

Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council

Public Participation Plan

Syracuse Metropolitan Planning Area



December 2016

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Adopted December 15, 2016 by the SMTC Policy Committee

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1. Introduction

As the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) designated by the Governor of the State of New York, the Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council (SMTC) has the responsibility to carry out the continuous, comprehensive and cooperative transportation planning process for the Syracuse Metropolitan Area. This area, which is shown in Figure 1, consists of Onondaga County, the Towns of Hastings, Schroepel, West Monroe and the urbanized area of Granby in Oswego County, and the Town of Sullivan in Madison County.

Planning activities at all MPOs must consider and integrate the following ten planning factors, based on current federal legislation:

- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency;
- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and nonmotorized users;
- Increase the accessibility and mobility of people and for freight;
- Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns;
- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation;
- Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system;
- Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation; and
- Enhance travel and tourism. (23 USC 134 (h) (1)).

In addition to these ten planning factors, public participation is a requirement of the MPO planning process. In 1991, the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) strengthened the role of MPOs in urban transportation planning processes. In 1998, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) built upon ISTEA and required the planning process to include proactive public involvement and input gathering as well as providing complete information and timely public notice to communities, stakeholders, and interested parties.

In 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) contained a key provision that required all MPOs to develop and utilize a Public Participation Plan (PPP) that provides reasonable opportunities for interested parties to comment on the content of the Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). With this SAFETEA-LU requirement in place, the SMTC's first Public Participation Plan was adopted in 2007.

In 2012, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21) was adopted, and this authorization continued the requirement for the development and utilization of a Public Participation Plan.

The current surface transportation authorization – the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act – was signed by the President on December 4, 2015, and will remain in effect for 5 years. The FAST Act maintains the requirement for an agency-wide Public Participation Plan.

While public participation is mandated, it is also practical. No one organization has a monopoly on good ideas – they often evolve through an open exchange of information. The SMTC recognizes that the active involvement of the entire community, in addition to the SMTC Policy, Planning, and Executive Committee members, is paramount to good transportation planning and the SMTC promotes the shared obligation of the public and decision makers to define the goals and objectives of transportation planning activities undertaken by the agency. Public input is valued because it can shape the direction of a study or planning activity, identify new transportation projects that are important to citizens of the area, or suggest new approaches to addresses issues.

This document details the various opportunities for public participation in the SMTC's planning process.



Figure 1: SMTC Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

2. Goals

The goals of the SMTC's Public Participation Plan (PPP) are:

- Create public awareness of the goals, objectives, and processes of various SMTC activities including the LRTP, UPWP, TIP, and other studies, as well as publicize the public participation opportunities and activities available throughout the development of these programs and studies;
- Involve the public in the transportation planning process so that transportation plans, policies, and investments embrace the concerns of the traveling public, rural and urban neighborhoods, economic development interests, and others. Outreach and involvement opportunities will be extended to all affected and interested groups and individuals including those traditionally under-represented or underserved including minorities, elderly persons, persons with limited English proficiency, low-income persons, persons with disabilities, and members of tribal governments.

3. Federal requirements

FAST Act

The FAST Act details a number of specific requirements for public participation in MPO activities. These requirements are found in 23 USC Section 134 (i) and 23 CFR Part 450.316 (Appendix A), and are summarized below.

- Requirement for a participation plan: MPOs must develop a formal plan in consultation with interested parties. The public participation plan, and any subsequent revisions, must have a 45-day public comment period prior to the pending approval by the SMTC's Policy Committee. The PPP will be reviewed and revised as necessary.
- Participation by interested parties: "Interested parties" include citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as a carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and others. The listed parties will be provided a reasonable opportunity to comment and provide input on the contents of the Long Range Transportation Plan and Transportation Improvement Program (see Section 5 of this document).

- Public participation methods: For studies that require public participation, the FAST Act specifies that the agency shall meet the following conditions “to the maximum extent practicable.”
 - hold any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
 - employ visualization techniques to describe LRTPs, TIP and other plans; and
 - make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web.

The SMTC makes every attempt to accommodate all requests for individuals with special needs. The SMTC has a history of producing visualization materials in all publications and for all public and agency meetings. The SMTC will continue to produce a variety of visualization materials such as maps, charts, graphs, photos, renderings, traffic simulations, and other types of visual materials for the LRTP, TIP and other agency-produced materials. The SMTC maintains an agency website that is updated regularly with information about upcoming public participation opportunities, draft documents for public comment, and completed studies (see Section 7 for more information).

- Coordination with statewide transportation planning public involvement: The SMTC’s public participation process will be coordinated with statewide public participation processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and cost. The SMTC will seek to integrate the public involvement program undertaken as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process with public involvement activities undertaken as part of the statewide transportation planning process.

This document serves as the SMTC’s PPP as required as part of the FAST Act regulations.

Other federal requirements

In addition to the requirements set forth in the FAST Act for public participation in all programs and activities associated with the LRTP, TIP, and related SMTC functions, the SMTC must also adhere to other separate Federal laws that apply to public participation:

- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964;
- Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice);
- Executive Order 13166 (Limited English Proficiency); and
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Title VI

The SMTC is committed to ensuring that no person is excluded from participation in, or denied the benefits of, its metropolitan transportation planning process on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, age, disability or economic status as provided by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes.

The SMTC has adopted a Title VI Plan that specifies how the agency seeks to ensure participation for traditionally underserved and under-represented populations. The plan is accessible on the SMTC website in the “Public Input” and “Final Reports” sections.

Environmental Justice

Executive Order 12898 states “Each federal agency shall make achieving Environmental Justice part of its mission by identifying and addressing, as appropriate, disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies, and activities on minority populations and low-income populations in the United States.” To understand these needs, SMTC performs an Environmental Justice Analysis that evaluates population trends and geographic locations of environmental justice populations (i.e., minority and low-income). Staff relies on demographic and socio-economic data from either the most recent census conducted by the US Census Bureau, or data from the American Community Survey. The analysis is routinely updated to include all completed work products to assure an understanding of impacts to the population groups.

The Environmental Justice Analysis is available on the SMTC website in the “Final Reports” section.

Limited English Proficiency

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency, requires “agencies to examine the services they provide, identify any need for services to those with limited English proficiency (LEP), and develop and implement a system to provide those services so LEP persons can have meaningful access to them.”¹ The SMTC has created a LEP Plan and produces public materials to meet identified language needs on a case-by-case basis. The LEP Plan is accessible on the SMTC website in the “Final Reports” section.

The SMTC’s website includes a Spanish-language page (accessible from an “En Español” link on the homepage) that provides the following items: a basic description of the SMTC; links to a map of the MPA, a Spanish version of the 2050 LRTP Executive Summary, and a Spanish version of the Title VI/LEP Plan Executive Summary; contact information (including how to request an interpreter for a public meeting or request that documents be translated); and the agency’s Title VI policy and complaint procedure.

In addition, the SMTC’s website (www.smtcmpo.org) is viewable in multiple languages using Google Translate software. This service is intended to provide a basic understanding of the SMTC’s website content in a different language.

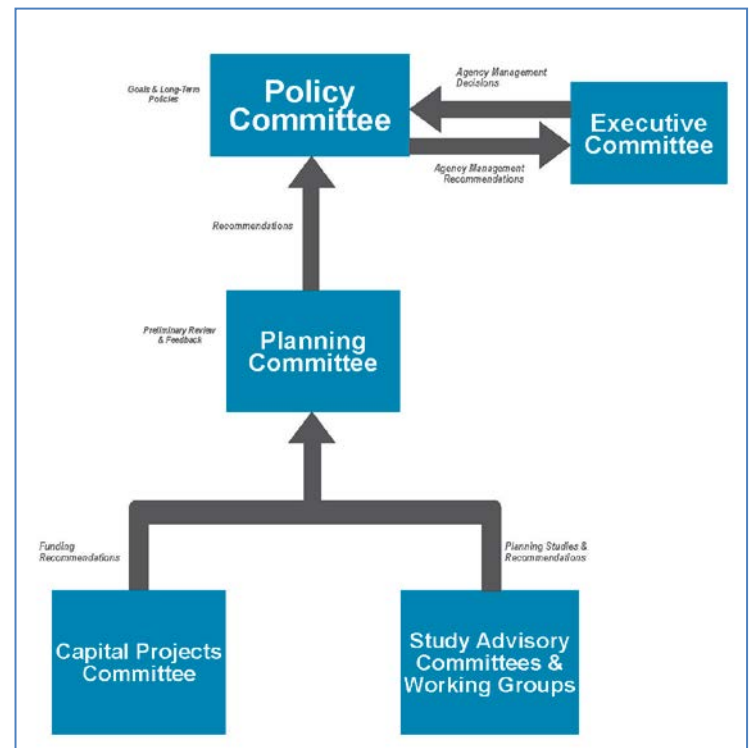
¹ <http://www.lep.gov/faqs/faqs.html#OneQ2> Accessed 9/29/2014

Americans with Disabilities Act

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) encourages the involvement of people with disabilities in the development and improvement of transportation and paratransit plans and services. In accordance with ADA guidelines, all meetings conducted by SMTC are held in locations that are accessible to persons with mobility limitations. Translation services, including American Sign Language (ASL), are available upon request with notice to the SMTC at least 10 days prior to a meeting.

4. The SMTC Committees

The Syracuse Metropolitan Transportation Council is comprised of three committees that incorporate all SMTC member agencies. The agencies that comprise the Policy Committee, Planning Committee and Executive Committee are listed below. These groups provide guidance to the SMTC’s studies and public participation process. Committee attention to planning concerns may require detailed technical evaluation by Central Staff, preparation of brief policy issue papers, or identification and debate on the committee floor. Issues may be brought to SMTC’s attention at the committee level either through contact with the staff, presentation by individual Committee members or presentations by external groups.



SMTC Committee Structure

All regularly scheduled committee meetings are open to the public. All committee meeting agendas and other important announcements are mailed to the Policy Committee chairperson, the FHWA, the FTA, and the main office of the NYSDOT, in addition to each member of the relevant committee. Notices of all SMTC Committee meetings are posted on the SMTC website and press releases are sent to the local media prior to meeting dates.

Policy Committee

The Policy Committee consists of the elected and appointed officials representing local, state and federal governments in the metropolitan area, and meets approximately three times annually. Other meetings are scheduled as needed. The Policy Committee is responsible for the general direction of the Central Staff, including establishment of goals, adoption of plans and programs (specifically, the LRTP, UPWP, and TIP), and approval of recommendations. The Policy Committee consists of the following agencies:

- U.S. Department of Transportation
 - Federal Aviation Administration*
 - Federal Highway Administration*
 - Federal Transit Administration*
 - New York State
 - Department of Environmental Conservation
 - Department of Transportation
 - Thruway Authority
 - Empire State Development
 - Onondaga County
 - Office of the Executive
 - Legislature
 - Planning Board
 - Madison County
 - Board of Supervisors*
 - Oswego County
 - Legislature*
 - City of Syracuse
 - Office of the Mayor
 - Common Council
 - Planning Commission
 - CNY Regional Transportation Authority
 - CNY Regional Planning and Development Board
 - CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity
 - Onondaga Nation*
- * = Non-voting advisory agency

Note: The Onondaga Nation is a member of both the Policy and Planning Committees, and the SMTC acknowledges the added emphasis given to contact with sovereign nations under various federal policies. The SMTC includes the Onondaga Nation in all of its mailings (including press releases, newsletters, flyers, and public meeting announcements). Current contact lists include several representatives from the Onondaga Nation.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee oversees the technical aspects of the transportation planning process in the Syracuse metropolitan area. The Planning Committee meets approximately three times per year, or as needed. The Planning Committee consists of the following agencies:

- New York State
 - Department of Environmental Conservation
 - Department of Transportation
 - Thruway Authority
 - Empire State Development
 - Onondaga County
 - Department of Transportation
 - Legislature
 - Madison County
 - Planning*
 - Oswego County
 - Community Development, Tourism, and Planning*
 - City of Syracuse
 - Administration
 - Public Works and Engineering
 - Planning
 - CNY Regional Transportation Authority
 - CNY Regional Planning and Development Board
 - CenterState Corporation for Economic Opportunity
 - Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency
 - Onondaga Nation*
- * = Non-voting advisory agency

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee provides oversight for the day-to-day operations of the SMTC as well as its finances. These meetings are held once a month. The Executive Committee consists of the following agencies:

- CNY Regional Planning & Development Board
 - CNY Regional Transportation Authority
 - City of Syracuse
 - NYS Department of Transportation
 - Onondaga County
 - Syracuse-Onondaga County Planning Agency*
- * = Non-voting advisory agency

5. Requirements for the LRTP, TIP, and UPWP

The SMTC produces three major documents on a recurring basis:

- The Long Range Transportation Plan provides a minimum 20-year vision of existing and projected transportation needs, and associated goals/objectives and performance measures, as well as recommended policies and actions to meet these objectives. This assessment is performed in the context of the eight major transportation planning factors previously noted. It provides the framework for guiding federally-funded transportation planning and investment decision making

in the area. The Long Range Transportation Plan must be updated at least every five years.

- The Unified Planning Work Program is the annual listing of the transportation planning and programming activities that the SMTC seeks to accomplish in support of the LRTP. This includes ongoing activities, such as traffic data collection, as well as short-term (usually 12-24 months) individual planning studies, such as corridor studies, parking studies, etc.
- The Transportation Improvement Program is the multi-year listing of capital and operational transportation projects that are selected and programmed to receive federal transportation funding through the Federal Highway Administration or the Federal Transit Administration. This program is generally updated every two years and represents the prioritized listing of projects to address the various goals, objectives and performance measures contained in the LRTP.

Each of these three documents has specific requirements for public participation, detailed in the federal legislation. These specific requirements, as well as additional procedures established by the SMTC, are described below.

LRTP

The LRTP will be developed in consultation with the public and affected local, regional, and State agencies/organizations. Per 23 CFR 450.316, when developing the LRTP, the SMTC will consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area that are affected by transportation or coordinate its planning process with such planning activities.

The following requirements have been established by the SMTC and federal legislation, and will be followed during the creation of the LRTP:

- Development of the LRTP will include public information sessions and meetings as appropriate. Notification will be provided consistent with Section 9 of this document for all public meetings held prior to the creation of the draft document.
- Website applications and other social media outlets, as applicable, will be used in conjunction with public information sessions or meetings.



Example LRTP cover

- A draft version of the LRTP will be made available for public review and comment for a period of 30-days and a final public meeting will be held during this review period to present the plan to the public and solicit comments.
 - The public review document will be made available at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system in Syracuse, NY, at the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.
 - A legal notice will be published indicating the commencement of the 30-day public comment period. The legal notice will also indicate: how the public can access the document (online and in-person); how comments can be submitted and the final date for submission of comments; and the date, time, and location of the final public meeting for the development of the LRTP.
 - A media release to television stations, radio stations, and weekly and daily general circulation newspapers in the region, as well as specialty newspapers on a case-by-case basis, and on the SMTC website will also announce the availability of the draft LRTP for public review and the schedule of the final public meeting.
 - To the maximum extent practical, the draft public review document will be directly distributed to the parties identified in 23 CFR Part 450.316 (a) (See Section 3 of this document).
- Citizens will be able to make comments during the public comment period via email, postal mail, or phone.
 - All written public comments submitted to the SMTC will be included in an appendix to the final LRTP as they are received; verbal comments will be summarized by staff and included in this appendix as well.
 - Public suggestions for modifying the draft LRTP will be considered, and may be incorporated into the final document prior to adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee.
 - If the final LRTP differs significantly from the version first made available for public comment and raises new material issues not reasonably foreseen from the public involvement effort, an additional public comment period of 10-days will be provided. Major comments that generate significant revisions between the publically-distributed draft document and final document will be summarized and included as an appendix to the final document.
- The SMTC Planning Committee must recommend approval of a draft LRTP prior to advancement to the SMTC Policy Committee. The SMTC Planning Committee will

consider comments received during the public review prior to recommending a final draft for the SMTC Policy Committee consideration.

- Upon adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee, the final LRTP will be made available for public distribution at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system, the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.

TIP development

The TIP will be developed in consultation with the public and affected local, regional, and State agencies/organizations. Per 23 CFR 450.316, when developing the TIP, the SMTC will consult with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the Metropolitan Planning Area that are affected by transportation or coordinate its planning process with such planning activities.

The following requirements have been established by the SMTC and federal legislation, and will be followed during the creation of the TIP:

- A “call for projects” letter will be sent directly to all member agencies and appropriate officials of eligible counties, municipalities and authorities within the SMTC Metropolitan Planning Area notifying them of the opportunity to submit project proposals. Additionally, a similar notice will be posted on the SMTC website and provided to the local newspaper for publication as a Legal Notice.
- Development of the TIP will include public meetings as appropriate. Notification will be provided consistent with Section 9 of this document for all public meetings held prior to the creation of the draft document.
- A draft version of the TIP will be made available for public review and comment for a period of 30-days and a public meeting will be held during this review period to present the program to the public and solicit comments.
 - The public review document will be made available at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system in Syracuse, NY, at the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.
 - A legal notice will be published indicating the commencement of the 30-day public comment period. The legal notice will also indicate: how the public can access the document (online and in-person); how comments can be submitted and the final date for submission of comments; and the date, time, and location of the public meeting for review of the TIP.
 - A media release to television stations, radio stations, and weekly and daily general circulation newspapers in the region, as well as specialty newspapers on a case-by-case basis, and on the SMTC website will also announce the availability of the draft TIP for public review and the schedule of the public meeting.

- To the maximum extent practical, the draft public review document will be directly distributed to the parties identified in 23 CFR Part 450.316 (a) (See Section 3 of this document).
- Citizens will be able to make comments during the public comment period via e-mail, postal mail, or phone.
 - All written public comments submitted to the SMTC will be included in an appendix to the final TIP as they are received; verbal comments will be summarized by staff and included in this appendix as well.
 - Public suggestions for modifying the draft TIP will be considered, and may be incorporated into the final document prior to the adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee.
 - If the final TIP differs significantly from the version first made available for public comment and raises new material issues not reasonably foreseen from the public involvement effort, an additional public comment period of 10-days will be provided. Major comments that generate significant revisions between publically-distributed draft document and final document will be summarized and included as an appendix to the final document.
- The SMTC Planning Committee must recommend approval of a draft TIP prior to advancement to the SMTC Policy Committee. The SMTC Planning Committee will consider comments received during the public review prior to recommending a final draft for the SMTC Policy Committee consideration.
- Upon adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee, the final TIP will be made available for public distribution at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system, the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.



Example TIP cover

Amendments to the TIP

A TIP project management procedure was revised by the SMTC in July 2016. This procedure is summarized in the TIP Project Management Amendment and Administrative Modification Matrix, which is included in Appendix B. The matrix identifies the actions that can be accomplished by staff through an administrative modification and the actions that require an amendment to the adopted TIP. Some amendments can be accomplished

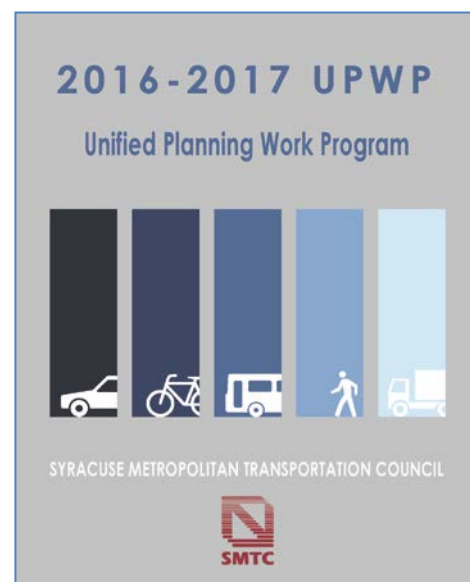
at the Executive Committee level, while more significant amendments require approval of the Planning and Policy Committees; these specifics are detailed in the matrix.

Amendments do not require a specific public meeting; however, as described in Section 4 of this document, all SMTC committee meetings are open to the public and notice of such meetings is posted on the SMTC website. In the case of TIP amendments, notice of the amendment is posted to the SMTC website and published as a Legal Notice in the local newspaper depending on the committee. For Executive Committee actions, notice is posted at least 10-days in advance of the meeting. For Planning/Policy Committee actions, notice is posted to the website and published as a Legal Notice at least 30-days in advance of the meeting.

UPWP development

The following requirements have been established by the SMTC and will be followed during the creation of the UPWP:

- A “call for projects” letter will be sent directly to all member agencies and appropriate officials of eligible counties, municipalities, and authorities within the SMTC Metropolitan Planning Area notifying them of the opportunity to submit proposals for consideration. Additionally, a similar notice will be posted on the SMTC website and provided to the local newspaper for publication as a Legal Notice.
- All prospective UPWP applicants will be required to meet with SMTC staff to discuss their potential project prior to submission of an application. SMTC will schedule an open meeting for this purpose (date/time will be indicated in the call letter mentioned above). Alternately, applicants may choose to arrange a separate meeting with SMTC staff for this purpose.
- A draft version of the UPWP will be made available for public review and comment for a period of 30-days.
 - The public review document will be made available at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system in Syracuse, NY, at the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.
 - A legal notice will be published indicating the commencement of the 30-day public comment period. The legal notice will also indicate: how the public can access the document (online and in-person); how comments can be



Example UPWP cover

submitted; and the final date for submission of comments.

- All applicants will be notified of the availability of the public review document.
- Citizens will be able to make comments during the public comment period via e-mail, postal mail, or phone.
 - All written public comments submitted to the SMTC will be included in an appendix to the final UPWP as they are received; verbal comments will be summarized by staff and included in this appendix as well.
 - Public suggestions for modifying the draft UPWP will be considered, and may be incorporated into the final document prior to the adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee.
- If a proposal is removed from the draft UPWP based on the public comments received, the applicant will be notified of such action.
- The SMTC Planning Committee must recommend approval of a draft UPWP prior to advancement to the SMTC Policy Committee. The SMTC Planning Committee will consider comments received during the public review prior to recommending a final draft for the SMTC Policy Committee consideration.
- Upon adoption by the SMTC Policy Committee, the final UPWP will be made available for public distribution at the Central Library of the Onondaga County Public Library system, the SMTC office, as well as on the SMTC website.

6. Study Advisory Committees and Working Groups

All SMTC studies include the formation of a Study Advisory Committee (SAC) or Working Group (WG). A SAC is generally a larger group with more varied interests in a project, while a WG tends to be smaller and focused on a narrower topic. While SACs are used in most SMTC studies, a WG group might be used for a technical analysis task. At the outset of a study, all SMTC Planning Committee members will be invited to serve on the SAC or WG. Depending on the nature of the study, additional community groups or interested agencies may also be invited to assign a representative to the SAC or WG. The SAC or WG will meet regularly over the course of the study to advise the SMTC on the technical content of deliverables and to provide input and assist with decision-making throughout the project.

A meeting summary document will be created for each SAC or WG meeting. SAC/WG members will be provided an opportunity to comment on the draft summary, and the final summary will be included in an appendix to the final study documentation.

7. General and on-going public outreach/involvement

The SMTC recognizes that public outreach and involvement in the transportation planning process is a continuous endeavor. Although much of our public involvement is focused on required activities such as the LRTP, TIP, and UPWP development (described in Section 5) or with specific studies (described in Section 8), the SMTC encourages the public to stay informed and involved in the transportation planning process through a number of on-going activities. These on-going activities generally fall into three categories: online presence, in-person outreach, and publications.

Online presence

- **Website:** The SMTC website (www.smtcmpo.org) contains: a description of the agency; completed study reports; the current UPWP, LRTP, and TIP; announcements of upcoming meetings; extensive traffic data; various maps; and other resources. The website provides contact information for the agency and for individual staff. Members of the public can submit a comment on any transportation related issue or file a Title VI complaint related to the agency's transportation planning process through the website. The website also includes a Spanish-language page. The web site is viewable in multiple languages using Google Translate.
- **Social media:** The SMTC also maintains an agency Facebook page, which is used to provide general information about transportation planning (such as links to relevant news articles from local or national sources) and information about specific public involvement opportunities (such as upcoming public meeting dates). SMTC follows the social media policy adopted by the agency in 2011. This policy is contained in Appendix C.

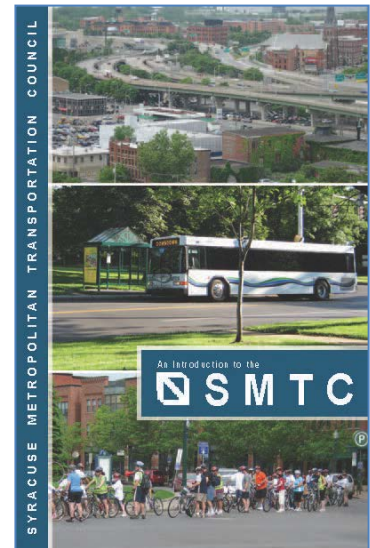
Ongoing in-person outreach

- **Presentations to community groups:** The SMTC receives numerous invitations to speak to community groups (such as City of Syracuse TNT, FOCUS, Town and Village board meetings, etc.) regarding current or past studies as well as to provide general information about transportation planning. The SMTC honors as many of these requests as is feasible given staff availability.
- **SMTC Bicycle and Pedestrian Community Interest Group:** The SMTC created the Bicycle and Pedestrian Community Interest Group (B/PCIG) in May 2013. The B/PCIG serves as a forum for discussing bicycle and pedestrian issues between public agencies, local organizations, and the public, while promoting bicycling and walking through partnerships, planning projects, events, and education. It does not act as a policy-setting or advocacy group. The SMTC and our member

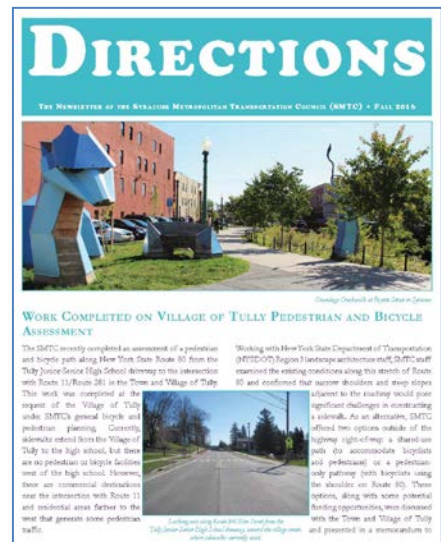
agencies have agreed that hosting a bicycle and pedestrian interest group in an informal setting would be mutually beneficial to the agency and the public -- an opportunity for information exchange. Meetings typically take place two to four times a year, or on an as-needed basis, with a speaker on a particular bicycle/pedestrian related topic(s) per meeting. The meetings are facilitated by an SMTC staff member. The B/PCIG is open to all who are interested, and includes representatives from local bicycling and walking groups, the public, and staff from various SMTC member agencies. Interested individuals can join the group by contacting the SMTC.

Publications

- **A Citizen’s Guide to Transportation Planning:** This brochure, produced first in November 2000 and updated in 2012, explains the role, purpose, services provided, work products produced and processes followed by the SMTC. Print copies of the brochure are made available at all SMTC public meetings, and an electronic version can be downloaded from the SMTC website.
- **DIRECTIONS newsletter:** The SMTC produces a newsletter that includes articles regarding transportation planning studies and related activities that is sent to the entire SMTC database via postal mail and/or email, typically two to four times each year. Recent issues of Directions can also be downloaded from the SMTC website.
- **SMTC Transportation Atlas:** The SMTC created a Transportation Atlas in 2015 that provides a wealth of information about existing demographic, land use, infrastructure, and mobility conditions in our planning area. Printed reference copies of this document are made available at public meetings and copies are provided to individuals or organizations upon request. The Atlas can also be downloaded from the SMTC website.
- **Study reports:** All final reports from SMTC studies are posted to the agency’s web site. A hard-copy is provided to the Central Library, and may be provided to branch libraries in or near the study area as well. Hard-copies are provided to the public on request.



SMTC brochure cover



Example newsletter cover

8. Project-specific public involvement

All SMTC studies, except those defined as purely “technical analysis” include public involvement. The intensity of the public involvement effort and the methods used vary based on the nature of the study. Therefore, a project-specific Public Involvement Plan (PIP) is created for each study, which sets the framework for the public participation opportunities that will be available throughout the course of the project. This allows the SMTC to craft a public involvement process for each individual project based on the specific needs of that project, and encourages continual review and updating of our public involvement methods.

Each individual PIP considers the unique characteristics and potential impacts associated with the geographic focus area of a particular study, and draws on the evaluations completed in the agency’s Title VI Plan, LEP Plan, and EJ Analysis for guidance. The nature of the study – for example a corridor study versus a bicycle and pedestrian plan – may also warrant different approaches to public outreach and involvement.

Individual PIPs may draw on any of the public involvement methods listed below, or additional methods deemed appropriate for that particular study. The PIP also identifies when in the project process any public meetings will be held or other public engagement methods will be utilized to allow for the exchange of information and input. Members of the public may also provide comment on a study during meetings of the SMTC Executive, Planning and Policy Committees as mentioned in Section 4.

The topic and the extent of the study area will determine the intensity of the public outreach effort. Some public involvement and outreach methods that the SMTC has used in the past are listed below.

All studies will include the following:

- **Public meetings:** Public meetings provide an opportunity for the SMTC to educate the public about a current study and provide opportunities for the public to provide feedback on various aspects of the study. In most cases, the SMTC will host a public meeting specifically for a current study; however, in some cases, attending a standing community group or municipal meeting may be more effective than hosting a separate public meeting. This decision is made on a case-by-case basis and, to the extent foreseeable, is specified in the PIP. Public meeting procedures are discussed in more detail in Section 9.
- **Project stakeholders list:** The SMTC creates a project stakeholders list (for postal and/or electronic mailing) for each project. Involved municipalities are included on this list, as well as any known community organizations that are within the study area or address a topic relevant to the study. The initial list is compiled with input from the project’s Study Advisory Committee. The list is continually updated

throughout the project. Members of the public may contact the SMTC and request to be added to the stakeholders list. All attendees at a public meeting specific to the project will be added to the stakeholders list. The individuals on the stakeholders list will receive all public meeting announcements, and may be included in other study-related communications as well.

- **Attendance at community/municipal meetings:** Upon invitation, SMTC staff will be available (to the extent practicable) to attend community or municipal meetings and discuss the status of a current study.

Some studies may warrant additional public outreach based on the topic of the study or the specific geographic reach of the study. Additional public outreach methods include:

- **Focus groups:** Focus group meetings may be utilized to deepen the staff's understanding of a specific topic within a study. A focus group consists of representatives of agencies and organizations from within study area that all have a common interest. The number of focus group meetings will depend on the content and timeframe of the study. Past studies have generally included about 4-8 focus groups. A notable exception is *The I-81 Challenge* Public Participation Program, which included a series of 23 focus group meetings between the fall of 2009 and the spring of 2010. Potential focus groups include: freight carriers/shippers, business developers, property owners, community leaders, social service agencies, fire and police representatives, and representatives of publicly available transit services.
- **Surveys or questionnaires:** Surveys related to a specific study may be conducted to gather public input from a broad swath of the community and to supplement the public input garnered from public meetings. Generally, these "surveys" are not conducted to be statistically significant and, therefore, are technically "questionnaires." Such questionnaires may be made available online, in paper format, or both. In some cases, questionnaires are distributed as part of a public meeting, but they may also be stand-alone efforts. The SMTC has conducted telephone surveys in the past and may do so in the future depending on the specific needs of a project. Both questionnaires and surveys can add valuable insights to a project.

A few very high-intensity studies (those that address topics of intense community interest or that have a very broad geographic extent) may include the following outreach methods:

- **Project-specific newsletters or fact sheets:** In addition to articles in our agency newsletter, DIRECTIONS, the SMTC may produce a project specific newsletter or fact sheet. The project newsletter may be distributed as an insert with DIRECTIONS or as a stand-alone document, either in hard-copy or electronically. A

project-specific newsletter might include: description of the project, updates on progress, schedule for public meetings, and/or opportunities for public comment.

- **Project-specific websites:** In addition to the main agency website, the SMTC may develop sub websites specific to an individual project. A project-specific website would provide general information about a project’s planning process, announce upcoming meeting dates, provide updates on the activities and progression of the project, and allow the public to participate, comment, or ask questions (via the website).



Example website page

- **E-mail blasts:** Depending on the potential magnitude and community relevance of a planning project, “eblasts” may be sent out to members of the public. Content would generally be similar to a project-specific newsletter, but with more focus on driving traffic to the SMTC website and/or a project-specific website.
- **Intercepts:** Intercepts typically consist of display boards, which may be interactive, set up in a highly public location. At these display boards, the passing public will be able to comment, vote, state preferences, etc. The exact nature and location of these boards would be determined by SMTC staff based on the nature of the study and the type of information to distribute and/or receive. Possible locations include destinations such as the Rosamond Gifford Zoo, the Museum of Science and Technology, Destiny USA and the various festivals at Clinton Square. It is also encouraged that boards be made available during peak usage times, such as during holidays or weekends. Intercepts may also be used at community centers or libraries to reach traditionally underrepresented populations.
- **Virtual meetings:** Online “virtual” meetings allow members of the public access to all of the information and feedback mechanisms provided at a traditional in-person public meeting. In most cases, the virtual meeting will simply consist of a PDF version of a meeting presentation and/or display boards along with a form for providing feedback or a set of survey questions. (Note that for *The I-81 Challenge*, the SMTC implemented a true virtual meeting with an interactive online interface; however, this intense effort is not feasible for most SMTC studies.) A virtual meeting would typically supplement a traditional public meeting to provide access to a wider audience or to allow people to review the information at their convenience.

- **Community Liaison Committee** – A Community Liaison Committee (CLC) may be formed to broaden community outreach for a project and ensure that diverse points of view are represented in the planning process. A CLC was used during *The I-81 Challenge*. Through an application process, the CLC was made up of representatives from local community organizations whose missions covered a range of issues including the environment, social justice, local neighborhoods, education, civic engagement, urban design, business and economic development, and housing. Members of the CLC were asked to comment on materials and methods for public involvement, to convey the concerns of their constituency to the project staff, and to disseminate information about the project to their constituents. A CLC is an advisory body only; it is not a decision-making body.

9. Public meeting procedures

In addition to the public meetings specified above as part of the LRTP and TIP development processes, the SMTC may hold public meetings, workshops, charrettes, open houses, or informational sessions as part of any SMTC study. The number of public meetings will depend on the type, intensity, and length of the study, and will be described in the study's PIP (see Section 8).

The SMTC follows specific procedures for conducting public meetings so as to maximize attendance and involvement by the general public and interested groups in the community. All public meetings conducted by the SMTC are open to the public and are subject to the following procedures:

- **Meeting locations:** Public meetings will be conducted in locations that are accessible to persons with disabilities in compliance with the ADA. Meeting announcements will clearly indicate that the meeting location is accessible. To the extent feasible, public meetings will be conducted in locations that are convenient to alternative modes of transportation. Under-represented and underserved audiences (i.e., minority, elderly, limited English proficient, low-income, persons with disabilities, tribal governments) will also be considered when selecting a meeting location.
- **Meeting notice:** Public notice of meetings (including SMTC committee meetings as well as project-specific meetings) will be made a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting.
 - Notice of public meetings will be posted on the SMTC website and Facebook page, and will be available at the SMTC office.
 - A media release to television stations, radio stations, and weekly and daily general circulation newspapers in the region, as well as specialty newspapers on a case-by-case basis, and on the SMTC website will also provide notice of a public meeting.

- To the extent practical, SMTC will reach out to community partners such as neighborhood associations or community advocacy groups for assistance promoting a public meeting. SMTC will provide meeting information to community partners for posting on their website, or for dissemination through postal or electronic mailing list.
 - Mayors/supervisors of cities/towns/villages within the study area will receive direct notice of a public meeting. SMTC will also encourage municipalities to promote the meeting through their website or social media accounts, and will provide text or fliers for that purpose.
 - SMTC may also distribute fliers at community meetings or post fliers at locations within a study area (particularly libraries, community centers, or other known community gathering places).
 - SMTC will develop and maintain a list of interested stakeholders for each study, and meeting notice will be sent directly to these individuals through postal and/or electronic mail.
 - When appropriate, the SMTC may consider paid print, online, or radio advertisements to provide additional notice of a public meeting.
- **Accommodations:** The SMTC will make every effort to respond to those who need a sign language interpreter, assistive learning system, or any other accommodations, such as language translation, to facilitate the public's participation in the transportation planning process. See Section 3 for additional details on requesting accommodations. Meeting announcements will clearly indicate that assistance may be requested by contacting the SMTC at least 10 days prior to the scheduled meeting.
 - **Comments:** During official Committee meetings, time will be allotted on the agenda for individuals or groups to convey their comments verbally. For study-specific public outreach efforts, comments will be accepted verbally and in writing. Verbal comments received at a public meeting or via phone following a public meeting will be summarized and documented in a meeting summary. Written comments received at the public meeting or following the public meeting (either through postal or electronic mail) will be included verbatim in a meeting summary.
 - **Distribution of meeting materials:** Depending on the type of meeting held, the SMTC may provide meeting materials on the agency's website following an in-person meeting, or provide copies to individuals upon request. Materials may include a copy of presentation slides used by staff, display boards, or handouts that were distributed at the meeting.
 - **Meeting summary:** SMTC will produce a summary of the public meeting indicating, briefly, the format and content of the meeting. Public comments will

be included in the meeting summary as noted above, and the public meeting summary will be included in an appendix to the final study documentation.

10. Conclusion

This Public Participation Plan outlines the many avenues through which the SMTC involves the public in the transportation planning process. The SMTC will regularly review the effectiveness of these public participation procedures and strategies to ensure a full and open participation process and update the Public Participation Plan accordingly.

A number of tools may be used to determine the effectiveness of the SMTC's public outreach and to inform any future revisions to this plan:

- **Monthly website activity:** Tracks activity on the SMTC's website or project specific websites, including the number of unique visits.
- **Monthly Facebook page updates:** Tracks activity on the SMTC's Facebook page such as number of "Likes" and number of visits.
- **Contact lists:** Number of contacts on SMTC's e-mail and mailing lists that receive newsletters, public meeting notices and other SMTC related materials.
- **Comments received through public meetings, comment cards, or website:** As mentioned above, the SMTC encourages the public to provide comments, questions and suggestions through several methods.

The table below summarizes the public comment periods discussed above for the three main SMTC documents (LRTP, TIP, and UPWP), as well as for this PPP.

Document	Public Comment Period	Update Schedule
Long Range Transportation Plan	30 calendar days	Updated every five years
Transportation Improvement Program	30 calendar days	Updated typically every two years
TIP Amendments	10 calendar days (Executive Committee)	As appropriate
	30 calendar days (Planning/Policy Committee)	As appropriate
Unified Planning Work Program	30 calendar days	Updated annually
Public Participation Plan	45 calendar days	As appropriate

The SMTC and its member agencies recognize the value of public input in the transportation planning process. The SMTC believes that the procedures outlined in this PPP will provide the opportunity for the public to develop greater awareness of and active involvement in the transportation planning process.

This PPP is a reference for the public, the SMTC staff, and the SMTC member agencies. The procedures outlined in the PPP guide SMTC in involving the public; help ensure that citizens have access to an open, fair, transparent, and equitable process; and ensure that transportation plans, policies, and investments consider the environmental, economic, and social concerns of the public.

Appendix A - 23 CFR 450.316 Federal Regulations

23 CFR 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation

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

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

- (i) Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including a reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (ii) Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes;
- (iii) Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs;
- (iv) Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web;
- (v) Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times;
- (vi) Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP;
- (vii) Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services;
- (viii) Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts;
- (ix) Coordinating with the statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes under subpart B of this part; and
- (x) Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Appendix B – TIP Project Management Procedures

TIP Project Management Amendment & Administrative Modification Matrix

Description	Amendment Process	Administrative Modification
	TIP Amendment Required	
Adding/Deleting Project		
Project deleted in entirety	Planning/Policy	
New project added over \$500,000	Planning/Policy	
New project added under \$500,000	Executive	
Changes to Scope		
Project type/function is changed	Executive	
Projects are combined		✓
Project phase is added less than \$500,000 (i.e., New ROW Phase)		✓
New CMAQ or STP-Urban phase added greater than or equal to \$250,000 and less than \$500,000	Executive	
New CMAQ or STP-Urban phase added less than \$250,000		✓
Project phase is added between \$500,000 and less than \$10,000,000	Executive	
Project phase is added greater than or equal to \$10,000,000	Planning/Policy	
Project phase is deleted		✓
Project limits increase		✓
Project limits decrease		✓

Changes to Schedule		
Phase is delayed 1 or more fiscal years	Executive	
Phase is advanced 1 or more fiscal years from Year 5	Executive	
Phase is advanced 1 or more fiscal years from Year 2, 3 or 4		✓
Changes in Costs		
Cumulative cost of a phase increases (Less than an increase of \$500,000)		✓
Cumulative cost of a CMAQ or STP-Urban phase increases (greater than or equal to \$250,000 and less than \$500,000)	Executive	
Cumulative cost of a CMAQ or STP-Urban phase increases (Less than \$250,000)		✓
Cumulative cost of a phase increases (between \$500,000 and less than \$10,000,000)	Executive	
Cumulative cost of a phase increases (greater than or equal to \$10,000,000)	Planning/Policy	
Cost of a phase decreases		✓
Changes in Funding Source		
Funding source for a phase changes in part or completely (To 1 or more different funding sources)		✓

Note:

Funding thresholds are in federal dollars, not total project cost. All amendments utilizing traditional TIP federal funds (i.e., “planning targets”) within the SMTC Metropolitan Planning Area require compensating offsets. External funding from such items as a statewide solicitation or Congressional award does not.

Appendix C – Social Media Policy

SMTC SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

PURPOSE

Many people communicate and obtain information online, including the use of social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. The SMTC seeks to use these social media platforms to reach a broader audience and gather feedback from the public. This policy establishes guidelines for the SMTC's use of these social media platforms and shall be posted on all websites and social media platforms maintained by the SMTC as notification to users.

OVERVIEW

The SMTC's goal in using social media platforms is to provide relevant, timely, and informative information to the public. Social media platforms that may be used are (but not limited to): Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr and blogs. Where appropriate, content posted to the SMTC social media platforms will also be available on websites maintained by the SMTC. Additionally, content posted to the SMTC social media platforms should contain links directing users back to the SMTC-maintained websites for in-depth information, forms, documents, mechanisms to submit official comment, or any other services necessary.

Any content posted to a social media platform will be timely, informative and related to the tasks, programs, products, or events of the SMTC. There may be instances where the sharing of articles, websites, or online information produced by outside sources is appropriate. This could include newspaper articles, municipal websites, other transportation and/or planning agencies or other informative, yet relevant, content from trusted sources. The SMTC may share these items as "information only" and does not endorse, support or have responsibility for the accuracy for these items.

The use of social media platforms will follow all federal, state, and SMTC related laws and/or policies regarding the sharing of information, collection of data, and archiving. The SMTC posts to social media platforms will be the responsibility of the staff person(s) assigned by the SMTC Director. The SMTC Director will make a final determination on any item that may be questionable as related to this policy. The SMTC Director also reserves the right to disable the social media platforms at any time if it is determined they are not fulfilling the SMTC's goals and objectives as detailed herein.

COMMENTS

Social media platforms provide a variety of ways to communicate with the SMTC and fellow users of the platform. Some of these communication methods such as @replies on Twitter or wall postings on Facebook are publicly visible and it is not directly stated whether the comment is intended for the SMTC or fellow users of the platform. As such, the SMTC will treat these social media communication methods as discussion, not official comments directed at the SMTC. Discussions on social media platforms may be summarized and shared with the SMTC's Policy Committee, Planning Committee, or Study Advisory Committees as appropriate.

Other communication methods provided by social media platforms such as direct messages on Flickr and Facebook are not publicly visible and are received by the SMTC via their designated contact email. Comments received via these methods are clearly directed to the SMTC and will be treated as official comments. Comments received through social media platforms via direct messages may be shared,

either verbatim or in a summarized form, with the SMTC's Policy Committee, Planning Committee or Study Advisory Committees as appropriate.

User comments that contain any of the following forms of content shall not be allowed and will be removed at the discretion of the SMTC:

1. Comments in support of or opposition to political campaigns or ballot measures or that are politically biased;
2. Profane language or content;
3. Content that promotes, fosters, or perpetuates discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, gender, marital status, status with regard to public assistance, national origin, physical or mental disability or sexual orientation;
4. Sexual content or links to sexual content;
5. Solicitations of commerce;
6. Conduct or encouragement of illegal activity;
7. Information that may tend to compromise the safety or security of the SMTC, the public or public systems; or
8. Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.

If available, the SMTC may also use a social media's 'blocking' feature for repeat offenders of the content guidelines specified above.

The SMTC reserves the right to reply or not reply to any and all comments posted on social media platforms. Replies from the SMTC should generally be used to correct erroneous information about SMTC projects that may be posted by other users. Replies from the SMTC should not be used to debate issues or attempt to sway the opinion of other users.

COLLECTION OF DATA

The SMTC will not collect or store the personal information (name, e-mail, location, gender, etc.) of social media users except when required by law. Social media sites may have their own privacy policies that may differ from the SMTC's.