



MARYLAND DEPARTMENT
OF TRANSPORTATION

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery

March 13, 2026



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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Public Participation Plan

The Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT) is made up of five modal administrations: the Maryland Aviation Administration (MAA); the Maryland Port Administration (MPA); the Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA); the State Highway Administration (SHA); the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) – and authorities that are a part of MDOT, including the Maryland Transportation Authority (MDTA) and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA). This unique approach provides the State’s leadership with the ability to develop a coordinated and balanced approach to transportation, as well as a collaborative way for MDOT and each modal agency to work with stakeholders to find solutions that move people and goods safely and efficiently. Marylanders depend on an interconnected system of facilities and assets that keep us moving and connected to jobs, goods, services, and each other.

The Maryland Department of Transportation’s Secretary’s Office’s (TSO) Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery (OPPPD) has developed this Public Participation Plan (PPP). ***MDOT seeks to provide an open public participation process that offers reasonable access to information, timely public notice, public access to key decisions, and support for early and continued involvement of stakeholders in the planning process.*** The primary purpose for this Public Participation Process is to outline a process to engage affected citizens and stakeholders in transportation planning, including minority and limited English proficient populations. This is done by encouraging participation in the development of OPPPD’s three main federally or state mandated and over-arching documents:

- the Maryland Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP),
- the long-range transportation plan or the Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP), and
- the six-year capital budget or the Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP).

The MDOT modal transportation agencies, including the Maryland State Highway Administration (SHA) and the Maryland Transit Administration (MTA), provide public input opportunities during project planning and implementation.

This plan supports MDOT’s initiative to involve all aspects of the public in transportation decision making and respond to federal laws and regulations that emphasize public engagement. It guides public engagement for the MDOT and ensures that future transportation planning and programming reflect the public’s documented needs, including those of traditionally underserved populations. This PPP supports the MDOT mission statement and commitment to public participation.

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**MISSION STATEMENT**

The Maryland Department of Transportation is a customer-driven leader that delivers safe, sustainable, intelligent, exceptional, and inclusive transportation solutions in order to connect our customers to life's opportunities.

Public participation is a process that includes many different strategies. OPPPD formalizes in this document the public participation process employed to be as inclusive as possible. This plan ensures that OPPPD's public participation process is:

- Proactive;
- Inclusive;
- Provides early and continuous participation opportunities; and
- Open and collaborative.

Successful public participation programs consist of:

- Being committed to the process;
- Articulating the objectives of the process to the public;
- Understanding the stakeholders and their issues;
- Using a variety of public outreach activities; and
- Evaluating and refining the approach as needed.

Transportation helps shape an area's economic health and quality of life. Not only does the transportation system provide for the mobility of people and goods, but it also influences patterns of growth and economic activity by providing access to land. The performance of the system affects public policy concerns like air quality, environmental resource consumption, social equity, land use, urban growth, economic development, safety, and security. Transportation planning recognizes the critical links between transportation and other societal goals and requires strategies for operating, managing, maintaining, and financing the area's transportation system in such a way as to advance the area's long-term goals.

Depending on the nature of, and interest in an activity of a project, public participation can vary from informal public information to more formal approaches, such as the development of project-specific public participation plans. The public participation plans often include stakeholder committees and other transportation planning partners such as the State's Regional Planning Councils, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, and other stakeholders. MDOT has developed a free-flowing process that includes a variety of tools designed to ensure that people

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have access to as much information as possible and opportunities to participate in decisions affecting Maryland's transportation system.

MDOT is committed to:

- Informing the public,
- Proactively seeking and encouraging the public's early and continuing input and participation when developing policies, plans, programs, studies, projects, operations and maintenance activities,
- Adhering to the principles of Environmental Justice and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act,
- Being consistent with the objectives of the Maryland Transportation Plan, MDOT's statewide long-range multimodal transportation plan,
- Improving customer service through training and effective external communication with stakeholders and the public,
- Enhancing public awareness and participation,
- Being fair, responsive and accountable to traditional and non-traditional stakeholders,
- Communicating effectively with the public, including minority groups, limited English proficiency populations, low-income households, and other traditionally underserved communities, and
- Making the best possible transportation decisions to affect an efficient multimodal transportation system that meets the MDOT mission and needs of the people of Maryland.



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2.0 Public Participation in Transportation Planning

2.1 MDOT's Approaches to Public Participation

Overall, MDOT recognizes that every planning and project development activity that it considers creates some public impact. An early and continuous public Participation process is the key to keeping the public fully informed and participatory in making decisions that affect Maryland's transportation system. As such, the public is one of MDOT's most important partners. MDOT's public Participation commitment requires a continuous and equitable free-flowing process that generally includes one or more of the following types of public participation, depending on the scope of the effort and the anticipated level of public interest, such as providing public information, public participation and public consultation and collaboration.

Public Involvement Approaches

- **Public Information.** Public information is the delivery of facts without prejudice. As such, it is usually intended to be a one-way communication, generally striving to inform the public about ongoing issues or developments.
- **Public Participation.** Public participation involves the release of public announcements and information as noted above under public information, but it is also followed up with solicitation of public comment and participation for these in decision-makers and all affected parties and interested stakeholders. As such, it is a form of two-way communication that must include decision-makers and all affected parties and interested stakeholders.
 - **Informal Participation:** Generally, a minimum of one-week public notice is given for public participation events, and the public comment period is usually open for no less than 15 days. In many instances the public comment period is open throughout the life of a planning or development effort.
 - **Formal Participation:** Formal policy development of rulemaking as well as legal processes, such as Environmental Assessments or Environmental Impact Statements, require specific minimum public comment periods. MDOT follows those requirements and makes the distinction that this type of comment period is one that is formal or has its roots in law or regulation.
- **Public Consultation/Collaboration.** Public Consultation/Collaboration is the most open method of two-way communication. In the public consultation approach, basic information is provided sufficient to identify the problem of issue at hand to elicit significant feedback and new ideas from the public and/or affected population. Public consultation is initiated at the earliest possible point, it continues throughout the problem identification and solution development process, and it generates a collaborative, team approach to problem solving.

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2.1.1 Public Information

Typical MDOT public information products and activities include traveler safety and other public information announcements and informational brochures, and the posting of legal notices, news releases, construction advisories, travel advisories, and other information-only products. Types of activities include roadside vegetation management, winter plowing, road closures due to storm events, roadside ditching, posting roads and bridges to heavy loads and other routine maintenance and operations activities. Though not intended to generate two-way communications, MDOT responds to questions and comments received. Depending on the action to be taken, MDOT strives to provide public announcements to all media as far in advance to the action as is possible. For operational issues that require immediate response, this might be as little as 24-hour notice. Generally speaking, such announcements are made several days prior to a planned action.

PUBLIC INFORMATION
Typically involves construction, maintenance and operations activities by the MDOT modal agencies.
GOAL
Provides balanced, objective information to assist in understanding the problem and actions needed. Not designed for interaction but may generate reaction to which MDOT responds.
TYPICAL APPROACHES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets/Brochures • Web Sites • Newsletters • Press Releases • Travel Advisories • Posted Project Roadway Signs • Variable Message Signs • Legal Notices • Construction Detours • Road Postings • 511 Announcements • Resurfacing/Paving Projects
EXAMPLES
Construction Detours, Road Postings, 511 Announcements, and Resurfacing projects
MINIMUM NOTICE REQUIREMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For emergency response purposes: as soon as possible. • For planned construction activity or road closure/detour: no less than 2 days; preferably 7 calendar days.

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2.1.2 Public Participation

MDOT frequently provides project-or activity-specific information and encourages participation from stakeholders and other interested parties. Public meetings are the most common way to encourage such two-way communication. However, interested or potentially affected persons cannot always attend meetings, so MDOT also uses webinars and other public outreach methods both to provide information and to seek public opinions. The Internet is becoming a popular tool to facilitate public participation because it allows people to view materials and comment at their own pace.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
Typically involves minor policy development, planning and project development activities including state and federal requirements
GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide balanced objective information to assist the public in understanding the problem, alternatives and opportunities and/or solutions • Obtain public feedback • Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.
TYPICAL APPROACHES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets/Brochures • Interactive Web Sites • Newsletters • Press Releases • Open Houses • Public Meetings • Online Surveys • Social Media • Mass mailing
EXAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maryland Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) • Maryland Transportation Plan (MTP) • Maryland Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP)
MINIMUM NOTICE REQUIREMENTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public Notice before any public meeting: 7-14 calendar days unless different time-frame outline in rule or law. • Public comment period on draft or final document: 14-45 calendar days.

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2.1.3 Public Consultation

MDOT typically uses this approach with large-scale modernization, capacity or expansion projects that are expected to generate substantial public interest. MDOT seeks to solicit significant public feedback and new ideas from the onset as it works to identify a transportation problem and develop solutions. Such significant and early participation produces a collaborative approach to project development activities, such as reconstruction of a town’s “Main Street”, the addition of a new trail, or an intermodal facility and problem-solving that results in a full team effort in defining the problem and developing its resolution.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION
Typically involves major policy development, planning and project development activities including state and federal requirements
GOALS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide balanced objective information to assist the public in understanding the problem, alternatives and opportunities and/or solutions • Obtain public feedback • Work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered • Partner with the affected community or stakeholder groups in each aspect of the decision including defining the problem, developing alternatives and identifying the preferred solution.
TYPICAL APPROACHES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fact Sheets/Brochures • Web Sites • Newsletters • Press Releases • Open Houses • Public Meetings • Focus Groups • Surveys • Public Hearings • Workshops and Charettes • Citizens Advisory Committees • Task Force Meetings • Stakeholder Committees • Webinars
EXAMPLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Major Project Planning Studies • Major Reconstruction Projects • New Construction • Multi-modal Connections • Development of New Policies

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MINIMUM NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

- **Public Notice before any public meeting:** 7-14 calendar days unless different time-frame outline in rule or law.
- **Public comment period on draft or final document:** 14-45 calendar days.
- **Public Hearing:** Notification of Public Hearing is published in a newspaper having general circulation in the project area and the surrounding vicinity, and in a newspaper having substantial circulation in the area, such as a local community newspaper. Newspapers that serve minority populations or LEP communities are used as appropriate. An advertisement is published 30 days and again 15 days prior to the Public Hearing. Advertisements/notices are also placed on the MDOT/modal agency website and may be announced via other appropriate news media (e.g., radio or television)
- **Offer public access to the decision-making process:** It is vital that members of the public are provided with reasonable access to the information necessary for meaningful participation in the decision-making process. Documents will be open to the public and include opportunities for public comment when applicable.

2.2 Maryland Transportation Plan Public Participation

The Maryland statewide long-range Transportation Plan or MTP is updated every five years per state and federal requirements. The MTP update includes internal coordination and input from staff throughout the Maryland Department of Transportation, along with outreach throughout the entire State. The outreach typically includes transportation priority questions in a statewide survey to citizens on the transportation priorities and strategies advertised on the Plan web site (www.mdot.maryland.gov/MTP) and through social media, including a press release, a banner on the MDOT web pages and social media to ensure statewide and demographic coverage. We also will utilize an E-blast sent to all State, regional and local planners (including the MPOs to distribute to their targeted audiences), the State NAACP Office, education leaders and elected officials to distribute to their constituents, especially minority and LEP populations, to announce the Plan update, share the survey and alert folks on how they can participate in the Plan update. Throughout the development of the Plan, we will continue to E-Blast updates to our comprehensive mailing list, along with updating our web site, briefings to the regional Metropolitan Planning Organizations, hosting a webinar on the draft plan development and staffing a Governor's Advisory Committee on performance measures for the Annual Attainment Report on Transportation System Performance. The Advisory Committee includes local and State membership, as well as diverse urban, rural and demographic individuals from around the State. This outreach is to encourage the participation of a wide range of Maryland's citizens, many of whom might not typically participate in traditional transportation planning outreach efforts.

Public workshops and open houses are held to provide information to and solicit input from the public including presentations at the CTP Tour meetings to ensure there is outreach to all of Maryland's 23 counties and the City of Baltimore. Brochures and flyers are prepared to hand out

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at each of these workshops, open-houses, and presentations. In addition, MDOT presents updates at each of Maryland's six Metropolitan Planning Organizations to present the plan and solicit citizen's input. Interactive opportunities such as this will allow citizens and stakeholders to learn about transportation in Maryland and provide their feedback on issues, goals, and objectives that are important to them and their communities. This outreach could also include visioning exercises and visualization methods.

2.3 Maryland Statewide Transportation Improvement Program Public Participation (STIP)

The public participation for the STIP occurs at the State, local and regional levels. At the state-level and non-metropolitan area level the identification of projects for inclusion in the STIP occurs at annual Consolidated Transportation Program Tour Meetings (Tour) that are held each fall season and through the development of County Priority letters. In the metropolitan regions, the MPOs' process for project selection in the STIP incorporates the projects in the MPO TIPs. Our outreach on the STIP is through our MPOs covering most of the State's population, along with outreach to our local jurisdictions, and other forms of communications and social media. In coordination with the MPOs, our efforts focus on the TIPs that are developed by the MPOs. In the metropolitan areas, the TIP outreach is based upon each MPO Public Participation Plans and their proved outreach methods to reach minority and LEP populations. Appendix 1 provides a summary table of the MPOs in the State of Maryland and their coverage of the State's population.

2.3.1 Consolidated Transportation Program

The annual Consolidated Transportation Program Tour process is where the Secretary of Transportation along with the MDOT modal agencies meet with the local elected officials, state delegation, and the citizens from each of Maryland's 23 counties and the City of Baltimore to share information on the State's transportation funding program and receive feedback on transportation priorities which MDOT considers in the development of the final CTP. The CTP includes projects funded for the current fiscal year and for five fiscal years in the future.

Formal local and public input is provided through "county priority letters" and input received during the annual CTP tour. Input is received from the Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), generally through the content of their constrained long-range transportation plans. In addition, the Department of Budget and Management provides recommendations on the final program to the Secretary in early December as a part of the budget process. Input is also received throughout the year from the Governor's office and specific guidance is received on the draft and final programs.

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Transportation Priority Letters

Maryland's 23 counties, the City of Baltimore and municipalities have the opportunity to submit an annual "Transportation Priorities Letter" to help inform the Department of local governments' needs as the draft Consolidated Transportation Program (CTP) is developed each year. Priority Letters identify the desired state capital investments deemed most important by local governments and convey a general consensus position of each jurisdiction's state and local elected officials. The letters are requested by MDOT's Office of Planning, Programming, and Project Delivery asking that each jurisdiction submit their letters by April 1st of each year so that their request for state funding for their transportation priorities can be considered by the Secretary of Transportation and the MDOT modal agencies for inclusion in the draft CTP.

Priority Letters represent each county's own internal ranking of projects deemed most important based on local need and local input. This is an effective way for counties to convey to MDOT the need for specific transportation projects and investments. Priority Letters involve requests for a wide variety of project funding – from transit improvements, highway reconstruction, and sidewalk construction to bridge improvements, bike path development, and highway safety projects. In some cases, counties reserve portions of their own funds to accelerate project implementation, conduct feasibility and planning studies, ensure that projects are kept on-track, and provide a funding match as required for certain types of projects. The modal share (highway, transit, etc.) of the projects listed in Priority Letters ranges from county to county. In more heavily populated and densely developed counties, there is a stronger focus on public transportation and improving access to public transportation from roadway networks. Counties with smaller populations and lower densities tend to focus on highway and arterial improvements, although most counties request some element of transit funding. Priority letters are typically received in the spring-summer as the draft CTP/STIP is developed. More guidance on the Priority Letters can be found at www.mdot.maryland.gov/PriorityLetter.

CTP Tour Annual Consultation Process

Once the official draft CTP/STIP is complete, MDOT conducts the Annual Consultation Process, also known as the CTP Fall Tour where the Secretary of Transportation and the Modal Administrators visit each of the State's 23 counties and Baltimore City to present and solicit input on the draft CTP/STIP. In preparation for the CTP Fall Tour, MDOT conducts staff level meetings with each of the Counties and Baltimore City called the Pre-Tour meetings to solicit staff input prior to the actual Tour. At the Tour itself, local elected officials, state legislators, and citizens are generally present at these meetings. After the CTP Fall Tour, MDOT reviews any comments and

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concerns and uses this input, along with updated revenue forecasts, to develop the final CTP/STIP.

Once the final CTP has been developed after public input, it is submitted to the General Assembly for its approval. The final CTP is used in creating the MPO TIPs – all information is the same. Once the final CTP and each TIP have been approved, they are brought together into the current STIP. It should also be noted that the STIP also includes projects and plans of two independent agencies – MDTA and WMATA.

To further make the transportation planning process accessible to the public, MDOT makes the Maryland Transportation Plan, the CTP, and the STIP available online for the public's information and use at www.mdot.maryland.gov. All MPOs also post their TIP online with other appropriate reports, studies, surveys, press releases, and pamphlets. More related information can be found at www.mdot.maryland.gov/Planning.

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Appendix 1

Maryland Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)
 (Source: <https://www.planning.dot.gov/mpo/>)

Metropolitan Planning Organization	Member Jurisdictions
<p><i>Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB)</i> Designation Year: 1992 2020 Census Population: 2,816,948</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baltimore City • City of Annapolis • Anne Arundel County • Baltimore County • Carroll County • Harford County • Howard County
<p><i>Hagerstown-Eastern Panhandle MPO (HEPMPO)</i> Designation Year: 1986 2020 Census Population: 334,482</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Hagerstown, MD • Portion of Washington County, MD • Urbanized Area Portion of Franklin County, PA
<p><i>National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB)</i> Designation Year: 1965 2020 Census Population: 5,732,469</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Washington, D.C.
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Maryland</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charles County • Frederick County • Montgomery County • Prince George's County <p>Cities of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bladensburg • Bowie • College Park • Frederick • Gaithersburg • Greenbelt • Hyattsville • Laurel • Rockville • Takoma Park • Manassas Park

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Metropolitan Planning Organization	Member Jurisdictions
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u><i>Virginia</i></u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fairfax County • Loudoun County • Prince William County <p><u>Cities of:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alexandria • Arlington County • Fairfax • Falls Church
<p><i>Salisbury-Wicomico MPO (S/WMPO)</i> Designation Year: 2004 2020 Census Population: 111,019</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Salisbury, MD • City of Fruitland, MD • Urbanized Area of Wicomico County, MD • Town of Delmar, DE
<p><i>Wilmington Area Planning Council (WILMAPCO)</i> Designation Year: 1971 2020 Census Population: 674,314</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Wilmington, DE • New Castle County, DE • Cecil County, MD
<p><i>Calvert-St. Mary's MPO (C-SMMPO)</i> Designation Year: 2013 2020 Census Population: 64,984</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urbanized Area Portion of Calvert County and St. Mary's County, MD

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