

# Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments

## Public Participation Plan

Updated XXX, 2022



## Disclaimer

The preparation of this document was funded in part by the United States Department of Transportation with funding administered through the North Dakota and Minnesota Departments of Transportation, the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration. Additional funding was provided through local contributions from the governments of Fargo, West Fargo, Horace, and Cass County in North Dakota; and Moorhead Dilworth, and Clay County in Minnesota. The United States government and the states of North Dakota and Minnesota assume no liability for the contents or use thereof.

This document does not constitute a standard, specification or regulation. The United States Government, the states of North Dakota and Minnesota, and the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments do not endorse products or manufacturers. Trade or manufacturers' names may appear therein only because they are considered essential to the objective of this document.

The contents of this document reflect the views of the authors, who are responsible for the facts and accuracy of the data presented herein. The contents do not necessarily reflect the policies of the state and federal departments of transportation.

## Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Introduction.....  | 4  |
| About the MPO.....   | 4  |
| Regulations and Requirements .....                         | 8  |
| Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 .....             | 8  |
| Stakeholders and Public Groups.....                        | 10 |
| Outreach Strategies .....                                  | 11 |
| Public Participation Procedures.....                       | 15 |
| Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) .....               | 15 |
| Amending the Metropolitan Transportation Plan.....         | 16 |
| Transit Development Plan (TDP) .....                       | 17 |
| Amending the Transit Development Plan .....                | 18 |
| Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.....              | 18 |
| Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) .....             | 19 |
| Amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program ..... | 20 |
| Public Participation Plan (PPP) .....                      | 21 |
| Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) .....                 | 22 |
| Other Corridor Studies and Sub-Area Plans .....            | 23 |
| Public Input.....  | 25 |
| Coordination and Consultation .....                        | 26 |
| Evaluation.....  | 26 |
| Contact Information .....                                  | 27 |

## Introduction

The Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) provides a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) transportation planning process for the metropolitan area. As part of a successful 3-C transportation planning process, the MPO solicits public review and comment on the work, projects, and products proposed and created by the MPO.

Metro COG's Public Participation Plan (PPP) intends to promote this effort by defining a process that provides citizens, stakeholder groups, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process.

Metro COG developed this PPP in consultation with the public and other interested parties. Social media, email blasts, and MPO committee meetings were used to direct the public and interested parties to Metro COG's website where they could provide feedback on the draft PPP. This document includes Metro COG's policies and procedures for carrying out public engagement, scheduling and notifying the public of public meetings and input opportunities, and both documenting and addressing public input in the planning process.

## About the MPO

The Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments (Metro COG) is both the designated Council of Governments (COG) and Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the greater Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Area.

The Federal Surface Transportation Assistance Act of 1973 requires the formation of an MPO for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. The Act also requires, as a condition for federal transportation financial assistance, that transportation projects be based upon a continuous, comprehensive, and cooperative (3-C) planning process for the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). MPOs help facilitate implementing agencies (including municipal engineering and planning departments, county highway and planning departments, and state departments of transportation) prioritize their transportation investments in a coordinated way consistent with regional needs, as outlined in a long-range metropolitan transportation plan.

Beginning in 2023, it is expected that Metro COG will also be designated as a Transportation Management Area, as established in 23 CFR 450.104, because the population of the UZA exceeded 200,000 in the 2020 Census.

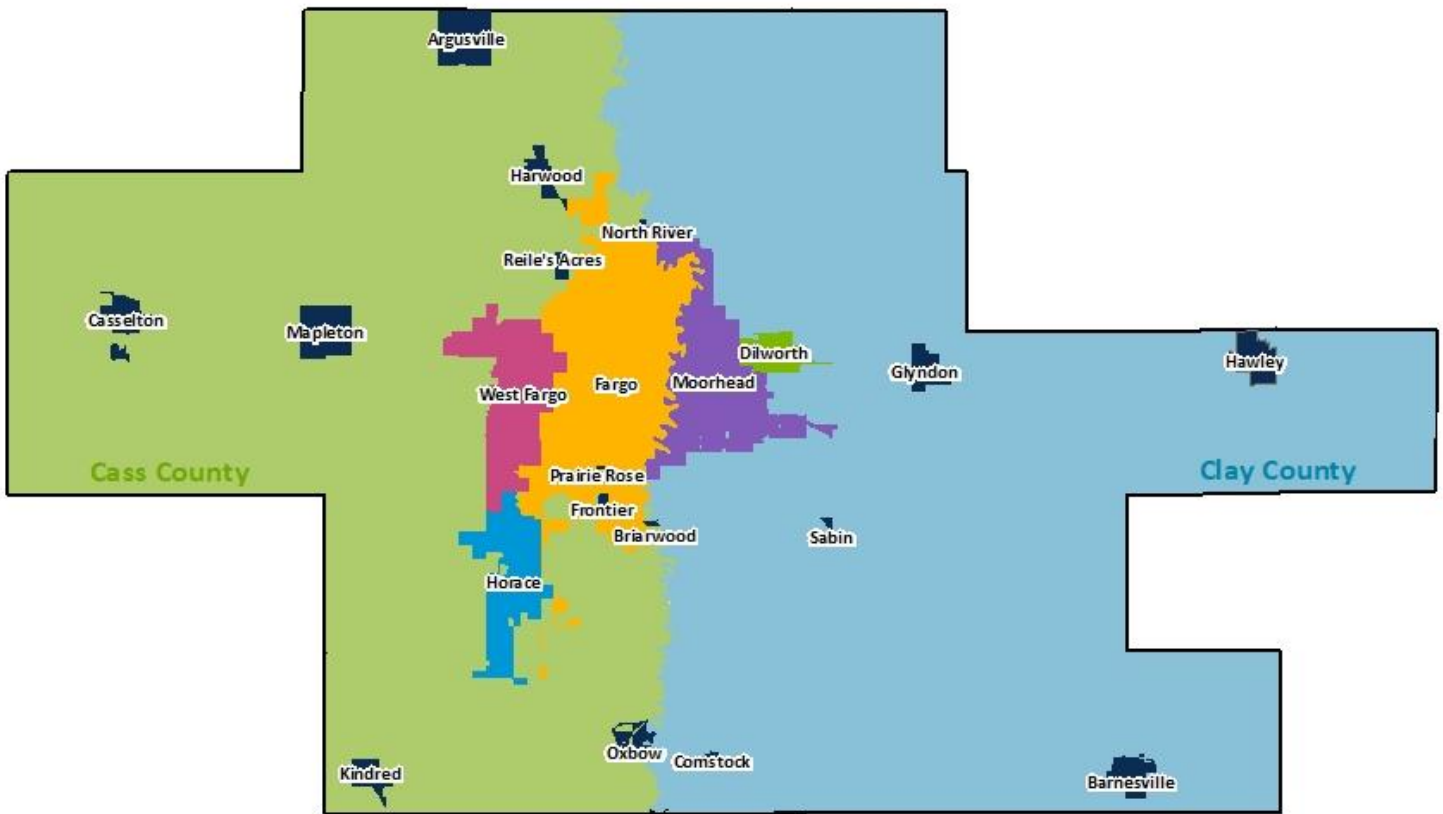
The core of an MPO is the official Adjusted Urban Area Boundary (known as the UZA), which is initially identified and defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as part of the Decennial Census update. The UZA boundary is used to determine the type of transportation funding programs potential projects may be eligible to receive.

In addition to the UZA, the MPO boundary includes any contiguous areas, which may become urbanized within a twenty-year forecast period. Collectively, this area is known as the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). Metro COG's MPA boundary was most recently expanded in 2013 and is currently comprised of approximately 1,073 square miles (687,000 acres), across two states, two counties, 14 cities, and 30 townships. The MPA boundary is effectively Metro COG's "study area" or area of influence respective to the metropolitan transportation planning

program. These areas are significant not only as potential future population centers, but also due to their proximity to existing and future transportation assets of regional significance.

**Map 1** provides an overview of these boundaries for the Fargo-Moorhead area, specifically depicting:

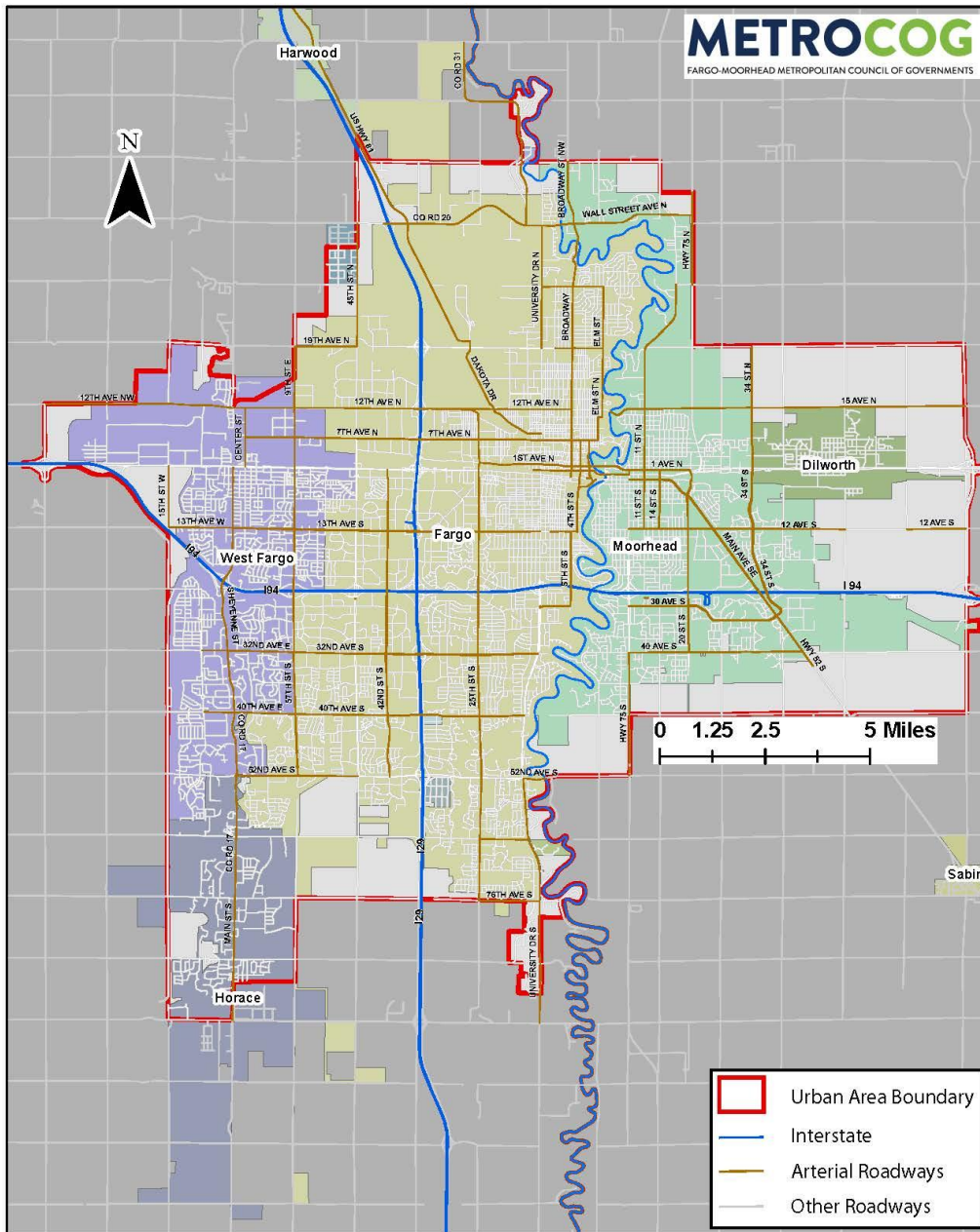
- a) The Metropolitan Planning Area Boundary;
- b) The Adjusted Urbanized Area boundary; and
- c) Cities within the MPA.



**Map 1. Metropolitan Planning Area**

Map 2 is an enlarged map of the Urbanized Area.

## Urbanized Area Boundary



### Map 2. Urbanized Area Boundary

Members of the MPO include the following seven jurisdictions:

Cass County, ND  
 Fargo, ND  
 Horace, ND  
 West Fargo, ND

Clay County, MN  
 Dilworth, MN  
 Moorhead, MN

MATBUS is involved as transportation providers of the Cities of Fargo and Moorhead, with contractual arrangements for providing transit services to West Fargo, ND and Dilworth, MN.

Through collaboration with the North Dakota Department of Transportation (NDDOT), the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Federal Transit Administration (FTA), and several other agencies, the members of the MPO work together to provide a safe and efficient surface transportation system for the metropolitan area.

As the MPO, Metro COG provides a regional forum to facilitate and ensure coordination between the public and local, state, and federal agencies in regard to transportation plans and programs, and other relevant planning issues that are addressed by the agency. Long and short-range multi-modal transportation plans are developed by the MPO, and as a TMA, Metro COG will also be responsible for selecting and approving projects for federal funding based on upon priorities established in adopted plans. As a TMA, Metro COG is also responsible for having a process by which traffic congestion can be managed.

Metro COG consists of three committees that make recommendations and decisions that are critical to the region's transportation system:

- Transportation Technical Committee (TTC) – The TTC makes technical recommendations to the Metro COG Policy Board. Membership of the TTC includes City and County engineers of member jurisdictions, City and County Planners of member jurisdictions, transit administration in both the City of Fargo and the City of Moorhead, and representatives of NDDOT, MnDOT, higher education, freight, economic development, and the Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, which is a subcommittee of the TTC. The TTC is chaired by the Metro COG Executive Director, who is also a voting member of the TTC.
- Executive Committee – This committee is made up of seven elected officials – one from each of the member jurisdictions. The Policy Board Chair and Vice Chair have the same roles on the Executive Committee. This committee is typically the first line of review for items such as annual budgets, UPWPs and UPWP amendments, personnel decisions, agency policies, and organizational matters.
- Policy Board – The Policy Board acts on the recommendations of the MPO Executive Committee and the TTC. Policy Board members are primarily local elected officials and other officials appointed by the local jurisdictions. In 2022, both NDDOT and MnDOT have an ex officio role on the MPO Policy Board. These members are expected to change from ex officio to regular voting members once the TMA designation is complete. At that time, the MPO Policy Board will also include a representative of public transit operators and a representative of Hector International Airport. Ex officio members will continue to consist of representatives of the associate member jurisdictions located throughout the MPA.

A full-time professional planning staff makes recommendations to the TTC and supports these three committees in addition to a number of Study Review Committees and other working groups. Metro COG staff coordinates and prepares for committee meetings, informs the committees of projects and programs, and develops the final MPO work products and reports.

## Regulations and Requirements

### **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964**

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and natural origin in programs and activities that receive federal financial assistance. As President John F. Kennedy said in 1963, "Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races [colors, and national origins] contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes, or results in racial [color or national origin] discrimination." According to the US Department of Justice:

If a recipient of federal assistance is found to have discriminated and voluntary compliance cannot be achieved, the federal agency providing the assistance should either initiate fund termination proceedings or refer the matter to the Department of Justice for appropriate legal action. Aggrieved individuals may file administrative complaints with the federal agency that provides funds to a recipient, or the individuals may file suit for appropriate relief in federal court. Title VI itself prohibits intentional discrimination. However most funding agencies have regulations implementing Title VI that prohibit recipient practices that have the effect of discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

To assist federal agencies that provide financial assistance, the wide variety of recipients that receive such assistance, and the actual and potential beneficiaries of programs receiving federal assistance, the US Department of Justice has published a Title VI Legal Manual. The Title VI Legal Manual sets out Title VI legal principles and standards. Additionally, the Department has published an Investigation Procedures Manual to give practical advice on how to investigate Title VI complaints. Also available on the Federal Coordination and Compliance Website are a host of other materials that may be helpful to those interested in ensuring effective enforcement of Title VI.

### *Executive Order #12898*

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. EPA has this goal for all communities and persons across this Nation. It will be achieved when everyone enjoys the same degree of protection from environmental and health hazards and equal access to the decision-making process to have a healthy environment in which to live, learn, and work."

In February 1994, President Bill Clinton signed Executive Order #12898 – Executive Order on Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations. The order is intended to focus federal attention on the "environmental and human health conditions in minority communities and low-income communities with the goal of achieving environmental justice. That order is intended to promote nondiscrimination in federal programs substantially affecting human health and the environment, and to provide minority communities and low-income communities with access to public information on, and an opportunity for public participation in, matters relating to human health or the environment."



## *Open Meetings Law*

Open meeting provisions are found in both the North Dakota Constitution and the North Dakota Century Code:

Unless otherwise provided by law, all meetings of public or governmental bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions or agencies of the state or any political subdivision of the state, or organizations or agencies supported in whole or in part by public funds, or expending public funds, shall be open to the public.

Minnesota also has an open meeting law which is codified in Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13D. The Minnesota Supreme Court has articulated three purposes of the open meeting law:

- To prohibit actions being taken at a secret meeting where it is impossible for the interested public to become fully informed about a public board's decisions or to detect improper influences
- To assure the public's right to be informed
- To afford the public an opportunity to present its views to the public body

Minnesota's law applies to state and local multimember governmental bodies, including committees and subcommittees and nonprofits created by political subdivisions.

## *Public Records Law*

Open record provisions are found in both the North Dakota Constitution and the North Dakota Century Code:

Unless otherwise provided by law, all records of public or governmental bodies, boards, bureaus, commissions, or agencies of the state or any political subdivision of the state, or organizations or agencies are supported in whole or in part by public funds, or expending public funds, shall be public records, open and accessible for inspection during reasonable office hours.

The Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13, is a series of laws meant to guarantee that the public has access to public records of government bodies at all levels. This includes all data collected, created, received, maintained, or disseminated by any government entity regardless of its physical form storage media or conditions of use.

## *Nondiscrimination Obligations*

Metro COG's Title VI and Non-Discrimination Plan documents the agency's commitment to:

- Ensure that the level and quality of transportation facilities and services are planned for and provided in a nondiscriminatory manner;
- Promote full and fair participation in transportation decision-making without regard to race, color, or national origin;
- Ensure meaningful access to transportation planning-related programs and activities by persons with limited English proficiency.

## Accommodations

Metro COG schedules public input meetings and regular meetings at accessible locations. When meetings pertain to a specific project, efforts are made to hold meetings at locations which are both accessible and in convenient proximity to study areas. News releases and public notices state that meeting facilities will be accessible to mobility-impaired individuals and that Metro COG will accommodate requests for translation services for meeting proceedings and related materials. More details on accommodations for persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency (LEP) is available on Metro COG's website at <https://fmmetrocog.org/resources/title-vi-plan>.

## Complaint Procedures

Persons wishing to file a formal discrimination complaint may do so by completing the Title VI Complaint Form available on Metro COG's website:

<http://fmmetrocog.org/titlevi>

Complaint forms are also available both at the front desk and near the entrance to Metro COG's offices at 1 - 2nd Street N, Suite 232, Fargo, ND.

## Record Keeping

Metro COG's Title VI Coordinator maintains a log of all complaints and the manner in which those complaints were addressed. At the time of this publication, the MPO has no discrimination complaints on file.

## Stakeholders and Public Groups

Metro COG's stakeholders include all who live, work, learn, play, and conduct business in the Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area as stakeholders. This includes both existing and future generations of metropolitan area citizens. The organization strives to study and plan for the wide range of interests, needs, and desires through the variety of studies and programs undertaken.

Several organizations and groups, both formal and informal, have been identified which either have a particular interest in transportation planning project and public involvement opportunities. These groups are included in email distribution groups that Metro COG uses to distribute information about projects and opportunities for public information, input and engagement. The entire email distribution list or portions of it can be contacted for special stakeholder input opportunities.

- Neighborhood organizations
- Fargo Moorhead West Fargo Chamber of Commerce
- Moorhead Business Association
- Freight entities, logistics organizations, and railroad companies
- Transit providers, both public and private
- Advocacy groups for people with disabilities, low income, or minority groups
- Transportation providers for groups that lack access to private vehicles
- The media, including television, radio, print, and electronic means
- Governmental agencies
- Schools and universities
- Environmental organizations

- Social action groups and those representing diversity
- Public health
- First responders and emergency services
- Large employers
- Organizations and individuals interested in providing public input on transportation projects

Metro COG provides a website page (<http://fmmetrocog.org/contact-us>) where individuals or organizations may subscribe to email lists for Policy Board, Transportation Technical Committee, Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board, Cass Clay Food Commission, Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, GIS Committee, Metro Connection (Newsletter) and Requests for Proposals and Consultant Information.

In addition to the Policy Board and Transportation Technical Committee, Metro COG currently supports the following committees which meet on a regular basis:

- Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
- GIS Committee
- Cass Clay Food Commission
- Metro Area Transit Coordinating Board

Agendas and informational packets are emailed to a large distribution group made up of individuals and groups who have subscribed to these email distribution lists.

## Outreach Strategies

Metro COG uses several techniques to reach the citizens of the Fargo-Moorhead region and the metropolitan planning area and the stakeholder groups identified earlier in this document. A general outline of engagement strategies is used by the organization, particularly for projects that occur annually or every few years, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, which occurs on a five-year cycle, or the Transportation Improvement Program, which is updated annually. The basic strategies may be added to or modified to enhance engagement or reach larger numbers of people in specific groups, either geographically, such as neighborhoods or corridors, or socially, such as people with disabilities, minorities (i.e. BIPOC - black, indigenous and people of color), or low income households.

Even before the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, public agencies such as Metro COG were beginning to increase the use of digital methods of communicating with the public, either through social media or web-based methods of information and input opportunities, such as surveys or interactive maps. However, since the spring of 2020, those efforts have significantly increased along with virtual meetings. In some cases, on-line meetings attract more participants than in-person meetings typically attracted in the past. It is Metro COG's intent to move forward with a combination of web-based and in-person input opportunities to maximize the convenience of learning about projects and providing input. Different stages of projects may warrant different approaches to virtual or in-person meetings.

### *Public Meetings and Events*

The MPO Policy Board and TTC meet on a monthly basis. All of their meetings are open to the public, per the open meeting laws of the State of North Dakota. Meetings are a hybrid of in-

person and virtual, with the information about connecting to the meeting virtually provided on Metro COG's website, on the agenda, and in the email distribution of the packet.

Other committees as listed above meet less frequently, but their meetings are also open to the public either virtually or in person. All meeting schedules, agendas, minutes, and informational materials are posted on Metro COG's website. Yearly meeting dates, times, and locations of the Policy Board meetings are published annually in The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead.

**Figure 1 – Summary of Metro COG Boards and Committees**

| <b>Group Name</b>                           | <b>Membership</b>   | <b>Responsibilities</b>  | <b>Meeting Frequency</b>  | <b>Distribution of Materials</b>      | <b>Information on Website</b> | <b>Past Meeting Minutes</b> |
|---|---|--|---|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Policy Board                                | Appointed representatives from local units of government  | Administrative leadership with authority on budget, policy, planning activities and project prioritization | Monthly on 3 <sup>rd</sup> Thursday at 4:00 PM <sup>1</sup>                               | Board and Email Subscription List     | Full agenda packet            | Available on website        |
| Transportation Technical Committee (TTC)    | Technical staff from local units of government and cognizant agencies, and representatives of higher education, economic development, bike & ped committee, and freight | Advise Policy Board on planning and policy activities and project prioritization                           | Monthly on 2 <sup>nd</sup> Thursday at 10:00 AM <sup>2</sup>                              | Committee and Email Subscription List | Full agenda packet            | Available on website        |
| Metropolitan Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee | Technical staff, park districts, higher education, non-profit organizations, law enforcement, transit, health agencies, and citizen member                              | Advise the TTC and Policy Board on bicycle and pedestrian plans, issues, and project priorities            | Quarterly and as needed for specific planning studies or annual prioritization activities | Committee and Email Subscription List | Full agenda packet            | Available on website        |
| GIS Committee                               | Technical staff from local units of government  | GIS data needs, sharing and standardization  | As needed   | Members only                          | Full agenda packet            | Available upon request      |

Metro COG typically distributes committee materials six days in advance of the scheduled meeting (typically the Friday prior to the scheduled meeting). All meeting minutes are posted to the website once approved. All of the above meetings, with the exception of the MAT Coordinating Board, are typically held at Metro COG's Conference Room at 1 - 2nd Street N,

<sup>1</sup> On rare occasions, regular meeting dates are changed due to holidays. Changes are documented in the meeting materials and at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org).

<sup>2</sup> On rare occasions, regular meeting dates are changed due to holidays. Changes are documented in the meeting materials and at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org).

Suite 232, Fargo, ND. The MAT Coordinating Board typically meets at Fargo City Hall in the City Commission Room at 225 4th St N, Fargo, ND.

Each year, Metro COG has a different slate of projects in its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The agency schedules public input meetings for the majority of those projects – typically more than one opportunity is provided over the course of the project, and larger projects often have three or more opportunities for input, and a variety of input methods at each phase of engagement. All input received is reviewed, synthesized, documented and shared with project decision-makers. At the beginning of every Policy Board and Transportation Technical Committee meeting, the MPO provides a public comment period where the public can address public officials.

The MPO seeks to engage all ages and all socioeconomic groups. In doing so, a variety of meeting locations and events are sought out as opportunities to reach out to a broad range of stakeholders. Project-related meetings and open houses are a public input component of most projects, and some projects also include pop-up meetings, where Metro COG has a booth or informational display at another public event, such as a community festival or street fair, that draws a large amount of attendance.

#### *Publications*

Press releases are issued throughout the year on many of Metro COG's planning projects and required transportation planning activities. Typically, these press releases are aimed at informing the public of scheduled input opportunities. Media releases go to media outlets throughout the region.

To subscribe to the MPO distribution list, contact MPO staff at 701-532-5100, or sign up at the following website: <https://fmmetrocog.org/contact-us>.

Metro COG also publishes legal notices or box ads in The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead, which is Metro COG's newspaper of record. For projects specific to Moorhead and Dilworth, notices are published in The FM Extra. Legal notices for projects in Clay County are currently published in the Clay County Union.

#### *Online Presence*

Metro COG's website at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org) provides information about upcoming meetings, committee members, staff contact information, maps, information about current projects, information about past projects, and other materials completed by the MPO or its consultants. Many relevant links are also provided on the website.

Social media sites including Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn are also used to increase the extent to which Metro COG's information is available to the public. Metro COG posts project information and shares posts made by our local partners, NDDOT and MnDOT.

As mentioned above, Metro COG uses web-based formats for public engagement. Zoom is most frequently used, and on occasion, Microsoft Teams or WebEx are used as the preferred format of our local partners or consultants. In some cases, both virtual public meetings and in-person meetings, are shared via Facebook Live.

Metro COG provides notifications and announcements, both online and in various publications, of upcoming public-input meetings for the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation

Improvement Program, and the Public Participation Plan. Input opportunities are announced through press releases, legal notices, publications, email subscriptions and online postings (website and social media). The announcements include timeframes during which public input opportunities are available. Time frames for notifications and the number of notices vary depending upon the type of project or plan. Metro COG also posts meeting agendas and minutes at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org).

The public is also notified of amendments to adopted plans and programs, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Program using the same methods as described above.

#### *Availability of Information*

To provide reasonable access to information about transportation and processes, Metro COG posts publications, meeting notices, and other information online at [www.fmmetrocog.org](http://www.fmmetrocog.org). Most publications are posted in PDF format, which uses the free, downloadable Adobe Reader software. The agency will provide hard copies of any document upon request. Additionally, Metro COG staff is available to make presentations on relevant topics to local organizations, and to meet with citizens and other interested parties. Occasionally, videos are used to provide information related to regionally significant planning initiatives. The MPO posts copies of all presentations to the Policy Board on the website, as well as copies of presentations from guest speakers. To request a hard copy of a document or to schedule a presentation, call 701-532-5100 or email [metrocof@fmmetrocog.org](mailto:metrocof@fmmetrocog.org).

#### *Public Review and Comment*

Metro COG provides a public review and comment period of no less than 15 days during which public comments can be submitted. Public notice is posted no less than seven (7) days prior to the public input opportunity (in-person or virtual meeting). One exception to this timeframe applies to the Public Participation Plan. This document requires a minimum 45-day public comment period. Specific public review and comment periods and approaches to public participation for each type of Metro COG's plans and programs are described in greater detail in the tables on pages 15-24. Links are provided to on-line postings of draft documents. However, paper copies of draft and final studies and reports are also available at Metro COG's office, and when applicable, at the offices of the local jurisdiction(s) involved in the study.

#### *Public Meeting Locations, Dates and Times*

Metro COG strives to schedule and conduct public meetings on dates that are most convenient for the public to attend, at times of the day that accommodate most peoples' schedules, and at locations that are convenient, safe, and accessible. Alternative arrangements to talk with interested members of the public are made when they are unable to attend a public meeting due to schedule conflicts.

# Public Participation Procedures

| Planning Document or Activity                 | Public Participation Procedures  |
|---|--|
| <b>Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)</b> | <p><b>About the MTP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The official multi-modal transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon that the MPO develops, adopts and updates through the metropolitan transportation planning process, including a fiscally constrained list of projects.</li> <li>• Development of the MTP includes an analysis of local trends, synthesis of recently completed corridor studies and sub-area plans, review of local transportation needs, and available funding, and is overseen by a Study Review Committee of stakeholders.</li> <li>• Reviewed by Study Review Committee, MPO committees, the public, North Dakota Department of Transportation, Minnesota Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration.</li> <li>• Updated every five years.</li> <li>• Depending on the scope of work for the MTP, public input opportunities may go above and beyond the minimum requirements established here.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Participation and Adoption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPO Policy Board adopts the Final MTP after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board</li> <li>◦ Reviewed and approved by local member jurisdictions through adoption of resolution which are asked to approve resolutions of adoption</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Public input meetings (in-person and/or online opportunities) held during MTP development.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Legal notice or box ad published in The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead at least seven calendar days prior to the meeting with information about the duration of the public comment period</li> <li>◦ 30 calendar day public comment and review period required starting on the date of publication of the notice</li> <li>◦ Public meetings or input opportunities published on Metro COG website calendar and project web page and posted on social media</li> <li>◦ Press release distributed to media outlets at least seven calendar days prior to the meeting</li> <li>◦ Email distribution to subscribers with information about meeting at least seven calendar days prior to the meeting</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All other public input opportunities during planning process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution</li> <li>• At least one public input meeting must be held for completed draft MTP.</li> </ul> |

|   |   |
|---|---|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Additional public input meeting and 15-day comment period required if substantial changes are made to the draft MTP after the initial input meeting.</li> <li>• Public notice is posted no less than seven (7) days prior to the public input opportunity (in-person or virtual meeting).</li> <li>• Draft and final plan available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, with final product available after adoption.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Amending the Metropolitan Transportation Plan</b></p> | <p><b>Administrative Modifications:</b><br/> Administrative modifications are tantamount to technical corrections that do not require a coordinated review by the MPO, FHWA and FTA or a determination of conformity by these entities. Administrative modifications shall be inclusive, but not limited to the following: descriptive material, forecasts, data bases, project costs (provided fiscal constraint is maintained) project descriptions, time frames, etc. No public notifications are required for administrative amendments. Administrative modifications may require coordination with the respective State DOT. Administrative modifications are approved by the Policy Board at the recommendation of the TTC. Public notice is not required.</p> <p><b>Amendments:</b><br/> The addition or deletion of any project or group of projects constitutes an amendment. An amendment to the MTP is subject to the requirements of the public participation process outlined above for the initial review and adoption of the MTP. The public notice requirements as outlined there should be followed for amendments to the MTP, using a 15-day public comment period. Following the public input process, amendments are approved by the Policy Board at the recommendation of the TTC.</p> |



| Planning Document or Activity         | Public Participation Procedures   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>Transit Development Plan (TDP)</b> | <p><b>About the TDP:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short and mid-term plan for the active management of transit services for the region.</li> <li>• Developed with oversight and input from the MAT Coordinating Board</li> <li>• Updated every five years</li> <li>• Referenced and reinforced by MTP</li> <li>• Depending on the scope of work for the TDP, public input opportunities may go above and beyond the minimum requirements established here.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Participation and Adoption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPO Policy Board adopts the Final TDP after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments</li> <li>• Reviewed by MAT Coordinating Board, which makes recommendations to relevant local jurisdictions and Policy Board</li> <li>• Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board</li> <li>• Reviewed by local member jurisdictions which are asked to approve resolutions of adoption</li> <li>• Public input meetings (in-person and/or online opportunities) held during TDP development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Legal notice or box ad published in <i>The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead</i> (Metro COG's newspaper of record) at least seven days prior to the meeting with information about the duration of the public comment period.</li> <li>○ 30 calendar day public comment and review period required starting on the date of publication of the notice.</li> <li>○ Public meetings or input opportunities published on Metro COG website calendar, project web page, and MATBUS website (<a href="http://www.matbus.com">www.matbus.com</a>), and posted on social media.</li> <li>○ Press release distributed to media outlets at least seven days prior to the meeting.</li> <li>○ Email distribution to subscribers with information about meeting at least seven days prior to the meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All other public input opportunities during planning process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution.</li> <li>• At least one public input meeting (in-person and/or online opportunity) must be held for review of completed draft TDP.</li> <li>• Additional public input meeting and 15-day comment period required if substantial changes are made to the draft TDP after the initial input meeting with the same public notice requirements as stated above.</li> <li>• Draft and final plan available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, with final product available after adoption.</li> </ul> |

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Amending the Transit Development Plan</b> | Amendments to the TDP require public notice, public comment period, review and recommendation by the MAT Coordinating Board and TTC, and adoption by the MPO Policy Board. |
|--|--|

| <b>Planning Document or Activity</b>            | <b>Public Participation Procedures</b>   |
|---|--|
| <b>Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan</b> | <p><b>About the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the expansion and improvement to bicycle and pedestrian access and facilities throughout the region.</li> <li>• Addresses a minimum 20-year planning horizon that the MPO develops, adopts and updates through the metropolitan transportation planning process.</li> <li>• Referenced and reinforced in the MTP.</li> <li>• Depending on the scope of work for the Plan, public input opportunities may go above and beyond the minimum requirements established here.</li> </ul> <p><b>Public Participation and Adoption:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MPO Policy Board adopts the Final Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Reviewed by Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, which makes recommendations to TTC and Policy Board.</li> <li>◦ Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Public input meetings (in-person and/or online opportunities) held during Plan development. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Legal notice or box ad published in <i>The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead</i> at least seven days prior to the meeting with information about the duration of the public comment period.</li> <li>◦ 30 calendar day public comment and review period required starting on the date of publication of the notice.</li> <li>◦ Public meetings or input opportunities published on Metro COG website calendar and project web page and posted on social media.</li> <li>◦ Press release distributed to media outlets at least seven days prior to the meeting.</li> <li>◦ Email distribution to subscribers with information about meeting at least seven days prior to the meeting.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• All other public input opportunities during planning process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution.</li> <li>• At least one public input meeting (in-person and/or online opportunity) must be held for completed draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.</li> <li>• Additional public input meeting and 15-day comment period required if substantial changes are made to the draft Plan after the initial input meeting.</li> <li>• Draft and final plan available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, with final product available after adoption.</li> </ul> |

**Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

**About the TIP (23 CFR § 450.326):**

- A detailed list of regionally significant, federally funded transportation projects by all jurisdictions and transit agencies in the MPO planning area, covering a period of at least four years and including capital and non-capital surface transportation projects, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, transit facilities, and other transportation enhancements and safety projects.
- Updated annually
- The TIP development process includes the solicitation of eligible projects for inclusion from all jurisdictions and transit agencies within the MPO planning area, an analysis of fiscal capacity, and feedback from MPO committees.
- Metro COG's current approved TIP outlines the required process for identification and prioritization of projects for the purpose of TIP development. The TIP also identifies the criteria for administrative modifications and amendments.

**Public Participation and Adoption:**

- MPO Policy Board adopts the Final TIP after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments
  - Reviewed by NDDOT, MnDOT, FTA and FHWA
  - Reviewed by local jurisdictions and transit agencies
  - Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board
- Public input meeting (in-person and/or online opportunities) held during TIP development.
  - Legal notice or box ad published in *The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead* (Metro COG's newspaper of record) initiates the public comment and review period which is a *minimum* 30 calendar day
  - Legal notice or box ad published in *The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead* at least seven days prior to the required public input meeting
  - Public meetings or input opportunities published on Metro COG website calendar and project web page and posted on social media
  - Press release distributed to media outlets at least seven days prior to the meeting
- All other public input opportunities during TIP development process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution.
- At least one public input meeting (in-person and/or online opportunity) must be held during the development of the TIP.
- If substantive written or oral comments are received on the draft TIP, either through the public involvement process or through the interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis, and report of the disposition of these comments shall be included in the final TIP.
  - A legal public notice and minimum 15-day comment period required if substantial changes are made to the draft TIP that was available for public review and comment. Substantive changes are new material issues which interested parties could not

|  |   |
|--|---|
|  | <p>reasonably have foreseen from the earlier public involvement efforts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ The amended draft TIP will be made available for review on the Metro COG website.</li> <li>◦ The final TIP will document the public involvement process, present a summary of all public comments received and demonstrate Metro COG's consideration and response to these comments.</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft and final TIP available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, with final product available after adoption.</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Amendments to the Transportation Improvement Program</b></p> | <p><b>About TIP Amendments (23 CFR § 450.328):</b><br/> Changes to the TIP are defined as either administrative modifications or amendments. Administrative modifications to the TIP do not require public notifications but are announced to the TTC and Policy Board at regularly scheduled meetings. Amendments to the TIP are required if certain criteria are met, as identified in the current adopted TIP.</p> <p><b>Public Participation and Adoption:</b><br/> Public participation requirements and notifications for TIP Amendments are the same as those described above for the annual update of the TIP, except that public input meetings may occur at either the TTC or Policy Board meeting, rather than scheduling a separate meeting solely for the TIP amendment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ A legal public notice and minimum 10-day comment period required.</li> <li>◦ The amended draft TIP materials will be made available for review on the Metro COG website and at Metro COG's office.</li> <li>◦ The final amended TIP will be made available for review on Metro COG's website and at the Metro COG office.</li> </ul> |

**Planning Document or Activity**

**Public Participation Procedures**

**Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

**About the PPP:**

- A documented participation plan that defines a process for providing the public and all members of the transportation industry with reasonable opportunities to be informed about and involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.
- Updated every five years or as needed.
- The development process includes a review of past and potential new engagement practices to ensure the plan fits the needs of the community.

**Public Participation and Adoption:**

- MPO Policy Board adopts the Final PPP after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments.
  - Reviewed by NDDOT, MnDOT, FTA and FHWA
  - Reviewed by local jurisdictions and transit agencies
  - Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board
- Legal notice or box ad published in *The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead* (Metro COG's newspaper of record) initiates the public comment period, which is a minimum of 45 calendar days
  - Public input opportunity published on Metro COG website calendar and project web page and posted on social media
  - Press release distributed to media outlets at least four days prior to the initiation of the 45-day public comment and review period
- All other public input opportunities during PPP development process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution.
- If substantive written or oral comments are received on the draft PPP, either through the public involvement process or through the interagency consultation process, a summary, analysis, and report of the disposition of these comments shall be included in the final PPP.
  - A legal public notice and minimum 15-day comment period required if substantial changes are made to the draft PPP that was available for public review and comment. Substantive changes are modifications to comment periods or public notice or public meeting requirements which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the draft Plan.
  - The amended draft plan will be made available for review on the Metro COG website.
  - The final PPP will document the public involvement process, present a summary of all public comments received and demonstrate Metro COG's consideration and response to these comments.
- Draft and final PPP available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, with final product available after adoption.

**Planning Document or Activity**

**Public Participation Procedures**

**Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

**About the UPWP:**

- An annual or biennial statement of work identifying the planning priorities and activities to be carried out within a metropolitan planning area. At a minimum, a UPWP includes a description of the planning work and resulting products, who will perform the work, time frames for completing the work, the cost of the work, and the source(s) of funds.
- Completed biannually with amendments as needed.
- The Policy Board adopts the Final UPWP after considering the recommendations of the TTC and incorporating state and federal comments.
- NDDOT, MnDOT, FHWA, and FTA affirm the final UPWP.
- The development process includes staff evaluating its planning funding availability, and regional planning tasks and needs with MPO communities and members to advance a draft UPWP.
- Public and stakeholder review is not required for the UPWP.
- Available on the MPO website.
- Developed with input from MPO committees and member jurisdictions after meetings and discussions about planning needs.
- MPO staff works with members as well as state and federal partners to monitor the progress of implementing the UPWP.
- Modifications and amendments are processed by seeking a recommendation from the TTC and approval from the Policy Board, followed by approval from NDDOT, MnDOT, FHWA, and FTA.

**Other Corridor Studies and Sub-Area Plans**

**About Corridor Studies and Sub-Area Plans:**

- As a follow-up to the MTP, TDP or Metropolitan Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, Metro COG and its local jurisdictions frequently determine the need to study certain transportation corridors, transit facilities or services, or bicycle and pedestrian components for more in-depth analysis.
- Often, a one of the significant reasons for conducting such studies is to gain input from the public on the needs and issues pertaining to the study area. In other instances, the significant reasons are more technical in nature, but usually include the sharing of information with the public and the gathering and consideration of public input.
- The scope of work for each project includes a public engagement plan, which will differ from one plan to another, but will generally include a plan for public meetings, on-line or in-person opportunities for input. The engagement plan will also include the method by which the general public and those directly affected by the Plan or Study will be notified about the study and opportunities for input.
- Depending on the scope of work for the Plan or Study, public input opportunities may go above and beyond the minimum requirements established here.

**Public Participation and Adoption:**

- MPO Policy Board adopts the Final Plan after considering and incorporating local, state, and federal comments
  - Reviewed by NDDOT, MnDOT, FTA and FHWA
  - Reviewed by local jurisdictions and, when applicable, transit agencies
  - Reviewed by TTC, which makes recommendations to Policy Board
- If public input meetings (in-person and/or online opportunities) are held during Plan or Study development
  - Legal notice or box ad published in The Forum of Fargo-Moorhead or newspaper of public record initiates the public comment and review period, which is a minimum of 15 calendar days, and shall be published at least seven days prior to the public input meeting
  - Public meetings or input opportunities published on Metro COG website calendar and project web page and posted on social media
  - Press release distributed to media outlets at least seven days prior to the public meeting or comment period?
  - All other public input opportunities during Plan or Study development process published on MPO website, social media, and email distribution
- Draft and final Corridor Studies and Sub-Area Plans shall be available for review on Metro COG website and at Metro COG office, and at the local government office with final product available after adoption.

### *Visualization Techniques*

Metro COG makes every reasonable effort to incorporate visualization techniques into its public outreach activities. The MPO and its consultants prepare legible maps for public meetings regarding the development of the MTP and the TIP to help identify the location and potential impact of possible transportation improvements and network alternatives. Other useful visual aids used by the MPO may include concept plans, sketches, renderings, graphs and charts representing various types of data and flow charts depicting the transportation planning process. Online “story maps” are used for some projects to help the public walk through a series of informational materials about projects. Online interactive maps are provided as a means of public input on more and more projects. These maps allow the public to insert comments about transportation issues and desired future improvements or changes. In addition to inserting their own comments on the map, members of the public can also agree, disagree or add to the input of another individual. Previously, videos were mentioned as way to inform the public about projects. They are sometimes developed as way to inform large numbers of people about a project and continue to be available over an extended period of time.

### *Accommodations for Special Populations*

Metro COG works to reach out to special populations traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems that may face challenges accessing employment and other services. These populations may include low-income and minority households, persons with disabilities, and persons with limited English proficiency. The MPO schedules public input meetings at Americans with Disabilities Act compliant facilities, and at convenient and accessible locations and times.

Translation services are available and can be used by Metro COG to translate documents upon request. To request translation services, people can call or email MPO staff at 701-532-5100 or [Metrocog@fmmetrocog.org](mailto:Metrocog@fmmetrocog.org). The public is asked to provide Metro COG with as much notice as possible so staff can best provide for any special accommodations that may be necessary in order for them to participate in any public events. Additional information on Metro COG’s nondiscrimination obligations and procedures for investigating and tracking Title VI complaints can be found elsewhere in this document, or is available upon request by calling 701-532-5100 or by visiting [www.fmmetrocog.org/resources/title-vi-plan](http://www.fmmetrocog.org/resources/title-vi-plan).



| Summary of Public Participation Procedures by Program Element |   |  |  |                |  |   |
|---|---|--|--|----------------|--|---|
| Type of Plan  | Public Meeting Requirement              | Public Meeting Notification Requirements** | Length of Notice Prior to Public Meeting | Comment Period | Press Release Requirement                    | Other Considerations                      |
| <b>Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)</b>                 | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 30 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>MTP Amendment</b>  | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 15 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>Transit Development Plan</b>                               | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 30 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>Bicycle &amp; Pedestrian Plan</b>                          | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 30 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)</b>                  | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 30 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>TIP Amendments</b>   | Yes                                     | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 15 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>Public Participation Plan (PPP)</b>                        | No                                      | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | N/A                                      | 45 Days        | Prior to initiation of public comment period | Email distributions to interested persons |
| <b>Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)</b>                   | No                                      | None Required                              | N/A                                      | N/A            | N/A  | N/A                                       |
| <b>Sub-Area &amp; Corridor Studies</b>                        | Varies – as specified by scope of work* | Legal Notice or Box Ad                     | 7 Days                                   | 15 Days        | 7 days prior to public meeting               | Email distributions to interested persons |

\*Generally public meetings are required for sub-area and corridor studies. On occasion, certain studies do not require public meetings, and information is provided through other means.

\*\*Legal notices will typically be used unless a) schedule requirements for a legal notice cannot be met, or b) greater visual emphasis is desired, in which cases a Box Ad will be used.

## Public Input

The MPO accepts input and comments from the public through a variety of means. Members of the public may make comments by calling Metro COG at 701-532-5100.

Written comments may be submitted in the following ways:

- Presented at public meetings
- Faxed to the MPO at 701-232-5043
- Emailed to [metrokog@fmmetrokog.org](mailto:metrokog@fmmetrokog.org)
- Mailed to Metro COG, 1 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Street N, Suite 232, Fargo, ND 58102

The public may submit comments to their respective TTC or Policy Board representatives for transmittal to the respective full committees. Citizens can make comments on MPO plans, reports and programs at public input meetings or at regular monthly meetings during the public comment period near the beginning of each agenda. Citizens or representatives may request time on a Metro COG TTC or Policy Board agenda to offer input to the full committees. The MPO staff shares all public comments and input with the TTC, the Executive Committee and the Policy Board in verbal and/or written form.

The MPO accepts and considers public input and comments received during the public participation process. When significant written or oral comments regarding the draft MTP, draft TIP, draft PPP, or other transportation planning project are received by Metro COG, a summary, analysis, and report on those comments is included in the final document. In those cases where a final MTP, TIP or PPP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment, the MPO provides an additional opportunity for further public comment on the final version. Additional public comment periods are at least 15 calendar days.

## Coordination and Consultation

Metro COG coordinates its public participation efforts with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation process, as necessary. The MTP, TIP, and PPP are developed with due consideration of other related planning activities in the metropolitan area, and Metro COG consults with other agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities that may be impacted or affected by transportation. Additionally, the MPO involves the appropriate federal land management agencies in the development of the MTP and TIP as necessary.

## Evaluation

The MPO periodically reviews the PPP in order to monitor the effectiveness of the procedures outlined in this document. Following evaluation of the outputs of the PPP, the MPO may revise these procedures to incorporate new and innovative ways to involve the public, facilitate the sharing of information, and ensure a full and open participation process. In particular, Metro COG documents information regarding public attendance at public input meetings, records the number of requests or complaints associated with special populations, and solicits feedback on the use of visual aids at public meetings. The MPO reviews this information every year and evaluates the need to revise these procedures.

## Contact Information

Metro COG understands that the public is vital to a strong planning process, and that transportation plans and projects are meant to serve the citizens from whom input is sought. As such, Metro COG encourages residents to submit comments to the MPO. This can be accomplished by contacting Metro COG through the following means:

Mail: Metro COG  
1 – 2<sup>nd</sup> St N, Suite 232  
Fargo, ND 58102

Phone: 701-532-5100

Fax: 701-232-5043

Email: [metrococg@fmmetrococg.org](mailto:metrococg@fmmetrococg.org)

Website: [www.fmmetrococg.org](http://www.fmmetrococg.org)

Facebook: [www.facebook.com/fmmetrococg](http://www.facebook.com/fmmetrococg)

Instagram: [www.instagram.com/fmmetrococg](http://www.instagram.com/fmmetrococg)

LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/company/fmmetrococg](http://www.linkedin.com/company/fmmetrococg)