



One of four flyers used on the Facebook event page for the TPO Board meeting

7. Refining the Public Participation Process

Periodic public involvement process surveys and citizen service feedback
In the past, the TPO has conducted periodic public involvement process surveys with its committees. Although the agency did not conduct any surveys of this nature in the 2020-2021 cycle, it continued to solicit general feedback from the public in situations where staff provided assistance in answering questions.

Federal certification review

The Hillsborough TPO last participated in its quadrennial federal certification review in April 2017. The review of transportation planning procedures, including public engagement, ensures that the county remains eligible for federal funding for transportation improvements. The review, which was conducted by officials at the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and FDOT, positively cited the TPO for several noteworthy practices including the Vision Zero plan, outreach and participation opportunities for the underserved, and performance-based scenario planning in the LRTP

The TPO did not receive any corrective actions in this review. Recommendations to improve public participation included: evaluating the participation process to determine when a public meeting versus public hearing is necessary; adding an interactive planning acronym list to the Public Participation Plan; and updating the Title VI Inclusivity Plan.

To address these recommendations, the TPO reviewed its PPP and PlanHillsborough.org website to ensure that the differences between public hearings and meetings are expressed correctly and clarified those differences more explicitly in the 2020 PPP update. The TPO also has an online glossary of transportation acronyms and terms, and the website features popup definitions when users scroll over key terms and acronyms. Additionally, the TPO updated the Title VI/Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan in August of 2021.

Important collaborative achievements

The Garden Steps Healthy Communities 50 Seed Grant project involved the TPO and several of its partners, including the Coalition of Community Gardens, Florida Department of Health-Hillsborough, HART, the City of Tampa, and the Planning Commission. In 2020, the team held a community event called “Stone Soup” with 30 community members, Mayor Jane Castor, Commissioner Les Miller, and Councilman Orlando Gudes. Also in 2020, the TPO Board approved the Garden Steps Action Plan. Then the TPO supported the **22nd Street Demonstration Garden Expo** and third annual **Grow Community Gardens Conference** in October 2021.





In 2021, the TPO hosted summer transportation safety workshops geared towards elementary and middle school-aged children as part of Plan Hillsborough’s **FLiP Jr. (Future Leaders in Planning) summer program**. The program spanned eight weeks while serving 80 participants across four locations in Tampa Heights, Palm River, Town ‘n’ Country, and Wimauma. In 2021, it also received the Public Outreach and Engagement Award from the Sun Coast section of the Florida Chapter of the American Planning Association (APA).



The TPO joined governments and nonprofit organizations worldwide to observe the **World Day of Remembrance**. Held in 2020 and 2021, the TPO commemorated the event as part of its Vision Zero program. Participants held signs with the names of their loved ones as they silently walked along Bruce B. Downs Blvd. Each year, the event involved the reading aloud of the names of more than 200 victims.

New and ongoing regional participation opportunities

Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance

In 2021, the Chairs’ Coordinating Committee (CCC) rebranded itself as the Sun Coast Transportation Planning Alliance (SCTPA). This change reinforced its commitment to operate as a unified voice. Although established in Florida Statute in 2001, the Committee began meeting in 1993 to coordinate regionally significant projects and decisions and establish a conflict resolution process.

The member MPOs of the SCTPA work together to annually update three priority lists: Regional Multi-Use Trails, which may compete for Florida SUNTrail program funding; Transportation Regional Incentive



Program (TRIP) grant candidate projects; and major projects that could be funded with statewide dollars such as for the Strategic Intermodal System or the Florida New Starts transit program. Each MPO seeks feedback from the public within its own community, bringing the top projects to the regional alliance for shared vision and advocacy.

TPO staff participated in the planning of the virtual 2021 Gulf Coast Safe Street Summit, an SCTPA annual event. To support the event, staff promoted registration and sought applications for the Vision Zero Hero Award. Staff also solicited session proposals and designed in-person mobile workshops.

Smart Cities Alliance

The Smart Cities Alliance was initiated by the City of Tampa, the Florida Department of Transportation District 7, and the Center for Urban Transportation Research at the University of South Florida. The group took on a broader vision to focus on cutting edge technologies that cut across multiple disciplines, including transportation, energy infrastructure, health, and more for the region. So far, the group has helped create the data & analytics portal, is completing a ramp-metering feasibility study, completing an 'innovative intersection' study, and developing a mobile fare payment system for all transportation modes.

Regional Planning Council's Resiliency Planning Committees.

Staff regularly coordinates with FHWA, local agencies, and other MPOs to exchange information and data about extreme weather and transportation system resiliency. Recent initiatives that the TPO supported include the development of the Hillsborough County Resiliency Plan, the Hillsborough County Community Vulnerability Study, and the Hillsborough County LEED Cities and County Certification.

Hillsborough County Local Mitigation Working Group and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council

Staff continues to participate in the Hillsborough County Local Mitigation Working Group and the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council's resiliency planning committees. Staff regularly coordinates with FHWA, local agencies, and other MPOs to exchange information and data about extreme weather and transportation system resiliency. Recent initiatives that the TPO supported include the development of the Hillsborough County Resiliency Plan, the Hillsborough County Community Vulnerability Study, and the Hillsborough County LEED Cities and County Certification.

Follow-up on recommendations from the last Measures of Effectiveness report

The previous TPO Measures of Effectiveness report covered the period of January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2019. Below are the recommendations from that report and their status.

1. Increase citizen engagement in the Environmental Justice areas to increase agency awareness and expand the agency's presence in the community by cultivating relationships with nonprofits, faith-based groups, and other community organizations.

From 2020 through 2021, the TPO engaged communities of concern to get input for the 2021 Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan. This effort included a short video to invite County residents to a virtual storytelling forum and the airing of the video on YouTube, social media, and HTV. From December 2020 through March 2021, staff also distributed a countywide survey via printed flyers, social media, Constant Contact emails, and door-to-door canvassing. Staff also held five demographic-based focus groups in environmental justice areas throughout Hillsborough County.

2. Use short videos to inform

The TPO created a planning education video series. Called 1 Minute Matters, the series is made up of five, brief videos that are designed to explore and explain an array of relevant planning themes and topics. The first video of the series focused on better coordinating transportation and land use. The TPO also began creating video shorts to promote studies and projects on its Facebook and Twitter pages.

3. Develop strategies for flexibility in meeting public plan requirements.

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing State of Emergency impacted how MPOs could conduct required outreach. Therefore, the TPO turned to virtual platforms as a way to hold community forums, hearings, meetings, and workshops. Meetings were held in a virtual webinar, and the public had the opportunity to participate as they would an in-person meeting.

The TPO has as now adopted a hybrid environment for meetings. And when meetings can only be held virtually in the event of disasters or public health emergencies, the process will continue until the Department of Health and Human Services or another form of government states that it is safe to hold in person meetings with the public.

4. Seek feedback on our public engagement strategies.

To increase public awareness of TIP amendments, the TPO piloted a new engagement strategy. Starting in 2021, staff promoted TIP amendments through social media posts, newsletter articles, a dedicated webpage, and road signs.

The strategy will go before the TPO Board in 2022 as a recommendation for the 2022 PPP, garnering feedback from the Board and members of the public.