

D7
Public Involvement
PERFORMANCE-BASED ASSESSMENT OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUES FOR
LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANS
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Long-Range Transportation Plans (LRTP) are Federally-required updates for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) every 4 or 5 years. By their nature, LRTPs do not spur extensive, organic public engagement to the same extent that other planning projects might. That being said, public engagement is critical for these studies. The authors have used a performance-based assessment of a multifaceted set of traditional and innovative community-wide participation tools during the LRTP process. To assess the performance of each engagement tool, the authors have used performance measures to assess each tool's effectiveness at soliciting public engagement, compared to the investment required.

The engagement goal is to provide a full suite of tools and approaches that interact with unique stakeholder groups on their own terms. This engagement approach provides a more "implementable" LRTP, with a final set of projects and programs that reflect the community vision. The authors describe the range of tools used, along with each element's objective, and the performance outcome of each tool. The range of involvement techniques, assessed from a cost and interaction value perspective, include:

Project Website: The lynchpin of public communications for both receiving input and disseminating the latest news, communications and technical content. Tools are built into the study website, including:

- Online Comment Mapping Tool: an ESRI-based interactive map form that provides users drawing tools on a map centered in the community. Connected comment forms allow citizens to draw issue areas or improvement ideas and tag that drawing to text input and their contact information.
- Online Alternatives Open House: embedded video of presentation materials and voice-over presentations, coupled with open house maps and materials, and input forms to record comments. This branded "Alternatives Open House" page provided a 24/7 option for the community to understand the process and the range of candidate projects being considered for inclusion in the LRTP, and to provide their thoughts, ideas on the options being considered.
- Virtual Town Hall: An LRTP-specific collaborative community forum established for community members to contribute through an idea submission, comment, or voting on a range of topic.

Grass roots events to generate community interest and gather community input on transportation issues. These include presentations during bike advocacy meetings, booths at community festivals, and online transportation photo-based contests with prizes.

- Informational Kiosks: Large, high-quality boards with comment boxes, comment forms, and attached pencil on easels, placed in public spaces such as malls, department of motor vehicles, senior centers, and libraries. Provides early awareness of the LRTP effort (including QR code for scanning with smart phone) and an additional avenue for collecting public comment on transportation issues.
- Social Media: to keep followers up-to-date on the project, with fresh content related to plan news and interesting national and local transportation stories to engage a wider, more active following.
- Contact & Comment Management (CCM) Database: This in-house tool is a web-based system used to manage project contacts, comments, responses, earned media, and event participation.

Traditional tools such as focus groups and public open house meetings, newsletters, household opinion surveys, and email campaigns.

The presentation objective is to provide example qualitative and quantitative performance measure approaches for assessing the interaction value of each engagement tool. Measures used include cost, citizens reached, social media followers, posts and shares, comments received, and meeting attendees. Example public engagement performance metrics / outcomes for MPO LRTP updates will be shared.