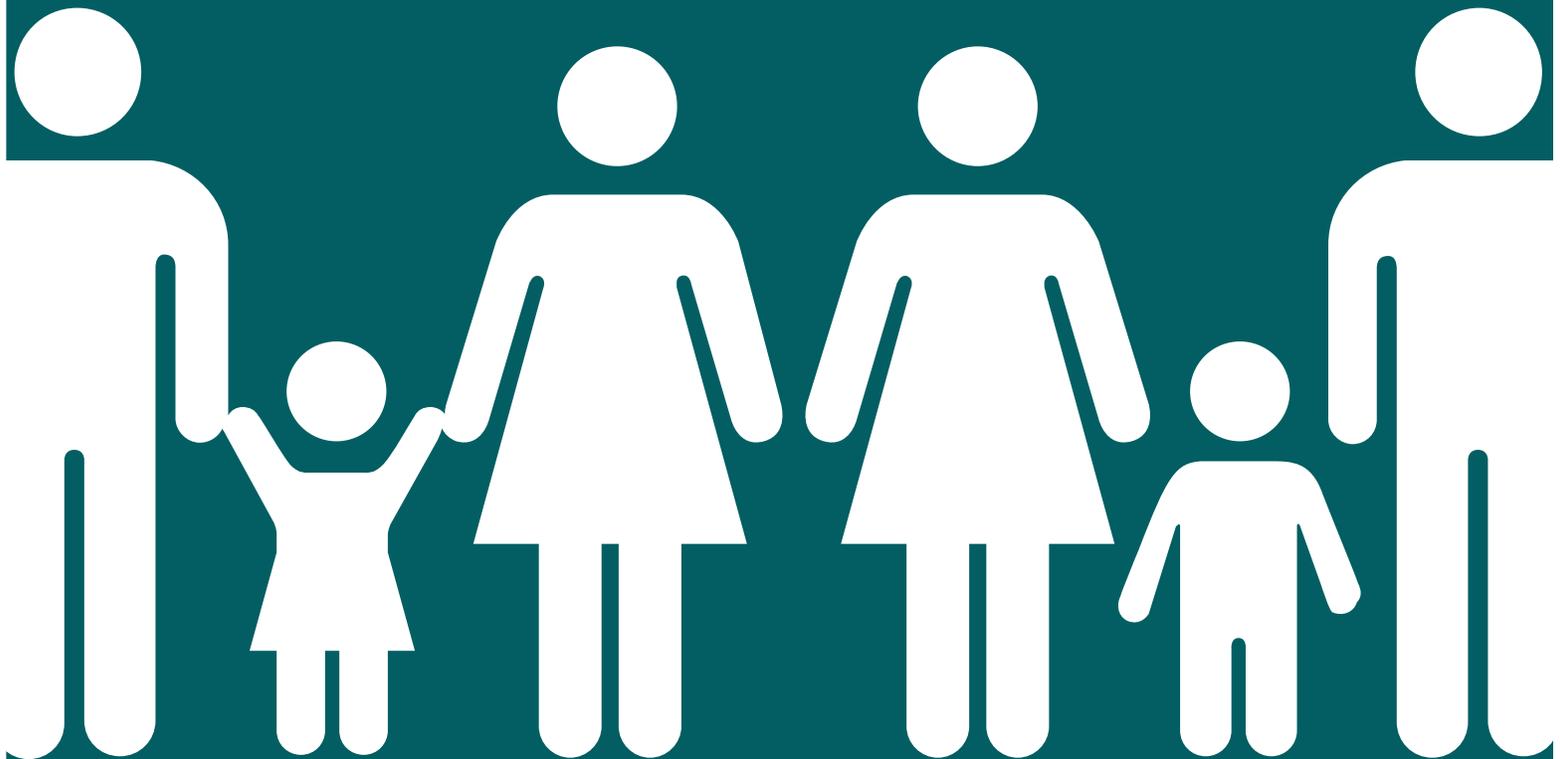


The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

## 2022 UPDATE



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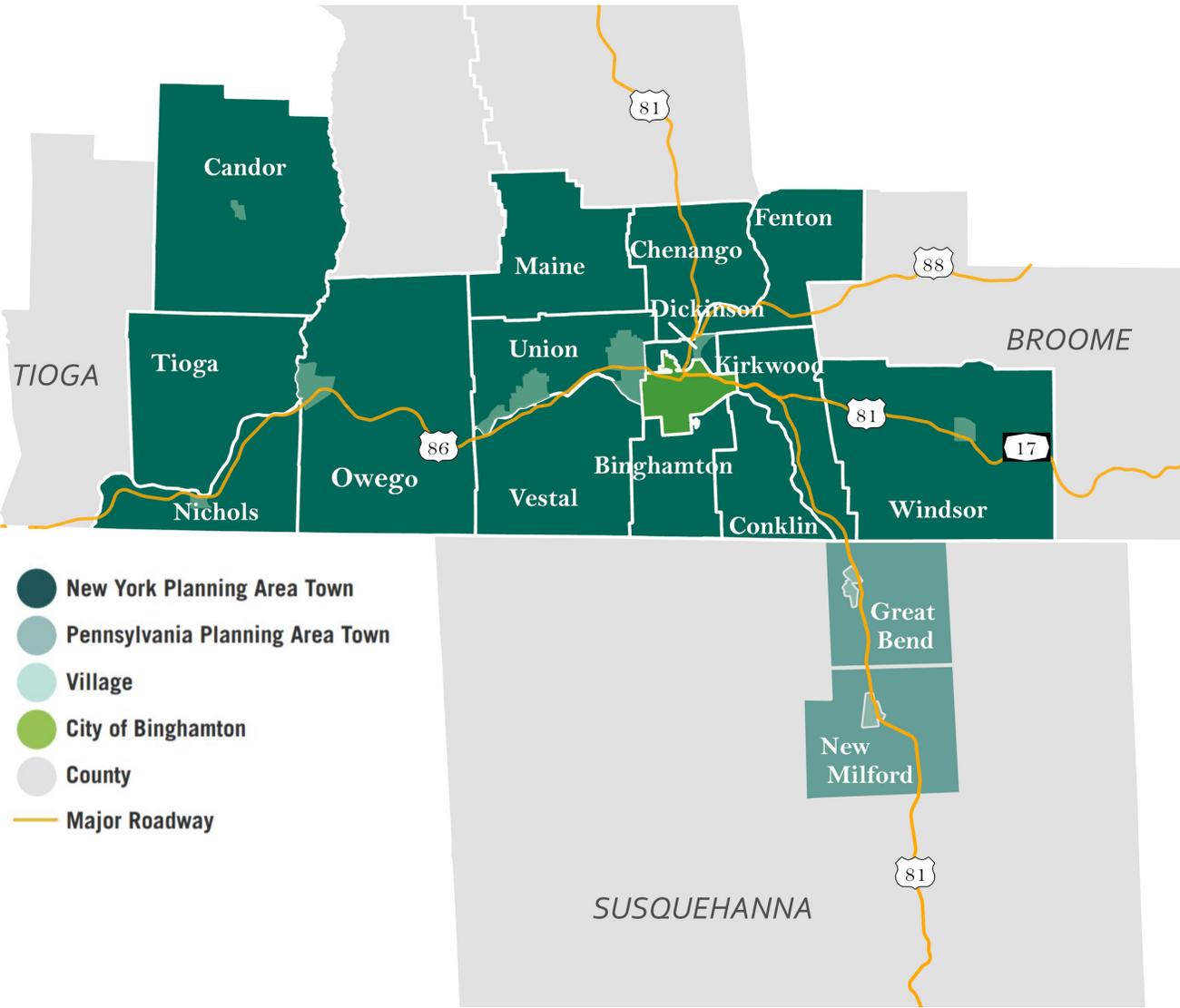
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# Introduction

The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated by the Governor of New York under federal law responsible for transportation planning in the Binghamton urban area. The BMTS planning area extends across most of Broome and Tioga in New York and includes a small portion in northern Pennsylvania.



Federal law established metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) to conduct the transportation planning process for US Census Bureau-defined urbanized areas with more than 50,000 people. The Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study (BMTS) was designated by the Governor of the State of New York as the MPO for the Binghamton NY-PA Urbanized Area. BMTS has fulfilled this function since 1964.

The BMTS Policy Committee is the governing board of the MPO. By law, it must include representatives of at least 75% of the local governments that comprise the region. The Policy Committee relies on cooperative decision-making to address the needs of the region and includes elected and appointed officials from:

- **Broome and Tioga Counties**
- **City of Binghamton**
- **Villages of Endicott, Johnson City, and Owego**
- **Towns of Chenango, Dickinson, Kirkwood, Owego, Union, and Vestal**
- **New York State Department of Transportation**
- **Empire State Development**
- **Southern Tier 8 (Regional Planning Agency)**
- **The Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, and Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) serve as advisory members.**

PennDOT is responsible for planning activities and transportation projects in the Pennsylvania portion of the BMTS planning area. The Northern Tier Regional Planning & Development Commission (N. Tier) provides local context for this area. N. Tier has adopted a Long-Range Transportation Plan<sup>2</sup> and a Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)<sup>3</sup> for their five county region, of which the portion in the BMTS MPA is a small part. BMTS includes federally funded transportation projects located within the Pennsylvania portion of the BMTS planning area in their Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for information purposes.

The Policy Committee is supported by the BMTS Planning Committee, whose members are primarily planning, engineering, and public works staff from member municipalities. They provide technical review of plans and programs prior to Policy Committee action.

The purpose of the MPO is to foster coordination of transportation planning activities as well as regional collaboration throughout the planning area. BMTS has a unique and far-reaching role in the region and works with organizations and people from different segments of the area; from elected officials and municipalities to state, federal, and regional organizations, as well as citizens and local clubs to make decisions about transportation investments.

Transportation investments can make significant impacts in an area, and it is therefore critical to include the public in the decision-making process. The FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act), enacted in 2015, continued the stipulation from past transportation bills that all MPOs must include public participation as a regular part of plan-making for their urban areas. And the most recent transportation bill passed in 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), encourages enhancing public participation by focusing on social media and other web-based tools. To facilitate this, BMTS is required to develop and utilize a Public Participation Plan (PPP). Requiring an update every five years, this plan is an update to BMTS's 2017 Public Participation Plan, Meaningful Local Participation in Transportation Planning. This plan outlines the strategies and means that BMTS will use to garner meaningful public participation and inclusion of all interested parties and stakeholders in planning decisions. Below is the legal basis for this public participation requirement in the statutory provision excerpted from the Federal Register passed on May 29th, 2016:

§ 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation.

(a) The MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

(1) The MPO shall develop the participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes for:

(i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;

(iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;

(iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;

(v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;

(vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;

(vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;

(viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;

(ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and

(x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

(2) When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan and TIP (including the financial plans) as a result of the participation process in this section or the interagency consultation process required under the EPA transportation conformity regulations (40 CFR part 93, subpart A), a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made as part of the final metropolitan transportation plan and TIP.

(3) A minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days shall be provided before the initial or revised participation plan is adopted by the MPO. Copies of the approved participation plan shall be provided to the FHWA and the FTA for informational purposes and shall be posted on the World Wide Web, to the maximum extent practicable.

(b) In developing metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs, the MPO should consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the MPA that are affected by transportation (including State and local planned growth, economic development, tourism, natural disaster risk reduction, environmental protection, airport operations, or freight movements) or coordinate its planning process (to the maximum extent practicable) with such planning activities. In addition, the MPO shall develop the metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs with due consideration of other related planning activities within the metropolitan area, and the process shall provide for the design and delivery of transportation services within the area that are provided by:

(1) Recipients of assistance under title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53;

(2) Governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations (including representatives of the agencies and organizations) that receive Federal assistance from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation to provide non-emergency transportation services; and

(3) Recipients of assistance under 23 U.S.C. 201–204.

(c) When the MPA includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(d) When the MPA includes Federal public lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Federal land management agencies in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

(e) MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under § 450.314.

§ 450.316

In sum, the regulations provide clarity on what the FTA and FHWA expect from MPOs regarding public involvement with respect to plans, programs, transportation projects, and transportation investments. The regulation expects an inclusive and proactive process that actively involves affected individuals, groups, communities, and stakeholders.

The purpose of this BMTS Public Participation Plan (PPP) update is to set goals, provide guidelines, as well as define strategies and requirements for public participation and outreach. With the previous PPP completed in 2017, the intent for this plan is to think broadly, be more attuned to the developing methods of communication, and to provide effective means for BMTS to evaluate their methods of involving the public.

## Goals of the PPP

The goals of the Public Participation Plan are to:

- 1 Reaffirm BMTS's commitment to involving the public early and often**
- 2 Outline BMTS's strategies for including the public**
- 3 Provide a guideline for BMTS's future public participation efforts**
- 4 Establish documentation & evaluation methods for the effectiveness of public engagement**
- 5 Define methods to enhance engagement, especially of stakeholders who have been traditionally underrepresented, or are a part of the minority or disabled populations, or reside in an environmental justice (EJ) area**

# Stakeholders & Interested Parties

There are institutions, organizations, and individuals that have a specific stake in the transportation planning process and these parties are to be specifically targeted to be included in the decision-making process. The following is a list of these stakeholders and parties:

- **Citizens**
- **Affected public agencies**
- **Representatives of public transportation employees**
- **Freight shippers**
- **Providers of freight transportation services**
- **Private providers of transportation**
- **Representatives of users of public transportation**
- **Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities**
- **Representatives of the disabled**
- **Agencies responsible for safety and security operations**
- **Representatives of the traditionally underserved, including low income and minority populations**
- **Other interested parties**

In addition to these groups, BMTS also considers representatives of the elderly in planning, as Broome and Tioga County have a large elderly population that will continue to grow. BMTS maintains a strong working relationship with organizations that represent the elderly populations in the planning area, such as the Southern Tier Independence Center, as well as the Broome County Office of the Aging. Furthermore, local businesses, local education institutions such as Binghamton University and SUNY Broome, and representatives of organizations advocating for motorists are actively targeted for participation and inclusion.

There are a variety of means that BMTS utilizes to obtain input from stakeholders, ranging from direct contact to advisory committees. Direct communication is the most common and most effective means of involving stakeholders in BMTS activities. BMTS maintains contact lists for each of the stakeholder groups mentioned above and sends letters and/or e-mail communication when there is a plan or program germane to that area. BMTS also has the ability to create advisory committees for certain stakeholder groups when necessary. For example, BMTS maintains a Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee that meets regularly to discuss pedestrian and bicycling accommodations in the area as they relate to new and ongoing projects. BMTS uses these opportunities to identify future needs and hear input from these stakeholders. The committee is a well-established group that is often called upon for input or advice on plans and projects, as well as for raising local pedestrian and bicycle issues. Similarly, a Freight Advisory Committee was initiated during the development of a rail freight plan. Though it later dissolved once the project was complete, it showcases BMTS's ability to gather interested and invested parties.

Finally, BMTS participates in the activities of stakeholders in order to be more attuned to local needs and activities as well as to facilitate their participation in BMTS's planning efforts. BMTS regularly meets with Broome County Transit and is an active attendee of Mobility Management of South Central NY meetings, an organization which represents transportation for the disabled and other underrepresented populations. BMTS staff also serves often on transportation related committees for specific projects; an example of this is the Broome County Planning Department's Waterfront Advisory Committee for the Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan development.

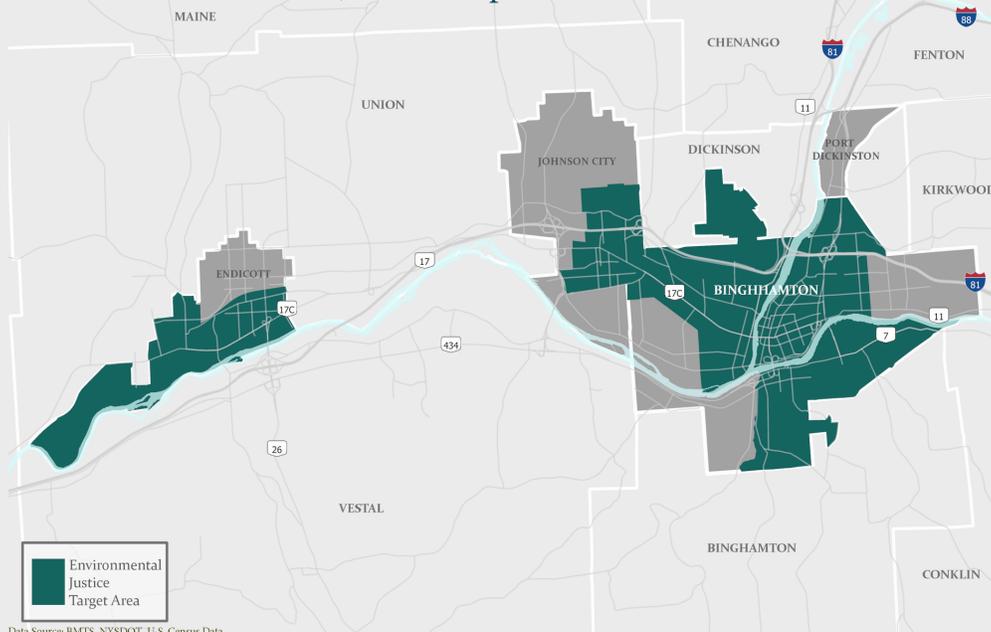
# Equity in Participation



BMTS is committed to ensuring that the transportation planning process is inclusive, and that no person is denied benefits or uninvolved on the basis of minority or income status. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), passed in 1998, emphasizes proactive public involvement and input gathering, providing complete information and timely public notice to communities, stakeholders, and interested parties in the transportation planning process. Moreover, traditionally underserved populations, including those with disabilities, seniors, those without access to private transportation, those with limited English proficiency, or those that are experiencing homelessness, need to be actively included in the transportation planning process.

**Environmental Justice** Executive Order 12898 requires 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 in the United States.” BMTS, as noted in the 2001 Environmental Justice Report, is committed to identifying and mitigating disproportionately high and adverse health or environmental effects of transportation programs, policies, and activities on these populations. BMTS performs an analysis that evaluates the population trends, demographics, and geographic locations of environmental justice populations based on data provided by the US Census Bureau.

BMTS Environmental Justice Map 2021



**Limited English Proficiency** BMTS recognizes that its planning area consists of a diverse population, which is why BMTS has developed such a large variety of ways for people to be involved in transportation planning. Executive Order 13166 seeks to increase access and participation for those with limited English proficiency. BMTS has in place a Limited English Proficiency Plan, which is periodically updated. The Limited English Proficiency plan details how the MPO will locate and include limited English proficient persons in the transportation planning process. While the BMTS area has a low LEP population, BMTS periodically reviews the needs based on census data. LEP is inherently related to public participation and is considered part of this plan by this reference.

**Title VI** BMTS is dedicated to remaining non-discriminatory in its actions and complying with federal regulations for inclusiveness. As such, BMTS has in place a Title VI plan that is updated periodically. The Title VI plan describes BMTS's compliance with civil rights, and BMTS is committed to ensuring that every person has an opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process regardless of race, gender, age, disability, economic status, or national origin. The VI plan is posted on the Publications page on the BMTS website.

**Americans with Disabilities Act** The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) seeks to include people with disabilities in the development of transportation and paratransit services and the transportation planning process. BMTS ensures that all meetings open to the general public are accessible to everyone, including those with vision, hearing, or mobility limitations. BMTS is committed to providing access and will make accommodations for special services when requests are received.

## Consultation

Federal Law also requires that BMTS consult with other planning agencies and municipality officials in the development of transportation plans as it is relevant. These include state and local agencies responsible for land use development, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation, and more as appropriate. Consultation with these agencies involves comparison of the plans of relevant agencies with BMTS's transportation plans and activities. Discussions between BMTS and local planning agencies regarding certain transportation topics may occur as needed.

Consultation with municipality officials also occurs when necessary. Frequent and ongoing consultation is done through participation on the BMTS Planning Committee. Municipal officials from all around the BMTS planning area are on the Planning Committee. This includes local highway superintendents, engineers, public works commissioners, and more. If needed, individual consultation with a specific municipality may take place through meetings, emails, or phone calls.

# Public Participation Strategy

Comprehensive, meaningful, and frequent public participation is essential to transportation planning work. Meaningful involvement allows the public to become active participants in the transportation planning process. Approaching public outreach in a holistic and ongoing manner will help to improve communities, develop a consensus on transportation projects and programs, and cultivate a transparent and ongoing dialogue between citizens, local government, and transportation agencies. BMTS's goal for public participation is that it is:

## Thorough

Outreach should be comprehensive and provide accessible options for involvement for all interested stakeholders and parties

## Continuous

The Public should be able to participate on an ongoing basis throughout the planning process and feel comfortable sharing their opinion at a convenient time

## Collaborative

Participation should be inclusive; BMTS, local organizations, and local governments should partner in decision-making

## Empowering

The public should feel recognized, important, and empowered by the public participation process

## Equitable

Participation should be inclusive, accessible, and representative of the public. Minority, disadvantaged, and groups that are traditionally underrepresented should be targeted in the public participation process

# Methods for Public Engagement

Below is a list of methods for public engagement that BMTS employs, most of which are listed in the 2017 Public Participation Plan. However, as participation needs and means evolve, BMTS is using this update to emphasize the need for virtual and remote public engagement opportunities in BMTS activities. When feasible, BMTS will seek to support virtual and remote public engagement opportunities, whether that is providing virtual participation in a committee meeting or live streaming a public meeting for virtual access.

Public involvement efforts vary based on the nature of the project or study, and methods employed should reflect the needs over the course of a project. Each project should take into consideration the unique characteristics and needs of the project area and draw from the agency's LEP, Title VI, and Environmental Justice plans for guidance. Public participation may be more involved and employ multiple methods for engagement for something more involved, such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, but may only employ one or two methods for something more technical and limited, such as a Road Safety Assessment.

## Virtual Public Involvement (VPI)

The Federal Transit Administration (FTA) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Offices of planning issued updated Planning Emphasis Areas (PEAs) on December 31, 2021. Early, effective, and continuous public involvement that brings diverse viewpoints into the decision-making process is one of the key emphasis areas, and integrating Virtual Public Involvement (VPI) tools into the public engagement approach will help BMTS increase meaningful public involvement in the transportation planning process. VPI tools provide a platform to inform the public and receive feedback, increasing efficiencies in how information is disseminated and how input is collected. These strategies are generally cost-efficient ways of collecting input and disseminating information. Stakeholders and interested parties are able to provide input and participate in ways that are more convenient; whether that is by providing feedback on an online survey at a time convenient to them or participating in a public meeting from the comfort of their home, virtual options provide greater accessibility.

VPI techniques can be included in nearly any part of the public participation process and examples include real-time polling, social media following, crowdsourcing, online surveying tools, online meetings, story mapping, virtual town halls, etc. BMTS supported studies and projects are to be accessible online on the BTMS website, providing access to documents, surveys, photos, and other information. Additionally, meetings that may be traditionally held in person, like the Policy and Planning Committee meetings, can integrate a live stream or conferencing platform, like Zoom, for participants to engage from where they are rather than having to attend in person. In order to expand engagement, foster communication, and collaboration, and enhance efficiency, it is critical for BMTS to provide as much virtual public involvement as possible, when feasible, and include virtual options in traditional participation methods.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, organizations and government entities heavily relied on virtual public involvement methods to reach out to the public and conduct meetings in a safe but meaningful way. Because of this, many organizations were able to see the benefits of using VPI and reaching out to the public. While virtual meetings instead of public meetings were a requirement during the pandemic and these policies will remain unchanged for the foreseeable future, BMTS will revisit the policy as needed to ensure safety, and will continue to utilize VPI strategies in the future in order to reach as much of the public as possible when seeking public input.

While VPI techniques expand engagement and pairs well with traditional participation methods, not all residents may have access to the internet or the technology needed to access VPI tools or feel comfortable using them. BMTS can make accommodations for individuals that are not comfortable using the VPI tools, especially when traditional methods are unavailable so that they can meaningfully participate in the planning process. BMTS will advertise the accommodations as necessary to ensure residents and stakeholders are aware of alternative options for participation.

**Public Meetings** Public meetings are held before and during the development of plans specifically in order to gather public input. Public meetings are an opportunity for BMTS to make a presentation and share information about upcoming plans while providing the public with the opportunity to ask questions and share their concerns. Many public meetings are hands-on, utilizing maps and other visual techniques to explain concepts to attendees and provide a physical place for them to provide feedback, brainstorm different planning scenarios, and much more. These meetings are held at convenient times in public places that are easily accessible to persons with mobility limitations. When necessary, special accommodations, such as hearing devices for hearing-impaired persons, can be made. VPI strategies are also to be incorporated into public meetings when feasible through means that are relevant to the event, such as: enabling virtual participation, providing access to meeting recordings, and conducting live polling during the meeting.

In order to further connect with the public, BMTS attends public meetings or events hosted by other local agencies and organizations when appropriate. This partnership assists us in reaching out to more audiences and special interest groups that may not typically attend an event hosted by BMTS. Concerns and opinions can then be addressed in future BMTS transportation planning initiatives.

**Branding & Marketing** A single logo is always used on all BMTS documents and public relations material. Since this has been standard practice for many years, the BMTS logo is commonly recognized as that of the MPO for the Binghamton urban area. This has helped the public become familiar with the activities of the MPO by providing an easy way to recognize BMTS products. This logo is especially helpful for this purpose since the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study is a relatively long agency name that can be hard to remember offhand.

**Surveys or Questionnaires** BMTS often releases questionnaires to receive input from the public. Questionnaires are great tools to supplement information gathered from public meetings or forums and enable BMTS to receive input from community members that may have not been able to participate otherwise. These questionnaires are often done online but BMTS understands the need to include those without access or the understanding of computers and may provide paper or telephone options.

**Social Media** BMTS staff runs a Twitter and Facebook page to engage with planning area residents. The Facebook page is a public business page that can be found by any Facebook user who searches for BMTS. BMTS uses this page to solicit comments on plans that are in need of public involvement, advertise public meetings, and post links to surveys related to the development of various plans. BMTS also uses Facebook to create formal event pages in which people can find event information, RSVP to an event, and share it with friends. Finally, BMTS uses Facebook as a way to keep the public updated with ongoing proceedings, and as a way to share interesting transportation-related articles, research, stories, and developments in local projects. Facebook is a great tool for fulfilling the federal requirement of making public information available electronically, as well as providing visualization of planning and planning-related materials. Additionally, BMTS monitors these sites and others, such as Nextdoor, for community opinions and to stay informed about local issues.

**Regular Meetings** BMTS conducts regular meetings on a quarterly basis for Planning and Policy Committees, and monthly for the Pedestrian and Bicyclist Advisory Committee. Committee meetings are a great way for the public to understand what BMTS does, are always open to the public, and the public is encouraged to attend. The beginning of the meeting always has a public comment period for the public to comment on the agenda, and written comments are always provided to committee members to review. Information for committee meetings, including agendas, minutes, and participants are routinely posted on the BMTS website and committee meeting dates are posted on the website months in advance to give the public advance notice. Additionally, a public notice is sent to the media preceding each meeting. These meetings are held in government buildings that are accessible to all individuals and are accessible via public transportation.

**BMTS Website** The BMTS website is a great resource for community members to learn about events and understand what BMTS does for that planning area. The website was updated in 2021 and is user-friendly and accessible. On the website is all of BMTS's publications, including interactive maps, information on bicyclist and pedestrians, traffic counts, studies, plans, reports, and federally-required documents. Additionally, BMTS includes information on all of its committees, including members, meeting agendas and minutes, and supporting documentation. The website transparently lists all staff members and provides contact information for the community to provide feedback, comments, and ideas for all projects, initiatives, and activities.

**Public Notices** BMTS gives notice of public meetings through press releases to local news agencies and postings on the BMTS Facebook page. These news outlets are collectively referred to as the media and they provide coverage for the entire BMTS planning area. Notices detail the time, date, and location of a public meeting, as well as the topic to be discussed. When appropriate, public notices may be made on local radio stations. Public meetings are also advertised on the homepage of the BMTS website. Requirements regarding the amount of notice necessary for different types of public meetings are described in the next section. Public notices for the public review of documents are typically posted on the BMTS Facebook page and website.

**Interactive Mapping** BMTS uses various interactive maps on its website to give the public greater access to the information that BMTS has. Additionally, interactive mapping techniques are a great visual way to gather information, such as opinions, comments, ideas, or for crowdsourcing purposes, from the public when hosting an event or seeking public input.

**Email** BMTS has a mass email mailing list where information about events, upcoming plans, or other important things can be shared. For example, during the public outreach effort for BMTS's 2020 Long Range Transportation Plan update, emails were sent to appropriate mailing lists to invite people and groups to attend outreach events. This method of communication is not frequently used, but the email database is constantly maintained and updated so that it can be utilized if desired. The database consists of members of the general public, local officials, and others that have been gathered over the last decade.

**Posters and Flyers** Posters and flyers are often used to announce meetings and events. These documents are distributed both electronically and physically at public places such as City/Town Halls, libraries, and community centers. These announcements contain pertinent information such as a brief description of the event and its date, time, and location.

**Media Outreach** It is BMTS's goal to garner as much interest and participation in planning activities as possible. Many community members rely on media to inform them about local events and pertinent information. When hosting events, such as the Bridge Pedal, or seeking input in a plan, such as the Long Range Transportation Plan, BMTS reaches out to local media to provide information or to participate in an interview. This coverage can generate interest or participation in the event and helps community members understand what BMTS is and does for the area.

# Transportation Planning Documents & Guidelines for Specific Plans

While BMTS involves the public in nearly every plan that is published, there are some specific guidelines to be followed for certain plans. This includes a period for the review and comment of documents, notice for public meetings, and the number of ads required for both review periods and public meetings. Details for each plan can be found in the following table and are detailed further on the next page.

Plan/Program	Review Period	Public Meeting Notice	Update Cycle
Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)	30 Days	10 Days	5 Years
LRTP Amendment	15 Days	N/A	N/A
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	30 Days	10 Days	2 Years
TIP Amendment	15 Days	N/A	N/A
Coordinated Transportation & Human Services Plan	30 Days	10 Days	3-4 Years
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	30 Days	N/A	Annually
Title VI Plan	30 Days	N/A	N/A
Public Participation Plan	45 Days	N/A	5 Years
Other Plans	30 Days	Varies	Varies

**Transportation Plan** BMTS's Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) is perhaps the most exhaustive planning effort completed by the MPO. As such, it also requires the most involvement from the public. Federal law requires that BMTS maintain a regional transportation plan with a horizon of at least twenty years and that the plan be updated at least every five years. Each update cycle will begin with stakeholder involvement and consultation prior to drafting any documents. The goal of these meetings will be to engage in discussions of the goals, objectives, and general direction of a plan.

Public outreach will begin after the stakeholder involvement and consultation with other planning agencies. This will occur in the form of a public meeting. Public notice of such a meeting will be given to the media 10 days in advance. An online survey can also be utilized to compile additional public input. When Transportation Plan documents are produced, they will be made available for review for 30 days. The plan will be available at BMTS and on the BMTS website. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft metropolitan transportation plan as a result of the participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final metropolitan transportation plan.

Amendments to the LRTP do not require public meetings but do necessitate a 15-day review period. Amendments can be reviewed online or at the office.

**Transportation Improvement Program** The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a comprehensive list of all transportation projects, or project phases, in the Binghamton metropolitan area proposed to receive FHWA and FTA funding during a 5-year period. The TIP is considered the capital programming component of the LRTP. It is a five-year program, and is updated every two years, in concert with NYSDOT's capital program update. Since the TIP is largely developed in consultation with agencies represented on the Planning Committee, Planning Committee meetings serve as public participation opportunities for TIP updates. The public is invited to attend the Planning Committee meeting at the start of the update cycle, or at any time, to provide input on project selection and prioritization. Public notice is sent to the media at least 10 days in advance.

Once the TIP update is drafted, the document is available for public review for 30 days. Copies of the draft can be found on the BMTS website or at the office. When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft TIP as a result of the participation process, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments are made part of the final TIP.

TIP Amendments do not require public meetings, but do have a 7-day public review period. These documents can also be found in person or on the BMTS website.

**Coordinated Transportation and Human Services Plan** The Coordinated Transportation and Human Services Plan details gaps and redundancies in our transportation system, and how local organizations and agencies can coordinate to improve transportation services. It is updated every three to four years. As a coordinated plan, this plan requires a large amount stakeholder involvement and local planning agency consultation. A specific committee comprised of local transportation and human service agencies meets on a regular basis to work on the development of this plan and its goals. The public is always invited and encouraged to participate in these meetings. Meetings with the specific purpose of inviting the public to discuss the plan are also held during the update process. They are publicized to the media at least 10 days in advance with their date, time, and location. The final document has a 30-day public review period. The document can be found on the BMTS website or at the office.

**Unified Planning Work Program** The Unified Planning Work Program details projects and plans to be worked on by BMTS during a certain fiscal year. This plan does not necessitate specific public outreach efforts, however, the draft document requires a 30-day public review and comment period. The document is available both online and at the BMTS office.

**Title VI** Title VI plans describe how BMTS complies with federal civil rights laws. It is updated periodically. There is no public meeting held for the development of these plans, but a 30-day public review period exists for people to comment on the plan. Like the previous plans, the document is both on the BMTS website and at the BMTS office.

**Public Participation Plan** Public Participation Plans are to be updated on a 5-year cycle. A public review of the drafted plan is necessary before its adoption. This review period is 45 days. The document can be found on the BMTS website or at the BMTS office.

**Other Plans** BMTS sometimes develops other plans related to various transportation topics when there is a need for them. Public meetings may or may not be scheduled depending on the nature of the plan, but adequate notice will be given if there is one. A standard 30-day public review period is in place for any draft document before it is adopted by the Policy Committee. Examples include the Pedestrian Plan (2013) and Bicycle Plan (2015).

## Evaluation of Participation Techniques

Unofficial reviews of participation methods are done continuously during staff meetings, project debriefs, and during the analysis and review of public input to assess strategies and means for maximizing public input. Public participation is always included in each year of the Unified Planning Work Program and is reviewed when the UPWP is reviewed at the end of each planning year. As technology evolves and more VPI options are available, BMTS will continue to evaluate new methods and assess how to most effectively integrate these methods into the participation plan.

BMTS will periodically evaluate its public participation methods and their effectiveness in achieving meaningful public involvement. Officially, this will be done at least every five years through the update of this plan, but more often if needed. This evaluation analyzes how well the public participation methods employed by this plan engage all interested parties. A specific emphasis is placed on how well the typically underserved populations, such as low-income people or minorities, are involved in MPO activities. BMTS employs a qualitative approach to evaluating participation methods and monitors metrics such as the number of participants involved in a meeting or comments received on a plan, and analyzes participation trends to assess the effectiveness of participation methods.

# Consideration & Documentation

Effective outreach does not stop once input has been received. It is BMTS's goal to demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received. To meet this goal, all input is saved and documented in one or more ways. For example, email input is saved, survey responses are compiled into a report, and sign-in sheets from public events are kept. For events that utilize hands-on and visualization techniques to gather input (such as maps or large posters that participants write on), summaries are written and photos are often taken and kept for future reference. By documenting this information, BMTS staff are then able to study results, consider how they are relevant, and incorporate them into plans as appropriate or necessary. Furthermore, any comments made on draft documents during public review periods are considered and addressed before the documents are brought to the Policy Committee for approval. These comments are also documented in one or more ways.

Most public involvement done on a large scale does not necessitate a personal response from BMTS to each participant. However, this is not always the case. Public input on plans and projects that deems a personal response is responded to in a timely manner. Formal complaints and comments are also acknowledged and responded to in a reasonable timeframe.

When appropriate and possible, BMTS plans which utilized a large public outreach effort will have an appendix where public participation strategies and outcomes are described. It is in this section that a reader may see how stakeholders, interested parties, and the public were engaged in a particular project or plan, how their input was documented, and how it was considered for the final plan. In accordance with federal law, this is required of the LRTP and TIP.