



# 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan

## *Public Involvement Plan*

## 1.0 Introduction

The Pinellas County MPO recognizes that the success of the 2040 LRTP is dependent on an effective public outreach effort. As such, the MPO is committed to soliciting community participation and obtaining public input to help guide the development of the long term transportation system in accordance with the goals of the LRTP. The Public Involvement Plan (PIP) for the Pinellas County MPO's 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Update was developed to document the public participation process and strategies and tools used to engage the community. It is consistent with the MPO's overall Public Participation Plan for community participation in all of the MPO's transportation planning processes.

## 1.1 Federal Requirements

As signed into law on July 6, 2012, Map-21, a two-year surface transportation bill, will take the place of the previous Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU). MAP-21 emphasizes increased safety, infrastructure, system reliability, movement of people and freight, economic vitality, environment, and reduced project delivery delays for the metropolitan planning process. The planning strategies provided in the law include:

- Support economic vitality of the metropolitan area to enable global competitiveness, productivity and efficiency;
- Increased safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increased security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users;
- Increased accessibility and mobility of people and 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 integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight;
- Promote efficient system management and operation; and
- Emphasize preservation of the existing transportation system.

MAP-21 requires that public outreach include all interested parties with reasonable opportunity to comment, including citizens, affected agencies, representatives of public transit employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transit, private transportation providers, representatives of public transportation users, and representatives of pedestrian, bicycle, and disabled facility users. Methods of participation include public

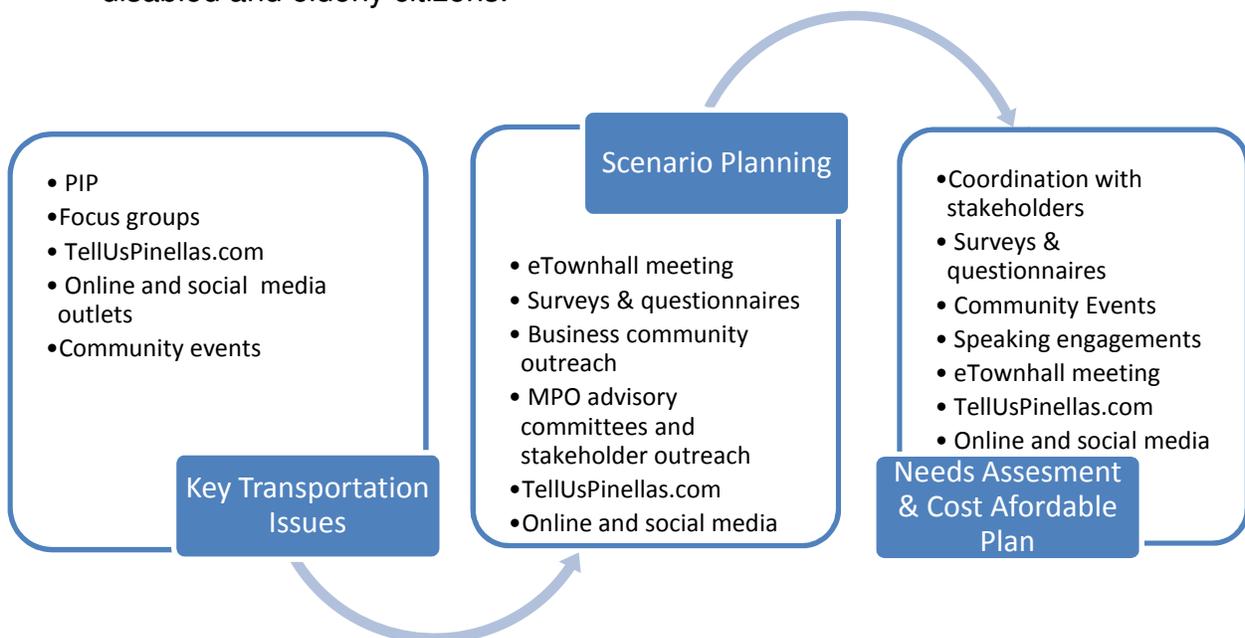
meetings, visualization techniques, and web resources. The PIP will help to ensure that federal requirements for public participation are met during the development of the 2040 LRTP, consistent with the MPO's adopted Public Participation Plan.

## 1.2 Goals and Objectives

The goal of the PIP is to encourage early and continuous public participation and to provide complete information, timely public notice, and full access to key decisions during the transportation planning process.

The objectives of the PIP are as follows:

- Develop an early, proactive, and ongoing public participation process that includes the general public, the MPO committees and Board, local and regional planning partners, and other stakeholders.
- Incorporate visualization techniques to help better convey the transportation planning process and transportation improvements identified.
- Provide prompt response to input and inquiries related to the transportation planning process.
- Maintain contact with interested citizens and other stakeholders throughout the LRTP development process.
- Involve traditionally under-served persons including minority, low-income, disabled and elderly citizens.



## 2.0 Public Involvement Strategies and Tools

A variety of traditional and innovative public involvement tools and strategies have been selected to achieve the goal and objectives of the PIP for the LRTP. These include:

- Conduct agency/stakeholder meetings and general public outreach at the outset of the planning process.
- Brand the LRTP as the Pinellas Transportation Plan (PTP) for public outreach purposes.
- Create an informative and interactive LRTP website with links from the Pinellas MPO and other websites for easy access.
- Conduct traditional community meetings and online collaboration efforts, through the MindMixer site TellUsPinellas.com, to obtain public input throughout the planning process.
- Conduct focus groups to generate ideas and obtain feedback on specific topics.
- Hold eTownHalls to obtain input at key points during development of the LRTP.
- Administer surveys in both traditional and electronic formats to obtain public opinion on current and future transportation needs and improvements.
- Employ a comprehensive media outreach plan that includes press releases, newsletters, a project website, and use of social media.
- Use mail and email databases to maximize public outreach.

### 2.1 Outreach Events

The MPO will conduct various outreach events, including public workshops, community meetings, electronic town halls, and a formal public hearing, to inform and gather input from the public. A **Speakers Bureau Program** will be used to develop appropriate PowerPoint and other presentation materials, train speakers, contact groups, arrange presentations, and coordinate speakers and logistics. A database system will be used throughout plan development to track events and participation.

#### 2.1.1 Public Workshops

Public workshops may be held at key points during the transportation planning process. Public workshops will allow participants to review project materials, discuss specific concerns/issues with facilitators, and

ask questions. The workshops will include display tables highlighting various elements of the plan and may include a time-certain presentation.

### **2.1.2 Community Meetings and Events**

- Presentations to Community Groups and other Stakeholders: Presentations on the transportation planning process and key elements of the LRTP will be provided to community groups such as homeowners associations and civic organizations, as well as local governments, business groups, and other stakeholder groups as appropriate.
- Community Events: Staff will participate in community events by setting up a display table, distributing informational materials, and interacting with interested event participants.

### **2.1.3 Electronic Town Halls & Online Collaboration**

- eTownHalls: Two eTownHalls will provide an opportunity to reach out to thousands of Pinellas County households in real-time interactive meetings that use the phone, Internet, and television. Through the eTownHalls, the MPO will provide information at key points in the LRTP development process via the telephone, Internet, and public television. The public will have the opportunity to ask questions and provide comments over the phone or through an online blog. A panel of speakers will respond to some of the questions during the eTownHall and the MPO will follow-up on the remaining questions afterward.
- Online Collaboration: The MPO will use the Mindmixer online collaboration platform ([www.TellUsPinellas.com](http://www.TellUsPinellas.com)) to provide an ongoing forum throughout the LRTP development process for the public to provide input and receive feedback on various components of the LRTP.

### **2.1.4 MPO Committee and Public Agency Meetings**

- MPO Committees: The MPO's Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC), Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC), Pedestrian Transportation Advisory Committee (PTAC), Local Coordinating Board (LCB), School Transportation Safety Committee (STSC), and Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (ITS) will review and provide input various components of the LRTP throughout the planning process.

- Public Agency Meetings: The MPO will obtain input from the local jurisdictions and regional planning partners (PSTA, PPC, FDOT, TBARTA, CCC, and the other MPOs in FDOT District Seven) on needs and transportation improvements identified for the LRTP.

### **2.1.5 Formal Public Hearing**

A Public Hearing to adopt the 2040 LRTP will be scheduled for a Pinellas MPO Board meeting.

## **2.2 Communication and Distribution Tools**

A set of communication tools has been identified to disseminate information about the transportation planning process and the LRTP.

### **2.2.1 Website**

A project website will be created and maintained for the 2040 LRTP. This website will provide information and updates regarding the development of the LRTP. It will allow users to access information, complete surveys, and provide input.

### **2.2.2 Project Informational Materials**

At the outset, a project fact sheet will be developed to provide project information and a summary of the planning process as related to the 2040 LRTP. At least one additional fact sheet will be developed to focus on specific areas of the plan. Maps and informational materials for a tabletop display board will be created. These informational materials will be distributed/used at community events and meetings.

### **2.2.3 Newsletters**

Three traditional and electronic newsletters will be prepared and distributed to engage and inform the public about the LRTP Update process in addition to other MPO news.

### **2.2.4 Social Media**

Social Media platforms such as LinkedIn, FaceBook, Twitter, and YouTube may be used to provide information as milestones are reached in the planning process, to disseminate surveys, and to obtain feedback from the public on transportation needs and proposed improvements.

### **2.2.5 Pinellas County Television (PCTV)**

The MPO will provide information on the LRTP development process and key elements of the plan through Pinellas County government public access television (PCTV). eTownHalls will also be broadcast through PCTV.

### **2.2.6 Mailing List**

Comprehensive traditional and electronic mailing lists will be developed including various stakeholders in the transportation planning process. Newsletters, surveys, and other information about the project will be distributed through the mailing lists. The stakeholders will include:

- Interagency professionals
- Elected and appointed officials
- MPO Committee members
- Civic organizations, homeowners associations, and business groups
- Groups representing underserved populations
- Transportation agencies
- Members of the community who want to receive project updates

### **2.2.7 Ads**

Public workshops will be advertised through the Tampa Bay Times newspaper, the MPO and project website, public television, and other outlets as appropriate.

### **2.2.8 Press Releases**

Press releases will be sent to all media outlets in the county with meeting and workshop announcements.

### **2.2.9 Teaming with Planning Partners**

The MPO will team with local and regional planning partners to disseminate project and public meeting information related to the LRTP through their newsletters, websites, community events, and other communication tools as appropriate.

## **2.3 Surveys**

Surveys will be developed and utilized to obtain the public's opinion about current and future transportation needs and the best way to prioritize public funds for future transportation improvements. Surveys will also capture limited demographic information about respondents (i.e., age range, zip code, etc). Both traditional and online surveys will be used and will be advertised through the project newsletter, the project website,

the MPO committees, the MPO's email list, public workshops, community meetings, and other public events where information on the LRTP is displayed or provided. Respondents may return the survey at the public workshops/community events or by mail, fax, email, or drop boxes placed at libraries and other public locations.

## **2.4 Focus Groups**

Eight focus groups will be utilized to obtain ideas and observe public reactions to specific plan elements such as transportation needs, travel modes, and funding options.

## **2.5 Outreach to Minorities and the Traditionally Underserved**

The MPO recognizes that some members of the public, such as populations with lower income, the elderly, the young, minorities, and those with disabilities may face obstacles when trying to participate in typical public outreach activities and transportation decision making. For example, some may not have access to the Internet or transportation to attend meeting and workshops. Others may be disabled and face challenges associated with visual, mobility, or hearing impairments. The MPO will provide opportunities for participation with a wide variety of tools and settings. In addition, the MPO will conduct targeted outreach in traditionally underserved communities and will work to make meetings and materials accessible.

## **2.6 Branding of the LRTP**

Branding will be used to convey the messages of the LRTP in a visually appealing and conspicuous manner. The 2040 LRTP will be branded as the Pinellas Transportation Plan (PTP) for public outreach purposes. An associated design motif for the 2040 LRTP will be used throughout the LRTP website, newsletters, and other project materials.

## **2.7 Visualization**

Visualization techniques will help convey information about the LRTP development process and the contents of the LRTP to the public in an easy to understand format that supports the text. Information provided in the LRTP, newsletters, website, and other documents will be accompanied by maps, graphics and photographs to highlight key points and convey the messages of the LRTP. Visualization techniques that will be used include:

- Maps of project locations and transportation services
- Photographs of various transportation improvements, transit vehicle types, and the community
- Renderings of light rail transit and potential station areas
- GIS mapping of demographic and socioeconomic conditions

- Displays of existing and proposed transportation conditions and improvements as well as future land use and transportation scenarios

## **2.8 Public Outreach Tracking**

A database will allow for tracking of public outreach activities, participation levels, comments received on the plan, and any official staff responses to comments received.