

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

MEASURES OF EFFECTIVENESS

REPORT



TWO YEAR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT
EVALUATION FOR 2020 & 2021

Final Report:
May 11, 2022



Hillsborough TPO
Transportation
Planning Organization

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Members of the public attend a hearing for the 2001 Long Range Transportation Plan

1. Historical Perspective

Every two years, the Hillsborough County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) updates its Public Participation Plan (PPP). Formerly called the Public Involvement Plan, the PPP outlines a proactive public participation process for the TPO's transportation planning initiatives. Established in 1998, the PPP includes public notices, complete access and input to important decisions, and support of community involvement. The TPO also evaluates its effectiveness, coinciding this evaluation with the PPP update.

Categories to Measure the Effectiveness of Public Participation



Visibility & Productivity

Visibility corresponds to the initiatives and products the TPO produces to increase the agency's engagement with the public. Productivity is the output of the TPO's tasks.



Participation Opportunities

Participation opportunities are the full extent of options the public has to interact with the TPO. Opportunities range from in-person and virtual meetings to online surveys. The TPO measures the effectiveness not just in availability, but in whether participation opportunities are accessible, time-sensitive, understandable, and meaningful.



Public Interest & Feedback

Public interest and feedback is collected through surveys, comment cards, emails, phone calls, walk-ins, and other forms intended to provide a range of options for inclusion. To seize new opportunities to receive public input, the TPO has also successfully engaged the public over social media and in event-specific chatrooms.



Input Results

Input results are the direct and indirect impacts that public feedback has on the TPO's reports, plans, and other activities.

Furthermore, the TPO measures its public participation with minorities, low-income individuals, and the transportation disadvantaged. The measures continue to be intertwined into four major categories, such as tracking the number of notices published in non-English newspapers and recording the number of events held in Environmental Justice areas.



Visit Appendix 1 to view the major areas of evaluation for the public participation program and the corresponding metrics from Public Participation Measures of Effectiveness.

A Timeline of the TPO's Measures of Effectiveness Report

2010

The TPO updated the PPP to more clearly define procedures for notification and public participation. This update included new acronyms, an expanded toolbox, and a new Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan. Amended in 2012, the PPP was adopted by the TPO along with an updated LEP Plan.

2014

The TPO amended the PPP to incorporate recommendations of its 2013 federal certification review which called for simplifying the document, its downloading process, and agency website.

2015

The Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) updated its MPO Program Management Handbook, incorporating principles of Environmental Justice (EJ) in programs and policies to ensure and document meaningful involvement by minority and low-income communities and scrutinize demographic data to ensure that planning activities will not have disproportionately high or adverse impacts on underserved communities,

2018

The TPO adopted a Nondiscrimination Plan, which addressed requirements under a presidential EJ executive order, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Americans with Disabilities Act and several other statutes. Collectively, these protected populations are called "Communities of Concern."

2018

The TPO updated its Public Participation Plan (PPP) in June 2018. The plan clarified the requirements, notices, procedures, and strategies that the TPO undertakes in its public participation initiatives. In refining the PPP process, the TPO recognized and integrated the components of the 2018 Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan Update, which included guidance for engaging with Communities of Concern, Environmental Justice, and Limited English Proficiency populations to enhance the PPP. This allowed for the exploration of some engagement technologies and tools that were suggested.



The Hillsborough TPO has been and continues to be fully compliant with federal and state requirements pertaining to public participation, including: §450.316, §450.322, §450.324, and §450.326 in Chapter 23 of the Code of Federal Regulations; Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; the Limited English Proficiency Executive Order 13166; Florida Statute 339.175; and Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law.



Members of the public attend the 2020 Garden Steps kick-off

2. Public Participation

It is important to hear from the public about whether TPO plans and studies are on target to meet their needs. Public participation is not only an essential piece in guiding TPO decisions but required to ensure the TPO meets federal guidelines. Therefore, the TPO uses the following areas to measure the effectiveness of its public participation process:

- *Provide opportunities for involvement*
- *Be inclusive of constituencies*
- *Be responsive to participants*
- *Be creative and flexible*
- *Maximize exposure, minimize costs*

The TPO's evaluation also coincides with the PPP update. At the conclusion of the review of TPO performance in each of these areas, there is an opportunity to refine the PPP process by formal amendment. Other opportunities to enhance performance may occur as a result of ongoing feedback, periodic surveys, or with the update of the PPP that accompanies the launch of each LRTP update.

Public Participation Performance Areas: An In-Depth Look



Provide opportunities for involvement

We will be open, meaningful, and organized to encourage convenient public participation.

We will consider the needs of the public regarding accessibility, scheduling, location, format, and language of informational materials.

We will allow for informed, constructive exchanges with the public, using unfamiliar transportation terminology as infrequently as possible, and encouraging exploration of the many competing transportation objectives.

Be inclusive of constituencies

- We will identify stakeholders and other interested members of the public for studies and projects
- We will identify strategies to bring information about those studies and projects to identified groups
- We will include outreach to “Communities of Concern” that require special attention to facilitate their participation in the planning process per the TPO’s 2021 Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan.
- We will engage neighborhoods and groups which may be affected by proposed projects, exploring new and creative ways to better engage the community

Be responsive to participants

- We will facilitate public discussions while being respectful of everyone’s time.
- We will provide clear and concise informational materials, addressing participant concerns and allowing citizens to form and express their independent views.
- We will document and give full consideration to all public involvement activities in all TPO decision-making processes and convey these activities to implementing agencies for their consideration.

Public Participation Performance Areas: An In-Depth Look

Provide a transparent and predictable process

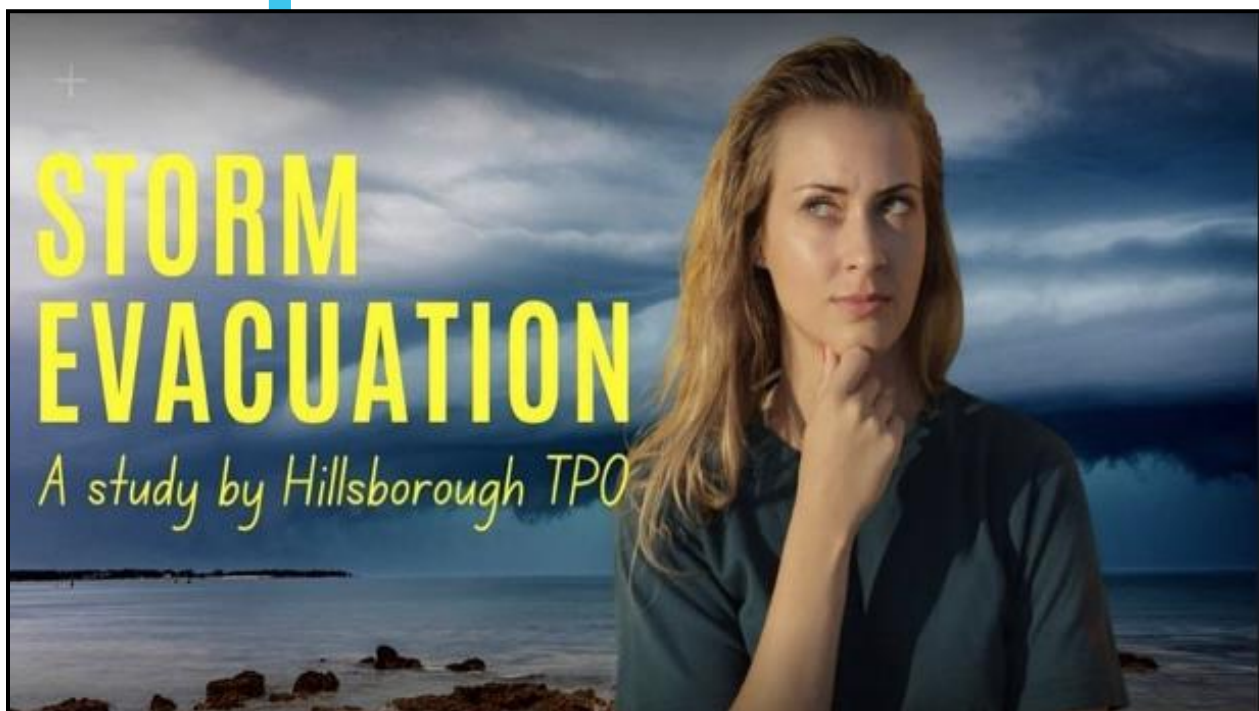
- We will be understandable and communicated to citizens well in advance of plan considerations.
- We will allow staff, citizens, and officials to plan their time and effectively apply their resources.

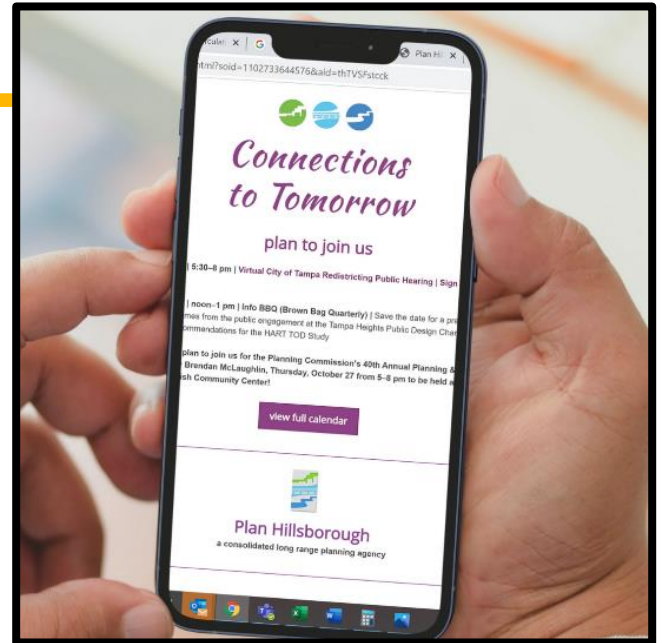
Be creative and flexible

- We will review the PPP periodically to ensure that it meets the needs of the public and the TPO.
- We will continue to evolve the PPP and include new avenues of communication to further augment TPO public outreach.

Maximize exposure, minimize costs

- We will coordinate the public participation process with local, federal, and statewide public involvement processes whenever possible.
- We will enhance public consideration of issues, plans, and programs while reducing redundancies and minimizing costs.





The Plan Hillsborough website on a mobile device

3. Measuring Visibility & Productivity

This chapter measures the visibility and productivity of TPO projects and reports during the 2021-2021 evaluation cycle. Visibility corresponds to the efforts and products the TPO produces to increase the agency's engagement with the public. Productivity is the output of the TPO's tasks.

A definition about visibility and productivity – knowing that our agency exists is a first step in being visible. A wide distribution of the work we do is an effective tool to be more visible to the public and at the same time demonstrating the impressive number of studies and plans the TPO have completed.

Number of TPO Publications Produced

Each year the TPO produces plans, projects and studies outlined in its yearly Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The resulting documents are made available to the public as reports, technical memoranda, and maps. Feedback on these documents is solicited through public meetings, presentations to the TPO's committees, and online engagement. Overall, there were 17 reports and studies produced in the 2020-2021 cycle (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Documents Produced from 2020-2021

Document Title	Published or Adopted
2020 Calendar With a Look Back at the Past Year	Jan 2020
Community Transportation Coordinator Evaluation	Feb 2020
Garden Steps Action Plan	Mar 2020
Resilient Tampa Bay: Transportation Pilot Program Project	Jun 2020
Transportation Improvement Program FY 2020 – 2024	Jun 2020
Public Participation Plan Measures of Effectiveness Report	Jun 2020
Public Participation Plan	Jun 2020
Managing Speed on Hillsborough's High Injury Network	Jul 2020
2019 Independent Oversight Committee Annual Report	Oct 2020
Plant City Transit Feasibility Study Final Report Executive Summary	Dec 2020
2021 Calendar With a Look Back at the Past Year	Jan 2021
Community Transportation Coordinator Evaluation	Feb 2021
Vision Zero Corridor Studies - Unincorporated Hillsborough County	Feb 2021
Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan - Minor Update	Jun 2021
Transportation Improvement Program FY 2021 – 2025	Jun 2021
Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan	Aug 2021
Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan - Major Update	Oct 2021

TPO Publications Available Online

The TPO continues to maintain a strong presence on the internet to publicize plans, studies, regular meetings, and special meetings. For example: all agenda packets for committee meetings are posted on the PlanHillsborough.org website typically one week before the meeting takes place. The PlanHillsborough.org website includes an archive of current and past newsletters dating back to 2011, as well as agenda packets for the current and past two calendar years.

During the 2020-2021 period, the TPO continually expanded its online library of completed and pending plans, studies, maps and documents. Table 2 shows the number of 2020 and 2021 publications found on the PlanHillsborough.org website.



Table 2: Number of publications available online

	2020	2021
Current & Archived Newsletters	103	115
Current & Archived Meeting Packets	891	971
TPO-Produced Reports & Documents Published to Website	10	7
Total	1004	1093

TPO Outreach Products and Materials

Newsletters & Press Releases

In August 2017, the Plan Hillsborough agency consolidated all five of its publications into one monthly newsletter titled *Connections to Tomorrow*. The consolidated newsletter reduced the treatment of Plan Hillsborough emails as spam/ clutter.

Connections to Tomorrow contains featured stories covering topics of interest along with an events schedule and archive of stories featuring Plan Hillsborough's agencies. *Connections to Tomorrow* is archived on the PlanHillsborough.org website as well as on Constant Contact, an email marketing platform. This allows viewers to click through to project pages and other sources of interest directly from within the website-hosted newsletter.

Virtual links to these newsletters are promoted online through Facebook and Twitter. The TPO honors requests for Spanish translations of its newsletters, which it began providing for each of its three newsletters from August 2016 to July 2017. Requests for Spanish translations of newsletters may be made via email or phone.

Newsletters and committee agenda packets continue to be sent via Constant Contact. Electronic distribution presents some significant advantages:

- Minimized printing and mailing costs
- Quicker access to information
- Allowing members of the public to easily self-subscribe to any or all mailing lists
- Enables the TPO to generate statistics on how many recipients opened, clicked links on, and forwarded newsletters.

Users can sign up to receive the Connections to Tomorrow newsletter via PlanHillsborough.org, by emailing or calling a staff member, or by signing up through a link included in newsletters shared online. The TPO offers an option for users to receive a Spanish version of the newsletter, which may be requested via phone or email. In addition, there is a drop-down tool available at the top of PlanHillsborough.org in which a language selection can be made, and translations are accessible in over 100 different languages.

As of December 2021, the mailing list database contained 17,917 mailing addresses, which amounts to approximately 34% more than during the previous evaluation period.

Agendas Produced for the TPO Board and Committees

Notices of agendas for regularly scheduled Board meetings and committee meetings are sent to all members as well as those who have expressed interest in receiving agendas. Individuals can sign up for an agenda by emailing or calling a staff member at any time.

Over the 2020-2021 cycle, a total of 50,947 agenda notices were emailed to the TPO's email list.

Disadvantages include the potential that committee members or interested members of the public without internet access will be unable to view these materials. To mitigate this, the TPO provides printed agendas at the beginning of each committee meeting. The agency also provides a large-print version of its Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board packet.



See Appendix 2 for statistics on the number of newsletters distributed via Constant Contact, press releases over this period, and other notifications sent in 2020 and 2021.

Public Information Pieces

During the 2020-2021 cycle, the TPO continued to distribute public information pieces developed both in-house and in collaboration with other agencies. Public information pieces such as brochures and calendars provide the public with useful information about plans and projects, examples of the TPO’s role in major transportation efforts across the county, and details on how citizens can get involved, including the dates of the public meetings of the TPO board and its advisory committees throughout the year.



The TPO printed 2,400 calendars in 2020 and 2021.

Safety Education Materials

To support the Vision Zero coalition’s efforts, the TPO continued to distribute promotional materials to the public. Hundreds of Vision Zero reflective slap-bands were distributed at events visited by the TPO.



Tables 3 and 4 summarize the TPO’s public information materials, and the promotional materials created to support Vision Zero.

Table 3: Other TPO Brochures, Maps and Public Information Pieces

Brochures, Maps and Flyers	Year	Printed Copies
2020 Calendar With a Look Back at the Past Year	2020	1,200
Ride Guide	2020	2,000
2045 "It's TIME Hillsborough" Long Range Transportation Plan Executive Summary		1000
Sun Coast Transportation Alliance 2045 Transportation Plan Executive Summary		2000
2021 Calendar With a Look Back at the Past Year	2021	1,200
English/Spanish Flyers for the TIP Public Hearing	2021	17,500

Table 4: TPO Vision Zero Promotional Materials

Promotional Materials	Date	Number Printed/Distributed
Vision Zero Reflective Slap Bracelets	2021 & 2021	6,000



Media Coverage of the TPO

Newspaper Advertisements and Public Notices

After the acquisition of *The Tampa Tribune* by *The Tampa Bay Times* in 2016, Hillsborough County is primarily served by *The Tampa Bay Times*. According to the 2021 Nielsen Scarborough Report, clients.tampabay.com/2021/Times.MarketPresentation.2021.pdf



The Tampa Bay Times has a weekly circulation of 531,300 and a Sunday circulation of 597,300.

The agency also published notices in *La Gaceta*, a tri-lingual English, Spanish, and Italian newspaper. According to lagacetanewspaper.com/advertising/, *La Gaceta* reaches approximately 726,000 Hispanics living in Tampa Bay.



The Florida Sentinel Bulletin is another publishing source for the TPO. The paper is the only African-American publication in Florida. It prints twice weekly. Through door-to-door and news rack sales in Hillsborough, Pasco, Polk and Pinellas counties.

In compliance with state requirements, the TPO advertised Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board meetings in the *Florida Administrative Register*, published weekly on the internet free of charge by the Florida Department of State as a means of increasing public access to Florida government. Although the publication does not provide readership numbers, two posts were made to this online source in 2020 and 2021.



Table 5 contains all the public hearing and meeting notices posted in newspapers by the TPO between 2020 and 2021. **Table 6** contains the circulation numbers for these publications.

Table 5: Public Meeting Notices Published in Newspapers by the TPO in 2020 and 2021

Publication(s)	Date Published	Notice or Announcement
Tampa Bay Times	February 9, 2020	Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board – Notice of Meeting/Workshop Hearing
Tampa Bay Times	May 10, 2020	TPO June 30 Public Hearing Notice (TIP & PPP)
Tampa Bay Times	Feb. 21, 2021	Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board – Notice of Meeting/Workshop Hearing
Florida Administrative Register	March 2021	Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board – Notice of Meeting/Workshop Hearing
Tampa Bay Times	April 25, 2021	TPO June 9 Public Hearing Notice (TIP & PPP)
Florida Sentinel Bulletin	April 30, 2021	TPO June 9 Public Hearing Notice (TIP & PPP)
La Gaceta	April 30, 2021	TPO June 9 Public Hearing Notice (TIP & PPP)
Tampa Bay Times	May 2, 2021	TPO Fictitious Name Notice
Tampa Bay Times	May 30, 2021	TPO June 9 Public Hearing Notice

Table 6 Daily and weekly circulation of newspapers in which the TPO posted notices

Newspaper	2019 Circulation (Daily & Weekly)
Tampa Bay Times – Weekly	531,300 [1]
Sunday Circulation	597,300 [2]
La Gaceta – Weekly	18,000 [3]
Florida Sentinel Bulletin	22,000 [4]

Sources:

[1] Tampa Bay Times (March 2020)

[3] **Florida Sentinel Bulletin** (April 2021)

[2] La Gaceta (March 2020)

[4] **Florida administrative Register**(April 2021)

Advertisements and Public Notices Placed in Publications With Primarily Minority Audiences

Two meeting notices were placed in newspapers with minority populations during the 2020-2021 cycle: *La Gaceta* and *Florida Sentinel Bulletin*.

Public Meeting notice signs and Mass Mailings

For the 2020 and 2021 TIP public hearings, the TPO placed notice signs in areas affected by major capacity projects detailing the location, date, and time of the hearing. Also, the flyers provided several ways for members of the public to give comments without having to attend the hearing itself, including by mail, e-mail, phone/ voice message, and social media. Flyers detailing projects in were mailed in each of the past two years to between 7500 and 18,000 property owners residing near upcoming major projects.

Online Advertisements, Social Media, Public Notices

To keep up with the changing news habits of the public, the TPO continued providing notices, announcements and information via email, Facebook, Twitter, and its regularly updated website.

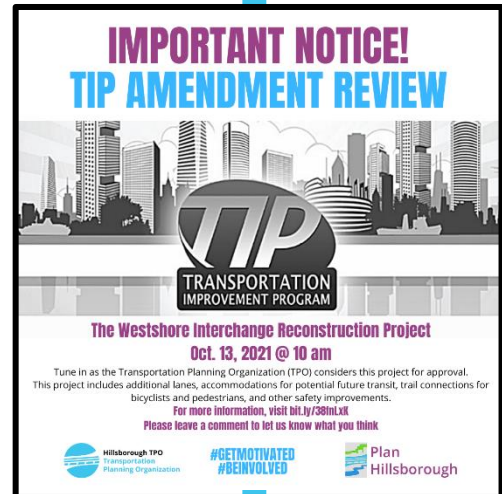
Print Media Coverage of the TPO

Due to elected officials serving on the TPO board and its public forum for transportation issues, the media frequently covers the TPO. Therefore, the TPO and its programs appear in 1232 articles from 2020 and 2021. This is an increase of 195% from the previous 2018-2019 cycle. Most articles appear in Tampa Bay Business Journal (118 articles) and The Tampa Bay Times (87 articles). Topics include the Transportation Sales Surtax, proposed projects for the I-275 and I-4 interchange, the West Shore interchange project, the Tampa West Riverwalk extension project, and pedestrian safety.

Meetings Broadcast on Television and Online

TPO public hearings are broadcast on Hillsborough Television (HTV), produced by Hillsborough County Government, and available on major cable providers in the Hillsborough County area as well as on the web at youtube.com/c/HillsboroughCountyMeetings/live. All 22 of the TPO's Board meetings were televised in 2020 and 2021. These meetings were broadcast live, close-captioned, and later rebroadcast throughout the corresponding month. Live and replays of televised meetings are noticed on the online HTV calendar.

In August 2017, TPO staff began uploading TPO Board meetings to its [YouTube channel](#). As of the end of 2021, this channel contains all TPO Board meetings held between August 2017 and December 2021, Independent Oversight Committee meetings, and some of the Tampa Bay TMA Leadership meetings. In 2020, the TPO began uploading all committee meetings as well. Combined with TIP Public Hearings, these meetings have received approximately 2882 total views as of the end of 2021. The TPO makes efforts to increase the viewership of its meetings and hearings for members of the public who cannot attend, by providing the live-stream link at the top of the Board meetings and Public Hearings meeting agendas, which can be accessed from the agency's PlanHillsborough.org homepage.





Ribbon cutting ceremony for the Selmon Expressway Extension

4. Measuring Participation Opportunities

Public input is a critical component of the success of the TPO's initiatives, and the agency consistently evaluates its participation opportunities for convenience and accessibility to the public. A participation opportunity is a situation where a citizen can provide public input, either directly to staff or in a format such as a written or emailed comment that staff receives and responds to. Citizens can participate at a regularly scheduled forum or community meeting, project workshops, events at which the TPO attends, online, or over the phone.

Participation at TPO Public Forums, Workshops and Community Meetings

As in years past, actively pursuing public outreach to obtain citizens' feedback is a major priority for the TPO. The TPO is committed to providing multiple avenues for citizens to interact with the agency, in person, in ways that are convenient and sensitive to their available time.

The main paths to participation include attending a regularly scheduled TPO or committee meeting, applying to become a member of a TPO committee, attending a public workshop on a specific topic sponsored by the TPO, and interacting with the TPO at fairs and exhibitions.

All TPO board and advisory committee meetings from 2020 to 2021 were publicly noticed, open to the public, and an opportunity for public comment. Public hearings were held during public meetings of the TPO Board and counted as one meeting during this cycle. Table 7 contains summary information of the committee meetings held in 2020 and 2021.

Table 7: TPO committee meetings held during 2020 and 2021

Board/Committee	2020			2021		
	Meetings	Attendees*	Public Comments	Meetings	Attendees*	Public Comments
TPO Board	11	273	35	11	634	117
TPO Policy Committee	3	58	1	9	342	23
Citizens Advisory Committee	11	278	6	11	348	5
Technical Advisory Committee	11	190	1	11	65	1
Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee	12	311	8	12	296	4
Livable Roadways Committee	11	348	2	11	279	5
Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board	6	106	0	6	120	2
Intelligent Transportation Committee	4	52	0	4	67	1
Independent Oversight Committee	4	n/a	n/a	N/A	82	8
Joint TAC/CAC Meeting	1	30	0	1	37	0
Sun Coast TPA/TMA	4			4		
Total	78	1646	53	80	2270	166

*From March 2020 and through 2021, public participation was virtual due to Covid restrictions

Public Outreach Events at which displays, presentations, discussions and feedback occurred

Beyond regularly scheduled meetings, the TPO hosted or participated in 84 external public meetings or events in 2020 and 2021, reaching over 3486 people. This represents a 65% decrease from the previous period. This decrease can be attributed to restrictions arising from the covid pandemic. The TPO also began tracking the number of event participants that staff members interacted with in 2017. In 2020 and 2021, the events with the highest number of attendees included:

Highest-Attended Events in 2020

1. 2021 Nondiscrimination Plan Field Outreach [December 2020] (350 survey participants)
2. FHWA Data Business Plan Update [July 8] (200 attendees)
3. Fancy Women Bike Ride [September 20] (66 attendees)
4. Holiday Vision Zero Showcase [December 5] (60 attendees)
5. Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council [March 9] (50 attendees)

Highest-Attended Events in 2021

1. Rep. Castor Telephone Town Hall [December 15] (1,000 listeners)
2. 2021 Nondiscrimination Plan Field Outreach [January 29] (350 attendees)
3. FDOT Conference: TransPlex [April 16] (100 attendees)
4. USF to Green ARTery Trail Neighborhood Outreach [August 25] (100 attendees)
5. Leadership Tampa [March 24] (60 attendees)

The TPO joined governments and nonprofit organizations worldwide to observe the World Day of Remembrance. Held in 2020 and 2021, the TPO organized 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. Approximately 50 individuals participated in each event.

The complete list of events that TPO sponsored or participated in are located in Appendices 2 (2020) and 3 (2021).

Attendance at events in Environmental Justice (EJ) areas

Of the 84 meetings that the TPO hosted or participated in, at least 17 were held in EJ areas. EJ areas in Hillsborough County are census tracts one standard deviation above the county's median in concentration of one or more of the following characteristics: low-income, race, and ethnicity (Hispanic and Latino).

Due to Covid 19 restrictions, there was no in-person sign-in sheet tracking for zip codes from March 2020 – December 2021. Therefore, we do not know the origin of virtual participants and do not have significant zip code data.

TPO Board and Committee Meeting Participation

Number and origin of participants

A total of 3916 participants attended TPO Board and committee meetings in 2020-2021. This is approximately a 3% decrease from the previous cycle.

Public Turnout for the Transportation Improvement Program Annual Hearings (2020-2021)

The 2020 TIP public hearing was fully virtual due to covid pandemic restrictions. The hearing had 107 registered attendees that tuned in. It received 136 views on YouTube and 36 speakers, donors or commenters participated¹. Public Attendance was complemented by 3 Facebook comments, 1 voicemail message on the TIP hotline, and 30 emails.

The 2021 TIP hearing, held as a hybrid meeting, attracted 333 views on Facebook and 20 speakers, donors or commenters participated. The hearing received 3 Facebook comments, 1 Twitter comment, 3 voicemail messages regarding the TIP and its projects, and 24 emails.

The **update of the 2020 Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan (TDSP)** included a workshop for coordination contractors to discuss unmet client transportation needs and explore potential solutions to address these needs. This was the second year that Hillsborough's coordination contractors engaged in a roundtable discussion. Five agencies participated, discussing their transportation needs.



Number of persons on the TPO mailing list receiving regular agendas

The number of individuals on the TPO mailing list who received regular agendas decreased 25% during the 2020-2021 cycle due to an adjustment to covid restrictions. In December 2021, the last month of the cycle in which all committee meetings were held, approximately 940 individuals received an agenda mailed through Constant Contact.

¹ Donors provided their time to allow a speaker to speak for longer. Commenters made written comments.

Surveys, Draft Documents and Plans Available for Public Comment

From 2020-2021, the TPO hosted seven surveys, seeking comments from the public and its committees.

One survey involved the annual **Evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)** draft report. The report was completed and approved by the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board. The CTC is a state transportation program for seniors, persons with disabilities, low-income people and children at-risk to access essential needs. The evaluation revealed that the CTC continues to provide quality TD service exceeding five service performance standards. The evaluation included a customer survey that continues to record a 97 percent satisfaction rate with the service of the Sunshine Line.

The TPO publishes all its reports online at PlanHillsborough.org. Prior to TPO Board adoption, these reports and documents are kept in draft status; once adopted, a date of adoption is added. At any time, visitors to a project page are encouraged to contact the project manager through an email link or send general questions to planner@plancom.org, which is then distributed to the appropriate staff member for response. Several project pages also contain links to surveys, off-site information pages, and public comment forms. The presence of these additional resources is determined by the needs of the project.

Increasing Public Participation Efforts with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, and the Transportation Disadvantaged

Ensuring the MOE report reflects representative public involvement

The Public Participation Plan 2022 Update will be provided to a member of the public to review for readability. And the agency's hybrid environment will encourage remote participation from a wider, more diverse audience.

Listing all TPO committee members' demographic data

As part of the Public Participation Plan, TPO staff collects demographic data to determine whether committee demography reflects that of Hillsborough County. This information is published as an [appendix to the 2022 Public Participation Plan](#).

Participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities

The TPO continues to ensure that tribal contacts receive agenda packets and Transportation Improvement Plan documents. The TPO has identified the contacts and placed them in its Constant Contact database. They also receive the TPO's monthly electronic newsletters which contain articles of transportation plans and projects. Lastly, tribal governments participate in the State's Efficient Transportation Decision Making process, which uses a web-based tool to provide information and map data to, and solicit comments from, agencies potentially affected by future plans and projects.



TPO staff at 2020 USF Transportation Day

5. Public Interest and Feedback

Public interest is a part of the foundation of transportation planning. And as the TPO sets out to serve the public, it is important that the agency is accountable for the public's well-being and interests.

Feedback through Surveys and Oral Comments

Feedback from the public was received via several sources in 2020-2021: community events, public hearings, meetings, the PlanHillsborough.org website, phone calls, emails, Twitter, and Facebook. The TPO received 20 responses related to the speed of staff service, satisfaction with information received, and overall quality of service with respect to the agency during the 2020-2021 cycle. Three of those responses were from the customer satisfaction survey that is accessible via staff member email signatures and the agency's website. Overall, 90% of citizens rated their satisfaction in each of these metrics as "excellent".

The 2021 Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan

In 2020, the TPO engaged the community for the update of the 2021 Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan. Fulfilling a recommendation from the 2020 Measures of Effectiveness Report to reach out to environmental justice areas, the team publicized a survey, canvassed neighborhoods, hosted a virtual Storytelling Forum, and held focus groups. While the Storytelling Forum was open to everyone in Hillsborough County, the street canvassing engaged underserved communities and focus groups involved members of groups based on ethnicity, gender identity, income, and disability. This proactive outreach resulted in nearly half of the survey responses coming from minority, low-income, limited-English, or disabled residents, a proportion that was much higher than most of the TPO's outreach during the evaluation period.

The Sheldon Road Corridor Technical Memorandum

The TPO conducted a study of 8 roads in the unincorporated county that are in the top of 20 of Hillsborough County's High Injury Network. The study took place during the pandemic with several special steps for proactive engagement with social distancing. A "walking workshop" was held on each road to identify problems and opportunities. In addition, an online survey was created for each road, and heavily promoted to communities in the area. Promotions included posting flyers along the corridor, such as at apartment buildings, convenience stores, and laundromats; and networking with active civic groups who shared the survey link with their members. The Westchase civic group even published an article about their area's corridor, Sheldon Road, in their monthly "WOW" magazine. As a result of these proactive efforts, the TPO received 395 survey responses from residents living along the 8 corridors.

Annual Evaluation of the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC)

Every year, the TPO undertakes an assessment of transportation disadvantaged services in Hillsborough County to determine if these services are meeting client needs. The Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board's Evaluation Subcommittee administers two client satisfaction surveys to existing door-to-door and bus pass clients on an annual basis. To encourage participation in this survey, the cover letter and survey questions are distributed in both English and Spanish, and pre-addressed postage-paid return envelopes are provided. The 2020 CTC Evaluation Client survey received a total of 721 responses. The 2021 survey received 635 responses. With a 98% approval rating for 2020 and 95% approval for 2021, respondents generally felt satisfied with door-to-door transportation and believed it improved their independence and quality of life.

TIP Hearing Comment Content Analysis

To analyze written public comments on the TIP received during and prior to the 2020 and 2021 TIP hearings, staff employed NVivo qualitative data analysis software. This software is used to provide greater detail about the public's opinions toward the content of the annual TIP. The results of these analyses were included in the addendum documents to the TIP in both [2020](#) and [2021](#).

Visitors to TPO websites and TPO documents

Internet and mobile connectivity of American citizens continued to grow over the two-year evaluation period. According to Pew Research, the percentage of American adults owning a cellphone has grown to 96% (from 95% in the previous evaluation period), and the percentage of mobile users who own a smartphone has grown to 81% (from 77%)².

Although internet connectivity is growing, citizens who make use of the internet to become involved with the TPO are not necessarily representative of the public at large. Therefore, while the TPO has expanded its online opportunities to connect with the agency, it has retained the use of traditional in-person, phone, and mail comment opportunities as well.

The PlanHillsborough.org website continues to be updated to keep information on projects and meetings current. The front page includes a list of all upcoming TPO committee meetings and hearings, and a slider bar at the top of the page is updated frequently to feature new projects.

Most Viewed Web Pages

There were an estimated 483,560 webpage hits on PlanHillsborough.org across 2020 and 2021, which represents a 5% decrease from the previous period. This decrease can be attributed to the change in behaviors due to the covid pandemic. The most visited TPO-related webpages in 2020 and 2021 are shown in **Table 8**.

Table 8: Most Viewed Webpages in 2020 and 2021

Webpage	2020 Views
www.planhillsborough.org/2045 LRTP/	2722
www.planhillsborough.org/transportation-planning-organization-TPO/	6978
www.planhillsborough.org/ GIS maps and data files /	5930
Webpage	2021 Views
www.planhillsborough.org/transportation-planning-organization-TPO/	6175
www.planhillsborough.org/ GIS maps and data files /	5222
Calendar and staff directory	5182

² Pew Research Center. (2019, Jun 12). Mobile fact sheet. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/fact-sheet/mobile/>.

Social Networks

The TPO continued to expand its use of social media in 2020 and 2021 including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube. Social media was used to promote public notices, advance stories of transportation interest in Hillsborough County, and event details. These platforms were also an important source of public input to the TPO.

Facebook

In 2010 the TPO established a [Facebook page](#), which was joined by a [Vision Zero Hillsborough page](#) in December 2016. These pages are used to promote news stories, events, newsletters, and meetings of interest to the public. Combined, these pages have approximately 1997 followers as of 2022. Public comments made on these pages are forwarded to TPO staff for response and shared with TPO Board members at their Board meetings.

Continuing from 2015, the TPO hosted a Facebook event page one week prior to each TPO Board meeting in 2020 and 2021. This event allowed the public to comment online and have their comments shared during the TPO Board meeting.

The @HillsboroughMPO Facebook page had 256 posts or shares in 2020-2021, reaching an audience of 19,950 users and nearly 2,559 user engagements (likes, comments, shares, and photo views). Posts with the most user engagements in 2020 and 2021 are shown in **Table 9**. The content of all Facebook posts made during this period are contained in [Appendices 4](#) (2020) and [5](#) (2021).

Table 9: @HillsboroughMPO Posts with Top Facebook Interactions

Year	Post content	Number of engagements
	Thank you to participants of Black Lives Matter Mural Project	46
	Three opportunities to learn about Managing Lanes for Transportation Efficiency & Fairness! at the Citizens Advisory Committee's virtual workshop	37
2020	In honor of Black History Month, we would like to make a special tribute to the Chair of the Hillsborough MPO Board. Commissioner Lesley Miller	27
	If you have a passion for transportation planning processes and would like to volunteer your time attending monthly committee meetings, consider applying for membership on the Hillsborough MPO Board's Citizens Advisory Committee	26
	TODAY! Everyone is welcome to join the Hillsborough TPO's School Transportation Working Group	22

	We are less than a week away from our June 9th Public Hearing that will involve the adoption of the next 5-year Transportation Improvement Plan!	213
	ICYMI: We had a blast celebrating Bike to Work Day with the @City of Tampa	154
2021	Have you felt the effects of discrimination in community planning, or are you part of a federally protected group? Fill out the survey to let us know	139
	2021 Nondiscrimination Plan & Storytelling Forum	129
	Wouldn't it be nice if we could travel across all of our Tampa neighborhoods and greenspaces by bike? Green Artery, Inc. thinks so, and so do we! USF Green ARTery Trail public input- coming soon!	99

The @VisionZeroHillsborough, Facebook page, which launched in December 2016, had 747 likes as of December 2021. Posts or shares made on this page have reached an audience of 5317 people with 4644 during the evaluation period. **Table 10** shows the leading posts by engagement on the @VisionZeroHillsborough Facebook page. All posts made by the @VisionZeroHillsborough Facebook page between 2020 and 2021 are listed in [Appendices 4 and 5](#).

Table 10: @VisionZeroHillsborough Posts with Top Facebook Interactions

Date	Post content	Number of engagements
April 1, 2019	#VisionZero813 It's hot but worth it to improve safety for all users on our streets. Twiggs and Franklin Streets. Check it out along with Lift up Local open streets.	224
November 9, 2019	So sad! My heart stopped when I heard the news my son's (Lisa Kramer Silva) school bus stop is within eyesight of the crash.	130
October 6, 2019	Congratulations to Lena Young Green, our Hillsborough TPO 2021 Vision Zero Hero!	117
April 1, 2019	There's still time to provide your input! #VisionZERO813 needs to hear from you if you travel on any of these High Injury Corridors.	99
July 18, 2018	1 Question Poll: Should portions of Bayshore Blvd be closed for pedestrians?	98

Twitter

As with Facebook, the Hillsborough TPO continued using [Twitter](#) to bring attention to transportation topics of interest, events, and notices. In December 2021, the Hillsborough TPO had 6645 followers, an increase of .3% from the prior period. The Hillsborough TPO is one of the most followed MPOs in the country, with followers including citizens, elected officials, candidates, journalists, bloggers, local businesses, professionals, non-profits, advocates, and other planning organizations.

The @HillsboroughMPO Twitter account had 288 tweets (a decrease of 65% from the last period) between January 2020 and December 2021 and had approximately 1639 profile visits per month in the same period. In 2020, #CommuterChallenge18 had 33,919 impressions. Overall, from 2020 - 2021, the TPO was mentioned 904

The image shows a screenshot of the Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization's Twitter profile. At the top, the name "Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization" is displayed with a back arrow and "12.6K Tweets". The profile picture is a blue circle containing a stylized road and bridge. The header features a blue graphic of a guitar with musical notes and a road, with the text "We've changed our tune ever so slightly." and "Your MPO is now doing business as...". To the right, a text box reads: "We've tuned up our name / Though our mission is the same / To better describe what we're / Planning with You". Below this is the new logo: "Hillsborough TPO Transportation Planning Organization". An "Edit profile" button is visible. The bio section includes the name "Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization", the handle "@HillsboroughMPO", and the text: "This TPO plans for a \$1.5+ BIL state & federal fund investment in multi-modal transportation projects in Hillsborough County, FL in each 5-year plan". Location is "Tampa, FL", website is "planhillsborough.org", and it was "Joined April 2009". At the bottom, it shows "6,169 Following" and "6,709 Followers".

Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization
12.6K Tweets

We've changed our tune ever so slightly.

Your MPO is now doing business as...

We've tuned up our name
Though our mission is the same
To better describe what we're
Planning with You

Hillsborough TPO
Transportation
Planning Organization

Edit profile

Hillsborough Transportation Planning Organization
@HillsboroughMPO

This TPO plans for a \$1.5+ BIL state & federal fund investment in multi-modal transportation projects in Hillsborough County, FL in each 5-year plan

Tampa, FL [planhillsborough.org](https://www.planhillsborough.org) Joined April 2009

6,169 Following 6,709 Followers



TPO staff at an event for the Safe Access to Parks Study

6. Public Input Results

During this evaluation period the TPO continued to bolster current ways and determine new avenues to have meaningful input. Comments were received from a variety of sources, ranging from mobile and desktop devices to phone calls and letters. The TPO attempted to respond to all requests for information and questions in a timely manner. When appropriate, the TPO staff recommended that implementing agencies work closely with affected stakeholders to address specific needs or concerns associated with future

Extensive public outreach conducted for major initiatives and studies during 2020 and 2021 were designed to seek ongoing public engagement early and often. Public and stakeholder involvement was crucial in identifying issues, developing goals and objectives, proposing alternatives, and prioritizing strategies. These efforts are to maximize the likelihood that final products have broad community support when brought to the TPO for adoption and reduce the likelihood that plans and studies need to undertake extensive revisions. Some of the highlights of public input in the TPO's initiatives and studies are summarized below.

Major TPO projects with substantial public input

Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan

In an effort to create and solidify relationships with underrepresented communities, staff carried out a targeted engagement strategy to collect input from communities of concern for the 2021 update of the Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan. By going into communities of concern to administer surveys, staff oversampled low-income people of color for input. As a result of the public input collected through these engagement activities, the Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan implements a process called the Equity Approach. This approach involves policy changes that staff can integrate into TPO plans and processes to improve the quality of life of all residents of Hillsborough County, particularly for the most underserved citizens and communities. A few recommendations in the Equity Approach include:

- Tailor public engagement methods to reach underserved communities.
- Expand community representation on TPO advisory committees.
- Coordinate with other jurisdictions to tackle complex equity issues

Additional recommendations found in the Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan include:

- Better advertisement of existing programs
- Meet community where they're at
- Create genuine relationships
- Ensure true representation



Transportation Improvement Plan

In 2021, the TPO approved its Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), a five-year plan that included \$3.1 billion in funding for local transportation projects. During the five-hour-long meeting, Board members heard recommendations from TPO staff, FDOT District 7 Secretary David Gwynn, and the public. Projects proposed for I-275 through Tampa Heights and Seminole Heights as well as the I-4/I-275 Downtown Interchange (DTI) caused lengthy public comment and debate; the topic garnered 31 comments via email, voicemail, and social media in advance of the meeting in addition to 20 public comments during the meeting.

Most of the public's concerns revolved around FDOT's quick-fix project to address traffic congestion at the DTI. The proposed project included the following changes:

- The addition of a new exit in the Ybor City area
- The construction of additional lanes on ramps of the DTI which would require the acquisition of right-of-way

The TPO board supported the quick-fix concept by adopting it into the 2045 long range transportation plan after a public hearing in November 2019. This decision was informed by the TPO's largest ever public opinion survey of summer 2019, which garnered more than 5000 responses. The survey described the quick-fix concept as requiring no new parcel acquisition. By November 2019, FDOT had clarified that about 10 parcels would need to be acquired. This information was provided in a deep-dive presentation about implications of the DTI project to the TPO board in October 2019. The quick-fix concept was chosen because it provided some safety and traffic flow benefits, remaining the least impactful concept in terms of right of way acquisition. Other concepts for the DTI required 10-20 times as many parcels to be acquired.

The quick-fix concept first appeared in the TPO list of priority projects in the TIP adopted in June 2019. At that time, the TIP described the quick-fix concept as requiring no parcel acquisition. In the TIP adopted the following year, June 2020, TPO staff did not update the description from zero parcels to around 10 parcels. TPO staff also did not update the list of priority projects the following year — in the TIP adopted in June 2021 — in spite of the fact that funds to acquire those parcels were added to the TIP in a TIP amendment approved May 2021. This oversight did not live up to the TPO's commitment to public access to accurate information.

During the 2021 TIP public hearing, the TPO Board considered the public's concerns about the project. However, they decided the project was too far along in development to remove from the TIP. FDOT was also concerned about jeopardizing Federal funding for the project. Subsequently, the Board voted to approve the TIP 11-4. But it came at a price: The TPO found itself in a position of broken trust with some community members.

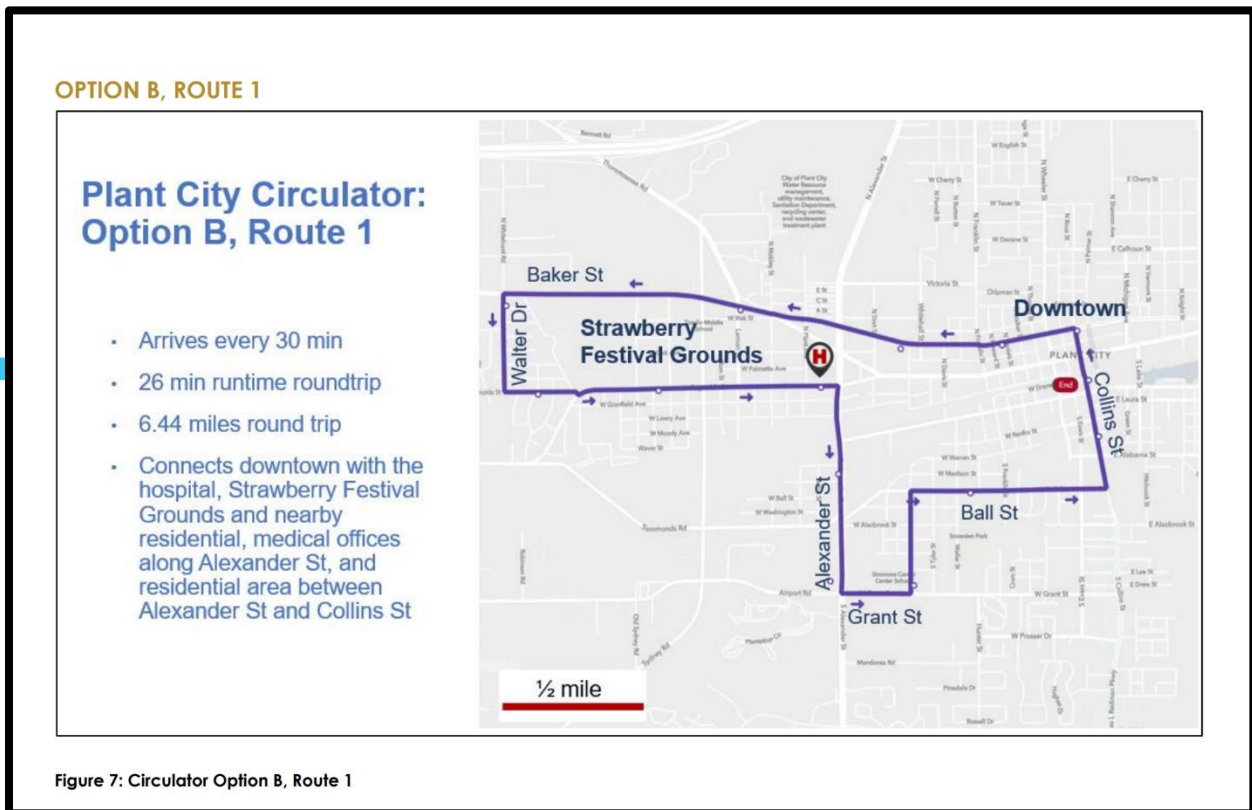
To rebuild trust within the community, the TPO will more diligently research projects presented for the TIP. The TPO has also implemented an equity scoring system to make sure projects are supporting the needs of communities of concern.

Safe Access to Parks Pilot Study

TPO staff conducted public outreach for the Safe Access to Parks pilot project through collaboration with an agency stakeholder group, online public outreach, and in-person public outreach. Additionally, regular presentations were made to the Hillsborough TPO committees to provide updates on the project and to receive feedback. A website to share project information was developed, with links to an online web map and an online survey. The web map and survey were developed in both English and Spanish and were open to the public from mid-August through early November 2021. Between the three parks, there were over 95 unique responses to the online survey and over 115 comments on the web map. To help inform people who use the park on a regular basis about the outreach, yard signs and flyers were placed around the park and distributed to people who have connections to the park. As a result of the outreach, recommendations included the traffic signal timing strategies to reduce red light-running and the use of paint to emphasize intersection points of bike lanes, sidewalks, and roads.

Plant City Transit Feasibility Study

The TPO collaborated with the Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) and the City of Plant City to create a Transit Plan for the City of Plant City. Through a series of Stakeholder Focus Group Meetings, Public Open House Meetings, and Travel Market Analysis, the study team identified various alternatives for circulator routes within Plant City, an express bus to Downtown Tampa, and a service to Lakeland. The most preferred alternative based on public input was a set of two fixed routes which would circulate through Plant City, connecting the downtown area, a local Walmart, Plant City High School, and the Strawberry Festival grounds. Based on this input, the Study suggests HART and Plant City further coordinate to identify funding sources.





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.



Logo for the 1 Minute Matters educational video series

8. Summary, Results & Recommendations

Public engagement involves the public in giving feedback, solving problems or making decisions that affect them. The TPO staff reviews agency practices and tools to cultivate an effective and useful public engagement experience for everyone involved.

Notable Successes in Public Engagement

1. FLiP Jr.

The goal of FLiP Jr. was to engage children in communities that have historically been underrepresented in urban planning decisions, giving them the knowledge and hands-on experience that would help them serve as planning and transportation safety ambassadors in their homes and community. In 2021, the eight-week program served 60 participants across three locations in Tampa Heights, Palm River, and Town 'n' Country. The program also served an additional 20 participants during a one-hour workshop in Wimauma. Children learned various topics such as bike safety and transportation planning. The highlight of the experience was an outdoor beautification project that involved the creation of a mural. The program also received the 2021 Public Outreach and Engagement Award from the Sun Coast section of the Florida Chapter of the APA

2. Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan

To engage the public for the Nondiscrimination and Equity Plan during covid restrictions, the TPO had to reach people individually and in small groups as opposed to large groups. This led to engagement via door-to-door canvassing and focus groups. As a result, the TPO was able to hear comments from groups they wouldn't normally engage with such as working members of the public and people living in rural areas. The TPO received feedback on its public engagement strategies. Some suggestions called for more community-based public engagement and representation that better reflects communities of concern.

3. Plant City Transit Plan Study public feedback

The TPO partnered with Hillsborough Area Regional Transit (HART) and the City of Plant City to create a Transit Plan for the City of Plant City. The study team hosted public engagement events and a Travel Market Analysis to identify various public transportation alternatives.

4. Hybrid engagement

During the covid pandemic, meetings of the Board and committees were entirely virtual. These meetings then pivoted to a hybrid format with both virtual and in-person components. The TPO established clear procedures and instructions for the public regarding how to participate, maintaining multiple avenues for input, and publishing the instructions in multiple spots

5. TIP Amendment Pilot Program

The TPO greatly increased public feedback on TIP amendments with its pilot program. The program involved the creation of a social media post, newsletter article, dedicated webpage, and road sign for each amendment. Prior to the pilot, agency staff placed notice of TIP amendments in the agenda packets for the Citizen's Advisory Committee, Technical Advisory Committee, and TPO Board, which were published on the PlanHillsborough.org website and distributed to the media. Since the pilot's inception, the TPO has received 18 comments regarding four TIP amendments presented to the Board in 2021.

6. Sponsored videos in partnership with 83 Degrees, including a series explaining why roads are unsafe and what can be done to improve resilience.

Plan Hillsborough sponsored 83 Degrees to create four video stories, two of which were about transportation and featured TPO work. Plan Hillsborough also created the 1 Minute Matters video series, a collection of one-minute shorts that focused on better coordination of transportation and land use (this implements a recommendation from the 2020 report).

Recommendations

Based on this review, the TPO's Public Participation Plan has worked effectively during the 2020 - 2021 cycle. As the TPO is committed to continuous improvement and making the best use of limited resources, the following refinements are recommended:

1. Increase digital and social media tools to increase engagement

Participation through popular platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and NextDoor can increase opportunities for public engagement. The TPO should use these platforms to expand its reach. It should also use paid advertising for strategic social media posts more often and increase web exposure by posting special meetings in the free online calendars of the Tampa Bay Times and Creative Loafing.

2. Institutionalize the proactive outreach for TIP amendments

In 2021, the TPO tested an engagement strategy for TIP amendments that included the creation of social media posts, a newsletter article, road signs, and a dedicated webpage for each amendment. The TPO should make this strategy a formal policy within the agency while reducing the notice period to two weeks for consistency.

3. Provide more clarity about the TPO's role and responsibilities in the transportation planning process

Now that the TPO has successfully launched the 1 Minute Matters educational video series, the agency should create infographics and additional video shorts to explain the TPO's role and responsibilities. One example would be the creation of a video that explains the TIP process or funding sources for transportation projects.

4. Following successful engagement for the Nondiscrimination Plan, use focus groups more often and consider target demographics

The TPO recognizes that there are challenges in getting responses to online surveys. Although social media plays a huge role in the agency's exposure, the TPO also realizes the value of one-on-one interactions as well as small group engagement. This is evident in the engagement strategy for the Nondiscrimination Plan. Future engagement can involve more in-depth and nuanced feedback by scheduling a 60 or 90 minute zoom discussion with a small group of people who are particularly interested in a specific topic. This strategy can

provide opportunities for people from a variety of backgrounds to weigh in. How the TPO designs the groups, what each group focuses on, who is recruited to participate will become more important if the TPO uses this tool more often.

5. Build culture of awareness

During the 2021 FLiP Jr. Ambassadors Program, the TPO raised awareness in communities of concern by engaging children and families. These voices of these communities were historically absent from the planning process. The TPO should increase awareness in these communities by engaging them more often throughout the year. The TPO should also expand this effort into other communities by engaging low-income workplaces, small community groups, schools, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, and community centers. Therefore, for every planning study, when public outreach is conducted, at least one community group or faith-based organization should be recruited to help spread the word about the study and any opportunities to give input shaping the study recommendations.

