



Public Participation Plan

REVISED Draft for Public Comment
Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and
Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan
Joint Update

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1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is currently updating the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) and the 20-year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP), through one joint process. The SMTP and MnSHIP are both part of MnDOT's Family of Plans, which stem from the Minnesota GO 50-year Vision. The Vision outlines what Minnesotans desire from the state's transportation system and identifies key guiding principles MnDOT strives to achieve. The SMTP is the State's highest level plan. It translates the Vision into general policy direction for MnDOT and other transportation partners. The policy direction from the SMTP guides the development of system investment plans, the next layer of planning in the Family of Plans. MnSHIP is the system investment plan for the State's highway system. It translates the SMTP objectives into fiscally-constrained, performance-based highway investment direction. Together, the SMTP and MnSHIP meet federal and state transportation planning requirements.

In 2012, President Obama signed a new federal transportation program into law. It is called the Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP-21). MAP-21 includes requirements for plans like the SMTP and MnSHIP, including rules on how they are developed and what they should include. Both the SMTP and MnSHIP need to be developed in cooperation with Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and in consultation with non-metropolitan local officials, Tribal governments and partner agencies. Partner agencies are those responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation. These rules, along with state requirements, have been carefully considered when developing a strategy for public participation on this joint update process.

Public involvement will be integrated with technical tasks and timelines for the SMTP and MnSHIP. The purpose of the Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to provide a framework for how public involvement activities will be conducted during the joint plan update process. This PPP is intended to be a dynamic document which will be updated periodically throughout the project, based on input from partners, stakeholders and the public and results from previous engagement activities.

2.0 GOALS & EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The overall goals for public involvement are to:

- Create opportunities for public involvement early and often, focusing on going to the public and stakeholder groups where they are.
- Use innovative engagement methods to reach more individuals statewide and pilot new tools to reach communities typically underserved in the statewide planning engagement efforts.
- Offer a variety of platforms to provide input, including online and in-person coordination opportunities.
- Guide the development of policy objectives and strategies for transportation in Minnesota as well as specific investment direction for the state highway network.
- Convey complex, technical information using plain language and graphics.
- Comply with federal and state requirements.

The intended outcome is that the public, including stakeholders, has actively participated in the project process and assisted MnDOT in updating the two plan documents. A secondary outcome is that there is broad buy-in and ownership of the policy and investment direction set for transportation in Minnesota.

3.0 AUDIENCES

It is understood that not every audience shares the same level of interest or commitment to the planning process. As a result, it is important to offer opportunities for different levels of involvement. Federal law identifies a spectrum of participation levels including:

- **Inform:** to provide accessible, objective information to assist stakeholders and the public in understanding
- **Coordinate:** to compare plans, programs and schedules, and adjust for general consistency
- **Consult:** to consider the views, actions or information from others prior to taking action
- **Cooperate:** to work together to achieve a common goal or objective

The audiences listed below require participation levels customized to their unique needs. The engagement of all audiences will comply with all Environmental Justice (EJ) and Civil Rights requirements, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements, as well as additional stakeholder outreach requirements set at the federal and state level.

MnDOT

The SMTP and MnSHIP are plans for the state of Minnesota. As the state's transportation agency, MnDOT plays a critical role in implementing the planning direction. It is important that MnDOT employees be engaged in the planning process, so they have buy-in and support for the transportation policy and investment direction. They will be responsible for the ongoing implementation of the plan.

Partners

Minnesota has a broad range of partners working on transportation. Like MnDOT, there are partner agencies and organizations that will play a key role in advancing Minnesota toward the planned transportation future. These include MPOs, non-metropolitan officials (e.g., cities, counties, and transit agencies), Tribal governments and agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation and historic preservation. These groups are considered partners, since they play an important role in planning and developing a strong transportation system for Minnesota.

Stakeholders

A stakeholder is generally defined as a person, group or organization with a specific interest in a project. Based on previous planning processes, a list of stakeholders will be developed for this plan update process. While organizations and groups will be identified initially, additional stakeholders may continue to be included as the project evolves and as specific needs are identified. The "primary" stakeholders, as mentioned throughout this PPP, are those who fall in the categories of consult and cooperate, as well as stakeholders identified to meet other specific needs.

Public

As the ultimate beneficiary of this update, the general public is a key audience that these plans intend to reach. . The interest of a member of the general public may be less specific than that of a key stakeholder, but is no less important. Those with any level of interest should have the opportunity to learn about the plans and provide input. MnDOT will employ a variety of outreach techniques with the goal of reaching a broad audience. These techniques are document in [Section 5.0](#) of the PPP.

MnDOT will also provide specific outreach opportunities for traditionally underserved populations by piloting new engagement tools and techniques. These targeted populations include ethnic or racial minority groups, low wage earners, non-English speakers, elderly, youth, persons with disabilities and zero motor vehicle households. Stakeholder groups associated with these targeted populations will be identified in the project stakeholder list.

4.0 PROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Project Management Team

The joint update of these two plans will be a coordinated effort led by MnDOT’s Policy Planning Director and Investment Planning Director, under the supervision of the Planning and Data Analysis Director. This group, along with the project managers for both plans, will make up the project management team (PMT). The PMT will be responsible for overseeing all tasks associated with both plan updates and coordinating tasks with the broader project team staff. A consultant will assist the project team in the development and implementation of the public and stakeholder outreach activities. The project team refers to members of the PMT and the consultant.

Project Advisory Structure

The advisory structure for the joint plan update will primarily rely on feedback from existing advisory stakeholder groups, both internal to MnDOT and external partners. However, the Commissioner’s Staff / Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of MnDOT will be used to provide continuous guidance, resolve specific issues and help set final direction for the project team. The SLT will be engaged throughout the update process and ultimately take ownership of the final plan documents. A representative of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Minnesota office will also be included as part of this overall advisory group. Input from other advisory stakeholder groups will inform the direction set by this group.

Table 4.1 identifies existing stakeholder groups with a designated role and responsibility to advise the Commissioner of Transportation. These are key examples of project advisory groups, but others may be engaged throughout the development of these plans.

Table 4.1: Advisory stakeholder groups

Partner Advisory Stakeholders	MnDOT Advisory Stakeholders
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)	Senior Leadership Team (SLT)
Federal Transit Administration (FTA)	Transportation Programming and Investment Committee (TPIC)
Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)	Planning Management Group (PMG)
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)	Pre-construction Management Group (PCMG)
Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA)	District Engineers
Tribal Nations	Employee Resource Groups (ERGs)
Advocacy Council for Tribal Transportation (ACTT)	Modal Planning and Program Management (MPPM) Division
Greater Minnesota Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs)	Operations Management Group (OMG)

Partner Advisory Stakeholders	MnDOT Advisory Stakeholders
Metropolitan Council / Transportation Advisory Board (TAB)	
Greater Minnesota Area Transportation Partnerships (ATPs)	
Metro Capital Improvements Committee (CIC)	
Minnesota Council on Transportation Access (MCOTA)	
State Non-motorized Transportation Advisory Committee (SNTC)	

Opportunities for the different stakeholder groups to come together for joint discussion will be provided through the outreach techniques described in [Section 5.0](#). Additionally, for each policy objective area in the SMTP, a workgroup will be formed consisting of both MnDOT and partner advisory stakeholders. The role of the workgroup will be to review the existing objective language, strategies and related performance measures as well as to develop new strategies and short-term workplan items based on technical analysis and public outreach. The recommendations from the workgroups will inform the direction set by MnDOT's SLT.

Project Stages

There are a number of stages during the life of a project. At each stage, the type of outreach, as well as the stakeholders targeted, varies. Opportunities for all audiences and levels of stakeholders will be available throughout the joint plan update. The following list identifies the project stages and summarizes the type of outreach that occurs at each phase.

- Scoping:** This stage includes the scoping process as well as communications after the scope of work is drafted. The project team will meet with stakeholders to discuss upcoming tasks and timeline. Feedback from stakeholders during this time will inform the overall project scope.
- Public Participation Plan:** This stage begins with the completion of the draft PPP. General stakeholder outreach at this time is focused on the informing stakeholder groups of the overall plan for project outreach. Additionally, there is a required 45-day public comment period on the draft PPP. Edits to the PPP are anticipated to be made based on feedback received.
- Outreach:** This is the stage when the project team is actively conducting outreach meetings and events. During this stage, stakeholders, partners and the public will participate in organized engagement activities and provide input focused on informing the development of the draft plan documents.
- Outreach Summary:** This stage occurs at the end of the organized engagement activities. A summary of the feedback heard during the outreach meetings and events in the previous stage will be summarized and shared with stakeholders, partners and the public. While this is a specific phase of outreach, it is important to note that feedback will be summarized throughout the engagement process to confirm what is being heard.
- Draft Documents:** This stage begins with the completion of draft plan documents and includes the open houses and public comment period, as well as the public hearing. The type of outreach that occurs at this stage varies by stakeholder type. For primary stakeholders, the project team will present on key document information during this stage. All stakeholders, partners and the public have the opportunity to review and provide comments on the draft information via the open houses, public hearing and public comment period.
- Final Documents:** This stage begins upon adoption of the final plan documents. In this stage outreach is mostly focused on the project team informing stakeholders of the adoption of the final plan documents and the key information included, as well as providing responses to all comments received in the previous stage.

The following table summarizes the types of engagement opportunities by project stage for each plan.

Table 4.1: Summary of engagement opportunity types by project stage

Project Stage	Opportunity Types	SMTTP	MnSHIP
Scoping	Opportunities to learn about the timeline for the plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scope of work
Public Participation Plan	Opportunities to influence the proposed public engagement strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPP public comment period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PPP public comment period
Fall/Winter Outreach	Opportunities to influence the direction of the plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trend analysis • Gain input on trends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop investment scenarios • Gain input on scenarios
Spring Outreach	Opportunities to shape the content of the plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss policies, strategies and performance measures • Draft plan • Stakeholder review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set direction and develop strategies • Draft plan • Stakeholder review
Outreach Summary	Opportunities to confirm what was heard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of feedback
Draft Documents	Opportunities to review and refine the plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan public comment period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan public comment period
Final Documents	Opportunities to read and learn about the final plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to comments • Plan finalization and adoption 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responses to comments • Plan finalization and adoption

5.0 OUTREACH TECHNIQUES

The core public outreach techniques that will be used for the joint plan update include the following list, which is also summarized in the subsequent table. The outreach techniques include a balance of in-person and online tools to maximize engagement statewide. All meetings hosted by MnDOT will be held in locations that are ADA and transit accessible (wherever possible). At a minimum, information will be provided in alternative formats and/or languages by request. A comprehensive calendar of all outreach events will be available on the project website and updated throughout the project process. At any point in the project, a group may request a presentation on the one or both of the plans. Outreach techniques will be implemented using materials written in plain language.

In-Person Engagement

INDIVIDUAL STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS

The project team will offer to schedule informational meetings with stakeholder groups. Any interested group will also be able to request a presentation via the project website, and the project team will make a good faith attempt to present whenever possible.

The goal of these meetings is to increase overall project awareness and provide key information to interested and affected stakeholders. The project team will look to partner with other MnDOT stakeholder outreach efforts, whenever possible, in order to reach more groups and limit overlap. The option to request a presentation will be made available on the project website, which will include a translation option for limited English proficiency audiences. The project team will also meet with traditionally underserved populations at events to let them know of this option.

ADVISORY STAKEHOLDER BRIEFINGS

MnDOT has a greater responsibility and interest to involve certain advisory stakeholder groups, as listed in [Table 4.1](#). These groups play oversight and implementation roles that are critical to the plans successful plan implementation. For these groups, in addition to providing informational project briefings, the project team will also be asking for guidance on the overall project direction and key decisions. Input provided by these groups will be brought to MnDOT's SLT for incorporation into final decision making per the project advisory structure identified in [Section 3.0](#). MnDOT will communicate with advisory stakeholders how often they can expect that MnDOT will meet with them. For most, this will be multiple times throughout the plan update process at key decision points.

STAKEHOLDER AND PARTNER FORUMS

At least four stakeholder forums will be held related to key issues and topics throughout the course of plan development. The forums will be targeted to stakeholders and partners, although meetings will be open to the general public. The purpose of the forums is to provide an opportunity to solicit more in-depth input on specific questions and issues beyond what is able to be accomplished through more limited time-exposure events like events at a major employer in the state. Stakeholder forums provide an opportunity to facilitate a dialogue between differing stakeholder perspectives. A round of three stakeholder forums will be held in November, 2015, with one in the Twin Cities metropolitan area and two in Greater Minnesota—one north and one south of the Twin Cities area. The morning will focus on transportation trends and the afternoon will focus on investment scenarios. A second round of stakeholder forums will be held in the Spring of 2016 in four locations different than the first round to gain input on draft policy strategies and performance measures, as well as the MnSHIP investment direction.

WORKPLACE-BASED OUTREACH

The project team will identify major employers from across the state and work with employers to schedule engagement sessions for employees. Employers will be selected based on geographic diversity and other factors to reach a diverse publication reflecting Minnesotans of all kinds. Employers will be given different types of engagement options—ranging from an informational presentation to an interactive activity—to select an outreach method that works for them and their employees. The goal of these events is to reach individuals who do not normally participate in the planning process by making it easy and convenient. Up to 31 individual employers will be selected to host an event. This includes three in each Greater Minnesota MnDOT District (up to 21 total) and 10 in the MnDOT Metro District. These activities will occur throughout the planning process with a higher concentration in the fall of 2015 and early winter of 2016, when survey tools are active and there is greater opportunity to influence plan development.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

In addition to workplace-based outreach, the project team will identify community events throughout the state for additional engagement sessions, including the Minnesota State Fair. The sessions will consist of information sharing and interactive exercises. A particular focus will be given to events that help reach traditionally underserved populations. Up to 18 community events, in addition to the 2015 Minnesota State Fair, will be selected. These will be selected based on geographic diversity and other factors to reach a diverse population of Minnesotans. Community events will be targeted to take place in the fall of 2015 and winter of 2016.

TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Over the 45-day comment period, MnDOT coordinated and communicated with various traditionally underserved community organizations and leaders who provided guidance on ways to pilot new engagement tools and techniques to better reach traditionally underserved populations across the state. MnDOT's outreach approach places particular emphasis on involving racially concentrated areas of poverty in the twin cities metropolitan area, immigrant populations, aging populations and persons with disabilities. Conversations helped establish the following recommendations as opportunities to reach a diverse range of traditionally underserved community members to gain input on the SMTP and MnSHIP.

Translated Materials

Organization leaders recommended translating existing project communication tools to increase input opportunities for non-English speaking Minnesota residents. Spanish, Hmong, and Somali were identified as the three languages other than English that would increase participation. The two interactive input activities, including the input surveys and worksheets, will be translated. At least five materials—one handout, two surveys (SMTP and MnSHIP) and two worksheets (SMTP and MnSHIP)—will be translated.

Website

All translated materials will be accessible through the MinnesotaGo.org website. Visitors interested in taking the online survey will have the choice to take the survey in English, Spanish, Hmong or Somali. Each visitor will have the ability to select his or her preferred language to complete the survey. The online survey will be the same in all languages in order to collect consistent results. A downloadable hard-copy version of the surveys will also be available in English, Spanish, Hmong or Somali. In addition, once the website surveys are available, a link to the translated online surveys will be emailed to underserved community leaders to allow leaders to share the link with their communities.

Social Media

There are two social media strategies planned—partnerships with underserved community organizations and targeted social media ads. MnDOT will partner with organizations such as AARP to share survey and website content on social media, especially via Twitter and Facebook. In addition, targeted social media advertisements will be used to connect non-English community members to the online translated survey. The social media sources will include Facebook and Twitter. The goal of these advertisements is to increase engagement with non-English speaking communities across the state.

Events

MnDOT will participate in a minimum of 10 events attended primarily by non-English speakers. Event attendees will have the opportunity to take the iPad or paper equivalent survey in English, Spanish, Hmong or Somali. MnDOT will use either the roving or information kiosk set-up during each of the attended events. If an event is well-attended, hard-copy surveys will be distributed to increase participation.

BRANDED MNDOT VAN

MnDOT will brand a van with a designed vehicle wrap using the Minnesota GO logo. The van will be called the Minnesota GO Mobile. The Minnesota GO Mobile will be launched as a part of the joint plan update and be used for "pop-up" open houses across the state. It will be a part of the social media communications strategy and help generate a conversation online through the hashtag #MinnesotaGOMobile.

PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD AND HEARING

A public comment period is expected of all statewide planning documents at MnDOT. The project team will schedule a 45-day public comment period upon completion of draft plan documents. This will be held in the fall of 2016. A notice of the public comment period will be posted in the State Register prior to its start and include the date and time of the scheduled public

hearing. Notices will also be posted on the project website and communicated through project social media channels. Interactive versions of the draft plans and comment options will be available on the project website. Hard copies of the draft plan documents will be available for review in the MnDOT library and MnDOT district offices. The public hearing will be held in St. Paul with video conference and virtual participation options available for participation throughout the state. Comments will be accepted online, at the hearing, in writing or via phone.

PRESS RELEASES

The project team will provide press releases for statewide distribution and for use by the MnDOT Public Affairs Coordinators to publish in local newspapers and media outlets, including local access television, radio and community newsletters, including minority and ethnic publications and outlets. Press materials will be prepared prior to each general public outreach opportunity and will also communicate key decision points (i.e. plan available for public review, public hearing date and final plan adoption).

Online Engagement

For a statewide effort with broad applicability, online engagement is critical to reaching a greater audience. For this reason, the engagement strategy for this joint plan update includes a robust series of online tools. The communications and participation tools online will mirror those implemented in-person, allowing for consistent messaging and sound data integration. An Online ADA Plan for online tools is included as [Appendix A](#). This will be MnDOT's first Online ADA Plan prepared and implemented as a part of an engagement effort. The Plan will be updated throughout project development to reflect the challenges and opportunities associated with providing web-based engagement that is accessible to persons with visual impairments.

PROJECT WEBSITE

The joint plan update will have a custom-designed, interactive website branded under the Minnesota GO theme, MnDOT's brand for statewide planning. The project website will be developed in the summer of 2015, launched at the beginning of the fall of 2015 and be live for two years. Upon completion, content will be migrated to the MnDOT website. This website will serve as a hub for information, resources and online engagement opportunities for the plans. The website will host online surveys and integrate with social media. It will host a project calendar of opportunities to get involved. There will be a place to request a presentation from a project team. The project team will track hits on a monthly basis to evaluate the success of the website. The website will be mobile-friendly and ADA accessible. The website will include a translation link for limited English proficiency viewers.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media will be used to promote engagement activities as a part of the joint plan update. A strategy will be crafted primarily around the Minnesota GO Facebook and Twitter profiles, with interaction and occasional posts from the MnDOT general Twitter and Facebook accounts. Posts will be made, on average, on a weekly basis. This will include driving traffic to the project website for more information and educational materials, promoting surveys and other feedback opportunities and interacting with followers to gain input directly through Twitter. Posts will be a mixture of graphics and text-based updates.

TARGETED FACEBOOK ADS

In partnership with the social media strategy, the project will implement four rounds of targeted Facebook ads. The main goal of the ads will be to drive participation to the online survey tools. Three rounds will be implemented in the fall of 2015 through the winter of 2016 to get increased input on surveys. A fourth round will be used to promote the open houses and direct the public to visit an online meeting offered parallel to the in-person open houses.

STAKEHOLDER E-MAIL UPDATES

The project team will utilize the existing MnDOT “Planning – Statewide Updates” Constant Contact email list to provide project updates to interested stakeholders and the general public. A link to sign up for the email list will be on the project website throughout the plan update process. Additionally, a one-time email will be sent to all stakeholders in the master stakeholder list at the beginning of public and stakeholder outreach inviting individuals to sign-up to receive continued project information and updates. Other strategies will be implemented to direct stakeholders and the general public to the email list throughout the process as well. Emails will be sent at key project stages and will highlight recent discussions, upcoming milestones and opportunities for input. Specific emails highlighting outreach and engagement opportunities will be sent to the targeted stakeholders identified in the master stakeholder list to increase project awareness and participation among these communities. The project team will develop email updates for distribution by MnDOT Communications via Constant Contact on a bi-monthly basis.

METROQUEST SURVEY

MetroQuest is an interactive, online engagement tool that collects feedback through a series of screens that are visually engaging. The tool will be used over a four month period to gain feedback on Minnesotans’ preferred transportation investment direction. The survey will launch once MnSHIP has developed investment scenarios. It will be used to gain input on the investment scenarios before MnDOT sets the recommended investment direction. The timeline is fall of 2015 through early winter of 2016. An equal survey option will be offered that is compatible with screen reader technologies as an ADA alternative.

WEB SURVEYS

The SMTP will gain feedback from the public on trends affecting transportation and draft policy statements using interactive web surveys. These include visual preference surveys, app-based interview surveys and other interactive web-based tools. The timeline for implementation will be fall of 2015 through winter of 2016. MnSHIP may also use web surveys to gain input on investment preferences. Where necessary, equal survey alternatives will be offered in a format compatible with screen readers.

STAKEHOLDER WEBINAR

In tandem with the Spring 2016 stakeholder forums, the project team will offer a webinar that will mirror the in-person forums. The webinar will be recorded and a link the recording available on the MinnesotaGO.org website.

ONLINE DIGITAL TOOLKIT

MnDOT has a vast network of employees and partners across the state. These partnerships will be important to maximizing engagement on this project. As a part of the website, an online digital toolkit will be available throughout the outreach process. This will be a place to host project information and tools for stakeholders to download and share with their networks. Examples of the type of information that will be available through the online digital toolkit include handouts, presentation slides and videos.

6.0 PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT SCHEDULE

The general schedule for implementing the techniques listed in Section 5.0 is presented in the following table.

Table 5.1: Summary of outreach techniques

Tools <i>What tools are planned?</i>	Timing <i>When and for what duration?</i>	Audience Level <i>MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public</i>	Input Solicited <i>What is needed from participants?</i>	Communication Method <i>How will we drive people to participate via this tool?</i>
Individual Stakeholder Meetings	Often, weekly, or bi-weekly, throughout plan development	Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
Advisory Stakeholder Briefings	Schedule to be determined; regular check-ins throughout plan development	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
MPO, Tribal, Environmental Resource Agency and Non-Metropolitan Local Official Outreach	Schedule to be determined; regular check-ins throughout plan development	Partner, Stakeholder	Present plan information and ask key questions depending on the stage of plan development	Established networks
Stakeholder and Partner Forums	3 forums in Fall 2015 (AM transportation trends/PM investment scenarios) in three different parts of state; 4 forums in Spring 2016 in four different locations in the state	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder	Round 1: Introduce planning process, gain input on trends and investment direction; Round 2: Gain input on draft policy strategies and performance measures and investment direction	E-mail, established networks
Workplace-Based Outreach	31 events (3 in each Greater MN District, 10 in Metro District) using survey tools - Fall 2015 to Spring 2016	Stakeholder, Public	Provide options for engagement: customized presentations on trends and activities to gain input on changes and investment direction	List of workplaces that meet targeted audience objectives
Community Events	18 events (2 in each Greater MN district, 4 in Metro District) using survey tools – Fall 2015 to Spring 2016, plus State Fair in Aug 2015	Public	Provide educational materials on plans; gain input on changes and investment direction	List of events that meet targeted audience objectives
Traditionally Underserved Community Partnerships	Translated surveys (x4), website translation service, minimum 10 targeted events, and targeted Facebook ads.	Stakeholder, Public	Provide educational materials on plans; gain input on changes and investment direction	Initial meetings, website, social media
Branded MnDOT Van: #MinnesotaGOMobile	Throughout the project	Partner, Stakeholder, Public	In coordination with other activities	In coordination with other activities
Public Comment Period and Hearing	Public hearing and comment period to be held upon official release of plans in fall 2016	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Comments on draft document	E-mail, press release, website, social media
Website	Two years of hosting with regular updates	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Provide information on plans; use as a platform to host other participation tools (e.g., social media and surveys)	In-person activities (business cards), e-mail, social media
Social Media	Weekly Twitter and Facebook posts	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Focus is on messaging, education and promotion of other tools	In-person activities (business cards), e-mail, website, followers (MnDOT, other agencies)
Targeted Facebook Ads	4 rounds of targeted ads	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Targeted ads promote opportunities to provide input via surveys; participate in open houses	List of geographies/demographics that meet targeted audience objectives
Stakeholder E-Mail updates	Bi-monthly (on average)	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	Provide updates on the process; share opportunities to get involved	E-mail list
MetroQuest Surveys	1 round of 4-month interactive survey, available on website and mobile devices (smart phones, tablets)	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	What is the preferred investment decision? Gain input on this, using scenarios developed	In-person activities (business cards), e-mail, press release, radio, posters, flyers, website, social media
Web Surveys	Various campaigns using online survey tools (e.g., visual preference, video and gamification tools)	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder, Public	What changes should MnDOT plan for? What should MnDOT do about these changes? How is the transportation system working for you?	In-person activities (business cards), e-mail, website, social media
Stakeholder Webinar	1 webinar in tandem with the spring 2016 stakeholder forums	MnDOT, Partner, Stakeholder	Gain input on draft policy strategies and performance measures and investment direction	E-mail, website, established networks
Online digital toolkit	Project fact sheets, event notifications and other collateral material posted to the website for MnDOT and partners to access	MnDOT, Partner	Equip MnDOT leaders and other partners with information on the plans and engagement opportunities to share with their networks	MnDOT e-mail, meeting updates

Table 6.1: Public involvement schedule

Tools	Summer 2015		Fall 2015			Winter 2016			Spring 2016			Summer 2016			Fall 2016			2017	
	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	
In Person Tools																			
Informational Stakeholder Meetings	Informational stakeholder meetings to occur throughout plan development																		
Advisory Stakeholder Meetings	Advisory stakeholder meetings to occur throughout plan development																		
MPO, Tribal, Environmental, and Non-Metro Partner Outreach	Partner outreach to occur throughout plan development																		
Stakeholder and Partner Forums			1	2	3					4	5	6	7						
Workplace-Based Outreach		Workplace Outreach																	
Community Events	*	Community Events																	
Traditionally Underserved Community Partnerships		Leader Meetings		Pilot Tools and Techniques															
Branded MnDOT Van		Ongoing in coordination with other activities																	
Public Hearing														1					
Online Tools																			
Website		Develop	Ongoing Website Engagement																
Social Media		Develop	Ongoing Social Media Engagement																
Stakeholder Email Updates			1		2		3		4				5		6			7	
Targeted Facebook Ads				1	2		3						4						
MetroQuest Survey		Develop	Investment Scenarios MetroQuest																
Web Surveys		Develop	Web Survey #1							Survey #2									
Stakeholder Webinar										1									
Online Digital Toolkit		Introductory						Draft plan direction				Draft plans							
Other Potential Tools																			
SMTP Milestones	Trend analysis		Gain input on trends						Discuss policies, strategies, PMs			Draft plan		Public comment period		Plan finalization + adoption			
MnSHIP Milestones	Develop investment scenarios		Gain input on scenarios						Review direction and discuss increased revenue scenario			Draft plan		Public comment period		Plan finalization + adoption			
Type of Engagement Opportunities	Opportunities to influence the direction of the plans								Opportunities to shape the writing of the plans				Opportunities to review and refine the plans						

*State Fair outreach

7.0 EVALUATION OF EFFORTS

Specific techniques will be evaluated by the project team on a monthly basis. Evaluation of techniques will be based on the following (example) criteria.

Quantitative

- How many place-based outreach meetings occurred? What was the attendance?
- How many stakeholder meetings, informational and advisory, have taken place? What was the attendance?
- How many people attended the stakeholder forums and open houses?
- How many people have signed up for project updates via email?
- How many hits on the project website? How many hits on the online engagement tool?

Qualitative

- What kind of feedback was received from the place-based outreach, stakeholder meetings and other opportunities?
- Were the locations of the meetings appropriate?
- Have stakeholders expressed any particular challenges regarding their participation in the process?
- Have different modal interests been represented? Different geography?
- Have key demographic groups (e.g. Title VI and EJ populations) been represented?

The qualitative and quantitative measures will be summarized in an outreach summary document, which will be drafted following major outreach phases and efforts. Cumulative results and trends will be used to adjust outreach related to this project and considered in the planning and execution of future outreach at MnDOT. In addition, MnDOT will receive monthly reports that document the number of people that interact with the project via:

- In-person activities
- Website
- Social media
- Surveys and other online tools

When possible, this will include a breakdown of where people are located to ensure geographic diversity in engagement. If certain areas of Minnesota are missing, the public participation strategy will be adjusted to target those populations. Beyond the plan-specific evaluation of efforts, MnDOT will use its annual omnibus survey to evaluate participation. Tracking responses to key omnibus questions before, during and after the planning update process is another tool the project team will use to evaluate outreach efforts.

8.0 HOW TO COMMENT

Written comments on the revised draft Public Participation Plan will be accepted through June 24, 2016. Comments should be addressed to:

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Online Accessibility Plan

Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan and Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan Joint Update

Last Update: September 4, 2015

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1.0 PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

The Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) is currently updating the Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan (SMTP) and the 20-year Minnesota State Highway Investment Plan (MnSHIP), through one joint process. The SMTP and MnSHIP are both part of MnDOT's Family of Plans, which stem from the Minnesota GO 50-year Vision. The Vision outlines what Minnesotans desire from the state's transportation system and identifies key guiding principles MnDOT strives to achieve. The SMTP is the State's highest level plan. Public involvement will be integrated with technical tasks and timelines for the SMTP and MnSHIP. Strategies for public involvement are outlined in the Public Participation Plan (PPP). This document is a companion to the PPP.

A critical part of any engagement effort is ensuring information is accessible to people of all abilities. Over the past few decades, project engagement has increasingly migrated from libraries and city halls to websites and online meetings. While in-person activities are an important cornerstone of a public involvement plan, online tools are needed to amplify the reach of a project. To this end, a variety of online tools are proposed for the SMTP and MnSHIP update.

This purpose of this document is to provide a framework for how online tools will be made accessible to people of all abilities. Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 requires that electronic information be accessible to people with disabilities. This protects people with visual, hearing, cognitive, and other disabilities. In addition to this requirement, it is simply a good public involvement practice to make information accessible to all audiences. This document provides goals, standards, and measures to evaluate the accessibility of online tools used in the SMTP and MnSHIP joint plan update.

2.0 GOALS

The overarching goal for this online accessibility plan is to make information accessible to all audiences. As with in-person activities, not every audience will respond to every tool. As such, diverse tools are leveraged to reach to a variety of audiences. The same is true for online tools. It is important that information is conveyed in more than just one way so that people can engage in a way that suits their needs. This includes taking necessary steps for people who use assistive technology. In some cases, an equitable alternate format for a participation tool is required. Wherever possible, preference will be given to a single format with the background coding to allow for the same experience. Regardless of approach, the goals below aim to ensure that information and engagement opportunities are accessible to all audiences.

The overall goals for accessible engagement are to:

- Allow people using assistive technologies to autonomously access the same information as those without disabilities.
- Convey online information using plain language to increase the ease of understanding for all people, including those with cognitive disabilities.
- When an alternate format is necessary, provide an equal opportunity for people with disabilities to access information and provide input.
- Comply with federal and state requirements.
- Evaluate the accessibility of online tools.

The intended outcome is that people of all abilities have been given equal opportunities to participate in the project process and assist MnDOT in updating the two plan documents.

3.0 STANDARDS

This section documents the standards that will be adhered to in order to fully maximize the accessibility of online engagement. This includes a team commitment to accessibility. Accessibility will be adopted into the quality assurance and quality control (QA/QC) process for the project. In addition to this commitment, specific strategies have been drafted to fully maximize the accessibility of online engagement tools. This section documents standards for the website, online participation tools, and online project documents to be developed as a part of the engagement for the joint plan update.

Website

This project will include a custom website that will enhance the engagement opportunities provided in the joint plan update. The following production and evaluation standards will be adhered to when developing and updating the website.

PRODUCTION

Website production standards were developed using Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG). The following standards will be applied to website production to fully maximize accessibility.

Developer

The website will be developed by a web designer who is trained in website accessibility. For this project, the web designer will be Kelly Spitzley. Kelly received training from St. Catherine University on developing accessible websites.

Approach

Accessibility will be considered at the beginning stages of developing a website concept. By adopting an accessible approach from the onset, the functionality of the site will be considered every step of the way. This includes making intentional design decisions that will allow for information to be easily conveyed without creating barriers for people using assistive technology.

Content

Content will be developed to the following standards in order to create a website that is perceptible, operable, and understandable.

PERCEPTIBLE

Content will be made available to the senses of sight, hearing, and/or touch. This includes the following.

- Images will be tagged with alternate text.
- Equivalent alternatives to complex images will be provided.
- Decorative content will be tagged as background.
- Videos will have captions.
- Transcripts will be provided for audio content.
- Form inputs will have text labels.
- Frames will be appropriately titled.
- A logical header structure will be applied to fonts.
- Headers will be provided for any tables.
- Tab order will be logical.

- Instructions that rely upon visual cues will not be used (e.g., click in the upper left corner)
- Color will not be the sole means to convey information.
- Audio that automatically plays for more than three seconds will have a way to stop, pause, or mute.

OPERABLE

Logic will be applied to website structure to maximize operability. This includes the following.

- Wherever possible, functionality will be available using the keyboard.
- Keyboard focus will not be locked or trapped in one part of the page.
- Page time limits will not be used.
- Automatically scrolling or updating content will have the option to be stopped.
- No page content will flash more than three times per second.
- Pages will have descriptive and informative titles.
- The navigation order of links and elements will be logical and intuitive.

UNDERSTANDABLE

Website content will be developed in a way that is easy to understand. This includes the following.

- Content will be written in plain language.
- The language of the page will be identified.
- Sufficient labels, cues, and instructions for interactive components will be used.

EVALUATION

The website will be tested prior to launching. Following the initial design and any consequent major updates, the website will undergo an accessibility evaluation using the following tools.

[Achecker.ca](#)

This tool checks websites against accessibility standards and provides a work-up of issues. Any known problems will be addressed.

[508Checker.com](#)

Like AChecker, 508 Checker will be used to check website compliance. Any known problems will be addressed.

[Window-Eyes](#)

Window-Eyes is a screen reading software application for the blind and visually impaired. The free download version of Window-Eyes will be used to check website accessibility.

Online Participation Tools

There are a variety of survey tools proposed on this project. The following standards will be adhered to for any online tools created.

PRODUCTION

Website Standards

All of the above website standards will apply to online participation tools.

Alternate Format

Where a single format is not possible, an equal participation alternative will be provided. Within the PPP for this project, the MetroQuest engagement tool does not allow for full accessibility. As such, an equal engagement tool will be developed as an accessible alternative. This will be achieved using an accessible Constant Contact form or similar technology. If other online participation tools have barriers to accessibility, an equal alternate format will be provided.

EVALUATION

The same steps outlined for the website will be used to evaluate the accessibility of online participation tools.

Online Project Documents

Documents posted to the project website will be developed and checked for accessibility.

PRODUCTION

Accessibility will be considered from the onset of developing any project materials. This will allow for thoughtful design of project information. As with the website, documents will be produced to a standard that is perceptible, operable, and understandable. This includes the following.

- Documents will be written in plain language.
- File names will be concise and will not contain spaces or special characters.
- Document properties (title, author, subject, keywords, and language) will be set.
- Documents will not contain watermarks.
- Images will be tagged with alternate text.
- Complex images will have descriptive text that describes the concepts demonstrated graphically.
- Multilayered objects will be flattened into one object that has alternate text.
- Color will not be used as the sole way to convey a concept.
- Tables will be assigned headers.
- Heading styles will be used.
- Paragraph styles will be used instead of blank spaces or pressing enter.
- Page numbering codes will be used.
- Footnotes will be made using the Word footnote function.
- Email links and URLs will have descriptive hyperlinks and be linked to the correct destinations.
- Documents with a Table of Contents will be made using the Table of Contents field in Word.
- When there is no way to make content accessible, an equal alternative will be made available.

EVALUATION

The following steps will be used to evaluate the accessibility of documents to be posted online.

Microsoft Word

Documents originated in Microsoft Word will be run through the accessibility check. Any problems will be resolved prior to exporting to PDF.

Acrobat

Wherever possible, documents posted to the website will be done so as PDF files. Prior to finalizing a PDF, it will be run through the accessibility checker. Any problems will be resolved.

4.0 MEASURING OUTCOMES

This is the first online accessibility plan created as a part of a PPP for MnDOT. The outcomes of this focused effort will be evaluated to improve the process for future efforts. Outcomes will be measured using both qualitative and quantitative means. Questions include the following.

- How many people encountered barriers when accessing information online?
- How does this compare to traditional public involvement efforts?
- How did the evaluation tools work?
- Are there other ways to evaluate accessibility in the future?
- What concerns were expressed?
- How could the process be improved in the future?
- What standards should be applied in future efforts?

These questions will be asked throughout the engagement process, and this document will be revised to reflect what is learned.