



Public Participation Plan

October 2022

DUTCHESS COUNTY
TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL

Better ways from here to there

DISCLAIMER

The preparation of this report has been financed in part through grant[s] from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, U.S. Department of Transportation, under the State Planning and Research Program, Section 505 [or Metropolitan Planning Program, Section 104(f)] of Title 23, U.S. Code. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of the U.S. Department of Transportation.

TITLE VI STATEMENT

The Dutchess County Transportation Council (DCTC) is committed to compliance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Restoration Act of 1987, and all related rules and statutes. DCTC assures that no person or group(s) of persons shall, on the grounds of race, color, age, disability, national origin, gender, or income status, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under all programs, services, or activities administered by the DCTC, whether those programs and activities are federally funded or not. It is also the policy of the DCTC to ensure that all of its programs, policies, and other activities do not have disproportionate adverse effects on minority and low income populations. Additionally, the DCTC will provide meaningful access to services for persons with Limited English Proficiency.



85 Civic Center Plaza, Suite 107

Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

(845) 486-3600

dctc@dutchessny.gov

dutchessny.gov/dctc

ADOPTION OF THE DUTCHESS COUNTY TRANSPORTATION COUNCIL (DCTC) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

WHEREAS, the Dutchess County Transportation Council (DCTC) has been designated by the Governor of the State of New York as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible, together with the State, for the comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative transportation planning process for the Dutchess County portions of the Poughkeepsie-Newburgh NY-NJ and New York-Newark NY-NJ-CT Urbanized Areas; and

WHEREAS, the federal surface transportation programs that are the responsibility of the DCTC are authorized by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA or 'Infrastructure Act') (PL 117-58, November 15, 2021); and

WHEREAS, Section 11201 of the Infrastructure Act establishes requirements for metropolitan transportation planning in 23 U.S.C. 134 and 49 U.S.C. 5303; and

WHEREAS, Title 23 U.S.C. Section 134 (Metropolitan Transportation Planning) requires that a Metropolitan Planning Organization develop and use a documented participation plan (i.e., Public Participation Plan) that defines a process for providing the public and interested parties with opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process; and

WHEREAS, said Public Participation Plan shall describe procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for a range of outreach activities such as providing adequate public notice of key work products, providing reasonable access to information, and using visualization techniques to convey information; and,

WHEREAS, the DCTC last updated its Public Participation Plan in 2014, prior to many of the technological advances that have made virtual public engagement an accepted practice; and

WHEREAS, the DCTC has expanded its technical capacity to virtually engage the public, embodied in the public outreach campaign for its new metropolitan transportation plan, Moving Dutchess Forward, done during the height of the COVID pandemic; and

WHEREAS, the lessons learned from Moving Dutchess Forward spurred a reassessment of the DCTC's Public Participation Plan, and led to a policy recommendation that it adjust its outreach process to better engage the public; and

WHEREAS, the DCTC subsequently embarked on a wholesale update of its Public Participation Plan, informed by its own experiences and research on best practices; and

WHEREAS, the DCTC developed the new Public Participation Plan to guide its actions and operations, ensuring public involvement at all stages of the planning process; and

WHEREAS, the new Plan identifies the following goals for public participation:

- **Inform:** Educate the public about county and regional transportation planning processes
- **Consult:** Solicit meaningful feedback from individuals and stakeholders to incorporate into our plans and studies
- **Involve:** Provide ample, diverse, and accessible opportunities for meaningful public involvement throughout the planning process, particularly for traditionally underrepresented focus populations and communities
- **Collaborate with & Empower:** Build consensus among interested parties and stakeholders; and

WHEREAS, the new Plan offers a menu of virtual, in-person, and hybrid tools to achieve these goals; and

WHEREAS, the new Plan also outlines ways to engage with populations that have historically been excluded from the planning process; and

WHEREAS, the DCTC held a 45-day public comment period for the new Plan, as required by federal regulations, starting October 28, 2022 and ending December 12, 2022; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the DCTC approves the attached Public Participation Plan; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Public Participation Plan shall stand separate and independent from the DCTC's bylaws to streamline implementation and enable future revisions.

CERTIFICATE, the undersigned, duly qualified and Secretary of the Dutchess County Transportation Council, certifies that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of a resolution adopted by ballot on December 23, 2022.

12/23/2022

Date

By Lance MacMillan
Lance MacMillan, P.E., Secretary
Dutchess County Transportation Council

What is the DCTC?

The [Dutchess County Transportation Council \(DCTC\)](#) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Dutchess County. MPOs exist in [Urbanized Areas](#) to ensure that federal transportation funding is committed through a locally driven, comprehensive planning process. We provide a forum for state and local officials to address transportation issues and reach consensus on transportation plans and projects within the county.

We produce three core products:

1. Metropolitan Transportation Plan: Our [Transportation Plan](#) serves as the strategic guiding document for improving transportation in the county over the next 25 years. It is updated every five years.
2. Capital Program: The [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#) is our 5-year capital program that assigns federal funds to highway, bridge, walking, bicycling, and transit projects. It is updated at least every four years.
3. Planning Program: The [Unified Planning Work Program \(UPWP\)](#) is our annual work plan which identifies the federally funded planning activities we will undertake. It is updated every year.

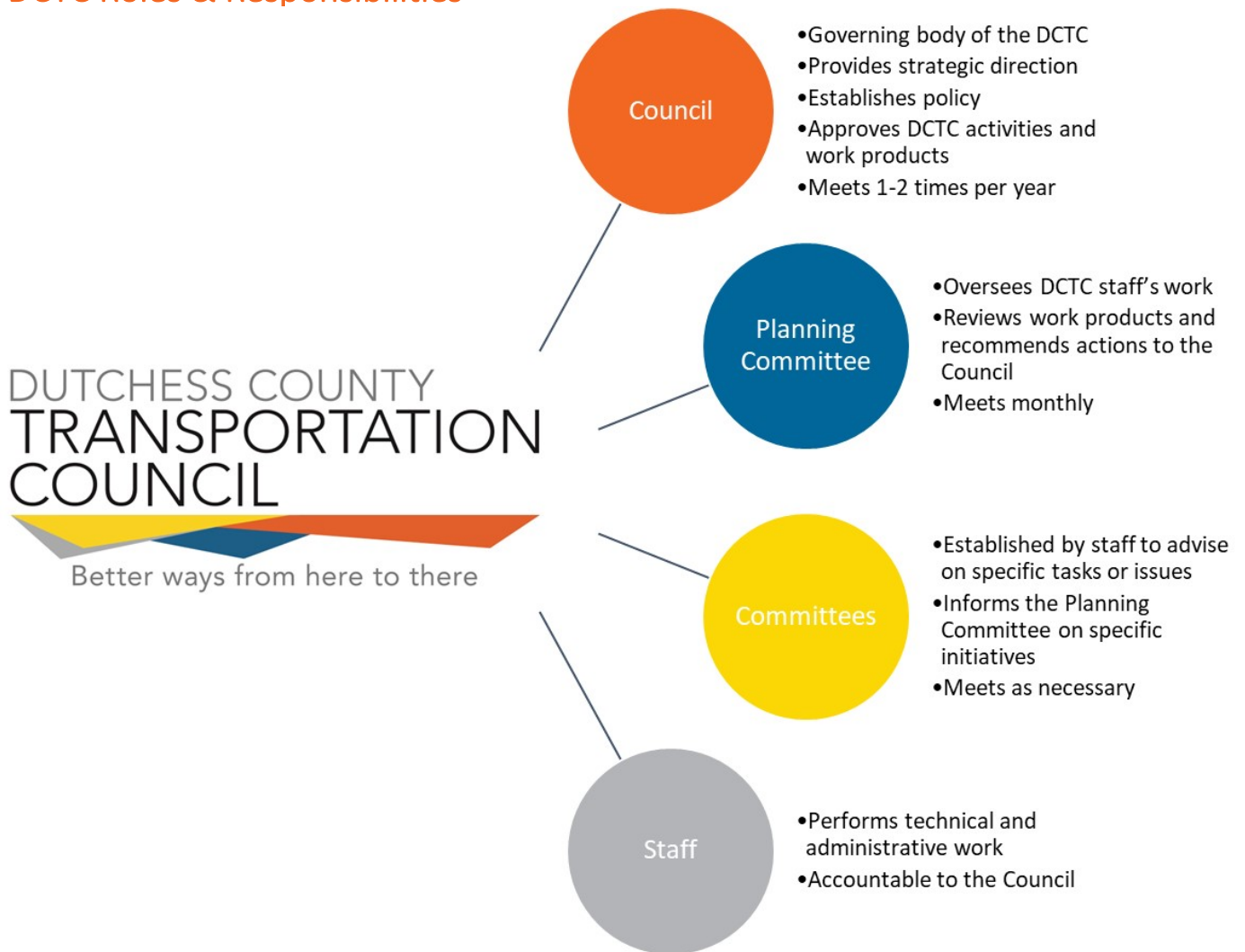
The figure on the next page illustrates our structure. For more information about the DCTC, including our bylaws and members, see our website.

What is a Public Participation Plan?

[Federal regulations](#) require MPOs to develop and maintain a Public Participation Plan (PPP) in collaboration with the public and stakeholders. Effective transportation planning is possible when the public is empowered to participate in the process and influence decisions that affect their lives. The PPP guides our actions and operations, ensuring we encourage public involvement at all stages in the planning process.



DCTC Roles & Responsibilities



Vision & Goals

Vision Statement: DCTC will inform, consult, involve, collaborate with, and empower the public through our planning process.

We have **four goals** for Public Participation:

1. Inform: **Educate the public** about county and regional transportation planning processes.
 - This helps the public understand who we are and what we do, how it affects them, and how to get involved.
2. Consult: **Solicit meaningful feedback** from individuals and stakeholders to incorporate into our plans and studies.
 - Outreach is not an end in itself, but a way to improve our work.

3. Involve: **Provide ample, diverse, and accessible opportunities** for meaningful public involvement throughout the planning process, particularly for traditionally underrepresented focus populations and communities.
 - Offering a variety of opportunities helps different groups participate in our work. This helps us understand perspectives that are often excluded from transportation planning.

4. Collaborate with & Empower: **Build consensus** among interested parties and stakeholders.
 - Our plans should reflect the community’s and key stakeholders’ goals. We often serve as mediators to develop consensus.

Public Participation Toolbox

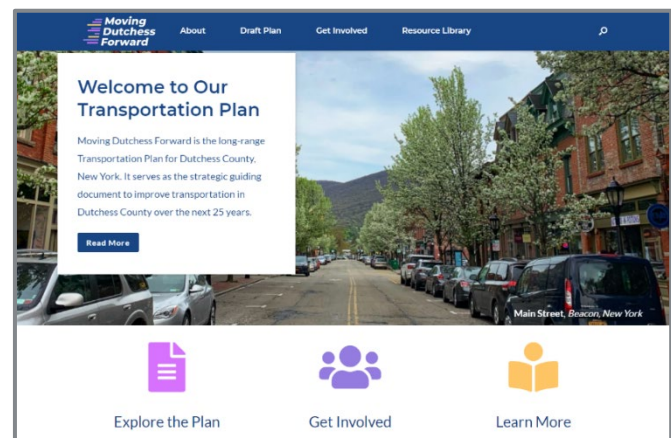
We use a variety of public participation tools depending on the study and our goals for it. These tools may be virtual, in-person, or a combination of the two. The toolbox below provides a brief description of our preferred tools. For large studies, we develop a specific outreach plan, which typically includes many of these tools.

Virtual Tools

Virtual tools allow us to reach more people across the county, in ways that are convenient for them. These tools are used in combination with in-person tools to provide a variety of participation options.

- DCTC Website
 - Our [website](#) is the primary source of information about us for the public. It includes information about meetings, our core products, current studies, publications, data, and funding programs. It is designed with various language and accessibility options and includes a public comment form.

- Study Websites
 - For larger studies, we often develop a separate website to share outreach tools and materials, meeting summaries, and draft products. These websites are linked to our main DCTC website.



- Online Tools
 - Online tools include virtual public meetings, surveys, interactive maps, live polling, and other tools. We provide technical assistance for using these tools. We may also partner with libraries or other partners to provide access to these tools for people without internet access.

- Email Lists
 - We maintain a public information email list, which is used to announce meetings and other updates, and a list for our Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee. We often develop email lists for specific planning studies.

- Social Media
 - We work with the County’s Communications staff to share information on the County’s social media accounts.

- Videos
 - For larger studies, we may ask a consultant to produce a video. Videos can be linked on our website and available on streaming platforms and social media.

OUTREACH FOR CORE PRODUCTS

We use a variety of public participation tools to solicit input on our work:

For our core products and other key actions, this includes a formal public comment and posting draft materials on our website for the public to review. We also provide paper copies upon request.

For our Plan and Capital Program, we hold at least one public meeting (in person or virtual).

For our Capital Program (as well as for some funding programs), we issue a call for projects if funding is available.

For our Planning Program, we issue a call for planning proposals if funds and staff resources are available.

In-Person Tools

In-person tools allow us to talk directly to the public and to understand the local context. They can often result in fewer but more meaningful interactions than virtual tools.

- In-Person Events
 - In-person events include public meetings, open houses, or workshops. As much as possible, we hold these events at an established gathering place (such as a municipal hall, library, senior or community center, or school) in a central location that is accessible by transit if possible and held at a time that is convenient for most people.

- Community Events

- Community events are our preferred option for in-person outreach with communities. Rather than planning a standalone event, we participate in an existing event, such as a community festival or farmers' market. We also offer presentations at regularly scheduled meetings, such as to Town Boards and local organizations.



- Pop-up Events

- Pop-ups are stand-alone outreach events at a local business or other key location, typically in an area where we are working on a study. They often include a tent and table with materials, maps and other visuals, surveys, or other tools to solicit feedback.



- Field Visits/Site Walks

- We use field visits to better understand the conditions and needs of a location such as a village or town center or a transportation facility such as a corridor or intersection. Typically, these include walks with community members and stakeholders where we observe issues, take notes and photos, and discuss potential improvements.



- Traditional Media
 - Traditional media includes direct mailings, printed materials such as flyers, bookmarks, and rack cards, newspaper articles, and radio spots. Direct mailings can be used in a corridor or community study to inform residents about the study. We can distribute printed materials to community organizations and post them on County buses. Local newspapers and radio programs can help us reach focus communities and populations.
- Paper Surveys
 - Paper surveys often supplement digital surveys, to reach people without internet access. We distribute them on County buses or through local organizations, as well as at in-person, pop-up, and community events.

Cross-Cutting Tools

These tools can be implemented virtually or in-person.

- DCTC Committees
 - Our Planning Committee and Policy Board (Council) meetings are open to the public and always include time for public comments. Our Bicycle-Pedestrian Advisory Committee is also open to the public and serves as a venue for discussions about walking and bicycling-related topics.
- Advisory Committees
 - We typically establish an advisory committee (sometimes called a Steering Committee or local Task Force) for larger studies. They include local stakeholders and partners.
- Focus Groups/Stakeholder Interviews
 - Focus groups and stakeholder interviews are useful for input on specific issues. Focus groups entail discussion with a small number of people, often grouped by interest (e.g., local business owners, property owners, institutions, etc.). Stakeholder interviews are discussions with community leaders, organizations, businesses or others, typically one-on-one or in a very small group.

PLANNING COMMITTEE & POLICY BOARD (COUNCIL)

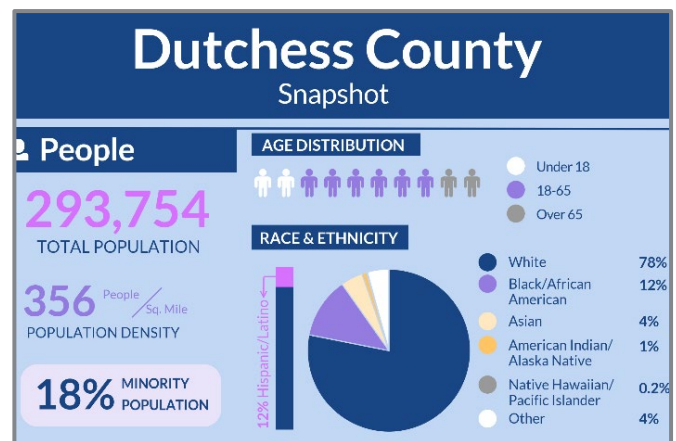
We present core products and other actions that require Council approval to our Planning Committee for input. The Council votes to approve resolutions and other actions. We post meeting materials on our website and email our public information list with a link to the materials about two weeks before each meeting. After each meeting, we post a meeting summary and relevant materials on our website.

- **Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations**
Establishing relationships with community-based organizations and community leaders helps us distribute information and solicit feedback, especially with focus populations and communities.

- **Agency Coordination**
 - We coordinate with a variety of agencies, depending on the study. These include the New York State Department of Transportation (NYSDOT) (for anything related to State roads); the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA)/Metro-North Railroad; County agencies such as Public Works (for anything related to County roads), Public Transit, Office for the Aging, and the Department of Behavioral and Community Health; local municipalities; and Tribal Nations.
 - While Dutchess County does not include any Tribal Land, there are three Tribal Nations with an interest in Dutchess County: the Stockbridge-Munsee Community, the Delaware Nation, and the Delaware Tribe.

- **Work Sessions**
 - Work sessions can be integrated into a meeting or event. They typically entail small groups working with maps to consider alternatives and prioritize options.

- **Visualizations**
 - We strive to incorporate engaging visuals and designs in all our studies, as they make our products easier and more fun to read. Visualizations may include infographics, charts and graphs, photographs and drawings, as well as maps and GIS-based applications.
 - We work with the County’s Office of Central and Information Services to develop and maintain our GIS-based applications, which include the [TIP Viewer](#), [Traffic Data](#), [Bike Dutchess](#), and the [Moving Dutchess Forward map series](#).



- Participation Incentives
 - As needed, we may offer incentives for people to participate in an outreach event or survey. Incentives could include a prize drawing (such as for a gift card), or providing food, children’s activities, or other services at in-person events.
- Translation Services
 - When possible or by request, we may provide translation services at an event. Depending on the study, materials can be prepared in multiple languages. Our DCTC website and study websites also include translation options. Virtual events include closed captioning.
- Public Notices/Comment Periods
 - We use public notices to inform people of a public comment period before a Council vote, often for one of our core products. See the Public Comments sidebar for more information.
- Press Releases
 - We may issue a press release to announce a public comment period, Council meeting, call for projects, outreach event, or to share other information. These are issued to local media through the County’s Communications office.
- Telephone Comment Line
 - For some studies, we may set up a telephone number to solicit comments from people without internet access. These comment lines should include English and Spanish language options.
- Plain Language
 - We strive to use [Plain Language](#) principles in all our written products and outreach materials to make them more easily readable by the public.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIODS

Some of our products have mandated public comment periods. These include:

- **Public Participation Plan:** 45 days
- **Transportation Plan and associated Air Quality Conformity Statement:** 30 days
- **Capital Program, Air Quality Conformity Statement (other than for our Plan), Planning Program, & Amendments to the Plan, Capital Program, and Planning Program, and others:** 15 days

We accept comments via mail, phone, and email. Comments posted on social media are not considered official comments for our public comment periods. We summarize the comments, respond to them, and share the comments and responses with the Council before the voting meeting for that item.

- Style Guide
 - As much as possible, we use our logo and style guide to ensure a consistent look and format for our products. Some large studies may have a separate logo and style guide.

Focus Populations

Our long-range plan, [Moving Dutchess Forward](#), identifies a series of [focus populations](#) that have traditionally been excluded from transportation decision-making and often harmed based on those decisions. It identifies specific equity-related issues and outlines our role in addressing them. The plan's [Transportation Equity Map](#) identifies Census tracts where focus populations are overrepresented compared to the county average. The table below outlines barriers for these and other populations and strategies to involve them in our planning process.

Focus Population	Barriers to Involvement	Outreach Strategies
<p>Minority & Hispanic Populations Individuals that identify as Black or African American, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, Native American, Other, Two or More Races, Hispanic or Latino.</p>	<p>Historically excluded from the planning process</p> <p>Agency staff often do not reflect these communities</p> <p>May not trust government agencies</p>	<p>Develop Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations and others that have established trust with community</p> <p>Hold in-person events at non-governmental institutions (library, local business, community center, public school, church, etc.)</p> <p>Participate in existing Community Events</p> <p>Embed education into outreach tools and materials</p> <p>Incorporate Visualizations in outreach materials</p>
<p>Older Adults Individuals aged 65 years or older.</p>	<p>Often have limited mobility</p> <p>May not understand or feel comfortable using technology</p>	<p>Provide technical assistance for Virtual Tools</p> <p>Hold in-person events at established gathering places, including senior centers</p> <p>Coordinate with the County's Office for the Aging</p> <p>Incorporate Visualizations in outreach materials</p> <p>Consider a telephone comment line</p> <p>Provide a call-in option for virtual meetings</p>

Focus Population	Barriers to Involvement	Outreach Strategies
<p>Low-Income Households Households below the poverty level.</p>	<p>Often have limited time and resources to access and participate in meetings</p> <p>May have unpredictable or non-traditional work hours</p> <p>May have limited internet access</p>	<p>Partner with Community-Based Organizations to provide access to information</p> <p>Participate in existing Community Events</p> <p>Hold Pop-up Events at everyday locations</p> <p>Hold in-person events at convenient hours and provide food, children’s activities, and other assistance to remove barriers to participation</p> <p>Use Online Tools and partner with libraries or other organizations to provide access for those without internet at home</p>
<p>Persons with a Disability Individuals who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments.</p>	<p>Often have trouble accessing meeting sites</p> <p>May not have access to assistive technology</p>	<p>Use Virtual Tools with accessibility options</p> <p>Provide technical assistance to help people use online tools</p> <p>Hold In-Person Events at accessible locations and with reasonable accommodations</p> <p>Partner with Community-Based Organizations and/or Agencies serving persons with disabilities</p>

Focus Population	Barriers to Involvement	Outreach Strategies
<p>Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) Individuals Individuals that speak English less than very well.</p>	<p>Materials are often written with technical language or jargon</p> <p>May have unpredictable or non-traditional work hours</p> <p>May have limited internet access</p>	<p>Partner with Community-Based Organizations and/or Agencies serving LEP individuals</p> <p>Offer translation services at In-Person Events and for Virtual Tools</p> <p>Create multilingual printed materials</p> <p>Share information with multilingual media outlets such as newspapers and radio stations</p> <p>Incorporate Visualizations in outreach materials</p> <p>Use Plain Language in written and outreach materials</p>
<p>Youth Individuals under 18 years old.</p>	<p>Usually excluded from the planning process</p> <p>Often have limited access (on their own) to meetings</p> <p>Materials are often written with technical language or jargon</p>	<p>Partner with Community-Based Organizations and/or Agencies serving youth</p> <p>Participate in existing youth-focused events</p> <p>Use Virtual Tools, including social media and videos</p> <p>Incorporate Visualizations in outreach materials</p> <p>Use Plain Language in written and outreach materials</p>

Focus Population	Barriers to Involvement	Outreach Strategies
Rural Residents	Meeting sites are often far away and/or inconvenient to access May have limited internet access	Use Virtual Tools and partner with libraries or other organizations to provide access for those without internet at home Hold In-Person Events in established gathering places Participate in existing Community Events Partner with Community-Based Organizations to provide access to information Consider a telephone comment line

Evaluation & Updates

We will measure the effectiveness of our outreach efforts on an ongoing basis and regularly consider new outreach techniques. Measures include the following:

- Growth in DCTC email lists
- Email open rates and click rates
- Number of visitors and page views on the DCTC website and GIS apps
- Number of participants at in-person events
- Number of participants in online tools
- Number of comments received on draft products
- Social media interactions (when applicable)
- Number of community events attended by DCTC staff
- Outreach to and/or participation from members of focus populations and communities

For larger studies, we often separately summarize and evaluate the effectiveness of our outreach.

Based on federal guidance, we will evaluate this Public Participation Plan at least every five years.

Appendix: Applicable Federal Legislation

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

The current federal transportation act, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (or BIL), includes language related to public participation, including allowing MPOs to use social media and other web-based tools. This is codified in the Code of Federal Regulations [Section 450.316](#), which describes the required MPO participation plan. Among other items, it requires MPOs to:

- Employ visualization techniques
- Make public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats
- Hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households
- When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

Civil Rights Act of 1964, Title VI

This Act states: “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice

This Executive Order states that “Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.”

Executive Order 13166 – Limited English Proficiency

The goal of this Executive Order is “To improve access to federally conducted and federally assisted programs and activities for persons who, as a result of national origin, are limited in their English proficiency (LEP).”

Americans with Disabilities Act (Title II, Subpart D -- Program Accessibility: §35.149)

This Act states that “no qualified individual with a disability shall, because a public entity's facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by individuals with disabilities, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity.”

Air Quality Conformity Consultation (Title 40, Chapter 1, Part 51, Subpart T, [§93.105](#))

This federal regulation states that “Affected agencies making conformity determinations on transportation plans, programs, and projects shall establish a proactive public involvement process which provides opportunity for public review and comment by, at a minimum, providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information considered by the agency at the beginning of the public comment period and prior to taking formal action on a conformity determination for all transportation plans and TIPs, consistent with these requirements and those of 23 CFR 450.316(a).”

[The Plain Writing Act of 2010 \(Public Law 111–274\)](#)

This Act requires federal agencies to “enhance citizen access to Government information and services by establishing that Government documents issued to the public must be written clearly, and for other purposes.”