

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

for the Transportation Planning Organization

*Serving Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City,
and Unincorporated Hillsborough County*



2022 Update | Approved August 10, 2022



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Transportation
Planning Organization

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Public Participation Plan

for the Transportation Planning Organization serving Tampa,
Temple Terrace, Plant City and Unincorporated Hillsborough County

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The TPO does not discriminate in any of its programs or services. Public participation is solicited by the TPO without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, family or religious status. To learn more about our commitment to nondiscrimination, visit planhillsborough.org/title-vi-and-accessibility/

CHAPTER 1: Introduction & Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

Mobility has a tremendous impact on a wide range of activities in Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City, Hillsborough County and throughout the Tampa Bay region. Transportation is a dynamic concept which makes it possible for us to get to our intended destination, but which also mirrors the social, economic, spatial, and political dynamics of our society.

The Hillsborough County Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) is committed to meaningful public engagement throughout the long-range transportation planning process.



Due to the far-reaching impacts inherent to transportation projects, soliciting advice and input from a wide range of stakeholders is critical to making sound transportation decisions.

Stakeholders can include both individuals and groups, whether citizens, business owners, environmental and civic organizations, agency partners, or advocacy groups that represent the needs of the traditionally underserved and underrepresented - including low-income individuals, minorities, those with limited English proficiency, youth, the elderly, and persons with disabilities. Each of these stakeholders offer a unique perspective on what it means to be mobile, and each also presents specific transportation needs and challenges. The diversity of these needs should be considered prior to the TPO rendering decisions on transportation projects.

Many important decisions regarding a transportation project are made years before a shovel even breaks ground. Thus, it is extremely important to encourage engagement in the process early and often. Early and active participation allows stakeholders to wield greater influence over how public dollars get spent in our communities, and shape the future of this region, county, municipality, and even our own neighborhoods.

Public participation includes the process, methods, and tools used by the TPO to inform and engage the public about transportation issues. A meaningful public participation plan is guided by more than just federal requirements; it is a valuable tool used by the TPO with the goal of making transportation investments meet the needs of the public and other stakeholders in both the present and future. The Hillsborough TPO believes that...

You are an important part of the planning process. Your opinion really does count and will help shape the future for the children of Hillsborough County.

This Public Participation Plan (PPP) contains the guidelines and expectations for public participation during the transportation planning activities and processes conducted by the Hillsborough TPO, including the procedures, tools, and strategies for outreach and education on transportation issues.

The TPO is directly responsible for making sure that federal and state dollars spent on existing and future transportation projects and programs are based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive planning process.

The following principles, developed in conjunction with best practice standards for public involvement, guide the PPP:

Provide opportunities for involvement

Avenues for involvement will be open, meaningful and organized to provide a setting that encourages convenient and comfortable participation. Consideration of needs for accessibility, scheduling, location, format and language of informational materials will be structured to allow informed, constructive exchanges with clear presentation of all information. Participants will be provided information so that they more clearly understand the trade-offs of each respective proposal, plan, or project, and will be encouraged to consider and weigh the many competing transportation objectives.

Be inclusive of all constituencies

The TPO will use best practices to identify stakeholders and target audiences. New strategies will continue to be explored in order to bring the information to these groups. Initiatives to reach new and existing constituencies include continuing outreach to the transportation disadvantaged, including minority, low income, the elderly, youth communities and neighborhoods or groups that may be affected by proposed projects. Creative techniques and technologies will be explored in order to engage the audience in discussion and interaction throughout the planning process.

Be responsive to participants

TPO forums will facilitate discussions that directly correspond to the participants and their available time. Informational materials should be clear and concise and address the concerns of the participants. Information will be available in sufficient detail to allow citizens to form and express their independent views. The results of all public involvement activities will be documented and given full consideration in all TPO decision-making, as well as conveyed to the implementing



agencies for their consideration.

Provide a predictable process

The planning process will be understandable and known well in advance of plan considerations. The consistency in our process will allow the TPO staff, citizens, and officials to budget their time and effectively apply their resources.

Be creative and flexible

The direction and effectiveness of the PPP should be reviewed periodically to ensure that it meets the needs of both the public and the TPO. This program should continue to evolve and include new avenues of communication to inform the TPO's public outreach initiatives.

Maximize exposure, minimize costs

Wherever possible the Hillsborough TPO is committed to coordinate with other local, federal and statewide public involvement processes in order to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs. The TPO will also work collaboratively with agency partners to furnish more project-specific information to stakeholders, thus providing the public more complete information. This will allow us to reach a larger audience and minimize costs and redundancies.

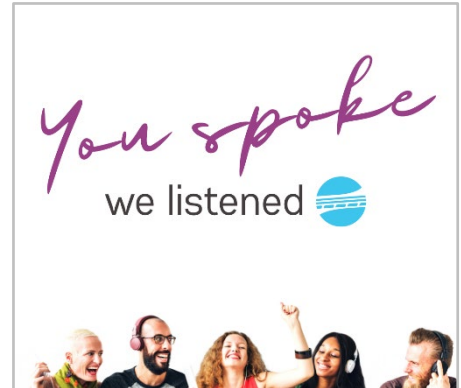
The mission of the Hillsborough TPO is to develop a comprehensive long-range transportation plan (LRTP) that supports economic development and the mobility needs of the community by:

- Preserving neighborhoods;
- Protecting the environment;
- Enhancing quality of life;
- Promoting public transportation;
- Cooperating with, and coordinating between, both the community and agencies to enable the plan to work.

Maximizing exposure to engage the public in the transportation decision-making process is the vision that drives this *Public Participation Plan*.

We're listening...

It is a priority for this TPO that all citizens in Hillsborough County be given the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process, including low-income individuals, the elderly, persons with disabilities and persons with limited English proficiency.



CHAPTER 2: TPO Board & Committees

All federally supported transportation projects and programs for Tampa, Temple Terrace, Plant City and Hillsborough County go through the transportation planning process. The obligation to provide information and consider public input in decision-making is explicit in federal regulations.

The TPO is created by agreement between local governments and the Governor of the State of Florida.

As indicated below, the Hillsborough TPO Board is composed of representatives from each of the respective governments and transportation authorities. TPO board members are subject to change – up-to-date membership is available on PlanHillsborough.org, and advisory committee and working group details are included on the following pages.

All meetings of the TPO and its advisory committees are open to the public. Public comment is welcomed, usually at the beginning of each meeting.

Committees & Working Groups

Policy Committee is a subset of the TPO board that acts as a sounding board for issues that will be brought to the TPO Board for action. In a less formal setting, members can ask questions and more fully discuss upcoming TPO action items. The Committee also provides guidance to the TPO staff on policy matters.

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) consists of 23 citizen volunteers. Sixteen are appointed by each of the TPO Board members, and one citizen represents the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board. Six at-large members (citizens) are drawn from African American, Hispanic, female and younger demographic groups, plus neighborhood and business representatives. Many CAC members belong to homeowner, business, or other civic associations.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is composed of technically qualified representatives employed by, or associated with, a public or semi-public agency for the purpose of planning, programming and/or engineering of the transportation system within the Hillsborough County Transportation Planning Organization area boundary. It is responsible for assisting in the development of transportation planning work programs; for coordinating transportation planning and programming; for review of all transportation studies, reports, plans and/or programs, and making recommendations to the Transportation Planning Organization, based upon the technical sufficiency, accuracy, and completeness of transportation related studies, plans and/or programs.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) makes Hillsborough County a safer and more pleasurable place to bicycle and walk. The committee makes recommendations to the TPO on bicycle and pedestrian-related issues. Up to 22 volunteers comprise the BPAC. Eleven seats are held by at-large members who are appointed by the TPO. The remaining seats are held by representatives of local agencies, cities and county.

Livable Roadways Committee (LRC) is an interdisciplinary group of volunteers from the public and private sectors who represent local governments, government agencies, companies, citizen groups and professional organizations. The committee strives to create a transportation system that balances design and aesthetics with issues of roadway safety and function. It reviews transportation and roadway plans and policies, making recommendations for improvement. The committee discusses topics related to transit, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and roadway design, safety and function. Focused on streetscape beautification, site and building design, landscape, environmental protection, preservation and signage, the committee is committed to considering all modes of transportation in the recommendations it makes.

Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB) is composed of members representing agencies and boards, citizens and a representative from the private transportation industry. A sampling of the agencies represented includes Blind Services, Children and Families, Elder Affairs, public schools and Veteran's Affairs, among others. The TDCB guides and coordinates local transportation services with the goal of improving quality of life for the elderly, those who have physical or mental disabilities, children at risk, and the economically disadvantaged.

Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (ITS) is composed of technically qualified representatives of agencies involved in the planning, programming, engineering and/or implementation of intelligent transportation systems projects in Hillsborough County. The ITS Committee is responsible for assisting in the development of ITS planning work programs, as well as reviewing related studies, reports, plans, projects (including consistency with regional architecture and other standards and/or programs) and making recommendations to the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) and/or other agencies. The ITS Committee recommendations to the TPO are based upon the technical sufficiency, accuracy, and completeness of studies, plans and/or programs.

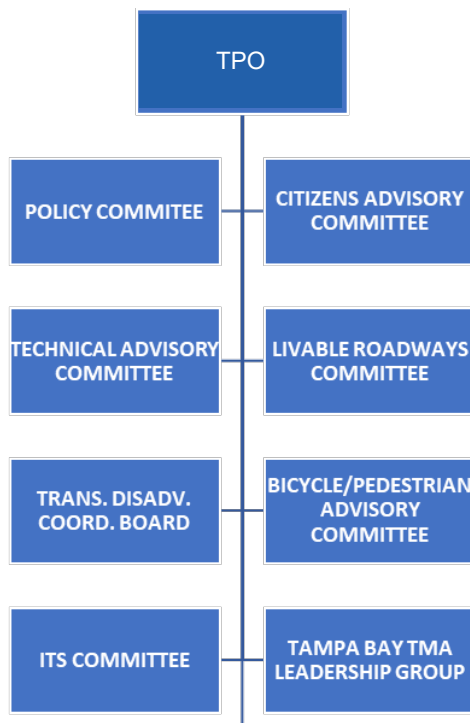
Tampa Bay Transportation Management Area Leadership Group (TMA) is composed of three TPO board members drawn from the Hillsborough, Pasco, and Pinellas County TPOs. It performs an advisory role to each of the three TPOs. Leadership members are responsible for conveying concerns of their respective TPOs to the TMA group, and for conveying TMA group discussion and recommendations back to the TPOs.

School Transportation Working Group was composed of transportation-focused professionals representing local governments, transit agencies, public safety organizations, and several functional groups within the School District. The group provided transportation coordination and long-range planning for a host of topics, from traffic circulation to walk/bike safety to school-pools and transit. The group was created in 2015, as an *ad hoc* committee and to meet for one year. After several annual renewals, the last meeting of this group was held December 5, 2018. Multi-agency coordination on school transportation issues was taken up by a newly formed School Board Transportation Committee and a staff-level School Circulation Committee led by the school district, complemented by a new subcommittee of the Florida Department of Transportation District 7 Community Traffic Safety Team.

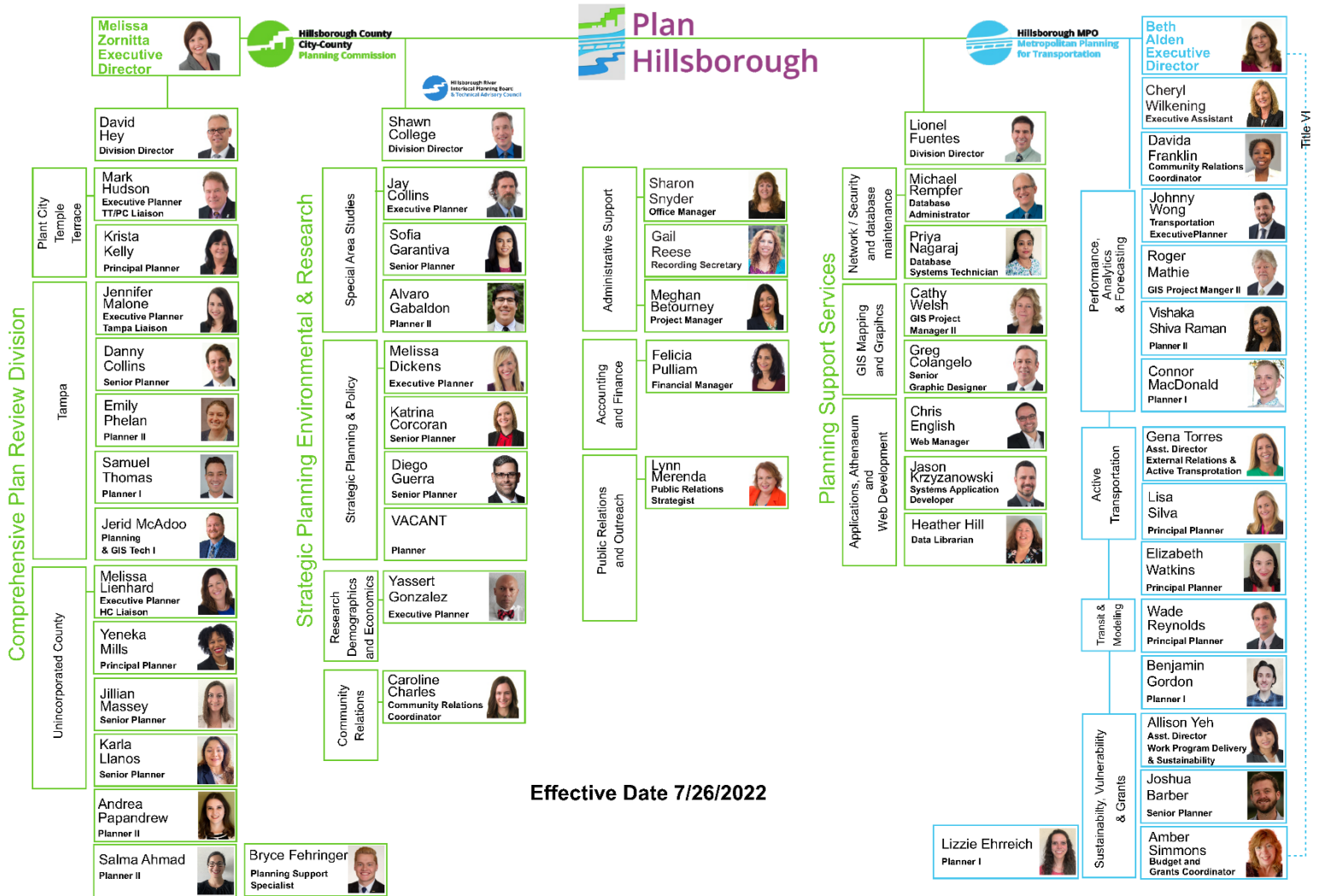
TPO Board Membership and Advisory Committees



TPO Advisory Committees



Plan Hillsborough Organization Chart



CHAPTER 3: Historical Context

In 1962, then-President John F. Kennedy signed legislation which thereby authorized continuation of the Federal-Aid Highway Act. Among other purposes, the Act promoted cooperative transportation planning in certain urban areas among federal, state, and local authorities, and also mandated that all urbanized areas with a population greater than 50,000 establish a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive (3C) planning process in order to be eligible for US Department of Transportation (USDOT) funding. A little more than a decade later, the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 strengthened those initiatives by mandating the creation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for all areas required to have a 3C planning process.

In 1977, an MPO was created for the Tampa urbanized area, with staff provided by the Hillsborough County City-County Planning Commission. It was known as the Tampa Urbanized Area Transportation Study.

In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) was signed into law. ISTEA was landmark legislation that introduced a comprehensive approach to address transportation issues by emphasizing and encouraging innovation, intermodalism and flexibility. The approach that began with ISTEA was further advanced with the adoption of the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) in 1998.

Also in 1998, the Hillsborough TPO, known then as Hillsborough MPO, adopted a *Public Involvement Plan* (PIP). The PIP identified a proactive public participation process for the transportation planning products of the TPO. Accordingly, the process includes advertisement of timely public notices, support for full public access and input to key decisions, and early and continuing involvement of the community. Since that time, several evaluation measures have been adopted by the TPO in response to the Federal Highway Administration's suggestion that the TPO develop a mechanism for evaluating the effectiveness of the PIP.

In 2003, at the onset of the *2025 Long Range Transportation Plan* update, a new *Public Involvement Plan* was adopted by the TPO which, for the first time, specified principles which would guide the TPO's public outreach involvement. Furthermore, the new PIP included modified goals, objectives, an updated toolkit and a revised evaluation section.



Pursuant to state and federal requirements, the PIP was amended and renamed the *Public Participation Plan* (PPP) in 2006. Since then, the PPP has been updated at least once every two years.

In 2015, the President signed the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act into law, which expanded public participation requirements for MPOs. MPOs must now solicit comments from public ports, tourism interests, and certain private transportation providers.

Also in 2015, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) updated its MPO Program Management Handbook to fully incorporate principles of Environmental Justice (EJ) in programs and policies. This update came with two requirements for TPOs:

- Ensure and document early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for 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, and where impacts are unavoidable, that documented steps are taken to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts.

The Hillsborough TPO change its name in 2021 to better reflect its mission as a transportation planning agency.

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 The Sunshine Law.

CHAPTER 4: Public Participation Requirements

Public participation is integral to crafting sound transportation policies, programs and projects. Without meaningful public involvement, there is a risk of making decisions which may produce unintended negative consequences. While the Hillsborough TPO firmly believes that encouraging meaningful public participation is necessary for good decision-making, federal and state requirements establish the minimum standards. The TPO is responsible for actively involving all affected parties in an open, cooperative and collaborative process that provides meaningful opportunities to influence transportation decisions.

FEDERAL AUTHORIZING LEGISLATION

Under 23 U.S.C. Sec. 134(h), Congress requires TPOs to consider transportation projects and strategies that:

- Support the economic vitality of the United States, the States, metropolitan areas, and non-metropolitan areas, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes throughout the State, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation;
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts upon surface transportation;
- Enhance travel and tourism; and
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.



The TPO is charged with preparing plans and programs that consider such projects, and providing for participation by interested parties, including “citizens, affected public agencies,

representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit and other interested parties.” The 2015 FAST Act also added public ports, intercity bus operators, and employer-based commuting programs as interested parties.

TITLE VI of the CIVIL RIGHTS ACT of 1964

Title VI, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq., otherwise known as “Title VI,” was enacted as part of the landmark Civil Rights Act of 1964. It prohibits discrimination based on race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.

As President John F. Kennedy said in 1963:

Simple justice requires that public funds, to which all taxpayers of all races [colors, and national origins] contribute, not be spent in any fashion which encourages, entrenches, subsidizes or results in racial [color or national origin] discrimination.

The Hillsborough TPO adheres to the provision of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination in any program receiving federal assistance. As the TPO develops and conducts its public involvement activities, it strives to seek out and consider the needs and input of the general public, including interested parties and those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems and those who may face challenges accessing employment and other services, such as minorities and persons with limited proficiency in English.

Communities of Concern

Communities of Concern are some of the most vulnerable populations residing in Hillsborough County. Members of a Community of Concern may face unique and often overwhelming

Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan

The Hillsborough TPO updated its Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan in 2018. The update contained a new set of indicators called Communities of Concern, which identifies characteristics that may significantly burden individuals with regard to transportation and/or participation in the TPO’s public engagement processes. The Plan outlines engagement strategies, plan equity considerations, and outreach effort evaluation measures.

This update is the first standalone Title VI plan update in over a decade – the last was composed in 2006, and the Hillsborough TPO has adopted FDOT’s Title VI plan in the interim years. As part of the TPO’s commitment to inclusivity, the agency will review its Nondiscrimination Plan triennially or alongside the Public Participation Plan, whichever is more frequent.

The **Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan** is available on the web at **PlanHillsborough.org**.



obstacles related to transportation and engagement in TPO participation processes. Although the definition of this term varies across the country, the Hillsborough TPO has operationally defined a Community of Concern as any block group at least one standard deviation above the median in two or more of the following characteristics: minority population, elderly population, Limited English Proficiency population, disability, zero vehicle households, low income, or youth.

The Hillsborough TPO engages with Communities of Concern through established civic and social service groups that serve the county. The TPO also provides translation and interpretation services and makes accommodations to ensure that citizens with disabilities can access information and reasonably participate in decision-making.

Figure 1 on page 13 shows the location of Communities of Concern within Hillsborough County. This map and associated data enable the Hillsborough TPO to identify neighborhood and civic groups active in the areas of higher concentrations of protected population groups. Successful outreach can then be conducted by using established civic and social service groups to communicate.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 12898, FEDERAL ACTIONS to ADDRESS ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE in MINORITY POPULATIONS and LOW-INCOME POPULATIONS

As a recipient of federal funds, the Hillsborough TPO also conforms to the 1994 *Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*. According to the US Environmental Protection Agency, Environmental Justice (EJ) is the “fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

The Executive Order directed that:

Each Federal agency shall make achieving environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Furthermore, in that same year, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) expanded the definition of “environment” to include “the natural environment, the built environment, the cultural and social fabric of our county and our neighborhoods, and the quality of life of the people who live here. This quality of life is enhanced not only by economic security and ample natural resources, but by enduring community values and thriving neighborhoods where all citizens have access to safe, comfortable, and efficient transportation.”

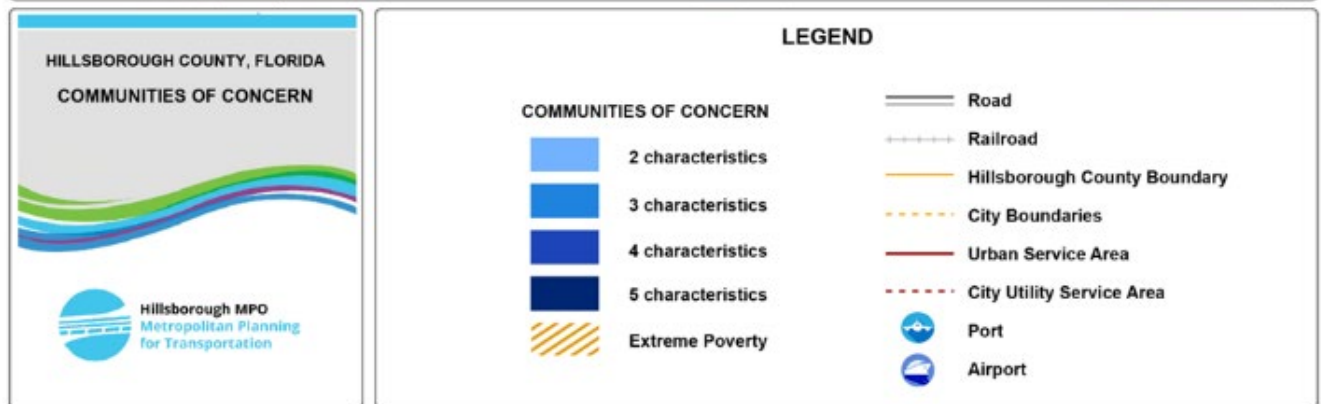
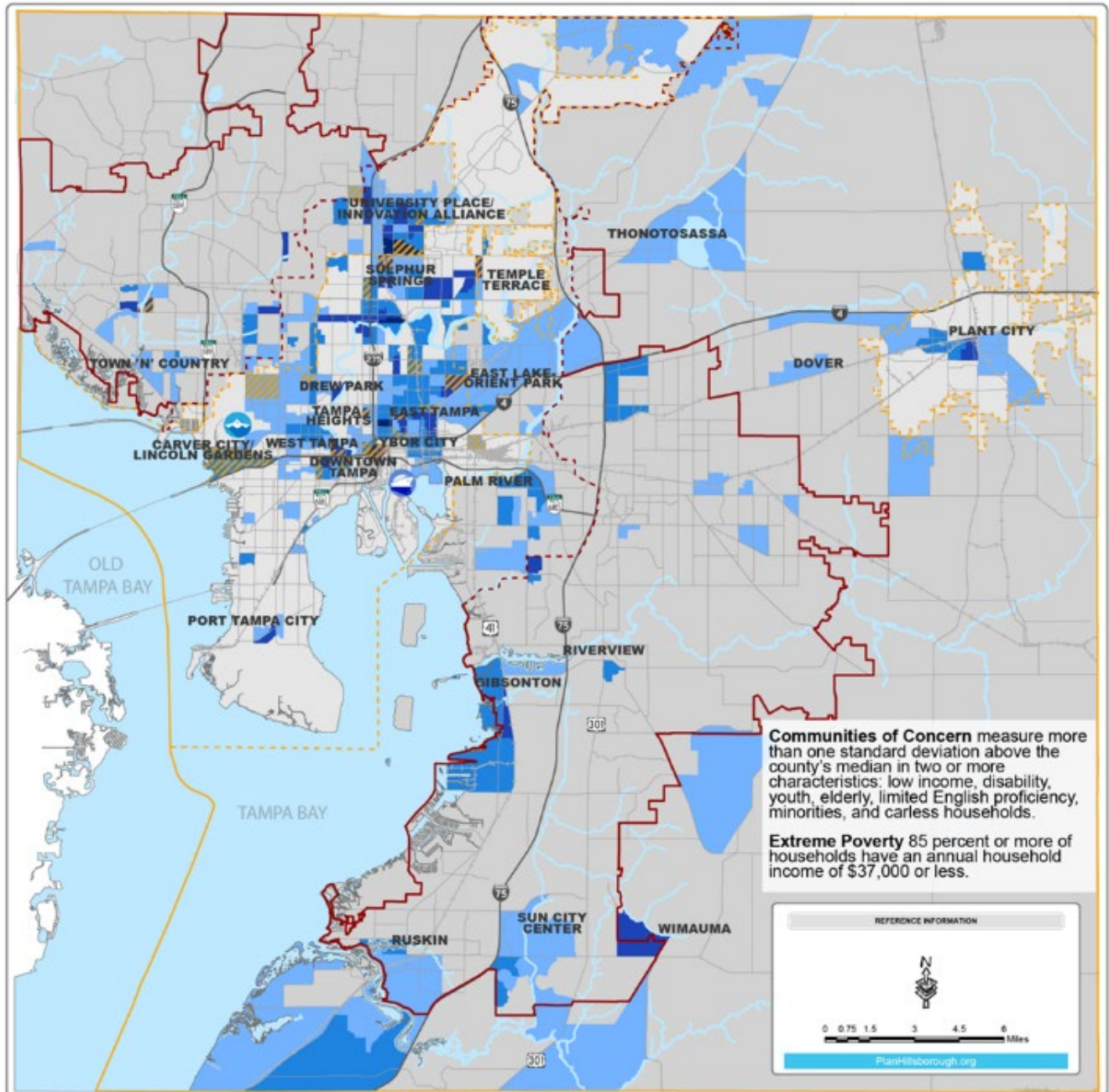


Figure 1: Communities of Concern

In 1997, USDOT issued its *DOT Order to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*, which states that a principled EJ approach will:

- Make better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people;
- Design transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities;
- Enhance the public-involvement process, strengthen community-based partnerships, and provide minority and low-income populations with opportunities to learn about and improve the quality and usefulness of transportation in their lives;
- Improve data collection, monitoring, and analysis tools that assess the needs of, and analyze the potential impacts on minority and low-income populations;
- Partner with other public and private programs to leverage transportation-agency resources to achieve a common vision for communities;
- Avoid disproportionately high and adverse impacts on minority and low-income populations; and
- Minimize and/ or mitigate unavoidable impacts by identifying concerns early in the planning phase and providing offsetting initiatives and enhancement measures to benefit affected communities and neighborhoods.

In 2015, the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) updated its MPO Program Management Handbook to reflect the full incorporation of EJ principles in programs, policies, and activities.

In addition to the principles in the 1997 USDOT Order, the 2015 FDOT update requires MPOs to:

- Ensure and document early, continuous and meaningful opportunities for 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, and where impacts are unavoidable, that documented steps are taken to avoid, minimize or mitigate impacts.

In its capacity, the TPO assesses potential effects of its plans on minority and low-income populations and strives to avoid disproportionate impacts. Furthermore, the TPO proactively reaches out to such populations and seeks to overcome barriers that may prevent them from participating in the transportation planning process.

The FHWA and Federal Transit Administration also encourage TPOs to establish performance standards, including:

- Adequate public notice of opportunities to get involved;
- Early and continuous opportunities to review and comment on key decisions;
- Reasonable public availability of technical and other information;
- Collaborative input on alternatives, evaluation criteria, and mitigation needs;
- Open public meetings and access to the decision-making process prior to closure; and
- Explicit consideration and response to public input.

Figure 2 on page 17 shows the location of the top quintile of Environmental Justice protected populations within Hillsborough County. The Hillsborough TPO uses this information to engage in outreach to established civic and social groups, plan events at times and in locations accessible to EJ populations and determine the cumulative impacts of transportation investments on minority and low-income populations.

Title VI Checklist

The TPO is in the process of developing a checklist for interacting with Communities of Concern. This internal process is intended to identify Communities of Concern surrounding project areas and proposes different steps depending on the demographics of the area for how meetings should be conducted. For instance, a Community of Concern that contains low-income populations may more easily access a meeting held after business hours.

EXECUTIVE ORDER 13166, NATIONAL ORIGIN DISCRIMINATION AGAINST PERSONS WITH LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

Executive Order 13166 directed that persons in the United States will not be excluded from participation in USDOT-assisted programs and activities simply because they face challenges communicating in English. To prevent exclusion of the residents in Hillsborough County who do not speak or read English proficiently, a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan was adopted by the TPO to ensure access to the planning process and published information. For further information regarding the LEP, please refer to [Appendix E](#).



Limited English Proficiency (LEP)

For the TPO's purposes, a LEP person is any person five and older who reported speaking English less than "very well" as classified by the US Census Bureau. Individuals who do not speak English as their primary language AND who have a limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English must be included in the TPO transportation planning process. Therefore, executive summaries for key documents will be made available in Spanish and may be presented in alternative formats, such as brochures or newsletters. PlanHillsborough.org is a key document and includes a *Select Language* feature that enables users to translate it into more than 100 languages. Public engagement pieces like *A Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning* as well as the It's Time Hillsborough 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan and the FY 2017-18 Transportation Improvement Program have been translated into Spanish and are available for download on the PlanHillsborough.org website at planhillsborough.org/TPO-documentos-en-espanol/.

In considering how to engage LEP persons, a four-factor analysis is used to determine which language assistance services are appropriate to address the identified needs of the LEP population. The four factors are as follows:

Factor 1: Demography: Assessment of the number and proportion of the LEP persons likely to be served or encountered in the eligible service population;

Factor 2: Frequency: Determining how often the populations are contacted or engaged by the agency;

Factor 3: Importance: Determining if the issues under consideration are important to these communities; and

Factor 4: Resources: Keeping an inventory of the resources available to engage these populations, including language assistance services.

These four factors must be used in conjunction with the TPO's area demographics, Public Participation Plan, measures of effectiveness, community partners, and funding levels to determine when and to what extent LEP services are required. The plans must analyze and discuss the four aforementioned factors to determine the steps, activities and resources the TPO uses to ensure access is meaningful for LEP populations. Furthermore, plans should use plain language and be accessible in length and content for the general population. These plans must be available for public access and comment.

TPOs in the state of Florida are allowed, but are not required, to comply with Safe Harbor Provisions. These provisions provide affirmative defenses to findings of noncompliance by demonstrating that all vital documents are translated for any LEP language group constituting 5% of the affected population, or 1,000 persons, whichever is less. Based on the agency’s assessment of the 2nd Factor of Analysis, we proactively translate key documents into Spanish. Although other language groups within the county do meet the threshold of the Safe Harbors Provision, individuals from those language groups are infrequently contacted or engaged by the agency. Therefore, the TPO may utilize other resources, such as interpreter services and bilingual family members, to communicate short messages to those LEP populations. Within its staff, the TPO has created a Spanish-speaking working group to translate planning jargon. The group discusses the language of public information material and assures that translations are understandable. **Table 1** shows the top ten LEP language groups in Hillsborough County by number of speakers.

Interpreter services are made available free of charge courtesy of Hillsborough County Communications & Digital Media Services. Interpretation services are available in 30 different languages upon request, which must be made at least 10 business days prior to TPO Board and committee meetings, workshops, forums or events. The Hillsborough TPO will make every effort to provide these services. Other special accommodations, including transportation to TPO meetings and events, are offered for those who qualify as transportation disadvantaged. Arrangements can be made by calling Joshua Barber at (813) 273-3774, ext. 313 or by emailing barberj@plancom.org at least three business days in advance.

Table 1: Limited English Proficiency Population by Language in Hillsborough County

Language	Number of Speakers	Number of Speakers Who Do Not Speak English “Very Well”
Spanish	273,082	107,434
Vietnamese	7,833	4,983
French Creole	9,527	2,363
Arabic	7,741	2,377
French	6,945	1,457
Chinese	3,005	1,474
Korean	2,574	1,215
Other Asian Languages	5,812	1,279
Portuguese	3,248	989
German	3,863	697
Total:	310,707	121,303
<i>Source: American Community Survey 2010-2014.</i>		

[Appendix E](#) in this document contains a portion of the *Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan* pertaining to Limited English Proficiency populations. In order to minimize costs, Hillsborough TPO staff and services provided by Hillsborough County, the local jurisdictions or other agencies will be used whenever possible. Some resources outside the Hillsborough TPO staff include but are not limited to:

Hillsborough County Customer Service

(Multi-lingual “Language Line” assistance for telephone customers)

Phone: (813) 272-5900

Hillsborough County Communications & Digital Media

Phone: (813) 272-5314

Hillsborough County Communications Department – Language Services

Contact: Luis Lopez | Phone: (813) 307-8377

Communication Access Real Time Translation (Speech to Text)

Contact: Joshua Barber | Phone: (813) 273-3774, ext. 313

Figure 3 on page 20 shows the location of high concentrations of LEP households in Hillsborough County. The Hillsborough TPO uses this data to notify LEP persons for whom it proactively provides language services of the availability of these services. Example notifications include signage, presentations at schools and/or faith-based organizations and working with community-based organizations and other stakeholders to inform LEP individuals of the TPO’s services and the availability of language assistance. This data is also used to identify community organizing agencies and advocacy groups that represent LEP populations as a means to invite them to participate in the transportation planning process.



Public Records and Open Meetings

In Florida, every person has been granted the constitutional right to inspect or copy any public record, with some exceptions, at both the state and local levels. Almost all written communication, including e-mails and messages posted to the TPO’s social networking sites, fall under the definition of public records. Notices will be placed on these media so that the public is aware that their communications to the TPO are subject to disclosure. All meetings of the TPO Board, advisory committees and subcommittees are governed by the Sunshine Law. This assures

accountability and a transportation planning process that is transparent and fully accessible. Excerpts from the *Government-in-the-Sunshine Manual* are available in [Appendix D - Section 3](#), of this document. For more information, visit:

myfloridalegal.com/sunshine.

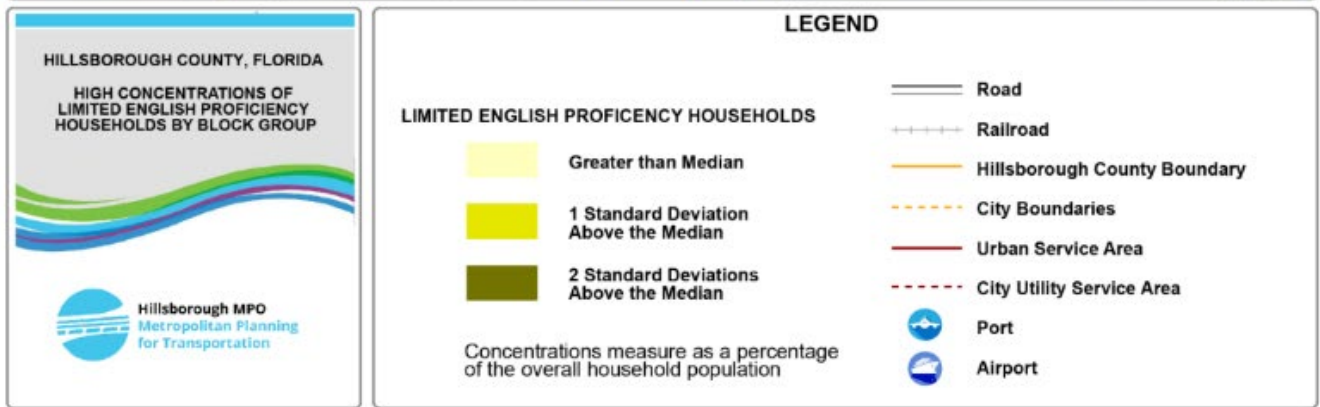
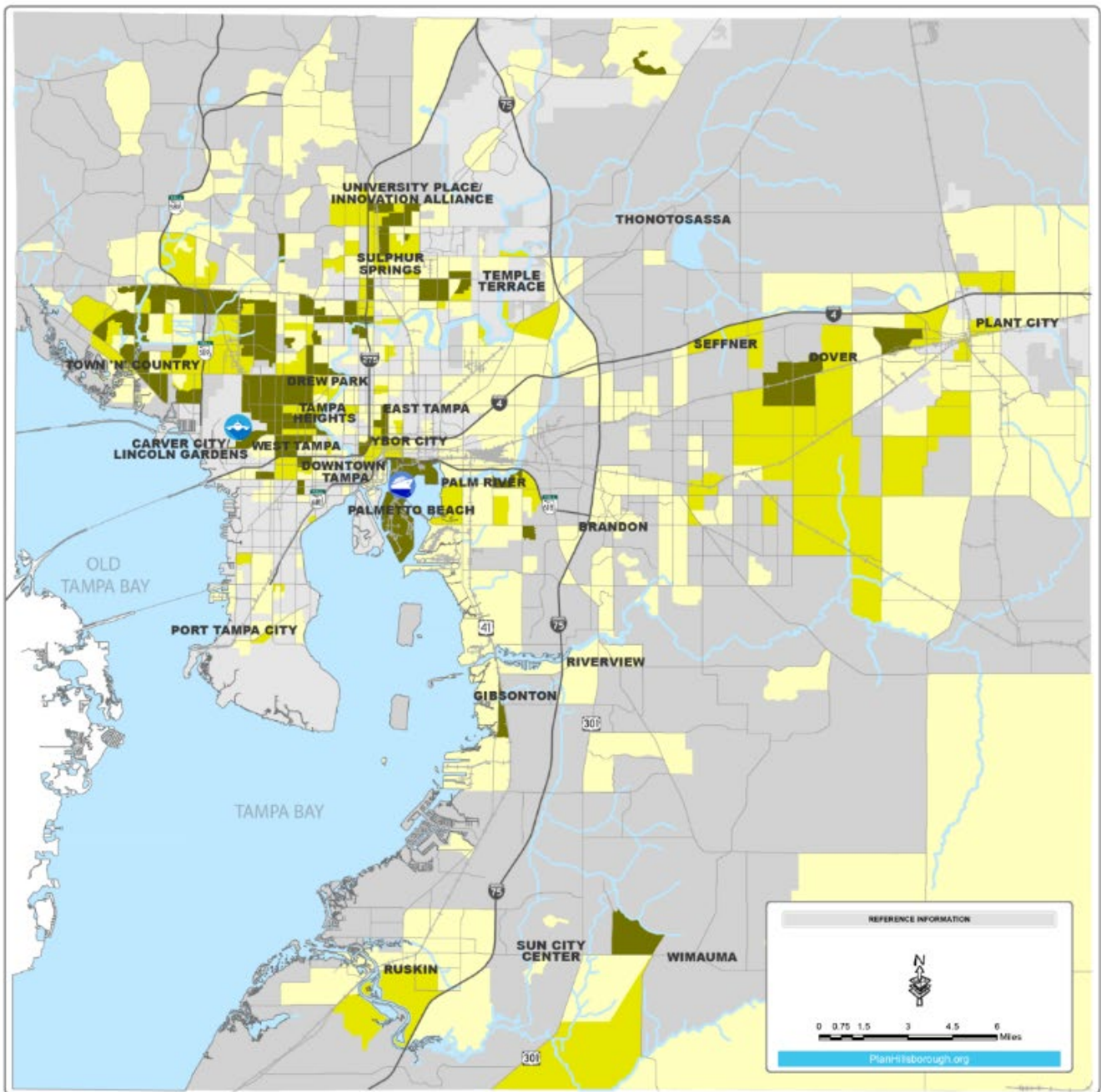


Figure 3: Location of High Concentrations of LEP Households in Hillsborough County

Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities

The Hillsborough TPO recognizes and values the diversity within our county. We also recognize the importance of including those individuals and groups who have been traditionally underserved. Workshops and forums will occur at various locations and times throughout the county in order to give people a variety of participation opportunities. All TPO public meetings and formal events will be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities.

- Upon request, TPO plans and documents will be produced in large type or other formats for the visually impaired.
- TPO websites will conform to the WAI-AA and US Section 508, making use of World Wide Web Consortium standards, including XHTML and CSS.
- In addition, TPO audio-visual productions will provide for closed captioning for the hearing impaired.

Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act requires federally funded departments or agencies that develop, procure, maintain, or use electronic and information technology to ensure that the electronic and information technology is accessible to all. The TPO is taking action to proactively convert key documents into a compliant format, using current professionally accepted methods. While this conversion process continues, the TPO has a designated staff person to assist anyone with disabilities in accessing, reading, or understanding documents or other electronically available information, as needed. The TPO's website provides access to many thousands of documents, as well as interactive mapping and data analysis tools, to provide information resources to the public as widely as possible. To lead the Section 508 compliance effort for the material made available on the website as well as the website structure itself, the TPO has formed an Accessibility Committee on staff.

Our Commitment to Diversity & Civil Rights

The TPO does not discriminate in any of its programs or services. The organization has adopted a policy that:

...no person shall on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, family or religious status, as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 and the Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992 be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination or retaliation under any program or activity.

As part of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), this policy statement is reaffirmed annually to fulfill the TPO's responsibilities under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and associated federal and state laws.

It is critical that the TPO communicate this commitment to nondiscrimination in plain language. Consequently, the following language shall appear on all TPO documents, plans and studies made available to the public:

The TPO does not discriminate in any of its programs or services. Public participation is solicited by the TPO without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, family or religious status. To learn more about our commitment to nondiscrimination, visit planhillsborough.org/title-vi-and-accessibility/.

The TPO updated its *Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan* in early 2021. This plan identifies the location of Communities of Concern and engagement protocols, lists ways the TPO determines plan equity, and states how the TPO evaluates effectiveness. The *Title VI/Nondiscrimination Plan* can be found on the web at planhillsborough.org/nondiscrim-plan/

The TPO has designated a Title VI Coordinator who reports directly to the TPO Executive Director on nondiscrimination matters and responds to any complaints of discrimination filed by the public. That role is currently filled by Joshua Barber, who can be contacted at (813) 576-2313 or barberj@plancom.org.

For further information regarding other statutes, please see Appendices C and D for requirements, related statutes and rules.



CHAPTER 5: Public Notices

TPO & Committee Meetings

According to the TPO By-Laws:

The Executive Director is responsible for providing written public notice of all TPO meetings, public hearings and committee meetings. Except in case of emergencies, written notice of any meeting shall be given at least five (5) days prior to the meeting. In case of emergency, notice of such meeting shall be given to each member as far in advance of the meeting as possible and by the most direct means of communications. In addition, notice of such emergency meeting shall be given to the media, utilizing the most practicable method. Written notice of any meeting shall state the date, time and place of the meeting, a brief description of the agenda for the meeting, and shall be provided in accordance with the requirements of Florida law and this Public Participation Plan.

2045 Long Range Transportation Plan

The Hillsborough TPO began its 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) update in late 2017. The LRTP identifies and prioritizes major transportation projects for funding under scenarios and trends that will shape Tampa Bay in the future.

The 2045 LRTP was coordinated across county boundaries and contains a chapter dedicated to regional priority projects. The Hillsborough TPO coordinated with the TPOs of Pasco and Pinellas Counties to identify travel needs that span the three-county region. The Plan was adopted in 2019.

More information about the 2045 LRTP can be accessed online at planhillsborough.org/2045-lrtp/



The TPO manages its notifications with an email database software called Constant Contact ®. TPO staff complies with the requirements by posting agendas for all TPO meetings and public



hearings on PlanHillsborough.org and ensuring that all board and committee members, the media and other interested parties are on the TPO’s Constant Contact ® mailing list to receive notices of all TPO and committee meetings. Any member of the public can register to receive notifications by visiting <http://www.planhillsborough.org/> and clicking “Join our Mailing Lists” under “Be Involved.”

Required Public Review

The Hillsborough TPO is obligated and will ensure reasonable time for public review and comment at key decision points on major documents and plans. These include, but are not limited to, the PPP, *Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)*, *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)* and *Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)*. The following table highlights requirements for public review periods and notices. The TPO’s practice is to meet or exceed these minimum requirements.

Plan or Program	Min. Review Period	Min. Public Notice/Ad	Min. Ad(s) Required	Public Hearing Required?
Public Participation Plan	45 days	45 days	1	No
LRTP Adoption	30 days	10 days	2	Yes
LRTP Amendment	15 days	15 days	1	Yes
TIP Priorities and Final Adoption	30 days	10 days	1	Yes
TIP Amendment	21 days	Not required	None	No
UPWP Adoption	30 days	Not required	None	No

Notifications and Advertisements

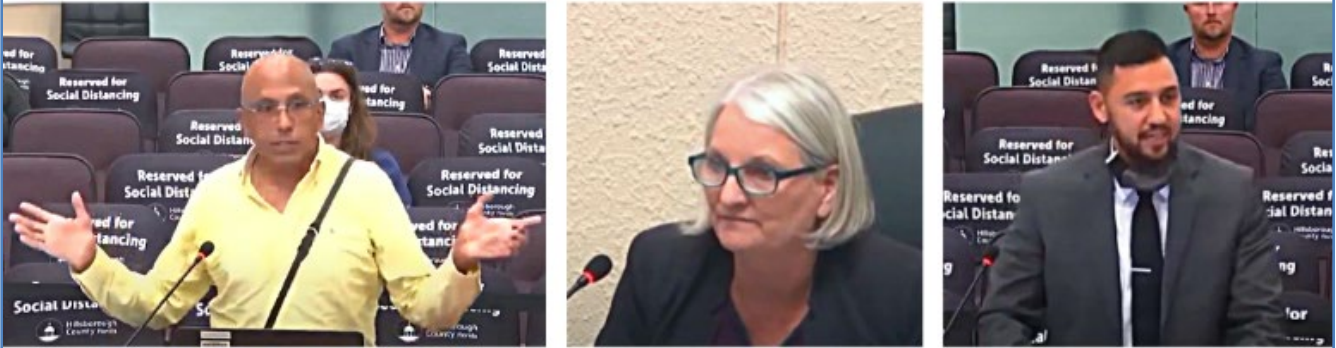
Public notices and/or advertisements are placed in accordance with the above table. At least one newspaper ad will be placed not less than 10 calendar days in advance of all TPO Public Hearings.

Monthly TPO Board and committee meetings and agendas are posted on the main page of PlanHillsborough.org. Regular TPO committee meetings are posted online at least 30 days in advance. Additional notices and schedule changes are promptly noted. Agendas for meetings are emailed and/or mailed out and are available on the TPO website normally seven days in advance. Draft meeting minutes are posted online in the agenda packet of the following month’s meeting.

TPO Board meetings are advertised, broadcast live and rebroadcast later in the month on Hillsborough County’s government television channel, HTV. These meetings are also available for streaming on the web at youtube.com/c/HillsboroughCountyMeetings/live. In late 2017 the TPO began uploading recordings of all TPO Board meetings to its YouTube Channel, available at youtube.com/channel/UCsojHyZb_mkYIU3o32Tbg4w, Mid-2018, the TPO

ICYMI

(IN CASE YOU MISSED IT)



Here's your chance to view the 2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Public Hearing! Just visit a webpage below.

WATCH
READ



TinyURL.com/watchTIP2022
TinyURL.com/seetheTIP

began recording and uploading Transportation Management Area (TMA) Leadership Group meetings to its YouTube profile.

The TPO advertises public hearings in newspapers of general circulation such as the Tampa Bay Times. Public notices and/or advertisements will also involve a social media post, notice on the PlanHillsborough.org website, a post on the calendars of news media websites, and a press release or newsletter article in Plan Hillsborough's newsletter, and placement of road signs. The TPO will also mail out notices for TIP amendment projects requiring right-of-way acquisition.

As appropriate and depending upon the project, the TPO may also place advertisements in newspapers with minority audiences, such as *La Gaceta* and the *Florida Sentinel Bulletin*, or in smaller community weeklies. The TPO may also provide information about TPO services and the availability of language services to LEP populations through non-English language radio and television advertisements.

Distinction Between Public Hearings and Public Meetings

There is no formal requirement for a TPO to hold a public hearing unless it is in a non-attainment Transportation Management Area. The Hillsborough TPO is not in a non-attainment area. However, it goes beyond the formal requirements by holding public hearings when adopting or amending an LRTP, or when adopting a new TIP, as shown in the adjacent table.

Plan or Program	Frequency of Public Hearing
LRTP Adoption	At least once every five years
LRTP Amendment	As needed
TIP Priorities and Final Adoption	Yearly

Public hearings must be advertised, and the public must have a reasonable time to comment on the item under consideration at the hearing. Generally, the timeframe for public comment on items under consideration at a public hearing is longer than the timeframe at a public meeting. For instance, adoption of the TIP Priorities and TIP Final Program require a 30-day public review period, public advertisement, and a public hearing. TIP Amendments require a 21-day review period, and in special situations, a minimum of a 14-day review period. They require no public advertisement and are considered at a public meeting. Additionally, an official transcript or record of comments must be kept for a public hearing.

Public hearings and meetings require that anyone who wishes to speak has the opportunity to do so, although the time to speak may be limited and a request may be made that speakers with similar messages consolidate those messages.

CHAPTER 6: Public Participation Procedures

The TPO will adhere to the following procedures to ensure public participation in the transportation planning process.

Public Participation Plan

The TPO makes every attempt to coordinate its public participation process with state and local governments to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs. The TPO will produce a new or updated PPP at least once every two years to continuously improve our outreach strategies to encourage public participation.

Adopting or amending the PPP requires a 45-day public review and comment period and includes:

- A legal advertisement placed in the aforementioned media outlets, thereby initiating the 45-day public review period;
- Notice of the public review and comment period is posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The PPP Draft is made available on PlanHillsborough.org under “Current Projects and Drafts,” as well as in the Planning Commission Library during regular business hours, for at least 45 days prior to TPO consideration;
- A post is made to the Hillsborough TPO’s social media accounts with a link to the PPP Draft;
- Formal presentations are made to the TPO Advisory Committees (CAC, TAC and Policy at a minimum) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment prior to TPO Board consideration;
- Public comments will be accepted at each TPO Board and Advisory Committee meeting, and forwarded to the Board prior to adoption;
- Reviews and comments will be solicited from FDOT and other interested partner agencies.

The PPP will be evaluated and reviewed at least once every two years by TPO staff, Advisory Committees and the TPO Board. This process assures that the process complies with all statutory requirements, encourages complete and continued participation from all interested parties, and that it adapts in response to changing technologies, outreach strategies, and effectiveness results. A PPP *Measures of Effectiveness* (MOE) report will be presented to the TPO and its CAC, TAC, Policy, and TDCB committees at least once every two years. The MOE will summarize the TPO’s participation activities, measure the effectiveness of the TPO’s public engagement over the past two years, and analyze the results to inform recommendations for



continued improvement. Comments received will be reproduced in the MOE presentation to the TPO for consideration.

The PPP frames the TPO's approach to involving the public in its decision-making. Specific public outreach strategies may be pursued for individual projects. Such strategies may be tailored to fit unique circumstances or project requirements but will conform to the PPP.

PPP Amendment

For major amendments, updates, or new PPP documents, the procedures listed above will be followed. Minor changes and additions between LRTP update periods will be implemented through the advisory committee process. The appendices are provided for information and are not subject to amendment requirements. Public comment on the PPP will be taken at any time, considered, and implemented with the bi-annual review, as appropriate. Creative suggestions are encouraged throughout the process.

Long Range Transportation Plan

The LRTP identifies transportation improvements necessary to maintain adequate mobility and accommodate anticipated growth. The LRTP includes a comprehensive listing of highway, public transit, bicycle, pedestrian and freight movement needs, and identifies cost affordable projects through a 20-year horizon. Major public participation strategies are noted in [Appendix B](#), the Public Participation Toolbox, of this document.

Federal legislation requires the LRTP development to incorporate consultation with state and federal environmental protection, tribal government, wildlife management, land management, and historic preservation agencies. The TPO accomplishes this through Florida's Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process, which uses a web-based tool to solicit comments and provide information and map data to affected agencies. Other procedures include:

- Coordination with FDOT, HART, the jurisdictions and other partner agencies throughout LRTP development;
- Extensive public involvement plan developed and executed to provide early and continuing opportunities to participate in the development of the LRTP;
- Coordination with American Indian entities such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida, through contacts furnished by tribal governments and FDOT (these are listed in [Appendix G](#));
- Concerted initiatives to identify and engage groups and areas which may have been under-represented in the past (e.g., low income, minority, LEP, and disabled populations);
- TPO newsletters, web posts, social media, direct mail, email blasts and ads in newspapers are used at various points to notify the public of participation opportunities;
- Key technical documents posted for public review and comment on PlanHillsborough.org;

- The Draft LRTP is posted on the PlanHillsborough.org and available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours;
- A 30-day public review and comment period as required, followed by a Public Hearing for TPO adoption of the LRTP;
- A good faith effort is made by posting signs, direct mail, or other means to inform the affected areas and notify parties potentially affected by the proposed LRTP;
- Two newspaper advertisements:
 - The first announcing the 30-day public review period and announcing the upcoming Public Hearing,
 - The second for the 10-day notice of the upcoming Public Hearing;
- Notice of the public review period and Public Hearing posted on the PlanHillsborough.org website;
- Formal presentations made to the TPO advisory committees as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the TPO Board considers adoption;
- In-person, written and electronic public comments accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone);
- Soliciting review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other partner agencies;
- Adoption by a roll call or hand-counted vote of the TPO.



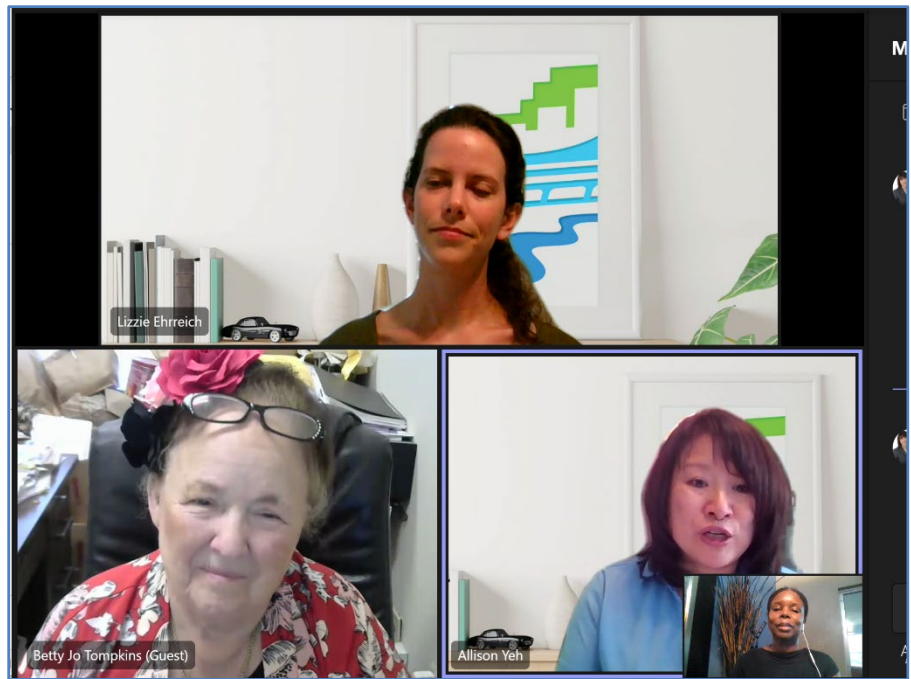
LRTP Amendment

An amendment is a major revision to the LRTP, such as adding or deleting a project, a major change in project costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope, such as changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes. Changes to the LRTP on projects included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment.

An amendment requires public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed within expected funding, and where appropriate, a finding that the change is

consistent with federal transportation air quality conformity mandates. The following outlines public participation procedures for an LRTP Amendment:

- A 15-day public review and comment period is required followed by a Public Hearing for an LRTP Amendment;
- One legal advertisement is placed announcing the 15-day review period, availability of the proposed LRTP Amendment on



PlanHillsborough.org, and announcing the upcoming Public Hearing;

- Notice of the public review period and Public Hearing is posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The proposed LRTP Amendment is posted on PlanHillsborough.org and is available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours for at least 15 days prior to TPO consideration;
- Formal presentations are made to the TPO advisory committees (CAC, TAC and Policy Committee at a minimum) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the TPO Board considers adoption;
- In-person, written or electronic public comments are accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone);
- Evaluate and document whether any adverse social, economic, and environmental impacts to the community at large and to the underserved population, in particular, would result from implementation of the amended or updated plan;
- Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies is solicited.

LRTP Administrative Modification

An administrative modification is a revision to the LRTP for minor changes to a project including project phase costs, funding sources, and/or initiation dates.

An administrative modification requires neither public review and comment, demonstration that the project can be completed based within expected funding, nor a finding that the change is consistent with federal transportation requirements. LRTP administrative modifications are executed as follows:

- No public review requirement;
- Approved by the TPO Executive Director;
- LRTP document is modified and posted on PlanHillsborough.org.

Transportation Improvement Program

Revised annually to incorporate those projects in the LRTP having the highest priority and an ability to be funded, the TIP contains all transportation projects programmed for the upcoming five fiscal years. Projects are grouped by jurisdictional responsibility, which indicates the year, funding source and levels for each phase of the project. From a policy perspective, the TIP is particularly important in that it establishes the priorities for scheduling improvements to the



Strategic Intermodal System (SIS), including freight and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) strategies, federal Interstate highway system, local roadways and TPO priorities concerning transit, pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly environments, and transportation demand management programs. The TPO updates its priorities every year and includes them in the TIP document.



Federally funded projects and most state funded projects must be included in the TIP and are subject to TPO approval. Locally funded projects are included for informational purposes and are not subject to TPO approval.

When an updated TIP and new priorities are proposed, a Public Hearing is held to adopt them. The new priorities are used by FDOT for programming the new fifth year to be integrated into FDOT's Work Program.

The TPO adopts the updated TIP at a Public Hearing held the following summer to meet the July 15th state deadline for submittal each year. Steps in the process include:

- Coordination with FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other partner agencies throughout TIP development;
- A 30-day public review and comment period before the TIP Public Hearing;
- Newspaper advertisements are placed to provide a 10-day notice of the TIP Public Hearing,
- Notice of the Public Hearing is also posted on PlanHillsborough.org;
- The Draft TIP document is posted on PlanHillsborough.org and available in the Planning Commission Library for public review during regular business hours for at least 30 days prior to TPO consideration;
- A good faith effort is made by posting signs, direct mail, or other means to inform the affected areas and notify parties potentially affected by the proposed TIP;
- Formal presentations are made to the TPO advisory committees as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the TPO Board considers adoption of the TIP;
- In-person, written and electronic public comments are accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone);
- Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies are solicited;
- The TIP is published annually and posted on PlanHillsborough.org. In addition, the website features an interactive version of the TIP that allows users to search and map individual projects listed in the document.
- To improve transparency, the TIP indicates which projects cannot be unilaterally rescheduled or removed, per the Florida State Statutes, Section 339.175, Sub 8 (d).

We Want to Hear From You!

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

Transportation Improvement Program
Wednesday - June 8, 2022 @ 6:00 p.m.

Tune in: TinyURL.com/HCmeets
For more info: TinyURL.com/seetheTIP
Comments & Questions: TPO@plancom.org
or call 813-272-5940 press 9



 Hillsborough TPO
 Transportation
 Planning Organization

www.PlanHillsborough.org

TIP Amendment

A TIP Amendment is a major change to the TIP, including: adding or deleting a project; changes in project phase costs, initiation dates, and/or design concept and scope, such as changing project locations or the number of through traffic lanes; or a cost increase greater than 20% and \$2 million. An amendment requires public review and comment and re-demonstration of fiscal constraint. The following outlines public participation procedures for a TIP Amendment:

- A public review and comment period will coincide with the formal presentations made to the TPO advisory committees (at a minimum CAC, TAC and Policy Committee) as an Action Item on the Agenda for review and comment before the TPO consideration, which includes posting on PlanHillsborough.org at least three weeks before the TPO meeting, or in special situations, two weeks before the TPO meeting;
- An engagement effort that includes a social media post, a dedicated webpage on PlanHillsborough.org, a press release or newsletter article in the Plan Hillsborough newsletter, road signs, and mailers for projects requiring right-of-way acquisition;
- In-person public comments are accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone);
- Review and comment by FDOT, HART, local jurisdictions, and other interested partner agencies are solicited, with public discussion opportunities among agencies at the TAC meeting;
- Approved by a roll call vote of the TPO Board;
- Amended TIP document is updated and posted on PlanHillsborough.org.



TIP Administrative Modifications

A TIP modification includes minor changes to an already adopted project's costs or to the cost of a project phase; minor changes to funding sources; changes to the initiation dates within the same fiscal year; changes to projects that are not federally funded; changes to information and projects included for illustrative purposes only; changes to information outside of the TIP period or not required to be included in the TIP per federal regulations; or changes to correct simple or data entry errors. Administrative modifications are executed as follows:

- No public review;
- Approved by the TPO Executive Director¹;
- TIP document is modified and placed on the PlanHillsborough.org website.

Annual Listing of Obligated Projects

To make the project funding process as transparent as possible, no later than 90 days after the end of the program year (i.e., the fiscal year ending September 30th), in combination with FDOT, HART and other public transportation operators, the TPO develops a list of projects in Hillsborough County – including bicycle and pedestrian projects – for which federal transportation funds were obligated (i.e., funds contractually committed to a project) in the previous program year. Based on the TIP, the list describes the project by name, to/from limits, type, funding source, and amounts obligated to specific project phases. The TPO posts this information each year on PlanHillsborough.org.

Air Quality Conformity Determination

Hillsborough County has attained air quality standards for ozone (a contributor to smog), and therefore, is not required to determine whether its Plan will have an adverse impact on air quality, an analysis known as a conformity determination.



Unified Planning Work Program

The UPWP defines the transportation planning activities and products to be developed by the TPO and other transportation planning agencies including FDOT and HART for a two-year period. Updated bi-annually, it is the basis for allocating federal, state, and local funds for transportation planning activities.

UPWP public participation opportunities are included in the process as follows:

- The UPWP requires a 30-day public review and comment period prior to TPO adoption in May;
- In February/March concurrent with the development of the new draft two-year UPWP; staff solicits planning project suggestions from TPO committees;
- A UPWP Draft will be available by March 15th for transmittal to FDOT and federal agencies;

¹ Federal Aid Technical Bulletin 10-03 from FDOT’s Federal Aid Office

- Formal presentations will be made at public meetings of TPO advisory committees such as the CAC, TAC and Policy Committee for review and comment before the TPO Board considers adoption no later than May 15th);
- In-person, written or electronic public comment is accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone).



All UPWP Revisions

UPWP Amendments must be approved by the FDOT, FHWA and/or FTA. Since the UPWP is updated bi-annually, there is likely to be at least one amendment when state and federal budgets are approved each year. Revisions to the UPWP involving FHWA and FTA funds fall into two categories:

1. **Minor Amendments:** do not change the approved FHWA and/or FTA budget or scope funded work tasks.
2. **Major Amendments:** change the FHWA and/or FTA approved budget, change the scope of funded work tasks, or add or delete a work task.

UPWP Minor Amendments are executed as follows:

- Notify the FDOT District TPO Liaison and the FHWA and/or FTA within the consultation process prior to its execution by the TPO (no approval is required);
- No public review requirement;
- Approved by the TPO Executive Director;
- The revised UPWP is posted on PlanHillsborough.org.

The Hillsborough TPO will provide opportunities for public review and comment of UPWP Major Amendments as follows:

- Draft UPWP Amendment is posted on PlanHillsborough.org with the meeting packets at least seven days prior to each meeting;
- Formal presentation to the Policy Committee and/or directly to the TPO Board for approval;
- In-person, written or electronic public comment to be accepted at each TPO Board and advisory committee meeting (when entirely virtual meetings must be conducted, there will be flexibility for public comment online and by phone);
- Final approval by the TPO Board.

Transportation Disadvantaged Program

Established by the Hillsborough TPO in 1990, the Transportation Disadvantaged Coordinating Board (TDCB) serves as the Local Coordinating Board (LCB) for Hillsborough County in order to guide and coordinate transportation services with the goal of improving quality of life for:

- Children who are at high risk;
- The elderly;
- Those who have physical or mental disabilities; and
- Low income or economically disadvantaged.



Public participation is a priority as outreach is targeted to people in our community most in need of services. Created by the TDCB's Outreach & Awareness subcommittee, the *Ride Guide* is a great example of outreach material consolidating relevant information for the transportation disadvantaged in Pasco, Pinellas, and Hillsborough Counties. An annual evaluation of the Sunshine Line (paratransit service) is conducted by the TDCB, including a direct-mail survey of more than 6,000 customers of the service. Other forums and public engagement opportunities are used to continue public involvement throughout the year.

The Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan is an annually updated tactical plan jointly developed by the Planning Agency and the Coordinator, which contains development, service and quality assurance components. The TDCB's Planning subcommittee provides input to the plan's development. The Local Coordinating Board reviews and approves the Service Plan, and it is submitted to the Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged for final action.

According to the CTD Handbook, the TDSP planning process must allow representatives of public, private and non-profit transportation; human services providers; and the public to participate.

Stakeholders may include:

- **Transportation planners and providers** – area transportation planning agencies; public transit and ADA transit providers; and private transportation providers such as brokers, taxi operators, vanpool providers, ride-share providers and intercity bus operators.
- **Passengers and advocates** – existing and potential riders; protection and advocacy organizations; representatives from independent living centers; advocacy organizations working on behalf of targeted populations.
- **Human service partners** – agencies that administer health, employment or other support programs for targeted populations; job training and placement agencies; housing agencies; health care facilities; and mental health providers.
- **Others** – emergency and security management agencies; tribes and tribal representatives; economic development organizations, faith-based and community-based organizations; representatives of the business community (employers); appropriate local or state officials and elected officials; and school districts.

Other TPO Plans & Studies

The TPO often prepares plans and studies focusing on particular sub-areas, corridors or specific project areas. These may be carried out by staff and/or consultants, and the scope and level of detail of such products can vary greatly, as can the level of public involvement and engagement technique. There are no set requirements, but the TPO makes a practice of engaging the community in such plans and studies early and continuously. The TPO strives to identify affected parties and invite them to collaborate as stakeholders.



Ideally, constituents will be invited to participate throughout the process and help shape the plan or study by:

- Identifying the issues or problem statement;
 - Defining goals, objectives and prioritization factors;
 - Developing alternative solutions;
 - Reaching a consensus on the preferred alternative; and
 - Reviewing and commenting on draft plans and studies.
- At a minimum, the TPO will provide timely notification of all such plans or studies as they develop in draft form and allow the public ample opportunity to review and comment on them before being adopted or approved by the TPO. Staff will forward all

relevant comments to the TPO board prior to acting, along with a synopsis and response to all pertinent issues.

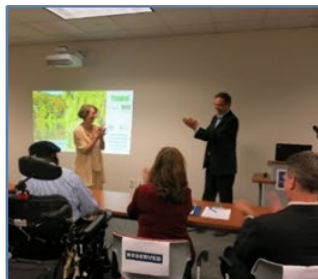
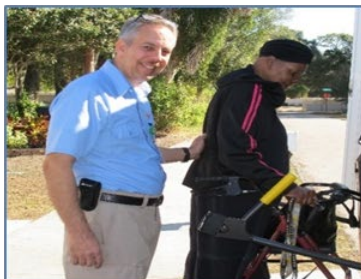
Public Engagement in Emergency Situations

- *Public participation during periods of social distancing.* To reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, government facilities may be temporarily closed to the public and/or in-person meetings limited or suspended. In such situations, virtual meetings will replace in-person meetings until in-person meetings can be held safely. TPO staff will work to provide equal access to all constituents and will continue to be available via phone and email.

Public notices and meeting agendas will continue to be posted on the agency's website and other media, consistent with the procedures outlined in Chapter 5. Notices will provide information about how the public can access the meeting, such as a call-in number, PIN, virtual meeting link.

Members of the public will continue to be encouraged to make comments, by telephone, email, the Facebook event page, and during public meetings online. Advance comments left on voicemail for consideration at public meetings will be screened for profanity and played into the record. Written messages received in advance will continue to be distributed to board/committee members and verbally summarized by staff during the meeting.

- *Public participation in disaster recovery.* In the event of a weather-related or other disaster, power or internet outages may prevent the TPO from posting meeting notices online or holding public meetings in its usual locations. Alternate meeting locations may be announced, with preference given to local or state government facilities that are centrally located, ADA compliant, and accessible via transit to the extent that transit is available. Public notice may be given by radio or other media announcement, and/or by physically posting a notice at the County Center building, or other local or state government building if the County Center building is not available.
- To maintain continuity of operations during such emergency conditions, meetings of the TPO Board may be scheduled with less than 5-day meeting notice. In addition, a quorum of board or advisory committee members at a publicly noticed virtual meeting may provide direction to staff, and later ratify the board or committee's intent with a vote at its next in-person public meeting.



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 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 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/. 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 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

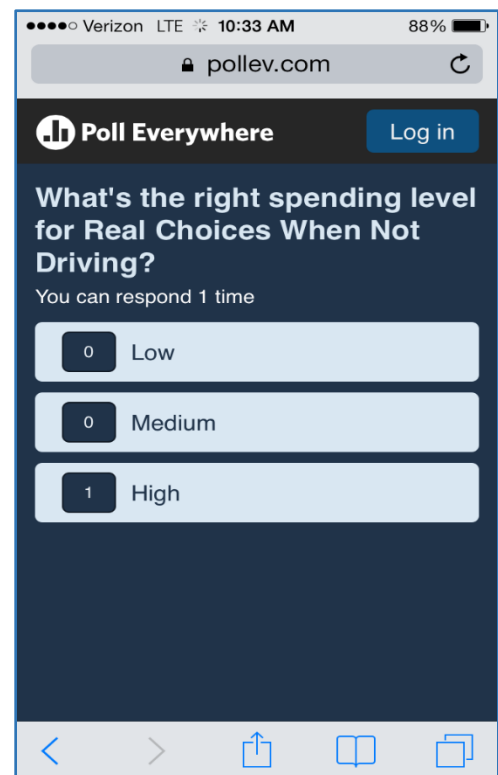
Evaluation is necessary to determine the effectiveness of the PPP. Being responsive to the public raises questions, such as: *To what degree is the community participating in public involvement opportunities? Are we reaching our target audience and key constituencies?* and, *Are TPO documents effective 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, 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 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;
- 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.