



PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Meaningful Local Participation in
Transportation Planning

Binghamton Metropolitan
Transportation Study
March 2017



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Approved by BMTS Policy Committee on March 9th, 2017

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**BINGHAMTON METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION STUDY
POLICY COMMITTEE
RESOLUTION 2017-03**

Resolution approving the BMTS Public Participation Plan as revised.

WHEREAS the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study Policy Committee has been designated by the Governor of the State of New York as the Metropolitan Planning Organization responsible, together with the State, for the comprehensive, continuing, and cooperative transportation planning process for the Binghamton Urban Area, and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the federal metropolitan planning regulations 23 CFR 450.316(a) the MPO shall develop and use a documented participation plan, and

WHEREAS in 2007 BMTS adopted a participation plan in consultation with all interested parties, and

WHEREAS, the 2017 update to the participation plan has been developed to more effectively meet BMTS' responsibilities for public notice and participation through a variety of activities and communication modes, and

WHEREAS the 2017 Public Participation Plan meets the requirements as set forth in 23 CFR 450.316(a) and has been available for public review for 45 days as required, and

WHEREAS the BMTS Policy Committee has created a Planning Committee of technical representatives to advise it on matters concerning the implementation of the urban transportation planning process, and a Program & Finance Subcommittee thereof to advise on matters of program administration, and

WHEREAS the BMTS Planning Committee on February 23rd, 2017 has approved by consensus a resolution recommending approval of the Draft BMTS Public Participation Plan as revised, and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the BMTS Policy Committee approves the BMTS Public Participation Plan, to be dated for reference March 2017.

CERTIFICATION OF RESOLUTION 2017-03

I, the undersigned, duly elected Chair of the Binghamton Metropolitan Transportation Study Policy Committee, do hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of BMTS Policy Committee Resolution 2017-03, adopted by consensus this 9th day of March, 2017.



Michael Marinaccio, Chair
BMTS Policy Committee



Date

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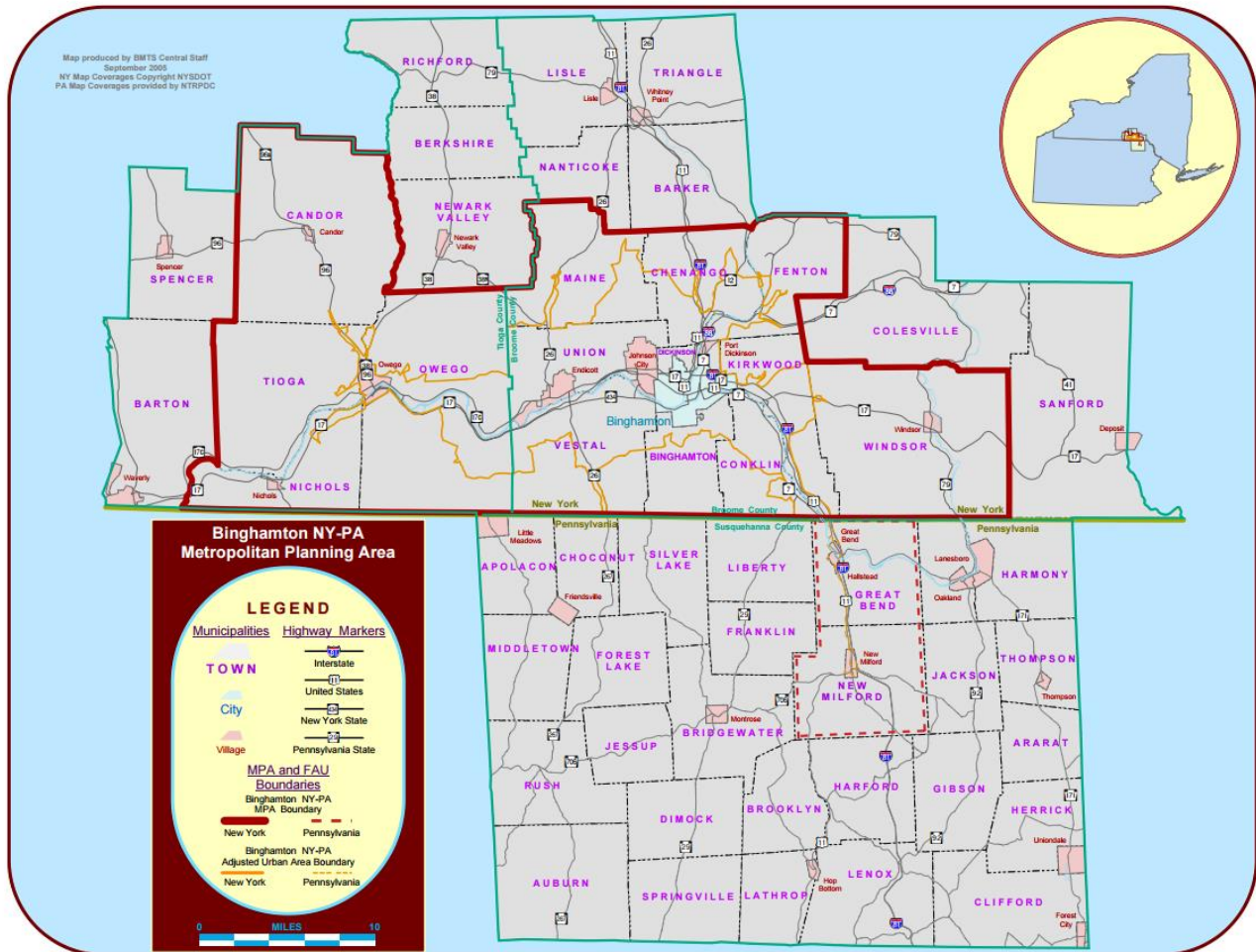
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Introduction & Purpose

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 map below shows the limits of the BMTS planning area, extending across most of Broome County, part of Tioga County, and a small portion of Pennsylvania based on U.S. Census data.

Map of BMTS Planning Area



The most recent federal transportation law, the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act), was enacted in October of 2015. This regulation 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. To facilitate this, BMTS is required to develop and utilize a Public Participation Plan (PPP). This plan describes the strategies and means that will be used to achieve all-inclusive public involvement for all BMTS plans that are published. This translates to having concrete methods for including *all* interested parties and stakeholders in planning decisions. Furthermore, these interested parties and stakeholders shall have a role in creating the PPP itself and the plan should be updated every five years.

Through Public Participation Plans it is possible to achieve continuous, cooperative, and coordinated transportation planning, which is something all MPOs must strive for. The legal basis for this public participation requirement can be found below in the statutory provision excerpted from the Federal Register passed 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

Stakeholders & Interested Parties

As noted above, there are institutions and organizations that have a specific stake in the transportation planning process. These parties are to be specifically targeted to be included in the plan making process. The following is a list of these stakeholders and parties.

Stakeholders and Interested Parties:

- 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

In addition to these groups, BMTS also considers representatives of the elderly in planning, as Broome and Tioga County have a high elderly population. Furthermore, local businesses, local education institutions such as Binghamton University and SUNY Broome, and representatives of organizations advocating for motorists participate in planning.

There are a variety of means of obtaining 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. 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, it's a great example of how committees of stakeholders and interested parties can become closely involved with transportation activities.

Finally, BMTS participates in the activities of stakeholders in order to facilitate their participation in BMTS's planning efforts. An example of this are regular meetings between BMTS and Broome County Transit. BMTS is also an active attendee of Mobility Management of South Central NY meetings, an organization which represents transportation for the disabled and other underrepresented populations.

Consultation

The FAST Act 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 or phone calls.

Public Participation Strategies

Participation from the general public is very different from the participation of stakeholders and consultation with other agencies described in the previous sections. The general public is large and diverse and does not necessarily have a background in planning, thus it is necessary to use many different methods to effectively engage everyone. For this reason, BMTS has the following criteria that are followed in all BMTS planning activities:

- Transparency
- Integrity
- Inclusiveness
- Coordination
- Timeliness
- Creativeness
- Responsiveness
- Awareness
- Straightforwardness

Though they are broad, these concepts guide all BMTS activities, and aid in encouraging meaningful participation and involvement from the public. In addition to acting on these principles, BMTS has specific methods and strategies for engaging the public in planning. These techniques are outlined below.

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 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.

Social Media

BMTS utilizes a [Facebook page](https://facebook.com/BMTSBinghamton) (facebook.com/BMTSBinghamton) run by the central staff to engage with urban area residents. The 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, and stories. 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.

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.

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.

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 notice for the public review of documents are typically posted on the BMTS Facebook page and website. However, other media outlets will be notified when BMTS staff believe it is necessary. Specific guidelines for the review of draft documents is in the next section.

Public Forums at BMTS Meetings

In addition to public participation events, all BMTS Planning and Policy Committee meetings serve as public forums for any projects or documents and their updates. An opportunity for public comment is included on the agenda of each meeting. Planning and Policy Committee meetings occur on a regular schedule each quarter. Planning Committee meetings typically occur on the first Thursday of the last month of each quarter. 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.

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 2015 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.

Online Survey Tools

BMTS has recently acquired QuestionPro, an online survey software, in an effort to further encourage public involvement in transportation planning. These surveys are convenient and will allow people to participate in transportation planning on their own time in their preferred environment. It is also helpful because there are many people who cannot necessarily travel to all public participation events but yet would still like to be involved. BMTS's online surveys will provide them with a tool to do so regardless of their travel abilities. Finally, online surveys allow for BMTS to utilize photos, maps, and charts in order to help people visualize information, which is crucial and necessary for public participation. QuestionPro is a new tool for BMTS, but it will be incredibly beneficial to the public participation process.

BMTS Website

BMTS uses its [website](http://bmtsonline.com) (bmtsonline.com) as the hub for data dissemination for public participation. As mentioned above, the homepage serves as a place to advertise public participation events or plans that are available for public review. All of BMTS's reports and documents, as well as other resources, can be found on the site as well. The website is a great tool for anyone to find information they may need in order to participate or provide feedback on planning, or to simply understand the MPO better. It also fulfills the federal requirement of making all public information available electronically. Comments and concerns regarding transportation in the metropolitan area are always welcome. The website has a "[Contact](#)" page

(bmtsonline.com/contact), where contact information can be found if a person wishes to reach out to BMTS. In addition to this, there is a “[Staff](http://bmtsonline.com/staff)” link (bmtsonline.com/staff) where emails for each employee can be found. With this information, it is easy to communicate with and provide input to BMTS.

Complaint/Comment Procedure

BMTS takes all complaints and comments seriously. If all other methods of public involvement are not adequate or appropriate for a person to express their opinion, BMTS has a standard complaint/comment procedure. Anyone can email (BMTS@co.broome.ny.us) or call (607-778-2443) BMTS during business hours to voice complaints or make comments about any transportation planning activity in the urban area. Anyone who reaches out to BMTS by this method will be responded to in a timely fashion. More complaint/comment procedure information can be found on the BMTS “[Contact](http://bmtsonline.com/contact)” page (bmtsonline.com/contact).

Title VI/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. 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](http://bmtsonline.com/reportsanddocuments) and [Limited English Proficiency Plan](http://bmtsonline.com/reportsanddocuments) (bmtsonline.com/reportsanddocuments), which are periodically updated. Title VI plans describe BMTS’s compliance with civil rights, while Limited English Proficiency plans detail how the MPO will locate and include limited English proficient persons in transportation planning. Since these topics are inherently related to public participation, they are considered part of this plan by this reference.

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 or Program	Public Review Period	Minimum Public Meeting Notice	Update Cycle
Public Participation Plan	45 days	N/A	5 years
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 Amendments	7 days	N/A	N/A
Coordinated Transportation and Human Services Plan	30 days	10 days	3 to 4 years
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)	30 days	N/A	Annually
Title VI Plan	30 days	N/A	N/A
Other Plans	30 days	Varies	Varies

Public Participation Plan

Public Participation Plans are to be updated on a 5-year cycle. 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.

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.

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 of these plans include the [Pedestrian Plan](#) (2013) and [Bicycle Plan](#) (2015). These plans can be found on the BMTS website (bmtsonline.com/reportsanddocuments) or at the office.

Documentation & Evaluation

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), 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.

BMTS will periodically evaluate its public participation methods and their effectiveness in achieving meaningful public involvement. 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.