

**New Mexico Department of Transportation
Public Involvement Plan**

final
plan

prepared for

New Mexico Department of Transportation

prepared by

Cambridge Systematics, Inc.

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date

June 24, 2014 Final

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1.0 Introduction and Purpose

The purpose of this plan is to guide the New Mexico Department of Transportation's (NMDOT) public involvement activities for statewide planning. NMDOT is committed to conducting planning activities openly and transparently, and providing citizens with an opportunity to learn about and participate in the transportation planning process.

This plan is responsive to the Federal requirements for statewide planning as outlined in the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). The plan is sensitive to the needs of audiences across the State, including the full range of transportation stakeholders, Tribal entities, communities, and citizens. The plan provides NMDOT planning staff with sufficient guidance to set a minimum threshold of activity while providing the flexibility so that individual planning project and program managers can craft an approach that will best serve their plan and its audience's needs.

NMDOT planning project and program managers are encouraged to use this document to guide development of a specific public involvement plan tailored to the planning activity and the target audience. NMDOT transportation planning activities that have a public involvement component should include the following key elements:

- Conduct outreach activities early in the process and at key milestones;
- Develop outreach strategies that are tailored for the target audience, including venues, communication styles, and technologies that are accessible to them, including underrepresented populations;
- Develop a standard process for documenting feedback obtained during public engagement process to ensure transparency;
- Adhere to all Federally required public comment periods and required public hearings; and
- Provide the opportunity for public review and comment at key decision points.

This plan covers the following planning activities and products:

- Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRP);
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- Transit and Rail Planning;

- Special Projects and Programs:
 - Aviation Planning;
 - Safety Planning;
 - Transportation Alternatives Program;
 - Bicycle, Pedestrian, Equestrian Planning; and
 - Recreational Trails Program

This plan is made up of the following sections:

- **Section 2.0** addresses the need for public involvement and describes why NMDOT conducts public engagement;
- **Section 3.0** lays out a set of principles to guide NMDOT's public outreach efforts;
- **Section 4.0** describes the public involvement tools and activities that can be integrated into a specific public involvement plan for specific planning activities;
- **Section 5.0** describes the key planning activities for which NMDOT conducts public outreach, including an overview of the primary audiences for each planning activity, and provides a framework for how public involvement should be approached for that particular planning activity; and
- **Section 6.0** summarizes NMDOT's commitment to Public Involvement.

2.0 Need for Public Involvement Planning

There are a number of reasons for a state DOT to engage in public involvement ranging from Federal requirements, to practical considerations, to philosophical reasons. The following section discusses the various reasons for actively engaging the public in transportation planning activities.

2.1 FEDERAL PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT REQUIREMENTS

Over the past several decades, various Federal laws and regulations have been enacted that address the need to engage the public in transportation planning-related activities, including specified methods for carrying out public engagement programs. Table 2.1 summarizes the relevant Federal regulations.

Table 2.1 Federal Public Engagement Requirements (Planning)

Federal Laws and Guidance		
Air Quality	40 CFR Part 93.105(e)	“Affected agencies making conformity determinations on transportation plans, programs, and projects shall establish a proactive public involvement process, which provides opportunity for public review and comment by, at a minimum, providing reasonable public access to technical and policy information considered by the agency at the beginning of the public comment period and prior to taking formal action on a conformity determination for all transportation plans and TIPS...”
Early and Continuing	23 CFR 450.210 (a)(1)(viii)&(ix) and 450.316 (a)(1)(vii)	“Establish early and continuous public involvement opportunities....”
Electronically Provided Information	23 CFR 450.210 and 450.316 29 USC Section 794(d)	“Make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web.” “(1)Accessibility...individuals with disabilities who are members of the public seeking information or services from a Federal department or agency to have access to and use of information and data that is comparable to the access to and use of the information and data by such members of the public who are not individuals with disabilities.”
Interested Parties	23 CFR 450.210(a) and 450.316(a)	“Providing 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, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation planning process.”

Federal Laws and Guidance		
Limited English Proficiency (LEP)	Executive Order No. 13166 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	“...To this end, each Federal agency shall examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services consistent with, and without unduly burdening, the fundamental mission of the agency... The guidance is based on the prohibition against national origin discrimination in Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as it affects limited English proficient persons.”
Public Input on Performance-Based Planning	23 USC 135(h)(1)	“The Secretary shall establish criteria to evaluate the effectiveness of the performance-based planning processes of States...and provide reports allowing the public to access the information being collected in a format that allows the public to meaningfully assess the performance of the State.”
Public Meetings and Hearings	23 USC Section 128	“Any State transportation department which submits plans for a Federal-aid highway project involving the by passing of or, going through any city, town, or village, either incorporated or unincorporated, shall certify to the Secretary that it has had public hearings, or has afforded the opportunity for such hearings...”
	23 CFR 450.210 and 450.316	“Ensure that public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times...”
	CEQ Regulations 40 CFR 1506.6(b)	“Provide public notice of NEPA-related hearings, public meetings, and the availability of environmental documents so as to inform those persons and agencies that may be interested or affected.”
	Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973	“Provide accessibility in programs, activities, and facilities. Not discriminate on the basis of disability regarding admission and access to its programs and activities and its employment practices.”
	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Title II, Subpart D Section 35.149	“Except as otherwise provided in §35.150, no qualified individual with a disability shall, because a public entity’s facilities are inaccessible to or unusable by individuals with disabilities, be excluded from participation in, or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by any public entity.”
Prohibiting Discrimination	42 USC 2000 – Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964	“Title VI prohibits exclusion from participation in, denial of benefits of, and discrimination under Federally assisted programs on grounds of race, color, or national origin.”
	Section 162(a) of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 (23 USC 324)	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex.
	42 USC Section 12132 – Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.
	Title VI Program and Related Statutes – Implementation and Review Procedures	“The purpose of this part is to effectuate the provisions of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to the end that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Transportation.”

Federal Laws and Guidance

	Executive Order 12898 – Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations	... “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 and its territories...”
	42 USC – Age Discrimination Act of 1975	Prohibits discrimination on the basis of age.
	42 USC – Traditionally Underserved by Existing Transportation Systems	“...Include a process for 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.”
Public Participation Plan	23 CFR 450.210(a)	... “The State shall develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decision points.”
	Public Involvement/Public Hearing Procedures for NEPA	“For the Federal-aid highway program: 1) each state must have procedures approved by the FHWA to carry out a public involvement/public hearing program pursuant to 23 USC 128 and 139 and CEQ regulation. 2) state public involvement/public hearing procedures must provide for a number of factors.”
Public Records	Freedom of Information Act (5 USC 552)	All Federal agencies are required to make requested records available unless the records are protected from disclosure by certain FOIA exemptions.
Visualization	23 CFR 450.210(a) and 450.316(a)	“Use visualization techniques to describe the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan and supporting studies.”

2.2 PRACTICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL BASIS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

While complying with Federal law is important, the reasons for a state DOT to conduct public outreach go well beyond meeting Federal requirements. It could be argued that complying with Federal law is the least important reason to conduct public outreach. NMDOT is committed to conducting active public involvement using a transparent process for the following reasons:

- **To better understand the public’s needs and preferences.** Transportation programs and plans are put together to deliver a transportation system that meets the needs of the public and users. Effectively engaging in a public dialogue is critical to understanding the public’s needs.
- **To advance equity by ensuring that the concerns of traditionally underserved groups are addressed.** Some groups may be significantly impacted by transportation decisions, but have more limited access to opportunities to impact those decisions due to factors such as language barriers or limited

Internet access, and barriers to meeting attendance. As a public agency, the DOT has a responsibility to reach those underserved groups and provide them the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process.

- **To establish trust and credibility with the public.** A public agency cannot effectively fulfill its mandate without public credibility. Without transparent, well-developed public outreach, the public does not have sufficient information to know if the DOT is credible.
- **To make better decisions and decisions that reflect the public’s values, needs, and preferences.** The most important reason to conduct public outreach is to *improve* the decisions made by the DOT.

2.3 TRIBAL CONSULTATION

The State of New Mexico has a high proportion of Native Americans, and there are both opportunities and challenges associated with addressing Tribal transportation needs. There are 22 Tribes, Nations, and Pueblos within the State of New Mexico, with a total population of 193,222 (based on the 2010 U.S. Census data) which is about 10 percent of the total state population of 2,059,179. Tribal lands total 6,055,930.739 square acres (according to NMDOT GIS data).

Tribal Consultation has been a part of the NMDOT statewide transportation planning process since the late 1990s. Over the past several years, the NMDOT made commitments to the principle of partnerships with Tribal governments in recognition and respect of the unique sovereign status of the Tribes. The NMDOT formalized this in 2010 with the implementation of Administrative Directive 121, “State-Tribal Collaboration.”

Tribal Consultation is also mandated by both Federal and state statutes with certain requirements. Title 23 USC Section 135(f)(2)(c) states, “With respect to each area of the State under the jurisdiction of an Indian Tribal government, the statewide transportation plan shall be developed in consultation with the Tribal government.”

On March 19, 2009, Governor Bill Richardson signed SB 196, the New Mexico State Tribal Collaboration Act (STCA), into law. The STCA provides the framework for the State and Tribes to work together to develop successful programs and services to benefit New Mexico’s Native American citizens. The Act requires cabinet-level agencies to develop policies that promote beneficial collaboration between the State and Tribal governments; designate agency Tribal liaisons; provide for culturally appropriate training to state agency employees who work with Tribes; and, provide annual reporting that accounts for each agency’s accomplishments pursuant to the Act.

Background

A majority of New Mexico's Tribal entities are Federally recognized Pueblo Tribes and rely on traditional governmental structures in which a Tribal Governor and other Officials serve a one-year appointed term. Therefore, turnover of Tribal officials in New Mexico is especially high. The Navajo and Apache Nations' Presidents and Officials serve four-year terms, thus have a lower turnover rate in leadership.

This turnover in leadership poses a challenge for NMDOT's communication with the Tribes, making lasting relationships with Tribal leadership difficult. To improve NMDOT's communication and coordination with Tribes, the NMDOT established the Tribal Liaison Program in 2004. The program created a full-time Tribal Liaison position at NMDOT responsible for maintaining relationships with all 22 Tribal entities in the State. Since inception, two employees have held the position: a former Tribal Leader and a non-Native experienced in working with the State's Tribes.

NMDOT's Tribal Liaison Program

The goal of the NMDOT Tribal Liaison Program is to promote Tribal involvement in the Statewide Planning Process. The Tribal Liaison encourages active Tribal participation in the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO) transportation planning processes, resulting in the inclusion of Tribal projects in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). The Tribal Liaison also offers information and guidance on Tribal topics to MPOs, RTPOs, and other state and local agencies that provide services to the New Mexico Tribes. The Tribal Liaison established a strategy to accomplish this goal, including conducting monthly or quarterly meetings between NMDOT District staff and Tribal planning offices; assisting NMDOT Headquarters' and Districts' staff in communicating with the Tribes; providing support to Tribes applying for state and Federal grant funding; and directly responding to concerns from Tribal entities on cultural resource issues and/or other matters. The Tribal Liaison established key contacts for both Tribal entities and NMDOT, in order to initiate and maintain a positive working relationship between the two governments. This relationship facilitated addressing Tribal inquiries of mutual concern by conducting government-to-government meetings with top-level officials as needed to provide guidance to NMDOT on individual transportation projects and policies that affect Tribal relations.

The NMDOT Tribal Liaison, currently housed in the Government to Government Unit of the Planning and Safety Division, serves as a facilitator to provide coordination, communication, and collaboration with the Tribal Entities; New Mexico Department of Transportation; U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs Department of Transportation; Federal Highway Administration; other New Mexico state agencies; MPOs; RTPOs; cities; counties and local governments in addressing specific transportation needs and concerns of the Tribal entities within their given jurisdictions.

Expected Outcome

The benefits of effective consultation that NMDOT has with the Tribal entities demonstrates that strong communication and well-established partnerships are essential for developing and maintaining a solid Tribal consultation processes. The NMDOT Tribal Liaison is proactive in conducting outreach, coordinating agreements, mediating misunderstandings, and building close relationships based on experience and accountability. The Tribal Liaison fosters partnership agreements between NMDOT and the Tribes by facilitating communication between Tribal transportation staff and NMDOT District Offices. Overall, New Mexico's active approach to partnering with Tribes is essential for planning projects and implementing policies that best serve the needs of Tribal members and other users of transportation infrastructure on Tribal lands.

3.0 Principles to Guide NMDOT's Approach to Public Involvement

The NMDOT is fully committed to a transparent, accountable approach to transportation planning. The following lays out the pledge that NMDOT makes to the public and describes the principles used to guide public involvement activities.

3.1 NMDOT'S COMMITMENT TO PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

NMDOT is committed to conducting our business in a transparent, accountable way. We will use techniques that encourage and promote active public participation; create opportunities for all citizens, including underrepresented groups, to participate in transportation planning activities in a meaningful way; and document our actions and the public comments received in a way that assures accountability. In addition, NMDOT recognizes that public involvement is a dynamic undertaking in which the audiences, their needs, and the available technologies are constantly changing. The NMDOT will monitor the effectiveness of our public involvement efforts, update our approaches as necessary, and be flexible to ensure that our efforts are serving the needs of the audiences that our plans are meant to serve.

3.2 NMDOT PRINCIPLES FOR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Public involvement is as much art as it is a science. A good public involvement approach for one plan or audience may not be effective in another situation. In order to provide the most helpful guidance possible, this plan includes guiding principles that should be used by NMDOT staff to guide the public involvement approaches taken for each plan.

Partnerships

NMDOT is not alone in having a mission to engage and inform the public about transportation planning processes. The State's Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPO) share this mission. There are four MPOs in New Mexico: Albuquerque, Las Cruces, Farmington, and Santa Fe. Additionally, the City of Sunland Park, New Mexico on the New Mexico/Texas/Mexico border is part of the El Paso MPO. The RTPOs cover rural areas outside of the MPO jurisdictions. The MPOs and RTPOs in New Mexico are key partners to the NMDOT in transportation planning activities. The NMDOT recognizes that strong partnerships with the MPOs and RTPOs are necessary to ensure that transportation planning activities

are effective. Therefore, the NMDOT is committed to partnering with the New Mexico MPOs and RTPOs in order to meet its public involvement responsibilities.

Flexibility

A good public involvement approach varies according to planning activity and audience. In addition, public involvement approaches should be reevaluated over time as technology and preferences change. An approach for the same plan, involving the same audience several years later, may need to evolve to remain effective. NMDOT staff will be flexible in design and approach to public involvement using tools and approaches that fit the planning activity, and that are targeted to the audience rather than relying on past practices; even practices that have worked successfully in the past may require adjustment before they are applied to a new situation.

Sensitivity to Audiences

It is important that each planning project or program manager recognize the target audiences that need to be engaged during the process for each planning activity and develops a public involvement approach that responds to the needs and cultural differences of various audiences. Transportation audiences can be quite varied. For some plans, it is important to connect with a broad range of audiences while other plans require a focus on a much more targeted audience. The target audience may be defined by geography (rural or urban, or a particular region of the State); business interest (tourism versus manufacturing); or transportation type or user (transit, bicycle, equestrian, etc.). However the target audience is defined, the goal is to develop a public involvement approach that reflects the needs of the target audience(s) rather than expect the target audience(s) to fit their needs to the public involvement approach.

Engage the Public Early and Often

NMDOT's objective is for the statewide planning public involvement process to reach target audiences for each type of plan early in the plan and as often as key milestones may require. The goal is to provide adequate opportunities for the target audience to provide meaningful and useful input, and to avoid presenting key audiences with decisions they had no input in.

Gain Credibility through Transparency

A primary purpose of public engagement is to provide transparent processes that allow the interested public to track the DOTs progress on specific plans and basis for making decisions. An important reason and desired goal for the DOT in using transparent processes is that such processes lend credibility to the DOT. A guiding principle for public involvement at the NMDOT is that it will be conducted in a transparent, accountable way.

Preparation of a Specific Public Involvement Plan

For each planning activity undertaken by the NMDOT, a public involvement plan specific to that activity will be developed. It is important to allow the flexibility, sensitivity to audiences, and partnership approaches appropriate for each plan.

Meet Federal and State Laws and Regulations

Whether a requirement exists for public involvement or not, it is in the best interest of the NMDOT to conduct public involvement to more effectively accomplish organizational goals, as well as meet the public need. In addition, public involvement approaches must comply with all Federal and state laws, including environmental justice and Title VI requirements.

4.0 Public Involvement Tools and Activities

This section provides an overview of public involvement tools and activities that NMDOT may consider incorporating into their public involvement plans. This section describes each technique, including strengths and drawbacks, and details ways to enhance the reach of certain techniques.

4.1 THE PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLBOX

This section provides a description of the primary tools and activities the NMDOT will use to gather public input for statewide transportation planning activities. Shown in Table 4.1, the tools and activities are organized into six public engagement activity categories: 1) public information, 2) media relations, 3) outreach activities, 4) market research, 5) listening and feedback, and 6) collaboration. In addition, each tool is categorized as basic or enhanced. Basic tools are recommended for most public involvement efforts, unless the project manager decides that the tool is not suitable for that outreach effort. Enhanced tools are included and can be added at the project manager's discretion.

The following recommendations are not intended to be directive, but rather to provide ideas and guidance to project managers as they develop public outreach plans for specific planning activities. Project managers should use their knowledge about the plan and the target audiences to identify which tools and activities are most appropriate. In addition, it is important for NMDOT staff to regularly evaluate how effective these tools and approaches are and update the tools recommended for each planning activity and audience as needed.

Table 4.1 Basic and Enhanced Public Involvement Tools and Activities

Activity Category	Basic Tools	Enhanced Tools
Public Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mailings lists, newsletters, and web site posts • Information boards/kiosks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media • Public awareness campaign
Media Relations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Press releases and press conferences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • YouTube press releases • Radio/television interviews
Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Workshops, open houses, and public hearings/meetings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers bureau • Webinars/on-line meetings • Attend community events

Activity Category	Basic Tools	Enhanced Tools
Market Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonstatistically valid surveys/questionnaires 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Statistically valid surveys/questionnaires • On-line customer community
Listening and Feedback	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunities for public to submit comments (e.g., paper forms, email, web site, telephone, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blog with opportunity for public comment • Interview key community leaders • Conduct focus groups
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Briefings/meetings with existing or new advisory committees • Facilitated workshops and charrettes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School outreach programs • Shared decision-making through task force or steering committees

4.2 KEY PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT TOOLS AND ACTIVITIES

This section describes each technique, outlines each technique’s strengths and drawbacks, and details enhanced uses of certain techniques.

Basic Public Involvement Tools and Activities

Mailing Lists, Newsletters, and Web Site Posts

Distribute plan-related documents, information, and updates on NMDOT’s and partner agency’s web sites or via U.S. mail or email. These techniques may be used to provide information at plan initiation and key milestones to circulate key planning dates, plan details, adequate notice of meetings, and/or other opportunities to participate in the decision-making process.

This method is most appropriate when the DOT seeks to distribute information (e.g., meeting information) or public documents but does not need to obtain public comment.

Providing information via mailing lists is more likely to reach the targeted population; whereas, the web site allows the public to access information at will. Publishing the information in multiple languages will enhance the population groups reached.

Information Boards/Kiosks

Set up information boards and kiosks at locations where targeted audiences tend to congregate to distribute key information about the plan.

Providing opportunities for the public to speak with DOT staff about plan information presented on information boards and at kiosks can be particularly effective for a number of reasons. Well-planned events bring the DOT staff to the targeted audiences; the location and time may differ depending on what would likely be most convenient for the

audience targeted. Additionally, it can facilitate more candid conversations, given the less formal venue compared to a large workshop or town hall meeting.

Including informational material in the language of the targeted audience and/or staffing representatives who speak that language can broaden the reach of the outreach effort.

Enhanced Public Involvement Tools and Activities

Social Media

Create social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, a blog, etc.) that the public may visit regularly (or subscribe to updates) to obtain plan information. Social media gets information to the public more quickly than other strategies, and allows the user to self-select what they are interested in. In addition to allowing NMDOT to distribute information more promptly, the public may also provide feedback by responding to social media posts.

Distributing information via social media is an effective way to distribute plan information to the public more quickly than traditional methods. Younger generations are more likely to obtain information via social media than older generations.

Implementing this tool requires empowering staff to select content and allowing flexibility regarding content that is published on-line. A key to successful use of social media is speed. If a cumbersome approval process is required, the use of social media can become a negative, rather than a positive.

Public Awareness Campaigns

A more comprehensive strategy that uses a collection of public engagement techniques to enhance public understanding and promote a public dialogue about a plan. A public awareness campaign may include the use of other public information techniques from other activity categories.

Implementing a public awareness campaign may be a good choice for a plan that will affect all or most population groups statewide (e.g., long-range transportation plan or safety plan) or a plan in which many communities have a strong interest in (e.g., Safe Routes to School plan). It also may be an important element of the larger public outreach effort if the plan covers topics that are controversial and/or involve a significant change from the status quo.

Media Relations

Basic Media Relations Tools and Activities

Press Releases and Press Conferences

An official statement distributed to newspapers to publicize information on the plan. A statement by a prominent figure to news media/journalists followed by a question and answer session.

Formally issuing a statement using traditional media formats is a way to get a message out that is accessible to most population groups, though there is no guarantee that using the media will ensure that the message reaches the targeted audience. The effectiveness of this method can be improved if press releases are produced in languages spoken by key target audiences and are distributed widely, including state and local newspapers and specialty publications for the targeted audiences. Similarly, press conferences will reach more diverse population groups if they are translated into multiple languages and broadcast using a variety of distribution methods, including television, radio, and Internet outlets.

Enhanced Media Relations Tools and Activities

YouTube Press Releases

An official statement produced in a video format and distributed to news outlets, the agency web site, and on YouTube.

YouTube press releases have similar benefits to those described above, but the on-line format allows the DOT to communicate its message in a more dynamic way, and it allows the public to view the content when and where it is convenient for them, potentially reaching more members of the target audiences.

Radio/Television Interviews

An interview given to a radio or television program followed by a question and answer session which the public can call in to learn more about a plan.

DOT personnel appearances on local television and/or radio programs can provide a more informal setting to convey information about a planning activity compared to a press conference. In addition, if a question and answer segment is included, it can give the public the opportunity to ask the questions they are interested in and for the DOT to provide feedback.

To broaden the populations reached, the medium and station on which the appearance is broadcast should be considered. If a large portion of the target audience has limited-English proficiency, then the broadcast should be translated or the DOT should designate a DOT representative who speaks the relevant language and understands the target audience's culture to participate in the interview.

Outreach Activities

Basic Outreach Tools and Activities

Workshops, Open Houses, and Public Hearings/Meetings.

Formal meetings that facilitate discussion about a plan.

Workshops, open houses, and public hearings provide a more formal venue for the DOT to educate citizens on the plan under consideration and also listen to their concerns. Documenting key concerns will improve the DOTs ability to incorporate the feedback effectively into the plan.

The venue, meeting times, and organization of the hearing/meetings are important elements of this approach and should be selected based on what is convenient for the target audiences. Similarly, if possible, the DOT should designate staff to participate who speak the language of the target audience (if non-English) and understands their culture. Feedback should be documented to ensure that it is captured and can be incorporated into the planning process.

Enhanced Outreach Tools and Activities

Speakers Bureau

Make available a list of individuals qualified to speak to groups about a particular plan.

An effective way to reach out to audiences is to appear at events organized by someone other than the DOT. For example Rotary, Lions, and other service organizations have regular meetings and need speakers. By enlisting qualified speakers from within the agency to discuss a particular plan with an audience that is already meeting at a time and place convenient for them can be a very effective way to engage with and inform the public.

Webinars/On-Line Meetings

A seminar or meeting that can be viewed over the Internet to provide convenient access to those who cannot attend the meeting in person.

Providing the public with the opportunity to participate in webinars or meetings on-line in real time or to view webinars or meetings that have already occurred at their convenience is an effective way to inform the public. This tool provides a convenient way for the public to stay informed, even if they cannot attend meetings in-person. The DOT can provide phone-in or on-line opportunities for participants to provide feedback and/or ask questions during meetings broadcast in real time.

Attend Community Events

Planning staff attend community events to distribute information and obtain feedback from community members.

Providing opportunities for the public to speak with representatives from the planning team at public events can be particularly effective for a number of reasons. These engagement events bring the DOT staff to targeted audiences by attending events that are hosted by a third party and are popular events with the target audiences. Examples of venues may include county fairs, high school football games, or local farmers markets. These outreach efforts can facilitate more candid conversations, because the targeted audience is likely more comfortable in these venues compared to larger workshops or town hall meetings hosted by the DOT.

Including informational material in the language of the targeted audience and/or staffing the event with representatives who speak that language can broaden the reach of the outreach effort.

Market Research

Basic Market Research Tools and Activities

Nonstatistically Valid Surveys/Questionnaires

Any method that allows participants to submit comments can be considered a form of market research. This can be as simple as a comment form provided at a meeting or a survey that can be picked up at a booth at a public event or use of an on-line survey tool such as Survey Monkey. This approach provides valuable feedback to the DOT, but is not a statistically valid representation of the greater population.

Nonstatistically valid surveys can help DOT staff to better understand the public's needs, preferences, and concerns. This information can be valuable, even if the survey is not large enough to be representative of the statewide population. Oftentimes those who are opposed to a plan are motivated to provide comment than those who support it; and as a consequence, use of this approach as the only method of obtaining input can skew an understanding of the public support or concern with a plan. DOT staff should be aware of this when incorporating the feedback from nonstatistically valid surveys or questionnaires into their decision-making.

Different survey formats can be used to reach different audiences. On-line surveys can be particularly convenient and quick to complete for many population groups, but written or surveys administered by phone can be more readily accessible for seniors and lower-income populations. Administering surveys in multiple languages may be important in order to reach more diverse population groups.

Enhanced Market Research Tools and Activities

Statistically Valid Surveys/Questionnaires

A series of questions designed to obtain specific feedback that is distributed in such a way to be a statistically valid representation of the greater population.

Statistically valid surveys/questionnaires provide similar benefits to those described above in the nonstatistically valid surveys section; however, a statistically valid survey is distributed in a way that feedback received can be considered representative of the State or segment of the population being targeted. Statistically valid surveys are much more expensive than nonstatistical methods and require professional assistance.

On-Line Customer Community

A group of members that provide feedback by regularly participate in on-line discussions, brainstorming sessions, surveys, and chats on a variety of transportation issues.

Initiating and maintaining an on-line customer community allows the DOT to obtain qualitative feedback, and to probe more deeply into why the community holds a particular viewpoint. The use of on-line customer communities is common among Fortune 500 companies, but has rarely been used by the public sector. The Minnesota DOT has an

on-line community and has found it to be a very successful tool to aid their understanding of the public that they serve.

Basic Listening and Feedback Tools and Activities

Comment Forms, Email Comments, Web Site Comments, and Hotline/Phone Number

Written, electronic, or call-in methods that the public may use to provide feedback on a plan.

A variety of methods may be used to obtain feedback from the public in writing or by phone. These methods are cost-effective, but rarely allow the DOT to engage in an active dialogue with the public regarding their comments. For written and on-line methods, providing instructions in multiple languages and having staff available that are multi-lingual for phone lines will broaden the reach of the approach.

Enhanced Listening and Feedback Tools and Activities

Blog with Opportunity for the Public to Comment

Assign a member of the DOT team to blog about a particular plan, project, or transportation in general. The blog post provides information and it provides readers with the opportunity to communicate their feedback by commenting on the blog. Most importantly, use of a regular blog creates a relationship between the writer and the readers, and creates the opportunity for a two-way dialog.

The blog provides a venue for the public and stakeholders to interact with both the DOT and fellow commenters. This method requires staff to respond to questions, concerns, and ideas posed by the public quickly so that they are encouraged to continue participating.

Interview Key Community Leaders

Interviewing key community leaders helps the DOT gain an understanding of the communities' interests, concerns, and issues about a particular plan.

This is an effective approach to use at the start of a plan. Early in the development process, it helps the DOT understand the concerns and interests of the community, provide a heads up on potential pitfalls within the community, and even helps the DOT understand the language that will resonate with the community. The information obtained through community interviews can be used to inform the public involvement approach to be used.

Collaboration

Basic Collaboration Tools and Activities

Briefings/Meetings with Existing or Newly Created Advisory Committees

Convene committees to share ideas, resolve problems, and identify solutions to improve plans.

Convening advisory meetings is an effective way to gain input, obtain insight, and to promote dialogue from diverse groups. Members may include key DOT staff, staff from partner agencies, experts, community leaders, and/or interested members of the public.

Facilitated Workshops and Charrettes

Meetings in which stakeholders and community members work together to resolve conflicts regarding a plan and to identify solutions.

Facilitated workshops and charrettes provide a venue for targeted audiences to discuss problems, share opinions, and resolve conflicts regarding a particular plan. The nature of the meetings, which generally involve smaller group discussions, makes this technique particularly effective, especially if skilled facilitators guide the discussions and document key concerns and ideas.

The venue location should be selected with consideration of what will be convenient and accessible for target audiences. Additionally, staff or volunteers who speak the language of target audiences should be on-hand to receive and discuss their concerns and answer their questions.

Enhanced Collaboration Tools and Activities

School Outreach Programs

Programs designed to engage with school children about transportation issues relevant to a plan. By providing students with information, it is hoped that some of the materials will reach their parents.

School outreach programs not only enable the DOT to build connections with youth, but they can also help the DOT to reach populations that do not generally attend community meetings or participate in the planning process. Communicating elements of transportation planning activities with youth will require DOT staff to simplify complex concepts so that the key points are understood by school children and, possibly, relayed to their parents.

Shared Decision-Making

The very concept of collaboration is to share decision-making. This can be done by establishing committees, task forces, charrettes, etc. The key difference is that participants are given a greater role in determining the outcome.

While shared decision-making can feel like the DOT would be losing control, it can be a powerful way to truly involve a community or a group in making a decision that has a big impact on that group. The shared decision-making process can be set up in a way that clearly spells out the group's responsibility versus the DOT's responsibility.

5.0 Planning Involvement Tools and Activities

For all statewide planning processes, NMDOT managers will develop a specific public involvement plan tailored to the needs of their planning activity and to the audience for that plan. This section provides ideas and guidance to project managers to help them develop their public outreach plans. This section is designed to be helpful and informative and is not intended to be directive.

What follows is a description of each planning activity that requires public involvement plan at the state level, a description of the key audiences for the plan, and recommended basic and enhanced public involvement approaches to be considered. The following planning activities are covered:

- Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRP);
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP);
- Transit Planning;
- Special Projects and Programs:
 - Aviation Planning;
 - Safety Planning;
 - Rail Planning;
 - Bicycle, Pedestrian, Equestrian Planning;
 - Recreational Trails Program (RTP); and
 - Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP).

5.1 STATEWIDE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Statewide long-range transportation planning is composed of two distinct and important processes, developing the Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan (SLRP) and development of the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP.) The SLRP is updated or replaced every four to five years. The STIP process is more of a day-to-day, year-in-year-out process that produces and documents the list of regional and local projects, as well as the four-year list of prioritized projects of statewide interest. Taken together the list of regional, local, and statewide prioritized projects make up the STIP.

Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan

The SLRP guides the development, implementation, and management of the State's multimodal transportation system in all areas of the State. Because of its overarching nature, the long-range transportation plan's public involvement process should target all categories of audiences, including the full range of transportation stakeholders, transportation providers, Tribal nations, communities, local economic development groups, and citizens.

Public Involvement plans for the SLRP should include a wide variety of methods to gather input from target audiences. Because the SLRP sets the direction for NMDOT, it is important that citizens have the opportunity to provide input on the plan; although, due to the "big picture" nature of the document and the process, it can be a difficult one for citizens to engage in. For purposes of the SLRP, NMDOT will:

- Utilize approaches that inform impacted, interested audiences that the long-range transportation plan is underway;
- Provide opportunities for key audiences to have input into the plan at the initiation stage and at key milestones of the plan's development;
- Provide reasonable access to the documents used in the development of the plan; and
- Adhere to environmental justice principles to ensure that the needs of the traditionally underserved are considered.

The basic public involvement tools that should be used to conduct outreach in SLRP public involvement process include newsletters, web site posts, press releases, workshops, open houses, and public meetings. Program managers may want to consider the following enhanced approaches during the public involvement process:

- **Public Awareness Campaign** - A multifaceted public outreach campaign can be an effective way to inform the public about the SLRP and elicit public opinion on the transportation goals and feedback on alternative investment scenarios. As public involvement campaigns often involve a range of strategies (e.g., web site posts, newsletters, surveys, workshops, etc.), it may help NMDOT to reach the broad range of audiences targeted during the LRP process.
- **Attend Community Events** - Providing opportunities for the public, stakeholders, Tribal entities, and other audiences to speak with DOT staff at popular public events already attended by various target audiences can be an effective method to distribute information and obtain feedback.
- **On-Line Customer Community** - Organizing an on-line customer community can be a particularly effective method of obtaining feedback using a format that is convenient for participants. Separate on-line communities can be created for audiences with different interests, which may be useful during

the SLRP process, given the wide variety of interest groups. Information and survey topics provided through the forum can be more targeted to each audience's interests to keep participants engaged in on-line discussions.

STIP

The STIP lists the transportation projects that the DOT will pursue, including details about funding and scheduling. Although STIP meetings with participants from MPOs, RTPOs, Federal Tribal governments, and local jurisdictions are advertised and open to the public, the STIP process is primarily an internal process to pull together a statewide list of projects that have been selected through other processes, which have had their own public involvement components. Although the STIP process generally does not generate a lot of public interest, given that the process prioritizes project funding statewide, it is important that the public have the opportunity to participate in the process.

For purposes of the STIP, NMDOT will:

- Post the STIP in a place that is commonly accessible to the public with specific emphasis on targeted audiences; and
- Provide an adequate comment period for the public so that they have time to review the list and provide comments to the NMDOT.

A key NMDOT manual – *Policies and Procedures Governing the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program* – has been in effect since February 9, 2012. This document governs the public involvement process for the development of MPO Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP) and the STIP. The STIP Unit of the NMDOT is housed in the Engineering Division. The STIP Unit is responsible for updating the STIP Policies and Procedures Manual on an as needed basis.

The manual identifies two classifications of revisions to TIPs and the STIP and outlines the public involvement process required for each:

- **STIP/TIP Amendments** are major revisions which require public review and comment, redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination, as well as official approval by the MPOs transportation board for projects that fall within a MPO and previewed at the State Transportation Commission for Informational purposes only. This is followed by submission to the New Mexico Secretary of Transportation for approval and subsequent approval by the FHWA and FTA.
- **STIP/TIP Administrative Modifications** are minor revisions which can be made by the STIP Coordinator and MPO staff after proper notification and verification that the change(s) falls into this category.

5.2 TRANSIT PLANNING

The Governor designated NMDOT as the agency responsible for administering Federal Transit Administration (FTA) programs. The Transit and Rail Division within NMDOT administers the FTA- and state-funded transit programs:

- Metropolitan Planning Program (Section 5303);
- Statewide Planning and Research Program (Section 5304);
- Capital Investment Program (Section 5309 (SAFETEA-LU));
- Enhanced Mobility of Seniors and Persons with Disabilities Program (Section 5310);
- Rural Transportation Assistance Program (Section 5311);
- Job Access-Reverse Commute Program (Section 5316 (SAFETEA-LU));
- New Freedom Program (Section 5317 (SAFETEA-LU));
- Bus and Bus Facilities Formula Grants (Section 5339); and
- NMDOT Park & Ride intercity bus service.

The Transit and Rail Division also provides intercity bus service called NMDOT Park & Ride. NMDOT Park & Ride began operations in May 2003. NMDOT Park & Ride is now the fifth largest public bus transit operation in New Mexico based on ridership: In State Fiscal Year 2013 (July 1 to June 30), NMDOT Park & Ride provided 312,320 passenger trips.

NMDOT Park & Ride operates 11 routes, including 2 shuttle routes, in north-central and south-central New Mexico, with 1 route extending into El Paso County, Texas. Service is provided by 20 57-passenger buses, 1 33-passenger bus, and 4 57-passenger spare buses. Service is currently funded by \$5.7 million of state funding, \$300,000 of FTA Section 5311(f), and \$387,848 of FTA Section 5316 from El Paso County, Texas, as well as fare revenues

Buses make 119 daily runs, covering 583 departures. The daily service totals 4,168 bus route miles and serves 22 park-and-ride lots and 40 bus stops.

The Division also coordinates services with our transit partners from a multi-modal planning perspective and informs stakeholder groups and the public appropriately.

Federal Transit Grant Administration

The Transit and Rail Division provides funding opportunity notices to current grantees and potential applicants. The Division distributes the notices to many state and local agencies, Tribal organizations, city and county officials, agencies that provide service programs to minority and the elderly, and metropolitan and regional planning organizations. The Division also places legal notices in approximately 14 newspapers announcing FTA grant funding. The Division has

an established timeline of events outlining the funding cycle. Timely information on grant programs and funding is posted on the Transit and Rail Division's webpage, located at http://dot.state.nm.us/content/nmdot/en/Transit_Rail.html.

All grant applications are presented at a Regional Planning Organization's board meetings and are reviewed and ranked, which then becomes a part of the seven-factor analysis before funds are announced and awarded.

NMDOT Park & Ride Intercity Bus Service

When major service changes or fare increases are proposed, Rider Alerts and draft schedules in English and Spanish are posted on the Transit and Rail Division's web site, distributed to passengers via email, and posted and distributed on all buses serving any route that will be affected by a major service change or fare increase. Public comments are received and incorporated into final schedules as appropriate.

The Transit and Rail Division surveys NMDOT Park & Ride passengers periodically to obtain feedback on service quality and potential service changes.

NMDOT Park & Ride utilizes the following policies and standards to maintain a high quality of service:

- A policy prohibiting standing passengers: 0 percent standing;
- A standard of timed stops for all locations on all routes: 100 percent standard;
- A policy prohibiting any early departure from any stop: 0 percent early departures;
- A policy prohibiting any departure more than 10 minutes after scheduled times: 0 percent departures more than 10 minutes after scheduled times;
- A standard of utilizing 57 passenger over-the-road motor coaches on all routes, and limiting the age of those coaches to no more than 12 years of age: 100 percent standard;
- A standard of at least 15 percent use of seating capacity systemwide;
- A standard of at least a 10 percent use of seating capacity per trip for each route;
- A standard of providing passengers with prior notification of delays in service whenever possible;
- A standard of maximizing connectivity with other transit services; and
- A standard of utilizing illuminated and ADA-compliant bus stops with shelters and benches at all lots.

The basic public involvement tools that are used to conduct outreach during the transit planning public involvement process include web site posts; press releases;

workshops, open houses, and public meetings; providing opportunities for the public to comment via comment form, web site, email, and/or telephone; and advisory committees.

Program managers may want to consider the following enhanced approach during the public involvement process:

On-Line Customer Communities. Organizing an on-line customer community can be a particularly effective method of obtaining qualitative feedback.

5.3 SPECIAL PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS

There are a number of special projects and programs that impact New Mexico citizens and that may be considered by NMDOT. The following is a discussion of those planning processes.

Aviation Planning

Airport planning and project applications are generally led by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and the staff of New Mexico airports. The primary role of the NMDOT is to help develop and plan aviation infrastructure improvements and services by provide a match to the available Federal funds or a state only grant. NMDOT's Aviation Division staff coordinates closely with airport sponsors around Federal grants and the public meetings that are held in conjunction with those grants. The primary audiences for aviation planning are the local airports that apply for FAA grants, the communities and citizens served by the airports and the aviation interest groups that support aviation.

The basic public involvement tools to be used to conduct outreach in aviation planning public involvement process are those designed to reach local airports, the aviation community, and the surrounding area they serve. These may include web site posts, newsletters, press releases, meetings with the aviation community, and establishment of advisory committees. All aviation planning and environmental projects require outreach to the public. In these situations, program managers use public meetings and/or hearings, public information workshops, and the use of webinars and on-line meetings to provide the public and other targeted audiences greater opportunity to participate and comment on plans, and to do it at a time and place convenient to them.

Safety Planning

Safety programs impact a number of organizations and communities across the State. The NMDOT Traffic Safety Bureau provides opportunities for the safety community to provide input on safety planning processes, the DOT's safety programs, and local traffic safety needs. NMDOT also coordinates an advisory group to receive input on the Highway Safety Performance Planning (HSPP)

process. The primary audience for safety planning is very diverse; it includes transportation, law enforcement, education community, medical providers, organizations that represent the needs of children and the elderly, and the general public.

A wide variety of methods and tools can be used to conduct public involvement for safety planning. One of the most important facets of safety planning is engaging with the diverse community of agencies, organizations, and interest groups that are actively involved in providing and in advocating for the safety of the motoring public. The first step is to create a process that fully engages and involves the diverse traffic safety community. Other basic public involvement tools that can be used to conduct outreach in the Safety Planning public involvement process include newsletters and web site posts; information boards and kiosks; press releases and press conferences; workshops, open houses, and public meetings; opportunities for the public to comment via paper forms, email, web site, and/or telephone. Program managers may want to consider the following enhanced approaches during the public involvement process:

- **Public Awareness Campaign.** A multifaceted outreach campaign can be an effective way to inform the public about Safety Planning, crash and fatality reduction targets, booster and infant seat availability, and other aspects of the safety campaign. It can also be a good way to elicit public opinion on and support for the safety goals. As public involvement campaigns involve a range of strategies (e.g., web site posts, newsletters, surveys, workshops, etc.), it is a helpful approach to reach the broad range of audiences targeted for Safety Planning.

Rail Planning

Statewide railroad planning is led by the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) under statutes enacted as part of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA). PRIIA requires that statewide rail plans be coordinated with statewide long-range transportation plans, and that adequate and reasonable notice be provided for comment and other input to the public and other interested parties. At the start of developing each update of the New Mexico State Rail Plan the NMDOT Rail Bureau develops a public outreach and communications strategy that is consistent with the public involvement process currently adopted for NMDOT planning efforts.

There are four components to the public outreach and communications strategy for the New Mexico State Rail Plan. The first component is to identify and communicate directly with key railroad stakeholders in the State, such as freight and passenger railroads; major shippers; transit providers; and local, state, and Federal agencies. The second component is the use of the NMDOT web site for communication on the Rail Plan. The third component is to have the Rail Plan included as an agenda item at regular meetings of the State's MPOs and RPOs. The fourth component is to conduct formal public meetings for the Rail Plan. All

of these components are two-way, in that NMDOT uses these contacts both to disseminate information and to solicit input on the Rail Plan.

Bicycle, Pedestrian, Equestrian Planning

The State Transportation Commission revised policy CP 66 in July 2012 to read as follows:

“The Secretary of Transportation shall provide guidance on reasonable accommodations for bicycle, pedestrians, and equestrians.

1. The Department shall have a position of Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Equestrian Coordinator.
2. The Secretary shall designate an internal, Departmental Bicycle/ Pedestrian Equestrian Technical Committee to assist the BPE Coordinator. The Committee will seek input from the public, advocacy groups, and interested parties and hold public meetings.”

The BPE Coordinator and the Technical Committee will develop a public involvement plan to facilitate the development of a Statewide BPE facility inventory and improvement plan over the next several years.

Tools that could be used in addition to holding public meetings, include producing newsletters and web site posts; information boards and kiosks; press releases and press conferences; workshops, open houses, and public meetings; opportunities for the public to comment via paper forms, email, web site, and/or telephone.

The BPE Coordinator and Technical Committee may wish to consider the following enhanced approaches during the public involvement process:

Attend Community or Bicycle, Pedestrian, or Equestrian Events. Participating in events organized by the community or by the interest groups being served provides the DOT with the opportunity to speak with the public at a place and time convenient to the public.

Recreational Trail Program

The Governor of New Mexico recently reassigned administration of the Recreational Trail Program (RTP) to the NMDOT from the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department – State Parks Division. Federal and state laws mandate specific public involvement processes for the RTP which the NMDOT will follow. The PIP will serve as a guide to augment the mandatory processes.

Transportation Alternatives Program

Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) projects are Federally funded community-based projects that expand travel choices and improve the transportation experience for all users by integrating modes and improving the cultural, historic, and environmental aspects of New Mexico’s transportation infrastructure. The NMDOT has produced a NM TAP Guide for potential TAP applicants,

MPOs, RTPOs, and other transportation planning partners. The NMDOT relies upon the public involvement processes adopted by the MPOs and RTPOs in administering the TAP.

6.0 NMDOT's Public Involvement Commitment

The NMDOT is committed to living up to the principles contained in this plan. In order to be held accountable to this commitment, the NMDOT will conduct an annual, internal review of the public involvement approaches used in that year's statewide planning processes. The review will include consideration of the tools and approaches utilized, an assessment of the effectiveness of those methods for creating engagement with the targeted audiences, and a determination of the lessons learned that will be applied to future public involvement plans.

Additionally, the NMDOT will report biannually to the New Mexico Transportation Commission. That report will include a description of the plans that were developed during the two-year period, the public involvement approaches that were used for those plans, an assessment of the outcome of the public involvement process, and a determination of the lessons learned that will be applied to the development of future public involvement plans.