

**Public**

**PARTICIPATION**

**Plan**

2013



**Abilene Metropolitan**

**Planning Organization**



**[www.abilenempo.org](http://www.abilenempo.org)**



**Public Participation Plan (PPP) adopted by Policy Board: November 19, 2013 (DRAFT)**

**Public Participation Plan (PPP) adopted by Policy Board: March 18, 2014 (FINAL)**

This report was prepared by the  
Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization  
in cooperation with the:  
Texas Department of Transportation  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
Federal Highway Administration  
Federal Transit Administration

#### **DISCLAIMER**

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#### **NOTE**

Questions or concerns about this document should be presented to the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization by contacting the MPO staff at (325) 437-9999, by fax at (325) 676-6398, by email [abilenempo@abilenetx.com](mailto:abilenempo@abilenetx.com), thru the MPO website, [www.abilenempo.org](http://www.abilenempo.org), by regular mail or by coming to the MPO office at 402 Cypress Street, Suite 519, Abilene, Texas, 79601.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Public participation is essential to the Metropolitan Planning Organization's mission. With meaningful public participation, it is possible to make a lasting contribution to an area's quality of life through optimal transportation planning decisions.

The fundamental objective of public participation programs is to ensure that the concerns and issues of everyone with a stake in transportation decisions are identified and addressed in the development of the policies, programs, and projects being proposed in their communities.

## **PURPOSE AND INTENT OF THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

The purpose of the Public Participation Plan is to describe the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization's (Abilene MPO) official policy for the provision of meaningful, active public participation and involvement in transportation planning and related activities.

The Plan's intent is to provide guidance for a proactive and comprehensive process to reach out to the community and encourage input from citizens, advisory committees, private transportation providers, agencies, and other interested parties. The end result should be a transportation planning effort which includes:

1. The public being fully informed about transportation issues throughout the process;
2. The public having adequate opportunity to express opinions and concerns about transportation issues in an orderly manner, at an appropriate forum, and at key decision points; and
3. The public supporting transportation plans, policies, and decisions.

## **ROLE OF THE METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION**

Federal law requires that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) be designated for each urban area with a population of 50,000 or more. The MPO's role is to provide a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process that results in plans and programs that consider all transportation modes and supports metropolitan community development and social goals. These plans and programs lead to the development and operation of an integrated, intermodal transportation system that facilitates the efficient, economic movement of people and goods.

Transportation decisions have long-term consequences on economic development, quality of life, and future generations of transportation users. The process of planning, maintaining, and improving the area's surface transportation system is a demanding, ongoing, and complex operation which requires the collaboration and coordination of the State and local government agencies, transportation providers, local businesses, and the residents of this region to make the process a success.

The MPO is comprised of a Transportation Policy Board, Technical Advisory Committee, and MPO Staff. Each of these entities has a specific responsibility in the planning process.

The **Transportation Policy Board (PB)** is the MPO's governing authority. The PB oversees the metropolitan transportation planning process and is responsible for approving the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Unified Planning Work Program and the Public Participation

Process. This includes amendments and/or updates to each document. The Board provides a forum for cooperative decision-making and policy guidance and is comprised of elected and appointed public officials.

The **Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)** was established to review, analyze, and comment on technical matters as appropriate. Periodic meetings are held to discuss transportation-related issues and to provide technical analysis of planning activities to the Transportation Policy Board. The TAC is comprised of elected and appointed officials, transportation professionals and other interested citizens.

The **MPO staff** are responsible for performing the work of the MPO which includes administration of the MPO, gathering and assembling documents that correspond to transportation issues, providing valuable planning guidelines, and the provision of technical resources. The MPO staff works closely with other transportation professionals to organize, implement, and evaluate transportation plans that affect the metropolitan planning area.

The **Abilene Metropolitan Planning Area** is the geographic area determined by agreement between the MPO and TxDOT (as the Governor's designated representative), in which the metropolitan transportation planning process is carried out. This area includes the City of Abilene (according to the US 2010 Census equal to 106.79 square miles) and the area immediately surrounding the city, extending primarily to the west and south and to a lesser extent to the east and north. The City of Abilene includes Dyess Air Force Base and Lake Fort Phantom Hill in southeastern Jones County. The additional area beyond the City of Abilene includes the cities of Tye and Impact and the communities of Caps, Elmdale, and Potosi. The Abilene 2010 Census Urbanized Area Boundary showed the City of Abilene with a population of 117,063 residents. The larger, entire Planning Area has a population of approximately 125,000 residents.

## **FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

### **FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION (FHWA)**

The program established by this document is based on federal legislation found in Title 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §450 [Planning Assistance and Standards], Subpart C, *Metropolitan Transportation Planning and Programming*, and in particular, 23 CFR §450.316, *Interested Parties, Participation, and Consultation*.

In December 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) was signed into law. ISTEA reemphasized the role of cooperative decision making in the development, review, and approval of transportation plans and programs and introduced requirements that the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Transportation Improvement Programs reflect realistic expectations of available funding for projects. In 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) continued the planning provisions of ISTEA with some revisions and increased the availability of federal funding for surface transportation. In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act - A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was passed. SAFETEA-LU continued the general planning provisions of ISTEA and TEA-21 with some changes and additions.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) was signed into law on July 6, 2012. MAP-21 is a milestone for the U.S. economy and the surface transportation program through its ability to guide the system's growth and development. MAP-21 creates a streamlined and performance-based surface transportation program and builds on many of the highway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian programs and policies that were established in 1991. It is based on the principles of creating jobs, simplifying programs, supporting safety, promoting innovation, strengthening systems, and establishing a performance based federal program. It establishes seven (7) fundamental national goals: 1) safety; 2) infrastructure condition;

3) congestion reduction; 4) system reliability; 5) freight movement and economic vitality; 6) environmental sustainability; and 7) reduced project delivery delays.

MAP-21 reinforced the policies emphasized by SAFETEA-LU for an expanded Public Participation Plan. This plan should reflect, as appropriate, consultation and coordination activities undertaken in consideration of the safety, security, and environmental planning factors. The metropolitan transportation planning process should contain the following public participation elements:

1. Include a proactive public participation process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access at key decision points.
2. Be consistent with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Title VI assurance executed by each State under 23 U.S.C. 324 and 29 U.S.C. 794, which ensures that no person shall, on the grounds of race, color, sex, national origin, or physical handicap, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program receiving Federal assistance from the United States Department of Transportation.
3. Comply with then-President Clinton's February 11, 1994, Presidential Executive Order 12898, *Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations*. The Executive Order directed federal agencies to develop strategies to address disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their programs on minority and low-income populations. It aims to provide minority and low-income communities' access to public information and public participation in matters relating to human health and the environment.

The Environmental Protection Agency defines Environmental Justice as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures and income with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, programs and policies". The Federal Highway Administration identifies three fundamental Environmental Justice principles:

4. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health and environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on minority populations and low-income populations.
  5. To ensure the full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
  6. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by minority and low-income populations.
4. Comply with the *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990*, the US DOT regulations, *Transportation for Individuals with Disabilities*, including all relevant revisions and changes in these and related legislation, regulations, and policies. Meetings will be held in ADA-compliant buildings and special accommodations must be made for those with disabilities to participate in meetings, planning, and programming activities.
  5. Consult with entities responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movement, bicycles, pedestrians, the disabled community, land use management, natural resources, and historic preservation.
  6. Provide for the involvement of traffic, ridesharing, parking, transportation safety and enforcement agencies; commuter rail operators; airport and port authorities; toll authorities; appropriate private

transportation providers, and, where appropriate, city officials.

## **FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION (FTA)**

As a Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Section 5307 recipient, the City of Abilene's transit system must follow a public participation plan. The FTA allows a grantee, e.g., the City of Abilene, to rely on locally adopted public participation plans for the submittal of their projects in lieu of a separate Program of Projects (POP) if the grantee has coordinated with the MPO and ensured that the public is aware that the MPO's plan is being used to satisfy the POP public participation requirements. To comply with this requirement, it should be specifically noted that the MPO's Public Participation Plan (PPP) satisfies the Federal Transit Administration's requirement of public participation for their Program of Projects (POP).

## **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION OPPORTUNITIES**

### **MPO TRANSPORTATION POLICY BOARD MEETINGS**

The Abilene MPO Transportation Policy Board holds regularly scheduled meetings, generally every other month, and other meetings as necessary. All meetings of the Abilene MPO Policy Board are open meetings held in compliance with the Texas Open Meetings Act and as such, all meetings are open to the public. The public is given the opportunity to participate at every public meeting through the use of public comment periods. Meeting minutes and relevant documents are made available at the MPO office and on the Abilene MPO website. Notifications for Policy Board meetings are provided through the following methods:

- Meeting notices are physically posted at the MPO office, Abilene City Hall, Taylor County Courthouse, Jones County Courthouse, and on the Abilene MPO website ([www.abilenempo.org](http://www.abilenempo.org)) a minimum of seventy-two (72) hours in advance;
- Notifications of meetings are sent via e-mail or regular U.S. mail to all persons in the MPO mailing list requesting notification.

### **CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

The MPO Policy Board may designate a Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) to assist in soliciting public opinions and comments on transportation issues affecting the Abilene MPO and the community. The CAC serves at the discretion of the Policy Board and may include a combination of volunteers from the community who are key public representatives, concerned citizens or members of community groups.

## **PUBLIC INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS**

Information concerning transportation planning may be disseminated in a variety of ways to reach as many people as possible. As technology and other methods change, new approaches will be evaluated and implemented. Examples of current communication methods include:

### **PUBLIC APPEARANCES**

The Abilene MPO makes every effort to comply with requests from civic, professional, and other groups, organizations, or committees to present or discuss information related to the work of the MPO. Organizations should contact the Abilene MPO and allow ample time for the MPO to make arrangements to attend.

## **MPO WEBSITE**

The MPO maintains an independent internet site ([www.abilenempo.org](http://www.abilenempo.org)). The site includes formally adopted documents such as the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the Uniform Planning Work Program (UPWP), and the Public Participation Plan (PPP). The site also contains MPO agendas, minutes, public meeting information, a public notification request form, a public comment and transportation suggestions form, and a MPO Events Calendar. Public transportation surveys and/or other features may be incorporated as needed.

## **SOCIAL MEDIA**

The Abilene MPO maintains a Facebook page and Twitter account to post information about transportation projects and meetings.

## **NEWSLETTER**

A newsletter is published annually on past, present and future planning activities, project updates and related local planning information.

## **MAILING LIST**

The MPO maintains a database of those interested in notification of public meetings and other MPO planning processes. All organizations and individuals remain in the database until either they request to be removed, or the email or mail returns as undeliverable. A Public Notification Request Form can be completed at any MPO meeting, by calling or coming to the MPO office, by e-mail, regular mail, fax, or through the MPO website.

The MPO mailing list may include members of the following groups as well as anyone else who desires to be on the list:

- Elected officials;
- Local government staff;
- Transportation agencies;
- Local media;
- Homeowners associations;
- Civic groups;
- Federal, State and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation, and other environmental issues;
- Parties that would have with an interest in the planning and development of the transportation network including affected public agencies in the metropolitan planning area;
- Native American Tribal Councils;
- Private freight shippers;
- Providers of freight transportation services;
- Private providers of transportation;
- Public transportation providers; employees;
- Users of public transportation;
- Users of pedestrian walkways;
- Users of bicycle transportation facilities;
- The disabled communities;
- Public utility companies and districts.



## **PUBLIC COMMENT FORMS**

A Public Comment Form for comments and questions can be completed at any MPO meeting, by calling MPO staff, coming to the MPO office, by e-mail, mail, fax, or through the MPO website.

## **PLANNING DOCUMENTS AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The MPO is responsible for numerous documents that define the transportation planning process. This includes the Metropolitan Transportation Plan, the Transportation Improvement Program, the Annual Listing of Obligated Projects, and the Unified Planning Work Program.

The **Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)** is the long-range multi-modal planning document or “blueprint” with a minimum 20-year planning horizon that identifies existing and future transportation needs, as well as network improvements needed to meet mobility responsibilities. It serves to guide the responsible use of public funds for transportation purposes and forms the foundation from which TxDOT and the Abilene MPO select projects for construction or rehabilitation within the MPO Area. This is federally required to be updated at least every five years.

The **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** is a four year transportation planning document that contains both highway and transit projects that address the goals of the MTP and lists specific, agreed-upon priority projects for this area each year for the respective four years. Projects in the TIP must be consistent with, and selected from, the MTP. It is fiscally constrained, meaning that each project included has an identified funding source with a reasonable expectation of fully funding the respective projects. The TIP is federally required to be updated at least every four years.

The **Annual Listing of Obligated Projects (ALOP)** provides a record of the projects, including investments in pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, for which funds were obligated in the preceding program year. This listing is a cooperative effort by the State, public transportation operators, and the MPO and includes funding categories consistent with those identified in the TIP. The listing is published or otherwise made available in accordance with the MPO’s public participation criteria.

The **Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)** is the annual program of work for the Abilene MPO which provides descriptive and budgetary details of the planning process. The UPWP identifies transportation planning activities (goals, objectives, and tasks) required by each of the several agencies involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. These activities are to be accomplished during the fiscal year. This is federally required to be adopted annually or every two years depending on the MPO’s timeframe selection.

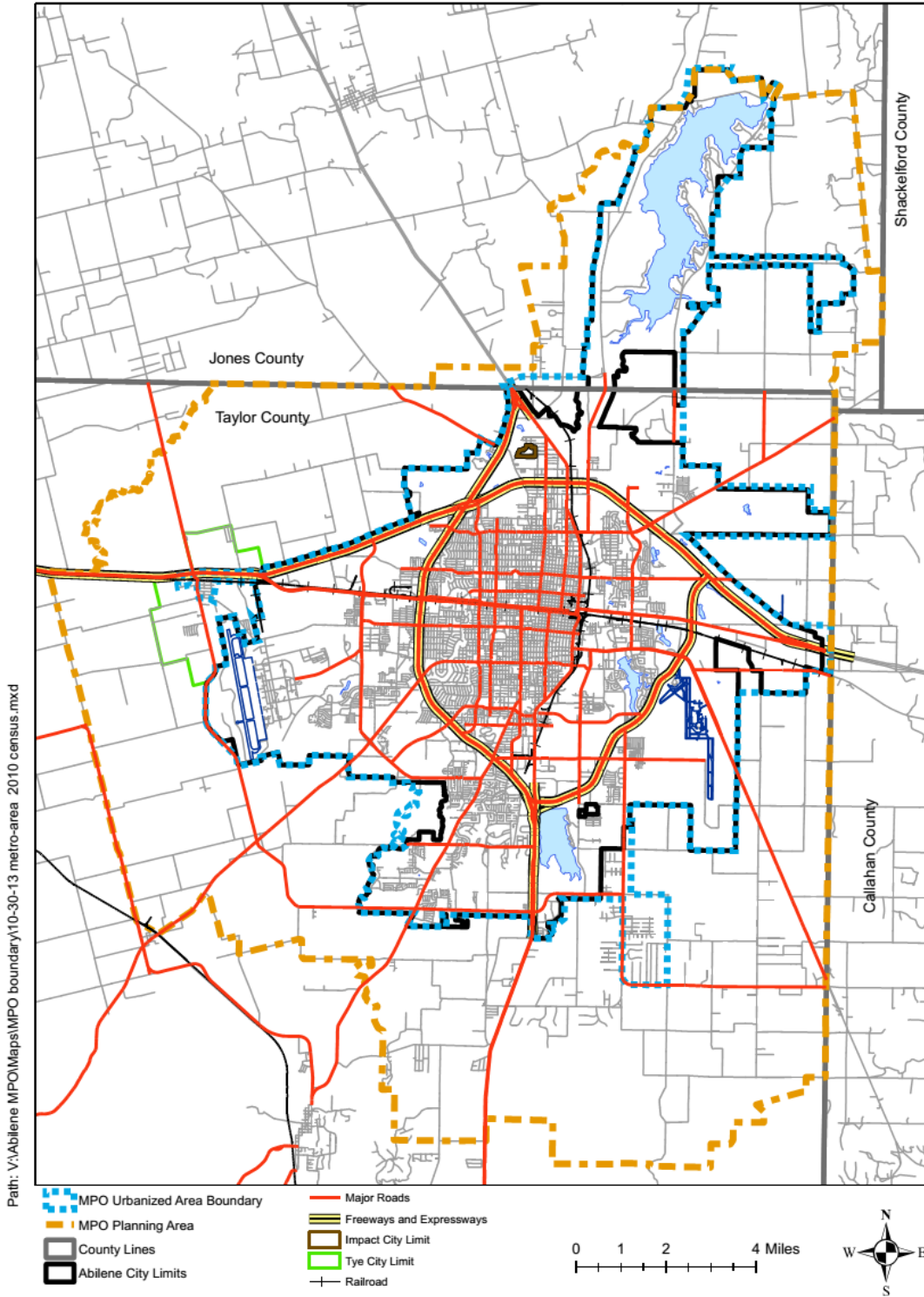
**The key elements of public participation with the abovementioned planning documents are presented in Table 1.** Procedures and activities that may be used for public information or public participation are not limited to the procedures described herein. Additional public information and public participation activities may be conducted without revision to these procedures. There will be opportunities for additional public comments if the final documents differ significantly from the version that was made available for public comment and raises new material issues which interested parties could not have foreseen from the public participation efforts. Notification of the public comment periods will be placed at least 72 hours in advance in the same locations described above for the MPO Transportation Policy Board meetings. In addition, notice may be placed in a newspaper of general circulation, on the MPO website, and on local television and radio stations.

**TABLE 1: PUBLIC PARTICIPATION FOR PLANNING DOCUMENTS**

PLANNING DOCUMENT	PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD	REMARKS
Metropolitan Transportation Plan	Adoption – 20 calendar days Amendment – 10 calendar days	Public meetings may be held to present new or major updates prior to its adoption.  Written comments must be signed and oral comments must be received in an official public meeting to be considered eligible for official response or incorporation into the MTP.
Transportation Improvement Program	Adoption – 20 calendar days Amendment – 10 calendar days	Public meetings may be held to present new or major updates prior to its adoption.  Written comments must be signed and oral comments must be received in an official public meeting to be considered eligible for official response or incorporation into the TIP.  In order to satisfy the FTA requirement for a Program of Projects (POP) the following statement will be published: “This public notice of public participation activities and time established for public review and comments on the TIP development process will satisfy the FTA’s Program of Projects requirements”.
Annual Listing of Obligated Projects	In conjunction with a regular meeting of the Policy Board	Shall be published or otherwise made available in a manner consistent with the criteria for the TIP
Unified Planning Work Program	In conjunction with a regular meeting of the Policy Board	No public review or comment period legally required.
Public Participation Plan	45 calendar days for adoption or amendment	

# **APPENDICES**

# ABILENE MPO URBANIZED AREA AND METROPOLITAN PLANNING AREA MAP



TEXAS TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION APPROVED  
(Based on the 2010 Census Data)

## PUBLIC NOTIFICATION REQUEST FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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I would like to be notified via:

- Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Topics of Interest:

- MPO Policy Board Meetings
  - Public Meetings
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - Specific Project \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Please mail, e-mail or fax to:

Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization  
402 Cypress Street, Suite 519  
Abilene, TX 79601  
Phone: (325) 437-9999  
Fax: (325) 676-6398  
E-mail: [abilenempo@abilenetx.com](mailto:abilenempo@abilenetx.com)

## PUBLIC COMMENT FORM

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone(s): \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

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Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

- If more space is required to make your comments, please use as many sheets of paper as necessary.
- The MPO staff will make every effort to respond to your comments.

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**Please mail, e-mail or fax to:**

**Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization**

**402 Cypress Street, Suite 519**

**Abilene, TX 79601**

**Phone: (325) 437-9999**

**Fax: (325) 676-6398**

**E-mail: [abilenempo@abilenetx.com](mailto:abilenempo@abilenetx.com)**

## HISTORY OF THE PPP AND AMENDMENTS

1. The MPO Transportation Policy Board adopted the *Public Involvement Policy (PIP)* for the Abilene Metropolitan Planning Organization on June 22, 2007.
2. The *Public Involvement Plan (PIP)* was revised and retitled as the *Public Participation Plan (PPP)* in accordance with Federal legislation.
  - Approval of the draft PPP was on November 19, 2013. Draft was made available for public comment from December 15, 2013 through January 28, 2014. A public meeting was held on January 14, 2014. One comment form was received and is summarized under the section “COMMENTS ON THE PPP”.
  - Approval of the final PPP was on March 18, 2014.

## COMMENTS ON THE PPP

On January 16, 2014 comments on the PPP were received and summarized below:

1. Suggestion for the use of an executive summary for the main MPO documents.
2. Suggestion for the use of a text-only version.
3. Suggestion for partnering with various agencies to enlist their help in disseminating information.