of action items to evaluate and improve the provision of information, facilitate public involvement, and increase input.

Previously Designated Action Items

As part of the 2022 Public Participation Plan Evaluation, four action items were identified to improve outreach and increase public involvement. The four items included:

- Develop printed materials, such as business cards with information about comment opportunities on the OTO website and acquire swag items for distribution at events and expos in anticipation of increased in-person opportunities to engage the public at community-based functions.
- Expand the use of social media to promote the OTO and solicit comments using ads and "boosted" content to target segments of the public for their input on studies and projects that directly affect them.
- Continue to annually update and maintain the OTO interested parties and stakeholder group contacts list/database.

- Utilize geographic information systems and census data to identify areas within the OTO that have disproportionate numbers of transportation disadvantaged or vulnerable populations with the intent of tailoring efforts to include them in the planning processes at the OTO.

Performance Measures

The OTO has been tracking Public Participation performance measures for several years. This section provides a list of activities and outlets that the OTO monitors and uses as performance measures in the evaluation of the public participation plan.

Facebook Participation

Date	Followers	Men/Women (%)
August 2013	51	Not Available
August 2014	108	56/43
April 2015	137	52/45
July 2016	175	54/43
March 2017	177	55/43
March 2018	220	56/43
March 2019	234	53/45
March 2020	437	44/55
March 2021	541	43/56
March 2022	550	44.5/55.5
March 2023	744	40/48

Facebook Participation by Location

Date	Battlefield	Springfield	Nixa	Ozark	Republic	Willard	Strafford
August 2014	-	60	4	2	2	-	-
April 2015	-	82	4	4	3	-	-
July 2016	15	72	5	11	7	-	-
March 2017	13	66	5	11	5	-	-
March 2018	3	117	8	13	4	-	-
March 2019	2	129	7	15	5	-	-
March 2020	3	207	21	41	13	-	-
March 2021	4	212	23	46	9	-	-
March 2022	20	208	30	47	38	-	-
March 2023	23	250	42	57	37	12	9

Twitter Participation

Date	Followers	Following	Tweets
August 2014	57	241	284
April 2015	91	218	628
July 2016	149	216	1,503
March 2017	169	214	1,648
March 2018	185	219	1,712
March 2019	217	289	1,743
March 2020	264	308	1,881
March 2021	264	309	1,964
March 2022	286	351	2,052
March 2023	280	344	2,137

Number of Meetings Open to the Public

The OTO attempts to hold six meetings annually for the Board of Directors and Technical Planning Committee. Quarterly meetings are usually the standard for other standing committees.

Board of Directors

Technical Planning Committee

Local Coordinating Board for Transit Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Each meeting is open to the public and provides an opportunity for the public to share opinions and concerns with OTO leadership and staff. Occasionally, electronic or email meetings are held. The following table shows how many meetings were held for each committee or board per year.

Meetings Held Annually

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

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

Press Releases Sent

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

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

Press releases sent out for **2014 - 41**

Press releases sent out for **2015 - 57**

Press releases sent out for **2016 - 53**

Press releases sent out for **2017 - 56**

Press releases sent out for **2018 - 54**

Press releases sent out for **2019 - 34**

Press releases sent out for **2020 - 45**

Press releases sent out for **2021 - 23**

Press releases sent out for **2022 - 43**

Media Coverage of OTO

The OTO maintains a log of all media articles and stories where OTO was featured or mentioned. The log provides a record of the types of items that are of interest to the media. Furthermore, as we continue to refine press releases, this log could serve as a guidebook to the effectiveness of our press releases.

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

Website Statistics

The OTO has been tracking activity on our website utilizing Google Analytics to document usage since 2015. Below are the google analytics for ozarkstransportation.org from 2015 to 2022.

Analytics for the OTO website

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

Legal Ads

Legal ads are utilized as documentation of efforts to include the public in the planning process as per the Public Participation Plan. Affidavits of publication are evidence of compliance with public comment periods by way of advertising in print publications widely circulated in the planning area as required by federal regulations.

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

Public Comment Log

OTO maintains a Public Incoming Comment Log. This log documents all email, phone, and personal interactions with the public to the extent possible. Ideally, the log will include the individual's:

- Name
- Date and time of comment
- Phone number and/or email address
- Subject or topic of their comment
- Their comment
- Any reply that was given or how the comment was processed

OTO Logged Comments

Year	Comments Received
2013	70
2014	195
2015	63
2016	22
2017	40
2018	16
2019	20
2020	37
2021	187
2022	255

Action Items for 2023

The following action items were identified to enhance Public Participation in 2023. The updated list is based on progress towards previously designated action items and performance measures. The items are recommendations for moving forward and represent refocused objectives for the coming year. The OTO staff will work towards accomplishing the updated action items in advance of the next Public Participation Plan Evaluation. These items include:

- Expand and enhance the use of virtual tools to broaden the reach of meaningful public engagement efforts by making participation more convenient, affordable, and enjoyable for greater numbers of people.
- Expand the use of social media to promote the OTO and solicit comments using ads and “boosted” content to target segments of the public for their input and prioritize intentional outreach to members of underserved communities.
- Provide information at a reading level that will allow people of varying levels of education to participate. Writing at the eighth grade reading level or lower is generally accepted.
- Utilize the OTO Equity Index to understand the demographics of affected communities within the OTO that have disproportionate numbers of transportation disadvantaged or vulnerable populations with the intent of tailoring outreach efforts to include them in the planning process.

Summary

Several years of performance measures used to evaluate the PPP have been compiled and now include data for the 2022 calendar year. The performance measures produce data for understanding how the public are utilizing tools that the OTO provides for keeping them informed and the methods that the OTO employs to solicit public engagement. A summary of conclusions from the performance measures include:

- In 2022, 255 comments were logged compared to 197 in 2021. Most of the comments were submitted through the “Map It” feature on the OTO Website.
- The OTO Website had the highest number of users and page views in the period from 2015 to 2022 using Google analytics.
- The OTO sent out 43 press releases in 2022, resulting in 23 news articles which represents the most media coverage enjoyed by the OTO since tracking began in 2012.

- The number of followers on the OTO Facebook account has steadily increased. In 2022, the number of users following the Ozarks Transportation Page has increased 35% from 2021. Facebook has proven to be more an effective platform to communicate with the public. The OTO Technical Planning Committee and Board of Director Zoom meetings are broadcast on Facebook live to conform with the Sunshine Law. Several comments have been received during these meetings via social media.

The OTO staff will continue to work toward increasing public awareness of its role in the region and planning activities. The action items, especially maintaining email contacts for interested parties, should be effective in directly providing information and gathering public feedback from them. In addition, the public involvement processes outlined in the update of the PPP and implementation of the updated action items will provide continuity and consistency in public involvement efforts at the OTO.