

Public Participation Plan

December 2012

Prepared by the

St. Cloud Area Planning Organization (APO)

Funding sources for this study include:

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT)
St. Cloud APO Participating Jurisdictions

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The St. Cloud APO is an advisory body committed to coordinated, fair, and mutually beneficial long-range planning on issues transcending jurisdictional boundaries for the betterment of the entire St. Cloud Area.



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INTRODUCTION

Background

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) hereafter referred to as the PPP, updates the 2007 Public Involvement Plan. The updated PPP reinforces the APO's commitment to public involvement in its planning and program efforts. Utilizing the proper public involvement techniques helps to improve all levels of decision-making by incorporating technical and non-technical input. Public involvement must reflect the specific needs identified by the planning related activity and be developed in the context of a broader understanding of technical and institutional issues, the process itself, and the decisions that need to be made and people who make those decisions.

Involving the community creates a means for exchanging information by identifying issues, outlining potential alternatives, and assessing impacts prior to determining a course of action. Participation is sought from a broad cross-section of the population with the intent to pursue facts behind the impacts, benefits, and costs of various alternatives. It allows for addressing public priorities and concerns, minimizing negative impacts, and improving public agency-to-community relationships.

Purpose

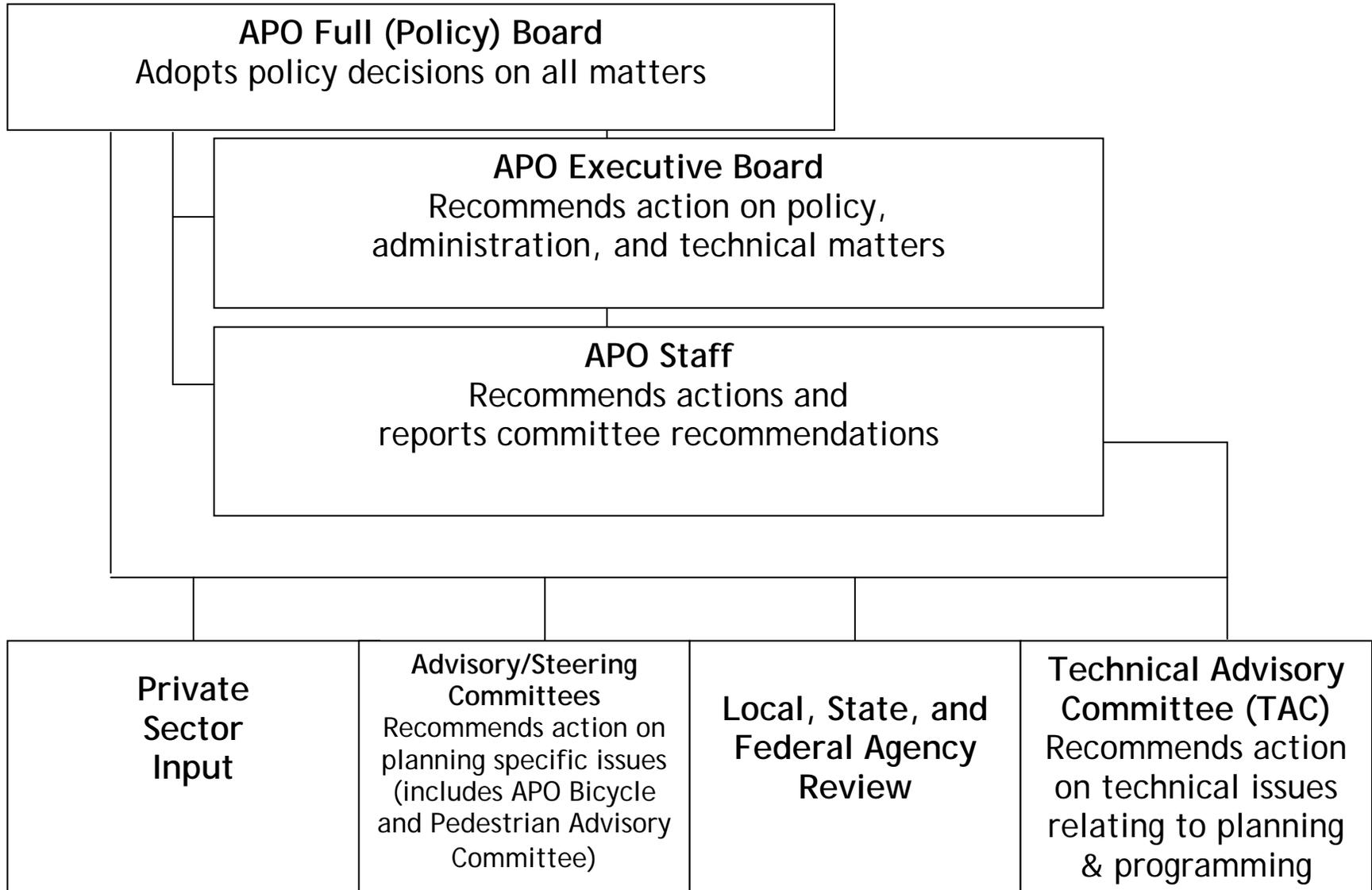
The purpose of the APO's PPP, which outlines the agency goals, strategies, and public involvement procedures and techniques, is to provide public involvement guidance during the APO's many planning processes. Some of the planning processes include the Long-Range Plan (currently the 2035 Plan), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), Transportation Systems Management (TSM) Plan, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and corridor studies. The APO's PPP is also used to satisfy the St. Cloud Metropolitan Transit Commissions Public Participation process for their Program of Projects.

This updated PPP is based on the results of a comprehensive evaluation of previous public involvement efforts. It has been updated for compliance with the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) provisions and was prepared in accordance with Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) statutes and regulations (23 CFR 450.316).

Organizational Structure

As a comprehensive, intergovernmental transportation-planning agency, for the St. Cloud Metropolitan Area, the APO receives local, state, and federal funds to administer programs and develop improvement projects. In addition, the APO is a center for U.S. Census information with broad data gathering capabilities, which includes current population estimates, as well as population and travel forecasts (see Chapter 4: Land Use in the APO 2035 Plan). The APO is divided into two governing boards, (Policy Board and the Executive Board) which provide guidance to staff (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 - St. Cloud APO Organizational Structure



Policy Board

The Full Policy Board is comprised of eleven (11) member jurisdictions, as well as representatives from the Central Minnesota Transportation Alliance and St. Cloud Metro Bus. The Policy Board is responsible for the adoption of policies on all transportation matters, and it consists of forty-three (43) members; thirty-six (36) of which are elected officials from local governing boards (city, county, and township). Non-elected persons representing planning and community interests hold the remaining seven (7) voting membership positions. The APO's planning area is comprised of a total of eighteen (18) jurisdictions, representing 130,225 residents. Figure 2 illustrates the APO Planning and Urbanized Area.

Executive Board

As a subcomponent of the Full Board, the Executive Board is a smaller working committee, responsible for detailed analysis of operational matters. This committee is comprised of thirteen (13) members who currently hold voting membership on the Full Board. Generally, the Executive Board makes recommendations to the Full Board. However; at times the Full Board authorizes the Executive Board to make decisions on its behalf. In addition, Staff works closely with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), the Central Minnesota Transportation Alliance (CMTA), steering committees including the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, and several review agencies to solicit feedback.

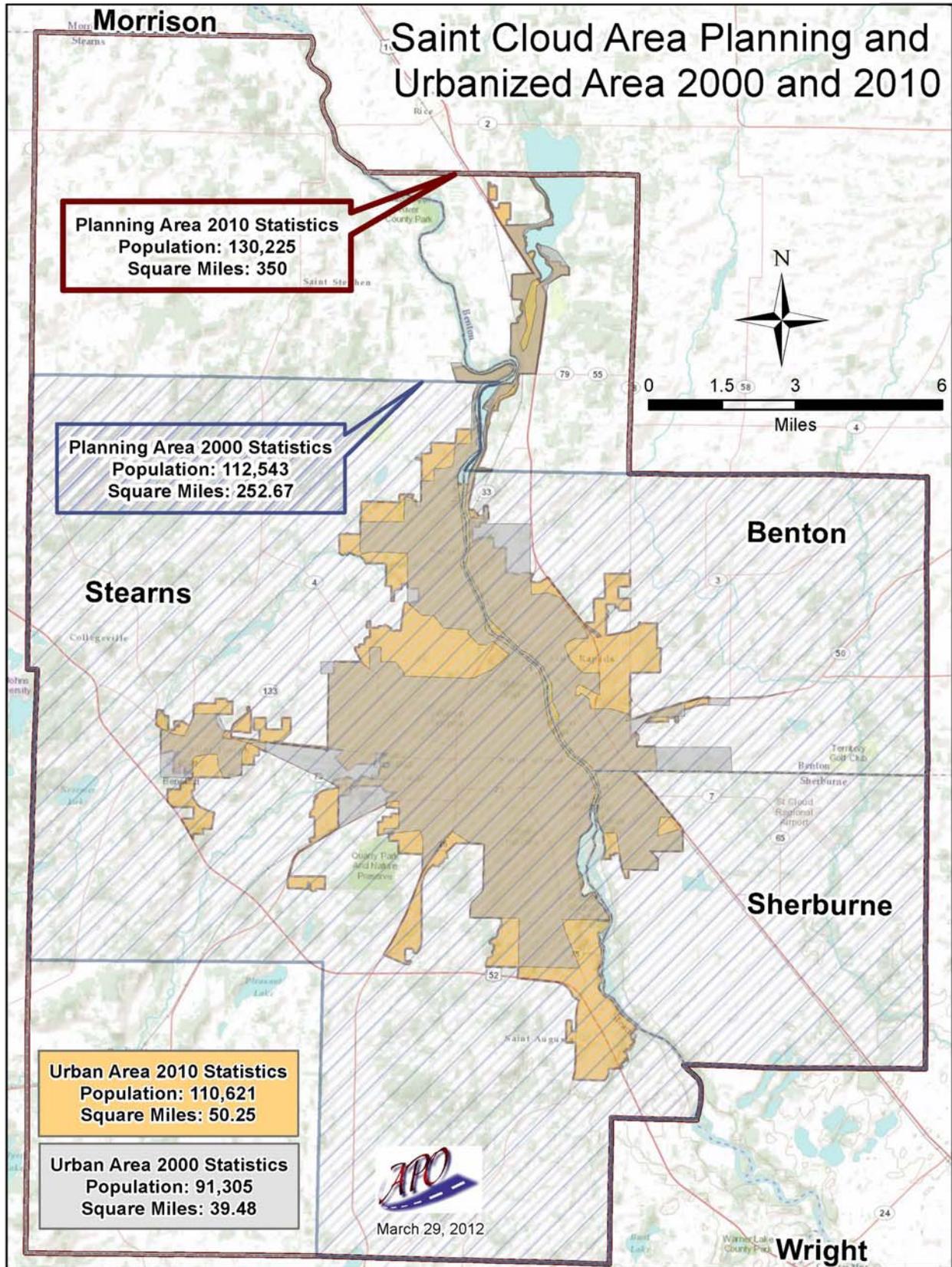
The TAC is primarily comprised of fifteen (15) transportation professionals from local, state, and federal agencies. This committee is charged with making technical recommendations, on all matters relative to the tasks outlined in the organizations work program. TAC recommendations are forwarded to both the Executive and the Policy Boards along with a staff recommendation.

Mission

As an advisory body, the APO is committed to coordinated planning, in a fair and mutually beneficial manner, on select issues transcending jurisdictional boundaries, for the betterment of the entire St. Cloud Metropolitan Area. This mission is accomplished through professional planning initiatives, the provision of objective information, and building collaborative partnerships that foster consensus. The APO strives to be:

- *Public Service Oriented:* Providing accountability to constituents and exhibiting the highest standards of ethical conduct.
- *Creative Problem Solvers:* Anticipating potential challenges and developing creative solutions based on professional knowledge, public involvement, and collaboration with our partners.
- *Continuous Learners:* Constantly seeking new information, knowledge, and skills to better serve the St. Cloud Metro Area.

Figure 2 - St. Cloud APO Planning and Urbanized Area



Goals & Strategies

The APO has created a set of goals and corresponding strategies to aid in the public involvement development and implementation of the PPP and other plan and program activities. Presented below are the goals and strategies associated with APO public involvement activities.

Goal #1: To provide early, continuous, and proactive public involvement for plan, program, and corridor related planning activities.

Strategies

- Develop a specific public involvement process at the beginning of the plan or program process.
- Provide continuous involvement opportunities to attract and include a broad range of representatives and stakeholders.
- Solicit public input throughout the duration of planning activities, not just at meetings, workshops and public hearings.
- Develop proactive public involvement measures and continually evaluate plans and procedures for increased effectiveness.

Public comments are solicited at the start of development process for policies, programs, and planning related studies where community values, goals, objectives, and concerns are identified. Checklists will be developed at the start of each planning activity to document public involvement. This allows staff to document and evaluate the level of participation and make recommendations for improvements, when necessary. The checklist will also be used as a reporting tool when updating the PPP.

The planning process begins by creating a “study design” which outlines the purpose and need in relation to the local transportation system. Clearly defined goals and milestones are identified to assist with data collection efforts. Several public informational meetings are scheduled, correlating with identified milestones, for the purpose of distributing information, soliciting feedback, and incorporating recommendations prior to entering the next phase. When developing strategies for public involvement, the following issues are considered.

- What decisions need to be made?
- Who will make the decisions?
- What issues are being addressed and in what geographical area?
- What constituents may benefit or be impacted?
- What key concerns may exist?
- What needs to be done to help stakeholders understand the decision-making process?
- What techniques have been used to engage the community?
- How well have these techniques worked?
- Which stakeholders have been under-represented thus far?
- Does the community have certain expectations based on past experiences?
- What are the prevailing perceptions of the agencies involved and the process?
- Are there previous decisions or controversies that should be taken into consideration?
- How interested is the media?
- How has the media portrayed the issues thus far?

Goal #2: To identify and solicit all potential stakeholders for public participation.

Strategies

- Identify affected and other interested parties at the beginning of the planning process to be included in plan or project development.
- Identify environmental justice populations and stakeholders (disabled, elderly, low-income, minority) at the beginning of the planning process to be included in plan or project development.
- Identify level of representation and participation of each stakeholder for each planning task.

A stakeholder is identified as any person, business, interest group, or other body that sees itself as being affected by or is interested in a transportation issue or proposed policy. Although the APO may not be aware of every stakeholder until issues are made known, it is important to attempt to identify all “potential” stakeholders in an effort to adequately disseminate information and solicit active participation. Those who attend APO public meetings are acknowledged as stakeholders and, as such, their viewpoints deserve consideration. A more expansive discussion on identifying stakeholders is included in the Public Involvement Implementation & Procedures section under Implementation Techniques.

Advisory or Steering Committee

APO planning studies are guided by a steering committee that meets throughout the duration of the project to review information/data collected and recommend courses of action. Representation generally consists of the following sectors (specific to geographical area being studied):

- Elected Officials
- Planning & Technical Staff
- APO Staff
- Consultant & Staff

It is important to note that several community-based agencies have expressed an interest in transportation issues relative to the St. Cloud Metro Area. Interested parties are added to a list and may be solicited in obtaining further community input in the capacity of a civic advisory committee or a collaborative task force. Additionally, technical staff, civic groups and other interested stakeholders in the community have opportunities to get involved on planning related committees such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee or Public Transit-Human Services Committee. Other meetings addressing specific topics such as safety; security; and roadway traffic are specifically addressed through focus groups during the transportation plan update process.

Goal #3: Make available timely and complete information for public involvement activities and adequate opportunity for public comment at publicly accessible locations.

Strategies

- Provide early notification of information so that all interested parties will have enough time to participate in related public activities.
- Provide materials that are easily understood, available in alternate formats and accessible at different times and places throughout the planning process (See APO Title VI and Non-Discrimination Plan/Limited English Proficiency Plan).
- Provide the federally minimum amount of time for the public to comment for all plans and programs.
- Allow the public to revisit and review plans and program if significant comments are received during previous reviews.
- Develop a communication protocol early in the planning process so that milestones for key tasks are understood in the decision-making process.

The idea behind public participation relies on the premise that increased exposure to information builds awareness and provides the general public with more opportunities to become involved. The first hurdle in public involvement is to efficiently outline and effectively communicate the issue(s) at hand. A host of information such as maps, meeting dates, agendas, approved minutes and more can be found online on the APO's website (www.stcloudapo.org).

Since not all stakeholders have access to the internet, other communication avenues are used to disseminate information. These can include, but are not limited to, local newsletters, local public television access, newspapers, email notifications/updates, Minnesota Public Radio (MPR), and direct mailings. In addition, all planning documents, including technical reports, are maintained on file in the APO office available for public inspection (copies are furnished upon request). The APO recognizes that there are more ways to distribute information and the following list illustrates potential options for dispersing information.

- Develop fact sheets, newsletters, brochures, or issue papers
- Identify libraries, city halls, and other public facilities for displaying information
- Submit a feature story
- Hold a radio interview
- Have the media interview a panel of experts
- Post information on social media websites such as Facebook

In addition, there are many ways to encourage participation and solicit feedback during a public meeting. The following list identifies potential meeting formats:

- *Open House*: Public views information or documents and provides feedback in an informal setting
- *Tour*: On site visit of area in question
- *Public Informational Meeting*: Meeting held to inform the public about an issue or explain a new proposal
- *Civic Advisory Committee*: Group of stakeholders providing public input
- *Task Force*: Group of experts and stakeholders given the task to develop a specific product or policy recommendation
- *Panel or Focus Group*: Groups assembled to debate and provide input on specific issues.
- *Workshop*: An informal meeting that may include presentations and exhibits and ends with interactive working groups (brainstorming session)

Discussing issues with the public can be addressed in a number of ways. Regardless of the format, the APO strives to conduct a forum in which an open exchange of information exists, where ideas are encouraged, and participant input is valued. Public informational meetings typically start with a presentation on the planning process and status of the policy, plan, program, or project being considered. After identifying relevant issues, an exchange of ideas and comments from the public is facilitated. APO encourages input throughout the decision-making process.

FEDERAL GUIDANCE & REQUIREMENTS

Federal Policy

Federal statutes and regulations provide general guidelines for locally developed public involvement processes and procedures. The APO's public involvement policy incorporates FHWA requirements (23 CFR Section 450.316) of the Code of Federal Regulations for the Metropolitan Transportation Planning Process including requirements for publication of the solicitation of public input in decision-making processes. The APO policy incorporates and continues to support:

- Early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans.
- Providing complete information, timely public notice and full access to key decisions through a proactive public involvement process.
- Providing for the involvement of traffic, ridesharing, parking, transportation safety and enforcement agencies, commuter rail operators; airport and port authorities; toll authorities, appropriate private transportation providers and where appropriate city officials; and for the involvement of local, state and federal environmental, resource, and permit agencies as deemed appropriate.

Accommodating the Traditionally Underserved

The PPP includes a process that assures the active participation of all affected transportation agencies, as well as other groups and individuals, with a perceived stake in the provision of transportation facilities and services. Accordingly, the APO has traditionally made a point of being aware of populations that are referred to in federal regulations as the “traditionally underserved,” such as low-income, minority, and representatives of the disabled populations.

Title VI Environmental Justice

The APO continues to strive to be consistent with Title VI Environmental Justice (EJ) of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI assurance executed by each State under 23 U.S.C. 324 and 29 U.S.C. 794, which ensure that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving federal assistance from the U.S. Department of Transportation.

Presidential Executive Order (EO) 12898 further supported Title VI, ensuring justice and fair treatment of minority or low-income populations. The order reads: “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.” Disproportionately high and adverse effects, not total population segment, are the basis for EJ.

In response to Federal standards for public accessibility, the APO annually certifies its compliance with Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, and with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The APO's public involvement process provides assurance that minority and low-income populations are included and their input is considered throughout the plan and program process, in accordance with Title VI EO's (1991 & 1997) for EJ. During planning processes, the APO follows the three federally mandated EJ principles: avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse human health and environmental effects; ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities; and prevent denial/delay/reduction of benefits for minority and low-income populations. Maps on low-income (Figure 3) and minority (Figure 4) populations by census tracts are included for reference. Additional information on “traditionally underserved populations” can be found in Appendix A: Federal & State Planning Considerations of the APO 2035 Plan. The APO Title VI and Non-Discrimination Plan/Limited English Proficiency Plan provides further direction for compliance with these standards.

1990 Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

The APO continues to strive to be consistent with 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act by utilizing meeting facilities that comply with the requirements of ADA. In addition, the APO follows accessibility related conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act and the State Implementation Plan (SIP) for all projects and programs requiring air quality conformity determinations. The APO Title VI and Non-Discrimination Plan/Limited English Proficiency Plan specifically addresses the APO's plan to continue to provide access to public materials, public meetings, and public workshops. Specific public involvement activities related to ADA compliance include an ADA stakeholder list and notifications, ADA compliant meeting facilities, and allowance of ample time for comment, including alternate formats of documents and for feedback.

Figure 3 - Environmental Justice: Minority

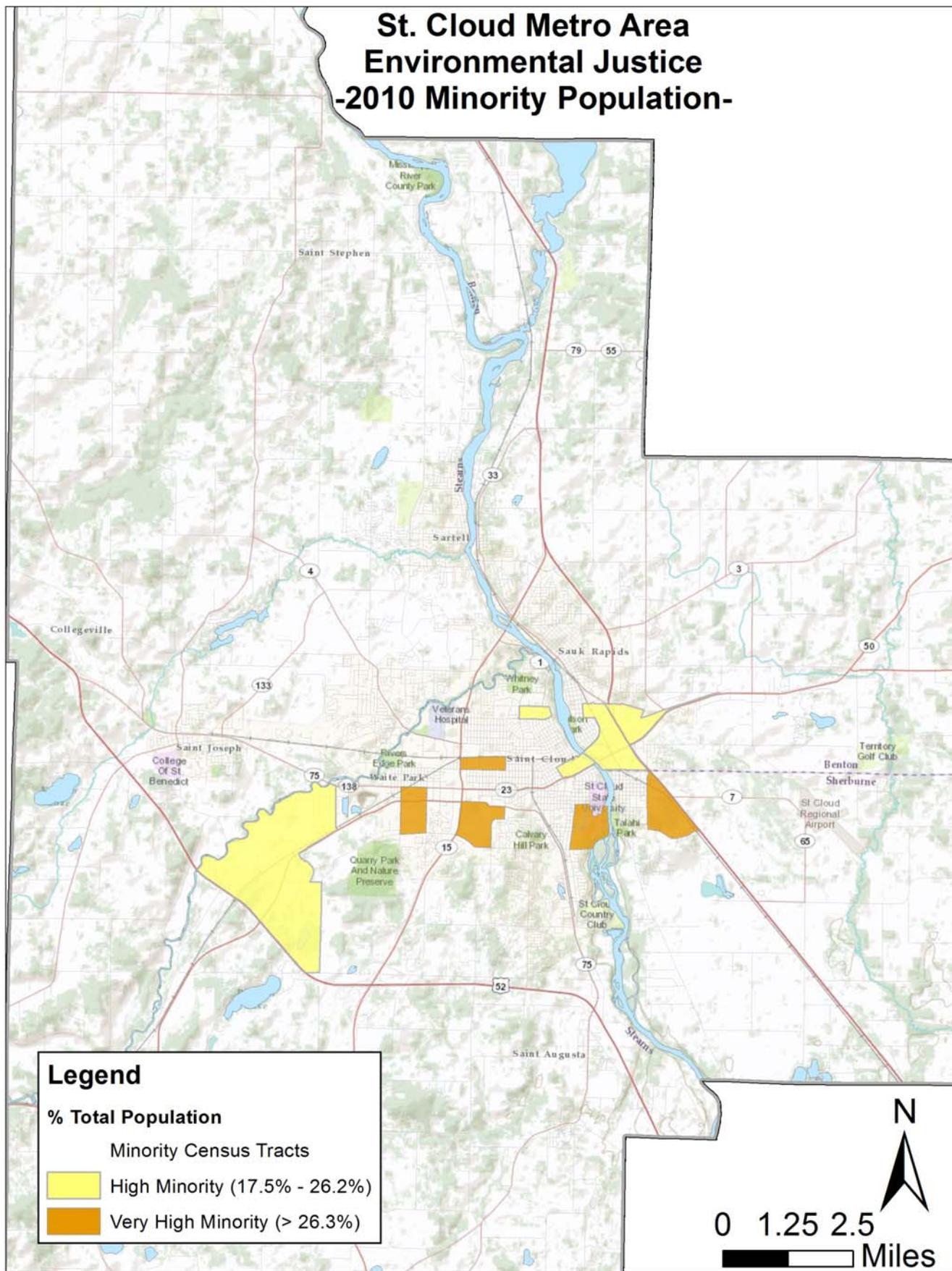
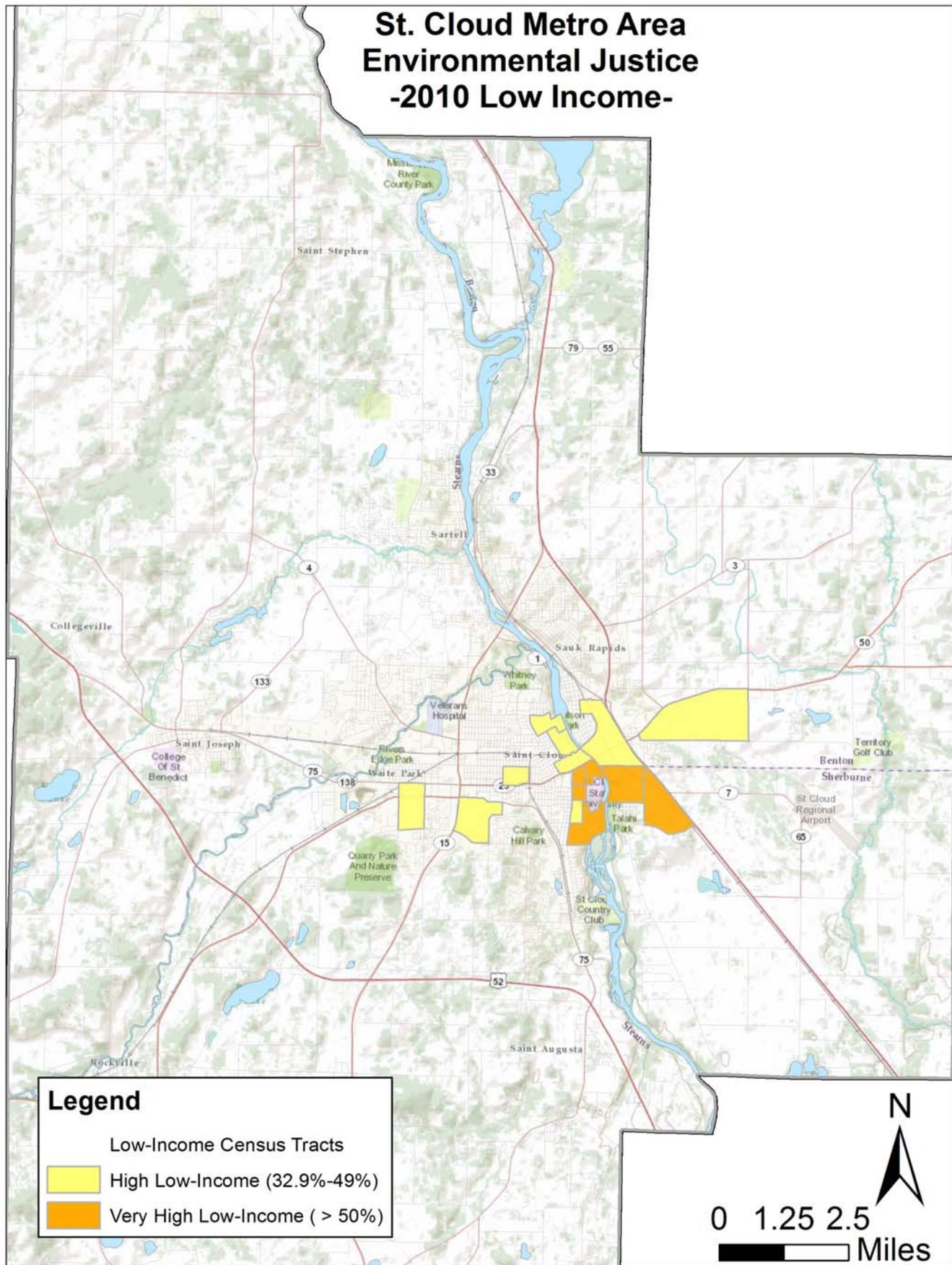


Figure 4 - Environmental Justice: Low Income



As of July 1, 2007, the APO's PPP must be in full compliance with Sections 1107 and 6001 of SAFETEA-LU. Changes from SAFETEA-LU were previously incorporated into this document. The most recent legislation, MAP-21, became effective as of October 1, 2012. The following procedures are outlined in the FHWA statutes and regulations (23 CFR 450.316) and are incorporated in the implementation and procedures section found in this document.

- Allow at least 45 days for public comment before the public involvement process is adopted or revised by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted online, to the maximum extent practicable.
- Provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with a reasonable opportunity to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies and representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs and projects.
- Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered.
- Require adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs. In non-attainment areas, TIP and major amendment(s) classified as serious and above, the comment period shall be at least 30 days.
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes. The APO's public participation plan must be developed in consultation with interested parties and allow reasonable opportunities for all parties to comment.
- Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including but not limited to low-income and minority households.
- Provide a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments as part of the final plan and TIP when significant written and oral comments are received on the draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA's conformity regulations.
- Provide an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP if the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts.
- Periodically review the public involvement process for its effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to everyone. Procedures will be reviewed by the FHWA during mid-year and annual reviews to assure that full and open access is provided.
- Coordinate public involvement processes with statewide public involvement processes to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.
- Include users of pedestrian and bicycle facilities and human service agencies providing transportation services to the physically challenged are to also be included as interested parties/stakeholders.
- Conduct public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times, employ visualization techniques to describe plans, and make public information available in an electronically accessible format, such as on the APO website (www.stcloudapo.org).
- In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the area that are affected by transportation or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In

addition, metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs shall be developed with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area.

- If the area includes Indian Tribal lands, appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government in the development of the transportation plan and the TIP. When the area includes Federal public lands, appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the transportation plan and the TIP.
- To the extent practicable, develop a documented process that outlines roles, responsibilities and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IMPLEMENTATION & PROCEDURES

Implementation Techniques

Through each of the planning activities, the APO strives to include as many stakeholders as possible to ensure every individual an opportunity to ask questions or submit comments. To ensure this equal opportunity, the APO has put together a list of stakeholders for public involvement outreach. Included in the list are agencies, organizations, and providers for traditionally underserved populations such as disabled, elderly, low-income and minority. The list does not depict all stakeholders, rather a diverse cross section of the population.

Stakeholders include local, state, and federal agencies and jurisdictions, local businesses and associations, and representatives and users of bicycle and pedestrian facilities, the freight industry, land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation. The APO will continue to evaluate its public involvement process and techniques to make sure stakeholders that might be under-represented have a chance to participate. Below is a sample list of stakeholders (not an exclusive list) to involve in the public participation process for public policy, Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, and corridor and planning related study decisions. The APO will work to expand this list as necessary for specific policies, plans, or projects.

- APO TAC, Executive, and Policy Board (representing local jurisdictions)
- Businesses and Facilities Servicing Elderly (Senior Centers, Assisted Living and Nursing Homes), Disabled, Low-Income, or Minority Groups
 - Central Minnesota Council on Aging
 - Good Shepherd Senior Living
 - St. Benedicts Senior Living
 - Whitney Senior Center
 - Man Power
 - Red Cross
 - Salvation Army
 - Catholic Charities
 - Lutheran Social Service, Senior Companion Program
 - Heartland Home Health Care & Hospice
 - SPOT Rehabilitation & Home Health Care
 - Cummings Care Center
 - Generations Senior Homes
 - Health North, Inc.
 - Independence Center
- General Public, Associations, and Interested Persons or Groups
 - Representatives of the Freight Industry (rail and truck)
 - Users of Bicycle & Pedestrian Facilities (Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee)
 - Neighborhood Associations (of member cities)
 - Lions

- Kiwanis
- Rotary
- Jaycees
- Women of Today
- Local, State, and Federal Agencies
 - Local government agencies (see Elected and Non-Elected Officials category below)
 - Corp. of Engineers
 - Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
 - Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
 - Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (Mn/DNR)
 - Minnesota Department of Transportation (Mn/DOT)
 - Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA)
 - State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO – Minnesota Historical Society)
 - Soils Districts
 - United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)
- Media
 - Charter Local Cable
 - Radio Stations (KCLD, KSJR, WVAL, KKJM, KNSI, and WJON)
 - St. Cloud Times
- Other Elected and Non-Elected Government and Public Officials in the APO Planning Area
 - Mayors
 - City Councils
 - County Commissioners
 - City and County Engineers and Planners
 - Human Service Representatives
 - Planning Commissions
 - Historic Preservation Commissions
 - School Boards and School District Transportation Departments
 - Township Boards
 - Other City Citizen Committees (St. Cloud Transportation and Infrastructure Committee)
- Public and Private Transit and Transportation Providers
 - Metro Bus
 - RiverRider
 - Tri-CAP
 - Wacosa
 - Above All Coach Travel
 - Broadway Limosine, Inc.
 - CARE Transportation, Inc.
 - Country Care-a-Van
 - Jefferson Bus Lines
 - Greyhound Bus Lines
 - Kozy Transport Services, Inc.
 - Pearl Limosine
 - Rockville Bus Service
 - Spanier Bus Service
 - St. Cloud Charter Service
 - Trobec's Bus Service
 - Voigt's Motorcoach

- Private Business Owners or Representatives
 - List updated from local Chamber of Commerce members

To reach out to stakeholders, the APO utilizes many public involvement tools to ensure that all interested parties have an opportunity to learn about public involvement opportunities for APO plans and programs. Below is a list of outreach activities and techniques that the APO utilizes to reach stakeholders.

- Cable Television Public Access Channel
- Email
- Newspaper Articles & Public (Legal) Notices
- Postal Mailings
- Presentations to Civic Groups & Organizations
- Public Meetings & Workshops
- Radio Advertisements & Press Releases
- Surveys (online and hard copies)
- Website Notices & Postings (APO & Local Jurisdictions)
- Social Media (Facebook account)

Visualization techniques play a key factor in getting the information out to stakeholders and presenting the information at public forums, meetings or workshops. On many APO projects, Microsoft PowerPoint presentations are presented, allowing stakeholders to view information in a visual format. At open houses or public workshops, presentations can be set-up with pre-recorded background vocals for continuous cycling to allow attendees to hear presentations at their leisure. Along with PowerPoint presentations, free standing boards with maps or diagrams are placed on elevated easels to present at public forums, meetings, or workshops. Informative handouts and comment cards are also provided at public workshops, open houses, or meetings.

Public Involvement Procedures

The APO distributes education and information resources to residents and elected officials on the role transportation plays within a community. To increase awareness, APO staff occasionally generate transportation legislative email updates, submit letters to the editor of the St. Cloud Times regarding current trends in the transportation industry, and develop educational leaflets for insertion into utility bills or newsletters produced by local jurisdictions. The APO recently updated the website, www.stcloudapo.org, to provide accessible educational resources, information updates, and agency documents. The website also offers an area for comment submittals from the public. In coordination with civic groups and various organizations, brief presentation can be given at an organization's regular meeting pertaining to the transportation planning process, current trends, and governmental issues. In addition, Staff work with the St. Cloud Times to identify potential transportation related articles or stories to help build regional awareness of on-going transportation policy issues or one-time transportation projects.

The APO pursues meaningful and continued public participation in the three categories of transportation planning listed below in order to determine the region's transportation vision and future goals.

- Implementing Policy (i.e. Public Involvement Policy).
- Developing Plans and Programs (i.e. Long-Range Transportation Plan & TIP).
- Conducting Transportation Planning Studies (i.e. Corridor & Planning Studies).

Furthermore, to comply with Federal Policy 23 CFR Section 450.316 and MAP-21 requirements, the APO has developed a set of public involvement procedures for each of the following planning categories: public policy pertaining to the PPP and other work activities (i.e. UPWP, TSM, etc.), the Long-Range Transportation Plan (TP) and subsequent amendments, the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and

subsequent amendments, and corridor and planning related studies. Specific procedures have been developed and are presented below.

Implementing Policy

The Board is responsible for coordinating decisions such as adopting transportation plans and policies, including the public involvement policies. To provide for a wide range of community, technical, and policy perspectives, the APO continues to build effective transportation partnerships. The APO benefits from a continued flow of information from local, federal, and state implementers, civic groups, steering committee members, and the APO representatives themselves.

Public Participation Plan (PPP) Procedures (for major procedure changes)

- Identify, review, incorporate, and coordinate environmental issues and concerns from other local, state and federal agency Plans to develop a specific public participation program that takes into account and addresses (possible) environmental mitigation activities and incorporates the level of participation needed for planning related activities.
- Identify stakeholders from public jurisdictions, stakeholder groups, and the general public.
- Consult with Indian Tribal governments and Federal land management agencies, to the extent practicable, on documented PPP processes.
- Solicit input on all aspects of the PPP from local jurisdictions via email, postal mail (formal or informal letter), verbal (in-person or telephone) and meetings.
- Provide adequate and timely public notices for review and comment opportunities.
- Schedule and inform stakeholders of public workshop via APO and other governmental websites, a published public meeting (workshop) notice, email, and other media sources (local cable television and radio channels).
- Facilitate a public workshop at convenient and accessible locations and times to gather comments from all interested stakeholders including metropolitan and non-metropolitan local, state and federal agencies and all interested public stakeholders.
- Incorporate received information and comments into the Draft PPP, and present first to the APO TAC and full Policy Board for approval.
- Upon approval, release PPP for a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the draft is revised, finalized and adopted.
- Post draft PPP on APO website, and at local jurisdiction public building including city halls and libraries (hard copy).
- Hold public meeting at convenient and accessible locations and times during 45 day review period to review draft PPP, and accept and respond to questions or comments. If there are significant changes, distribute the draft PPP again to stakeholders for review.
- At the end of the 45 day review period, present to APO TAC for approval and then to the Policy Board at a formal public hearing for approval of final PPP.
- Distribute copy of final PPP to local, state and federal jurisdictions, post on APO website and make available at APO office for total stakeholder access.

Developing Plans and Programs

The APO develops a 5-year TIP and 20-year TP. The goals and objectives listed in the 2030 Plan provide a framework for project development and for transportation improvements identified in the TIP. As part of the TIP solicitation process, a memorandum is sent by staff to assist local jurisdictions in identifying projects that may be controversial or require extensive public involvement in order to prevent project delays. Agencies are provided with a project evaluation worksheet, which considers eight categories. The eight areas of evaluation include: accessibility & mobility, system connectivity, multimodal, system condition, safety, economic vitality, equity, and project deliverability. Projects are ranked high, medium, or

low in each category, and an overall project ranking is determined based on these factors. This evaluation sheet is in addition to standard funding application materials.

The media is made aware during document development of issues under discussion. Paid notices in area newspapers announcing upcoming meetings are posted online (www.stcloudapo.org under “Meeting Info”), on the APO Facebook account, and occasionally supplemented by televising information on the public access channel (Channel 19). In addition, each document is publicized to inform community members of the transportation planning process, issues currently under consideration, and opportunities for public involvement. Specific procedures for planning and programming documents are presented below.

Transportation Plan (TP) Procedures

- Identify, review, incorporate, and coordinate environmental issues and concerns from other local, state and federal agency Plans to develop a Transportation Plan and public involvement program that takes into account and addresses (possible) environmental issues and concerns and specifies environmental mitigation activities.
- Incorporate the level of participation needed and the number of meetings into the public involvement program, specific to the Plan.
- Identify stakeholders from public jurisdictions, stakeholder groups, and the general public and, if needed, coordinate an advisory committee with representatives from the above mentioned stakeholders.
- Facilitate inter-agency consultation with local, state, and federal agencies at both the metropolitan and non-metropolitan geographies.
- Consult with Indian Tribal governments and Federal land management agencies, to the extent practicable, on documented Transportation Plan procedures.
- Solicit input on all aspects of the Plan from local jurisdictions via email, postal mail (formal or informal letter), verbal (in-person or telephone), and meetings.
- Provide adequate and timely public notices for review and comment opportunities.
- Review and incorporate information from other local, state, and federal agency Plans.
- Schedule and inform stakeholders of public workshops via APO and other governmental websites, a published public meeting notice, email, and other media sources (local cable television, radio, or social media).
- Facilitate a public workshop and meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times to gather comments from all interested stakeholders including metropolitan and non-metropolitan local, state, and federal agencies and all interested public stakeholders.
- Incorporate received information and comments into the Draft Plan and present to the APO TAC and full Policy Board for approval.
- Upon approval, release the Plan for a minimum public comment period of 30 days before the draft is revised, finalized, and adopted.
- Post the draft Plan on APO website and at local jurisdiction public buildings including city halls and libraries (hard copy).
- Hold a public meeting at a convenient and accessible location and time during the 30 day review period to review the draft Plan and accept and respond to questions or comments. If there are significant changes, then distribute the draft Plan again to stakeholders for review.
- At the end of the 30 day review period, present to APO TAC for approval and then to the Policy Board at a formal public hearing for approval of final Plan.
- Distribute a copy of final Plan to local, state, and federal jurisdictions, post on APO website and make available at APO office.

TP Amendment Procedures

Significant TP amendments, as defined by MnDOT guidance, will follow the same procedures as stated above. TP amendments not significant in nature are brought to the APO TAC and Board for approval.

Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Procedures

- Identify, review, incorporate, and coordinate environmental issues and concerns from other local, state and federal agency Plans to develop a specific public participation program for the TIP that takes into account and addresses (possible) environmental mitigation activities and incorporates the level of participation needed.
- Identify stakeholders from public jurisdictions, stakeholder groups, and the general public.
- Incorporate the level of participation needed and the number of meetings into the public involvement program, specific to the TIP.
- Solicit input from all local jurisdictions via email, postal mail (formal or informal letter), verbal (in-person or telephone), and meetings on projects and federal funding needs.
- Provide adequate and timely public notices for review and comment opportunities.
- Consult with Indian Tribal governments and Federal land management agencies, to the extent practicable, on documented TIP procedures.
- Bring list of projects to APO TAC for discussion and prioritization.
- Facilitate TIP solicitation process.
- Put together several alternatives, based on solicitation process, and bring to APO TAC for discussion and selection of funding alternative.
- Schedule and inform stakeholders of public workshops via APO and other governmental websites, a published public meeting notice, email, and other media sources (local cable television, radio, or social media).
- Facilitate a public workshop and meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times to gather comments from all interested stakeholders including metropolitan and non-metropolitan local, state, and federal agencies and all interested public stakeholders. Collect and record information and comments through written or verbal communication on the TIP at workshop and public meetings.
- Update the TIP after the public workshop.
- Incorporate received information and comments into the Draft TIP and present to the APO TAC and full Policy Board for approval.
- Upon approval, release TIP for a minimum public comment period of 30 days before the draft is revised, finalized, and adopted.
- Post draft TIP on APO website and at local jurisdiction public buildings including city halls and libraries (hard copy).
- Hold a public meeting at a convenient and accessible location and time during the 30 day review period to review the draft TIP and accept and respond to questions or comments. If there are significant changes, then distribute the draft TIP again to stakeholders for review.
- At the end of the 30 day review period, present to APO TAC for approval and then to the Policy Board at a formal public hearing for approval of final TIP.
- Distribute copy of final TIP to local, state, and federal jurisdictions, post on the APO website and make available at the APO office.

TIP Amendment Procedures

Significant TIP amendments, as defined by MnDOT guidance, will follow the same procedures as stated above. TIP amendments not significant in nature are handled through an administrative process and brought to the APO Board for approval.

Conducting Corridor & Planning Related Studies

Participation in corridor and planning related studies, including NEPA, provides the most grassroots form of public involvement. It allows residents to look closely at a particular geographical area within the APO's transportation network. Deciding to invest in a major infrastructure improvement is often a big undertaking, comprised of varying perspectives, concerns, costs, and potential impacts. The facilities that carry cars, trucks, buses, and trains are generally not perceived to be ideal neighbors, yet they are vital components of a healthy region. Decisions frequently reflect the dilemmas and tradeoffs between maintaining mobility and safety for people and goods, while minimizing costs and impacts (particularly on residential areas). Public policies have been established to promote cost-effective and environmentally sensitive improvements; however, social, physical, institutional, and financial factors must be weighed in each situation.

The intent of public involvement is to create a better end product by (1) facilitating a dialogue with a broad cross-section of citizens in the planning process, (2) organizing and recording information and other input for consideration and use by staff, planning partners, and the Board(s), and (3) informing citizens about the impact their input has on the development of regional policies. Accordingly, the APO strives to provide opportunities for citizens to help shape the region's future through an early, open, and active engagement process so decision-makers understand and incorporate civic insights.

The APO looks for opportunities for all segments of the public to learn and become informed about issues and proposals under consideration in the planning process. The APO recognizes that integrating and coordinating citizen involvement activities with state and local government entities increases efficiency and broadens outreach efforts. Summary data on APO planning issues are made available to area residents via the APO website and through occasional informational emails or mailings. Various studies, publications, or other documentation pertinent to transportation analysis may be acquired on the APO's website or at the APO office located at 1040 County Road 4 in St. Cloud.

The following section outlines the APO's procedures for public involvement in corridor and planning related studies. Public involvement is most significant and visible when conducting transportation planning and corridor studies with direct impacts on local residents or businesses. Specific procedures for Corridor and Planning Related Studies have been developed and are presented below.

Corridor & Planning Related Studies Procedures

- Identify, review, incorporate, and coordinate environmental issues and concerns from other local, state, and federal agency Plans to develop a specific public participation program for corridor and/or planning related studies that takes into account and addresses (possible) environmental mitigation activities and incorporates the level of participation needed for each project.
- Incorporate the level of participation needed and the number of meetings into the public involvement program, specific to each project.
- Identify stakeholders from public jurisdictions, stakeholder groups, and the general public.
- Facilitate inter-agency consultation with local, state, and federal agencies at both the metropolitan and non-metropolitan geographies.
- Consult with Indian Tribal governments and Federal land management agencies, to the extent practicable, on Corridor & Planning Related Studies.
- Review and incorporate information and comments from other local, state, and federal agency Plans.
- Form an advisory committee and coordinate meetings for input.
- Solicit input on all aspects of the project or study from local jurisdictions via email, postal mail (formal or informal letter), verbal (in-person or telephone), and meetings.
- Provide adequate and timely public notices for review and comment opportunities.

- Schedule and inform stakeholders of public workshops or meetings via APO and other governmental websites, a published public meeting notice, email, and other media sources (local cable television, radio channels, or social media).
- Facilitate a public workshop and meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times to gather comments from all interested stakeholders including metropolitan and non-metropolitan local, state, and federal agencies and all interested public stakeholders. Collect and record information and comments through written or verbal communication on the project or study.
- Incorporate received information and comments on project into draft document and present first to the APO TAC and then APO Policy Board for approval.
- Upon approval, release the draft document for a minimum public comment period of 30 days before the document or study is revised, finalized, and adopted.
- Post the draft document or study on APO website and at appropriate local jurisdiction public buildings including city halls and libraries (hard copy).
- Hold a public meeting at a convenient and accessible location and time during the 30 day review period to review the draft document or study and accept and respond to questions or comments. If there are significant changes, then distribute the document or study again to stakeholders for review.
- At the end of the 30 day review period, present to APO TAC for approval and then to the Policy Board at a formal public hearing for approval of the final document or study.
- Distribute copies of the final document or study to local, state, and federal jurisdictions, as appropriate, post on the APO website and make available at the APO office.

CONCLUSION

The APO recognizes its obligation under MAP-21 to foster community participation in plan and program development and to fulfill metropolitan needs for multimodal planning. To ensure adequate public participation opportunities in the transportation planning process, the APO has incorporated the following federal requirements and provisions into policy implementation including the PPP, plans and programs, and corridor and planning related studies.

23 CFR 450.316 & MAP-21 Provisions for Public Involvement

- The APO provides a minimum 45 day public comment period before the public involvement process for the PPP, Transportation Plan, and TIP are initially adopted or significantly revised.
- The APO provides timely information about transportation issues and processes to all interested stakeholders and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects.
- The APO provides reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans, TIPs, and corridor and planning related studies at open public meetings. Plans, TIPs, and studies are provided electronically on the APO's website.
- The APO requires adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment before approval of policies, plans, TIPs, and major amendments.
- The APO gives consideration and responds to all public input received during the planning and program development processes. Significant comments are summarized, analyzed, and included as part of the final plan or TIP document.
- The APO strives to consider the needs of those traditionally underserved including disabled, elderly, low-income, and minority persons.
- The APO strives to consider the needs and involve all stakeholders including, but not limited to, representatives of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, human service agencies providing transportation services to the disabled, citizens (the general public), affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, transportation services for freight, transportation providers, and representatives of users of public transportation.

- The APO requires that all public meetings or workshops be conducted at accessible and convenient locations and times. The APO engages public meeting and workshop participants using visualization techniques and informational handouts.
- The APO periodically reviews the public involvement processes for effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all stakeholders.
- The APO coordinates the public involvement processes with statewide public involvement processes to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

The APO maintains a commitment of sharing information and seeking public involvement prior to making decisions. Accordingly, all staff and participants are encouraged to make recommendations for improving the APO public involvement process and the PPP.