

## CHAPTER 7: Strategies

Beyond meeting state and federal requirements, the PPP outlines strategies employed by the Hillsborough TPO to further encourage public participation and be responsive to the unique needs of the community. Given that the specific needs of the community are prone to changing rapidly, the TPO exercises discretion in implementing the strategies outlined below on an as-needed basis. The wide range of engagement strategies listed in Appendix B is utilized as appropriate to the constituency of each planning project, to achieve the objectives described below.

### Telling Our Story

Telling our story in a language and manner that is both understandable and meaningful to the public is a necessary strategy, given the diversity of the community being served. Framing our story from the perspective of the audience makes TPO plans and programs more relevant to people and greatly encourages their participation. For example, ‘traffic’ is a relatable concept for many people, whereas ‘congestion management process’ may not be readily understood by the general public. Explaining technical and complex transportation concepts in understandable and relatable terms continues to be a point of emphasis for the Hillsborough TPO.



## Being Cooperative and Creative

Using pictures and other visual aids to tell our story is an excellent way to make planning more relatable. Creative marketing approaches for advertisements and collateral pieces helps us to effectively communicate messages to those affected by planning projects. Advanced techniques, such as still-photography or animated simulations, make it easy for citizens to visualize future transportation projects and imagine how they may be affected.

## Involving the Community

Public participation is a mission, not simply a requirement. The TPO supports the following public participation goals in order to encourage community involvement:

- **Visibility**

Raise the awareness of the TPO as a leader in transportation planning for Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City and Hillsborough County.

- **Engagement**

Involve the public in every phase of the transportation planning process.

- **Notification**

Notify the public when key decisions are being made and provide opportunities for comment.

- **Responsiveness**

Ensure that issues raised by the public are explicitly considered and that a timely and appropriate response is provided.

- **Communication**

Ensure that all communication media and TPO plans are presented in a format understood by partner agencies and the public.

- **Resourcefulness**

Be creative - optimize and effectively use resources dedicated to public participation.



- **User-Friendliness**

Provide user-friendly collateral materials, and communicate in a clear, credible, concise and consistent manner. Where appropriate, use visualization techniques to describe plans consistent with a citizen's perspective.

- **Proactive**

Make it easy for all citizens to get involved and be heard.

- **Accessible**

Proactively reach out to inform and engage populations that have been under-represented in transportation decision-making.

- **Compliant**

Meet or exceed the spirit, intent and requirements of local, state and federal statutes and regulations.

### **Capturing All Input**

Public commentary comes from myriad sources, including e-mail correspondence, both scientific and informal polls, remarks offered at community meetings, or statements entered into the record at advertised public hearings.

TPO planners, therefore, must ensure that all such comments are captured and that no input is ignored. Staff and consultants will make concerted efforts to document and synthesize all comments, regardless of source, so that the TPO board can give full consideration to all issues raised by the public and respond appropriately.

TPO staff and consultants employ tools and standard procedures to retain and manage public commentary, including:

- Minutes and summaries of all regular TPO and committee meetings to keep track of public speakers and record comments;
- Annual logs to document all TPO public outreach events and meetings, documenting the date, location, number of participants, any issues raised, and whether the event was held in an Environmental Justice area;
- Annual logs of TPO publications and brochures, showing the number of copies produced and their distribution;
- All e-mails sent to [TPO@plancom.org](mailto:TPO@plancom.org) are forwarded to the appropriate staff for a response, and are copied to a digital folder to facilitate their compilation and synthesis;



- Public comment compilers are used to log and transcribe comments and attachments, such as scanned letters; track major topics addressed by the commenter, such as mode of transportation, and whether the commenter favors or doesn't favor investing in that mode; and produce standard reports;
- Social media and networking sources are increasingly popular forms of communication. Input received through such sources may be compiled through the use of archiving software to facilitate records retention and searches for particular people, topics or conversational threads across different platforms. The TPO has a policy governing the appropriate use of such social networking/media, included as [Appendix H](#); and
- Virtually every plan or study initiated by the TPO has a public engagement component. The specific techniques will vary, but TPO staff and/or consultants are tasked with compiling public comments and documenting how collected input affected the outcome of the particular plan or study. All major plans, studies and reports should feature a section entitled "What We Heard" from the public and how that affected the outcome. [Appendix F](#) provides sample language for scopes of work to capture public input, as well as to document an explicit TPO response.

Members of the public are consulted in the development of the Public Participation Plan. The draft of the document is posted on [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org) for 45 days and linked on the agency's social media and Current Projects & Drafts website sidebar. A review copy is placed in the library, and the document is revised per comments from TPO committees. Beginning in 2018, the agency is also providing review copies to non-transportation planning professionals for review. This is to ensure that the document is accessible to a range of individuals interested in the public participation component of transportation planning.

Written comments and correspondence are treated as public records and are subject to disclosure under Florida's Sunshine Laws. They are archived and kept for a number of years per Florida's public records retention requirements.

## Collaborating with Partners

Public outreach can often be a time-intensive, costly endeavor. The TPO, therefore, strives to reduce redundancies and ensure cost-effectiveness by collaborating with other entities to expand its outreach initiatives and effectively engage the public. For example, TPO workshops are frequently joint endeavors held in collaboration with other public agencies and non-governmental organizations.



Economies can be achieved through joint promotion and cost-sharing agreements to facilitate the process of hosting workshops, meetings

and public events. Some strategies utilized to improve cooperation and coordination with our agency partners are included below:

- Collaborating more closely with agency partners on documents, such as the LRTP, TIP, and FDOT District 7 Work Program;
- Ensuring consistency between FDOT District 7 design plans and TPO-adopted or proposed LRTPs, TIPs, etc.;
- Requesting complete information from FDOT on projects included in the TIP;
- Designing educational materials with input from the public regarding the best methods for explaining project development processes in plain English; and
- Updating collateral public message materials as they become available.

### **Making Use of Technology**

Internet access and the use of social networks to communicate are increasingly prevalent. The TPO has taken advantage of technology to inform the public about our plans and programs. New forms of communication technology allow the TPO and the public to engage in a two-way dialogue. “Crowdsourcing” or Web 2.0 technology will enable the TPO to fashion plans in an even more collaborative, rather than reactive, manner. Crowdsourcing platforms allow for communal problem-solving in real time, where users may interact both with the TPO and with each other. Other internet-based tools, such as wikis, webcasts, photo inventories and online dialogues, also allow users to develop documents collaboratively. These can be used, for example, to draft corridor plans with direct input from community representatives.

Mobile devices, such as smartphones and tablets, are also increasingly prevalent hardware. Such technology will enable the TPO to continue delivering its messages directly to interested parties and obtain immediate feedback. These forms of communication, however, are not without their nuances. One unique caveat to using these new forms of communication is that all messages sent or received are considered public records and are thus subject to Sunshine Law requirements governing retention and disclosure. Moreover, board and committee members are cautioned against using these new media to communicate among themselves on topics likely to be discussed in public meetings. (See [Appendix D](#) for excerpts from Florida Attorney General’s Advisory Opinion AGO 2009-19).

In response to a recommendation made by the Department of Transportation in the TPO’s 2017 Federal Certification Review, the TPO has launched an online guide of common transportation acronyms. The Transportation Acronym Guide (TAG) is available online at [planhillsborough.org/TPO\\_glossary/](http://planhillsborough.org/TPO_glossary/). This guide is also available in document form and attached to this document as [Appendix A](#). To promote this product, the TPO posted it under its Current Projects & Drafts list on [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org) and made an announcement on social media.

## Involving Diverse Constituencies

The public comprises a wide array of people with different interests, backgrounds, and mobility options. The Hillsborough TPO recognizes that not everyone has the time, ability, or motivation to directly participate in transportation planning. In what follows, some constituencies are identified which may pose, or endure, significant challenges to participating in public outreach efforts. Each is listed and specific strategies are discussed which may address those challenges.

- **Private sector transportation providers and freight stakeholders** have limited time when it comes to transportation planning. They seek immediate relief to problems that directly affect their drivers and impose costs on their operations. Slow-downs caused by bottlenecks, turn-movement restrictions, or other problems amenable to relatively short-term, low-cost solutions are “low-hanging fruit” that can attract the interest of freight stakeholders. Umbrella groups, such as the Florida Trucking Association, and proxies, such as Port Tampa Bay, can sometimes represent these interests. Inviting freight stakeholders and private transportation providers to annual summits and/or regional meetings to enlist their help in identifying freight and goods movement problems and solutions may be preferred in lieu of monthly meetings. Telephone interviews are another way to obtain their input on specific issues or plans.



- **Persons with mobility impairments** often have difficulty traveling to meeting locations. Specialized transportation such as wheelchair lift-equipped vans, provided by the Sunshine Line, may have to be scheduled to pick them up and return them home. Another option is to attend events where there are likely to be a large number of disabled persons in attendance, and/or organized by groups that speak for the disabled.
- **Children and students** make up a significant portion of the non-driving public. Consequently, they are major users of bicycle and pedestrian networks. Getting involved with Boys and Girls Clubs, scouts, school and PTA activities such as “teach-in” events is one way to get input from them and their parents or teachers.
- **Low-income individuals and minorities** often have limited involvement in transportation planning. They may not have access to a vehicle, not be aware, or not have time to go to a meeting about transportation. Outreach can be extended to these groups through gatekeepers, including churches, neighborhood groups or community fairs, and has proven to be effective in obtaining input from these constituents.

- The TPO maintains a growing inventory of **community groups which represent or work with protected or vulnerable populations**. The inventory indicates whether the group or organization represents the perspective of one or more of the six demographic criteria used to identify Communities of Concern. The TPO will use the inventory for the 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan, among other plans and projects, to ensure adequate involvement of these communities in the planning process. The inventory is updated regularly and is included in this document as [Appendix J](#).

## CHAPTER 8: Evaluation

### Measures of Effectiveness

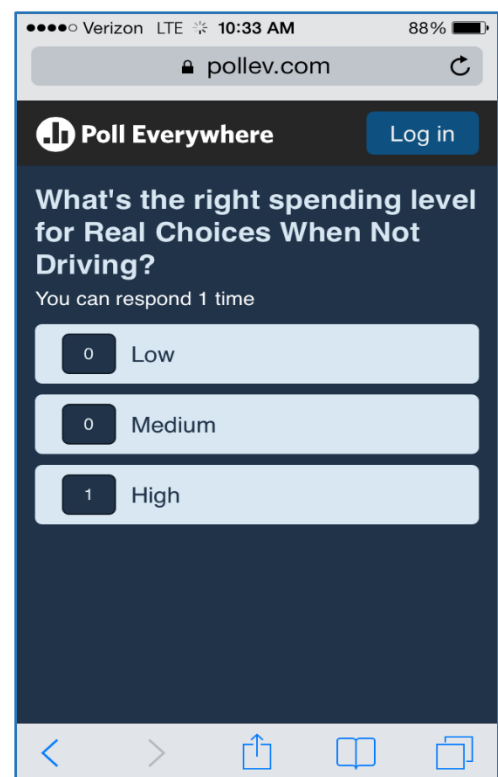
Evaluation is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the PPP. Being responsive to the public raises questions, such as: *To what degree is the community participating in public involvement opportunities? Are we reaching our target audience and key constituencies?* and, *Are TPO documents effective and informative tools for public awareness?* Answers to these questions can be determined through an analytical evaluation process. New and improved strategies and techniques can be developed to improve the overall performance of the public involvement process. The following are Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs) considered in the bi-annual evaluation of the PPP.

### Measuring Visibility & Productivity

- Number of TPO publications produced;
- Number of TPO newsletters and brochures distributed, such as Bicycle Suitability Maps, Ride Guides and Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning, etc.;
- Number of newspaper advertisements and public notices placed in publications with minority audiences;
- Media inventory of newspaper articles, television and radio coverage;
- Number of CCC brochures distributed;
- Number of TMO sponsored maps distributed, as well as any other sponsorship or advertisement opportunity;
- Number of meetings broadcast on Hillsborough County Television; and
- Number of publications available on [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org), at a minimum to include the LRTP, TIP, and an annual list of obligated projects.

### Measuring Participation Opportunities

- Number of TPO public forums, workshops and community meetings at which displays, presentations, discussions and feedback occurred;





- Number and origin of participants at such public forums, workshops and community meetings;
- Number of persons invited to attend meetings;
- Number of participants at public forums, workshops and community meetings held in historically underserved areas or with such populations;
- Number of participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities, such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida;
- Number and origin of participants at monthly TPO and committee meetings;
- Number of persons on the TPO mailing list receiving regular agendas; and
- Number of draft plans, reports, other preliminary documents or surveys posted to [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org) for public comment.



### **Increasing Public Participation Engagement with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, & the Transportation Disadvantaged**

- Ensuring the PPP report details representative public engagement;

- Developing maps with updated, community-specific demographic and socioeconomic data within the TPO's geographic boundaries at the census tract, block group or zip code level; and
- Listing all TPO committee members' demographic data, including race, ethnicity, age, and whether or not they are disabled.

### **Measuring Public Interest & Feedback**

- Number of returned electronic comment forms provided to members of the public after receiving staff assistance;
- Total number of interactions at public outreach events and meetings;
- Number of verbal comments received at open forum discussions, public hearings and at any other opportunities for public interaction;
- Number of phone, fax, mail and email inquiries or comments cards received;
- Number of visitors to [PlanHillsborough.org](http://PlanHillsborough.org);
- Types of tools and technologies employed at public outreach events and meetings; and
- Seeking feedback that is immediate and project specific.

### **Measuring Input Results**

- Number of issues identified through public input and responded to by the TPO; and
- Documented revisions to plans based on citizen input.

### **Refining PPP Process**

- Periodic reviews of whether PPP presentations and documents are accessible to the public;
- Update the PPP in conjunction with, and at the outset of, each LRTP update; and
- Recommendations to enhance the PPP.

Using these measures, the PPP MOE is akin to a report card on the TPO's Public Participation Plan. The report is presented to the TPO Board every other year, posted on the TPO website, and lays the groundwork for continuous improvement to the TPO's public outreach and engagement.