



TranPlanMT

Moving Montana Forward. Together.



Public Involvement Plan

March 2016



Public Involvement Plan



Prepared by:



For:



Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1.0 Introduction | 2 |
| 2.0 Regulatory Compliance | 3 |
| 3.0 Guiding Principles | 4 |
| 4.0 Outreach Methods | 7 |
| <i>4.1 Launch Event</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>4.2 Website</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>4.3 Online Survey</i> | <i>7</i> |
| <i>4.4 Stakeholder Workshop</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>4.5 MPO Coordination</i> | <i>8</i> |
| <i>4.6 Statewide Plan Review</i> | <i>9</i> |
| 5.0 Document Availability and Review Opportunities | 10 |
| 6.0 TranPlanMT Contacts | 11 |
| 7.0 TranPlanMT Schedule | 12 |

This page left intentionally blank.



INTRODUCTION

Effective public involvement is critical to transportation decision making. Public input helps transportation officials understand Montana's needs and reflect the state's priorities in planning and project development.

Public involvement also provides opportunities to educate Montanans about the value of the statewide transportation system, how transportation decisions are made, and the need for continued investment in our infrastructure.

The Montana Department of Transportation (MDT) developed this public involvement plan (PIP) for its update to the statewide long-range transportation plan, TranPlanMT. TranPlanMT is a policy document that sets a statewide transportation framework and guides MDT's decisions and actions. It supports the department's mission to serve the public by providing a transportation system and services that emphasize quality, safety, cost effectiveness, economic vitality, and sensitivity to the environment. TranPlanMT ensures that MDT continues to address customer priorities and that resources are directed to programs and projects that reflect those priorities.

MDT prepared this PIP to explain the guiding principles and methods for public involvement during development of the TranPlanMT update.

What is TranPlanMT?

TranPlanMT is a policy document that sets a statewide transportation framework and guides MDT's decisions and actions.



Watch for these signs to find out more about TranPlanMT and how you can stay involved!

State and federal regulations require MDT to provide public involvement opportunities during the transportation planning process.

As outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (23 CFR 450.210), the process must provide:

- timely information about transportation issues and decision making to a broad group of citizens, resource agencies, local and tribal governments, and user groups;
- opportunities to review and comment on draft materials at key decision points;
- reasonable access to information used in development of the plan;
- adequate notice of involvement activities and review timeframes;
- convenient and accessible meeting locations and times;
- visualization techniques to describe the proposed plan;
- explicit consideration and response to public input;
- methods for considering the needs of traditionally-underserved populations; and
- periodic review of the involvement program's effectiveness.

The current transportation funding authorization, Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act, reinforces the federal focus on continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning and public involvement.

MDT also follows other laws and regulations that affect public involvement for transportation planning, including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibiting discrimination in government programs and services; Article II of the Montana Constitution requiring

What is the FAST Act?

*On December 4, 2015, President Obama signed into law the **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act**. The law provides five-year funding for surface transportation projects, including roads, bridges, railways, and public transportation, with specific focus on motor vehicle safety and freight movement.*

opportunity for citizen participation and review; and Executive Orders 12898, 13166, and 13175 addressing environmental justice in minority and low-income populations, access for people with limited English proficiency, and coordination with Indian tribal governments.

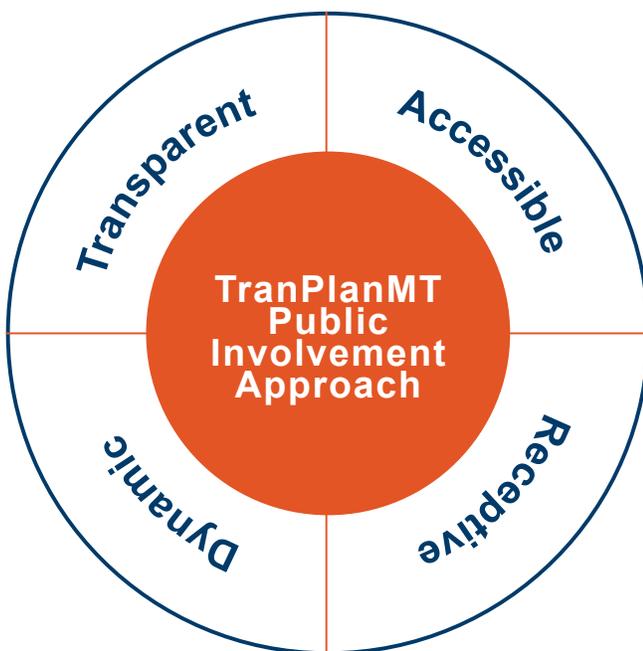
GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MDT values input from the public during the long-range transportation planning process. Public interaction and feedback provides important information on the public's transportation needs and priorities.

To ensure Montanans have an opportunity to meaningfully participate in shaping the state's transportation future, MDT has identified the following guiding principles for TranPlanMT outreach efforts. MDT is committed to:

- inform through a transparent process,
- provide adequate access,
- consider input, and
- enable a dynamic approach.

These guiding principles will assist MDT in effectively and efficiently gathering valuable public feedback.



MDT considers public feedback to continually improve its delivery of projects and services across the state.

Inform Through a Transparent Process

Montana has a long history of ensuring public access to government programs. The public has a vested interest in understanding how plans are developed and how decisions are made. MDT recognizes that sharing information through an understandable, transparent process is critical to building credibility with the public.

MDT will use a variety of tools to inform, educate, and encourage a constructive dialogue about the state's long-range transportation vision, needs and priorities, trends, and funding scenarios.

Transportation planning and the project development process can seem complicated to the public. To promote understanding, MDT will develop materials that simplify concepts and clearly explain decision-making processes, timeframes, goals, priorities, and outcomes.

The updated TranPlanMT document will use visualization techniques such as charts, figures, photographs, and other methods to help explain narrative formats. More detailed explanations with technical information will be provided in attachments and reference documents.

Provide Adequate Access

Diverse representation and feedback is important to ensure that the TranPlanMT update reflects the needs and priorities of all Montanans. Factors such as literacy, internet access, disability, socioeconomic status, and language barriers may affect the public's ability to provide their views to MDT.

MDT has identified a variety of outreach methods to enable broad participation in the planning process. Through stakeholder representation, access to documents online and in local public spaces, paid and earned media announcements, and an interactive online survey, MDT will explain why transportation planning is relevant to the lives of Montanans and offer multiple ways to participate.

MDT attempts to provide accessible information and services to all individuals. MDT will employ the following specific measures to enable adequate public access during the TranPlanMT update.

- MDT will confer with representative organizations about how best to involve traditionally-underserved populations.
- MDT will use photographs, charts, and graphics to promote understanding of planning concepts.
- Alternative accessible formats of materials will be provided upon request.
- Documents will be made available electronically to the extent feasible.

Receive Public Input

MDT recognizes that open communication builds public trust. After providing comments, the public wants to understand how their input will be considered and addressed, and what effect it will have in shaping planning outcomes.

MDT will review and consider all public comments submitted for the TranPlanMT update. Using appropriate avenues, MDT will demonstrate how public comments and concerns are collected and



considered throughout the TranPlanMT update process and how those comments affect subsequent planning elements.

Comments that do not apply to the TranPlanMT update will be forwarded to the appropriate MDT contact. For example, comments about a specific transportation project will be directed to the MDT District or project manager serving that location.

Enable a Dynamic Approach

During the TranPlanMT update process, MDT will evaluate the effectiveness of this PIP in achieving intended goals and participation levels. As a first step, MDT will be coordinating with other state departments of transportation to learn about best practices from their public involvement programs.

MDT will also review stakeholder participation, and feedback from the online survey to assess demographic representation of public comments. MDT may modify its public involvement approach for the TranPlanMT update as needed to adequately engage Montanans and reach targeted audiences.



Stay involved in TranPlanMT!

Learn more about the TranPlanMT update process and ways to stay involved at: <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan.html>





OUTREACH METHODS

In fulfillment of regulatory requirements and in accordance with MDT's department-wide public involvement plan and goals, the following sections outline public involvement methods for the TranPlanMT update.

Launch Event

MDT Director Mike Tooley will host a public event to announce the launch of MDT's TranPlanMT update effort. The purpose of the event will be to explain the importance and objectives of statewide long-range transportation planning and associated funding challenges and invite the public to join in planning for Montana's transportation future. Director Tooley will use visual aids to describe the TranPlanMT update effort and timeline.

Before the event, a press release will be sent to media outlets to encourage media coverage at the event and allow adequate opportunity for the public and interested stakeholders to attend.

After the event, letters to the editor will be sent to newspaper editorial boards (including the *Missoulian*, *Billings Gazette*, *Bozeman Chronicle*, *Montana Standard*, *Helena Independent Record*, and *Great Falls Tribune*) from community members to emphasize the importance of the TranPlanMT update, explain why long-range transportation planning is relevant to the lives of Montanans, and encourage public participation.

Website

In 2015, Montanans rated the MDT website as one of the top tools MDT uses to communicate with its constituents.

Public input helps MDT identify transportation needs and ensure limited funding is spent in the areas of greatest need.

To compliment public engagement through traditional print media and public events, MDT will host a website at <http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan.shtml> to share information about the TranPlanMT update process. The website will provide a description of the planning effort, information on public involvement opportunities including specific dates and times, key contacts, links to available documents, and an anticipated schedule.

Online Survey

Online surveys provide a convenient way for the public to participate according to their schedule. To broadly engage Montanans in the long-range planning process, MDT will request public feedback through an online survey tool during a three-month engagement period. The online survey will be designed to offer a simple, informative, engaging format.

With access provided through a link on the main TranPlanMT website, the survey will provide a series of screens to educate the public about the statewide planning process, request input on

Montanans' transportation priorities, collect feedback on transportation budget allocation and investment decisions, and ask participants to rank potential strategies. The survey will also provide information on next steps and additional ways to stay involved in the planning process.

MDT will consider all relevant public comments in identifying issues, analyzing transportation trends, and developing policy goals for the updated long-range plan.

Stakeholder Workshop

MDT will host a stakeholder workshop in Helena to obtain input on long-range visions and anticipated transportation trends. MDT will invite representatives from metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), non-metropolitan areas and tribal governments, rail, production facilities, public ports, freight shippers and providers of freight transportation, agriculture, private providers of transportation including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuter programs, state/federal/ tribal land management and natural resource agencies, public transit, pedestrian and bicycle groups, groups representing elderly and disabled individuals, trade and economic development agencies, tourism groups, aviation, and construction entities.

MDT will specifically identify and solicit participation from representatives of traditionally-underserved groups (including low-income, elderly, minority, disability, and tribal populations). Stakeholder participants will be asked to share information and represent the views and concerns of their constituents.

A future visioning tool called TrendLab+ will be used to help stakeholders understand how changes in vehicle technologies, demographics, and consumer preferences might influence future demands on the transportation system and funding impacts. The purpose of this exercise will be to build an appreciation for the challenges and opportunities that MDT faces in developing a long-range transportation plan.

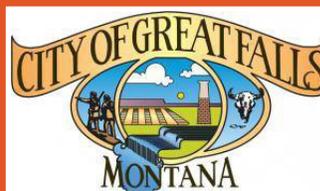


TrendLab+ allows stakeholders to identify and discuss trends and future transportation system demands.

Building on the stakeholder workshop, follow-up interviews will provide additional opportunities to discuss comments from the workshop and ask targeted questions relating to specific areas of interest and expertise. Feedback from the workshop and follow-up interviews will be used to support trend analysis and inform the direction and vision for TranPlanMT policies.

MPO Coordination

Federal regulations outline specific coordination requirements between state departments of transportation and MPOs. Under 23 CFR 450.208, MDT must coordinate its statewide long-range



Montana's MPOs will provide assistance and guidance for the TranPlanMT process. Contact your MPO representative to get involved.

transportation planning with planning efforts conducted for the Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula MPOs. A review of current plans for these

To facilitate this coordination, MDT personnel will share TranPlanMT update information at regularly-scheduled MPO meetings. MDT will also request relevant information from the MPOs to aid in issue identification and policy development, review published MPO plans, and invite MPO representatives to attend management team meetings at milestone events.

Statewide Plan Review

Working with the MPOs, municipalities, and communities within the state, MDT will review local, area, urban, and regional plans to acquire information on transportation conditions and anticipated future needs throughout the state. Review will include but not be limited to:

- MPO long-range transportation plans;
- local growth policies;
- state emergency relief disaster preparedness plans;
- Montana’s Comprehensive Highway Safety Plan;
- statewide economic development reports;
- state/federal/tribal land use management plans;
- MDT’s risk-based asset management plan;
- the Rail Grade Needs Study;
- the Rest Area Plan; and
- the State Rail Plan.

The review process will assist MDT in assessing historic data, recent shifts, and anticipated changes in the demands and priorities of Montana’s transportation system. Utilizing this information, will allow MDT to formulate the proper policy areas that will work towards preserving Montana’s roadways and infrastructure and planning for future demands.



DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY AND REVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

MDT will post documents to the TranPlanMT website throughout the course of the update process for public viewing.

Posted documents may include meeting minutes, public comment summaries, and policy papers.

In accordance with federal regulations, MDT will also facilitate a 45-day public review period for the draft TranPlanMT document.

The document will be posted to the MDT website and announced using newspaper advertisements and social media posts.

Printed copies of the draft document will be mailed to libraries in each of Montana's 56 counties; the three MPO offices in Billings, Great Falls, and Missoula; Montana's seven Indian reservations; and the five MDT district offices and MDT headquarters. MDT will consider all public comments received by the comment period deadline before finalizing the TranPlanMT update.

Where can I review the draft plan?

The draft TranPlanMT document will be available for public review on the website (<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/tranplan.shtml>) and across Montana for a 45-day period.



Be sure to check these places for copies of the draft TranPlanMT document.

- *Public Libraries*
- *MPO Offices*
- *Tribal Offices*
- *MDT District Offices*

If you're not sure where to find the document in your community, contact MDT at http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml Watch the website and your local newspaper for announcements about the review period.



TranPlanMT CONTACTS

The TranPlanMT update process will be overseen by a group of MDT representatives serving on a project management team (PMT).

The PMT will meet monthly throughout the update process to discuss progress, public input, analysis methodologies, and any issues or concerns that arise.

The PMT will also review all documentation before publication. The MDT Project Manager, Charity Watt, will lead the PMT and will be assisted by the Consultant Project Manager, Sarah Nicolai.

How do I submit my comment?

Public comments are welcome throughout the planning process and may be directed to the contacts below, through http://www.mdt.mt.gov/mdt/comment_form.shtml, or to the TranPlanMT toll-free number at 1-800-714-7296.

TranPlanMT Contacts

Charity Watt

MDT Project Manager
Rail, Transit and Planning Division
2701 Prospect AvenueP
PO Box 201001
Helena, MT 59620-1001
406.444.3439
cwatt@mt.gov

Sarah Nicolai

Consultant Project Manager
DOWL
1300 Cedar Street
Helena, MT 59601
406.324.7412
snicolai@dowl.com



Other Involvement Opportunities

To learn more about other ways to be involved in transportation decision making, visit MDT's main public involvement website at:

<http://www.mdt.mt.gov/pubinvolve>

SCHEDULE

The TranPlanMT update process kicked off in March 2016 and is anticipated to extend through March 2017. The schedule below illustrates key milestone events and public participation opportunities.

