

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION for transportation planning in the Baltimore region **PLAN**

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PURPOSE

of the Public Participation Plan

The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) seeks to provide an open process that offers reasonable access to information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions and support for early and continued involvement of stakeholders in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

There are two intended audiences for the Public Participation Plan.

First, the Public Participation Plan serves as a guidebook for the public as to how and when they can engage in the regional transportation planning and decision-making process.

Second, the Public Participation Plan clearly outlines the policies and procedures for those responsible for engaging the public in the regional planning process. That is, BRTB members, subcommittee members and planning staff.

The Public Participation Plan is organized into several sections

Public Involvement Policies

This section outlines the process and procedures the BRTB will follow when conducting public involvement. It includes such topics as how members of the public can submit comments, what the BRTB will do with the comments it receives, when public meetings or comment periods will be held, and how members of the public can find out how to get involved.

Strategies for Outreach, Education & Engagement

The tools and techniques used to educate and engage the public in the regional transportation planning process.

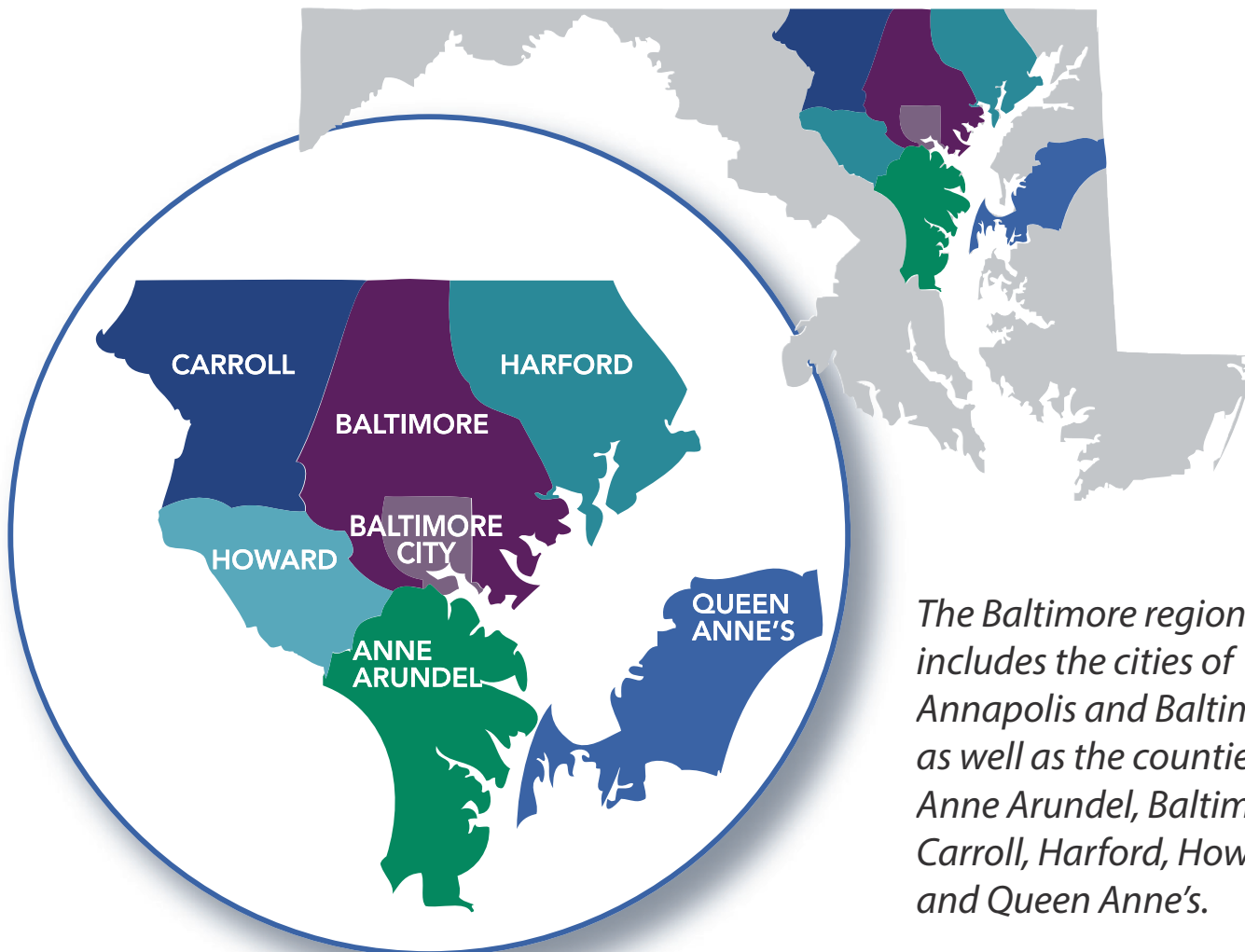
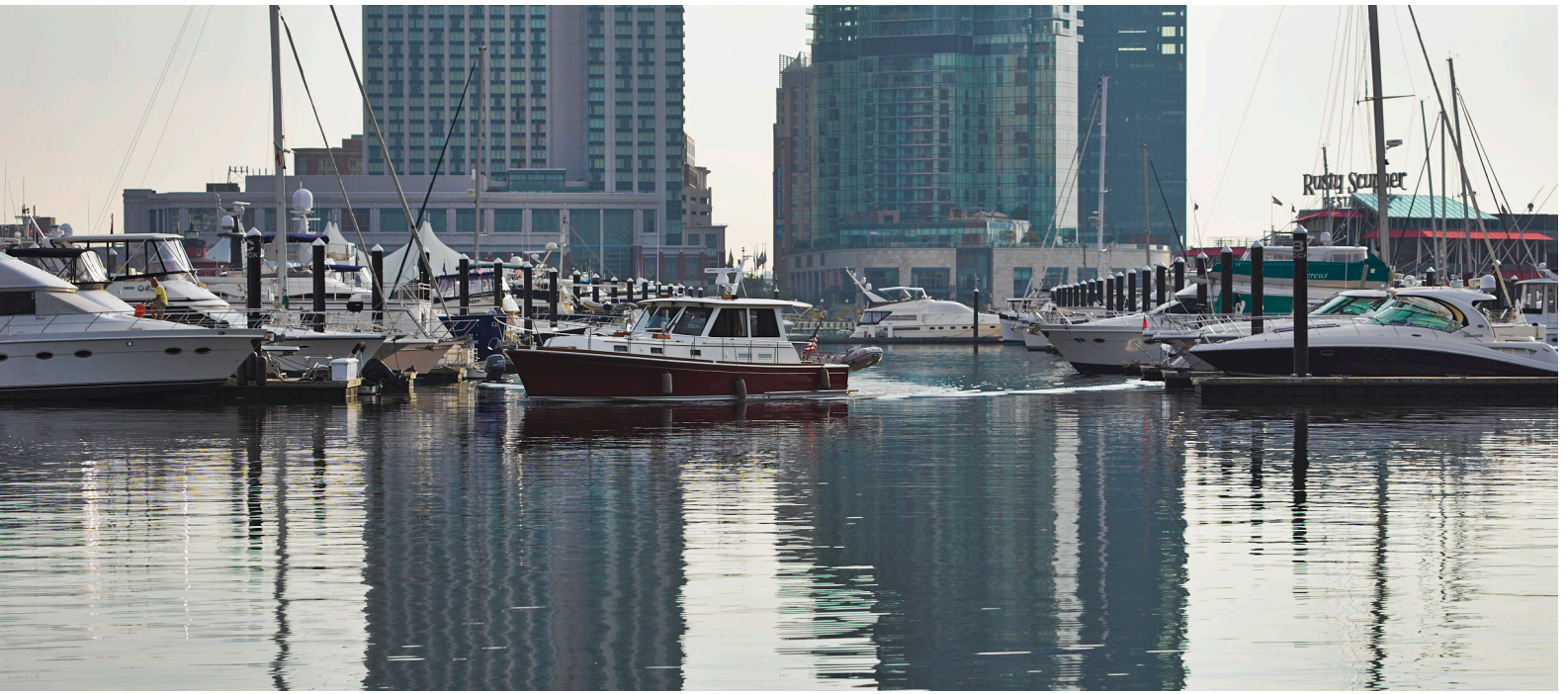
Evaluation

The tools used to measure both the quantity and quality of interactions with the public.

Additional Resources

Information and links to more information on the transportation planning process and related federal regulations.





The Baltimore region includes the cities of Annapolis and Baltimore, as well as the counties of Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Harford, Howard, and Queen Anne's.

ABOUT US

Baltimore Regional Transportation Board



The BRTB is the federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Baltimore region.

As an MPO, the BRTB is directly responsible for making sure that any federal funding approved for transportation projects and programs is based on a continuing, cooperative and comprehensive (3-C) planning process. Transportation projects and programs that receive federal transportation funding in our region go through this planning process. Public engagement is a key part of this process.

What is the BRTB responsible for?

The BRTB brings together the region's decision-makers, government agencies, interested parties and members of the public to examine and plan for the region's future.

To meet its mission, the BRTB develops long-range transportation plans and short-range transportation programs, as well as a report that details the impact of these proposed transportation investments on the region's air quality.

The BRTB also develops a work program and budget called the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP serves as a basis for the development of the ongoing short- and long-range transportation plans, as well as the related air quality analysis, through key tasks such as: congestion management, multi-modal planning, monitoring system performance, travel simulation tools and public participation. The UPWP usually includes consultant tasks supporting regional initiatives.

In addition, the BRTB has a number of subcommittees and advisory groups that focus on specific technical and policy areas. These currently include groups that focus on topics such as freight, bicycle and pedestrian access, traffic incident management, air quality and more.

All meetings of the BRTB and subcommittees are open to the public.

Who serves on the BRTB?

The BRTB members represent:

- Annapolis
- Anne Arundel County
- Baltimore City
- Baltimore County
- Carroll County
- Harford County
- Howard County
- Queen Anne's County
- Maryland Department of the Environment
- Maryland Department of Planning
- Maryland Department of Transportation
- MDOT Maryland Transit Administration
- A representative of local transit agencies in the region



The BRTB receives staff support through its host agency, the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC). BMC is a nonprofit organization that works with the region's elected executives to identify mutual interests and develop collaborative strategies, plans and programs that will help improve the quality of life and economic vitality. BMC is a resource for the region.

To learn more about the BRTB and the metropolitan planning process, or to see a current calendar of meetings and events, visit www.baltometro.org.



BRTB Meetings

The BRTB holds meetings regularly to discuss current activities and events, as well as vote on key decisions. All BRTB committee meetings are open to the public to attend, and BRTB meetings include an opportunity for public comment.

The COVID-19 Pandemic upended traditional in-person committee meetings. While there will always be a virtual option for the public to join the BRTB or any of its subcommittee meetings, those interested should check the BMC website to see if committee meetings will also be held in-person. Many meetings will be entirely virtual, while some will have in-person opportunities.

To learn more about the BRTB and the metropolitan planning process, or to see a current calendar of meetings and events, visit www.baltometro.org or our engagement hub on [publicinput](#).

POLICIES & PRINCIPLES

for Public Involvement

Public participation is an essential part of a meaningful transportation planning process that helps the BRTB comply with federal requirements and goals. Further, the BRTB affirms that it is important to ask for public participation, not just wait for it. Thus, the BRTB seeks to engage people and organizations early and often using a variety of methods.

The BRTB's public involvement program is guided by the following principles:

Provide adequate and timely public notice for key decisions

It is critical that members of the public are informed in a timely manner of key upcoming decisions. This information will be provided in plain language that enables members of the public to find, understand and use information they need or are asked to review.

Offer public access to the decision-making process

It is vital that members of the public are provided reasonable access to the information necessary for meaningful participation in the decision-making process. Meetings will be open to the public and include opportunities for public comment when applicable.

Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input

It is essential to respect and seriously consider input that is received, not just collect it.

Educate members of the public about transportation issues and engage them in the regional transportation planning process

Informing and educating the public about transportation planning issues and the transportation planning process is key to obtaining good quality public input. In addition, BMC staff engage the public in a number of outreach campaigns on topics such as pedestrian and bicyclist safety, air quality and clean commuting options such as biking to work, ridesharing and teleworking.

Involve persons and groups typically under-represented in transportation decision-making or with special transportation needs

Effective transportation planning must include the perspectives of those whose everyday lives are critically affected by how they are able to get to work, home, school, stores and services. Particular emphasis will be placed on involving persons and groups typically under-represented in transportation planning such as those with special transportation needs, including people with disabilities, low-income, minority and elderly populations.

Improve upon the public involvement process through periodic evaluation

Members of the public will be involved in providing periodic feedback on the public involvement process.

Federal law and planning regulations also guide the regional public involvement process. See pages 24-25 for more information about these regulations.

WHO WE SEEK TO CONSULT

in the public involvement process

Federal regulations related to planning, environmental justice and civil rights cite specific “Interested Parties” that are to be consulted and engaged in the metropolitan transportation planning process. These groups are listed below.

- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation services
- Private providers of transportation
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- Representatives of people with disabilities
- Limited English proficient persons
- Low-Income communities
- Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color
- Travel and tourism agencies
- Officials responsible for natural disaster risk reduction
- Public Ports
- Other interested parties (Individuals, affected public agencies, etc.)



In order to achieve widespread engagement and consultation, the BRTB has identified a number of additional groups to include in the process when possible. These groups are listed below.

- Affordable housing groups
- Business groups
- Civic organizations
- Civil rights organizations
- Community & economic development organizations
- Commuters
- Environmental groups
- Environmental justice organizations
- Individuals with low literacy
- Public health organizations
- Religious organizations
- Neighborhood/Homeowner Associations
- Organizations focused on aging
- Social service organizations (veterans, homeless, mental health, etc.)
- Workforce Development agencies
- Youth

BMC staff maintains an extensive list of individuals and organizations who have expressed an interest or who have participated in previous transportation planning efforts. To be added to the list, please contact the Public Involvement Coordinator at comments@baltometro.org or 410-732-0500 or, visit www.baltometro.org and sign up for our mailing lists.

HAVING YOUR SAY

Policies and Procedures for Public Comments

The BRTB encourages public comments and seeks to provide members of the public with a variety of ways to voice their opinions and share their ideas.

Public Comment Periods

Public comment periods provide a key opportunity for members of the public to share their thoughts and ideas.

A public comment period of at least 45 days will be held for the Public Participation Plan.

A comment period of at least 30 days will be held for the following:

[Unified Planning Work Programs](#)

[Federal Certification Reviews](#)

[Long-range Transportation Plan \(LRTPs\)](#)

[Short-range Transportation Improvement Program \(TIPs\)](#)

[Air Quality Conformity Determinations](#)

Amendments

Any project proposed for the TIP or LRTP that requires a new regional emissions analysis triggers a 30-day public review and public meeting. All amendments, regardless of 30-day review, will go to the BRTB Technical Committee and BRTB for consideration and approval. Project information will be made available for public review 5 weeks prior to a BRTB vote. The Executive Committee will review and approve Administrative Modifications (minor amendments). A list of all TIP actions is posted on the BMC website.

Comments received on these documents will be considered and compiled as part of the public record.

The BRTB, in consultation with "Interested Parties," will review all of the plans listed above at least every 4 years and update as necessary. To better inform the BRTB, other documents or projects may also be made available for public comment.

Information necessary for the public to understand and comment will be released to the public for review. This includes items such as a readable, public-friendly executive summary, information posted on our website and/or in printable flier format, detailed project sheets or reports, and links to project or sponsor websites for comprehensive information.

To allow sufficient time for the BRTB to review and respond to comments, efforts will be made to close comment periods at least 14 days before a BRTB vote on these items. If additional time is needed, the BRTB will consider modifying the voting schedule to allow further time to review and incorporate comments.



WE INFORM THE PUBLIC THROUGH



Notification of Public Comment Periods

The BRTB seeks to provide the public with timely notice of and convenient access to information about the transportation planning process.

All public documents related to the development of transportation plans are made available on the BMC's website (www.baltometro.org), and may be available for review at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council's office at 1500 Whetstone Way, Baltimore MD 21230, or by mail on request.

Comment periods are announced in a variety of methods, including:

- The BMC website.
- Press releases sent to local media outlets and posted online.
- Posts shared on social media channels including but not limited to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and LinkedIn.
- Announcements distributed through various e-newsletters.
- Advertisements placed in a variety of outlets depending on the project, plan and/or target audience.

HAVING YOUR SAY

How to submit comments

The BRTB encourages public comments and invites members of the public to voice their opinions and share their ideas through a variety of methods.

Written comments are preferred, as this helps the BRTB provide more thorough responses and keep more accurate records of public involvement.

Anyone in need of assistance submitting a comment should contact the Public Involvement Coordinator by phone at 410-732-0500 or by email at comments@baltometro.org.

All comments must be received by the close of the comment period. Visit www.baltometro.org or call 410-732-0500 for a current comment period schedule.

Please share comments using any of the following methods:

- **Mail:** Comments may be submitted to The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board, 1500 Whetstone Way, Suite 300, Baltimore, MD 21230.
- **Online:** Comments may be submitted through project pages on BMC's PublicInput Engagement Hub (publicinput.com/Portal/J5348)
- **Email:** Comments may be submitted to comments@baltometro.org or through a unique project email found through public input.
- **Voicemail:** Comments may be submitted at 855-925-2801, using a project code found through PublicInput or on request.
- **Text:** Comments may be submitted to a unique project number found through PublicInput or on request.
- **Social media:** Comments may be submitted through direct messages to BRTB-affiliated accounts, or by using #BRTBListens in posts or comments.
- **Meetings:** Members of the public can also make comments at monthly BRTB meetings or scheduled public meetings.





Commenting Through Social Media



The BRTB understands the value and importance of reaching the public through a variety of means, including social media. The BRTB currently maintains various social media channels to share information, engage members of the public and collect comments.

Comments received via social media will be shared with the BRTB if they are submitted within the timeframe of a public comment period, relate to a BRTB action item open for public comment, and meet at least one of the following additional criteria:

- Direct messaged to a BRTB-affiliated account
- Posted with the #BRTBListens hashtag

Please note:

- The BRTB may use additional hashtags (or other appropriate metadata tools) to reach a wider audience or collect comments on specific projects or plans.
- Comment threads responding to an initial post or comment which includes the #BRTBListens hashtag may be reviewed by the BRTB at its discretion.
- The BRTB and BMC will maintain an in-house Social Media Policy which clearly outlines the best practices and procedures for integrating social media in the public involvement process.
 - Comments which include profanity, hate speech, targeted harassment, misinformation, lewdness, incitement of violence or any other content which violates the BMC/BRTB's Social Media Policy will not be accepted and may be deleted, reported or otherwise addressed at the BRTB's discretion.
 - The Social Media Policy and its application to the BRTB's public engagement processes is subject to change at the BRTB's discretion.



Follow Us On Social Media!

@BaltimoreMetropolitanCouncil

@BaltoMetroCo

@BMoreInvolved



GETTING INVOLVED

Guidelines for BRTB public meetings and events

In accordance with BRTB Bylaws and federal guidance, public meetings and events of the BRTB will:

- Be governed by the Maryland Open Meetings Act and the Maryland Public Information Act. Some portions of meetings may be closed to discuss sensitive budget, finance, personnel or homeland security issues. The minutes and materials presented to the BRTB shall be public record and shall be available for review at a place determined by the BRTB.
- Be announced on the BMC website no less than 14 calendar days prior to the meeting date.
 - Every attempt shall be made to adhere to the fourteen (14) calendar day public notice to all other meetings of the BRTB, including meetings of BRTB committees, subcommittees and task forces, with the exception of the Executive Committee.
- Be listed and shared in alternative formats upon request for those without access to the BMC website.
- Allow for public comment regarding all aspects of the transportation planning process.
- Include opportunities for BRTB members to listen to and discuss public comments, when possible.
- Be held at convenient and accessible locations and times, with virtual as well as in-person options which may be held at various locations throughout the region to reach the widest audience and encourage participation among the diverse population in the Baltimore region.
- Include a call-in number and live transcription for virtual meetings.
- Be scheduled at various times, including evenings and weekends to maximize participation.
- Be accessible to persons with disabilities.
 - Additional accommodations for people with disabilities may be provided on an as-needed basis, if requested 7 days in advance. BMC staff maintains a list of resources for auxiliary aids and services.
- If in person, be held in locations that are convenient to public transit and/or traditionally underserved communities as often as possible.
- When feasible, be conducted using technologies such as virtual public meetings, webinars, conference calls, etc. and share recordings online.
- When possible, not be scheduled to coincide with significant civil, religious and cultural holidays.





Get a current calendar of meetings and events at baltometro.org

Public Participation at BRTB Meetings



The BRTB holds meetings regularly to discuss current activities and events, as well as vote on key decisions.

An opportunity for members of the public to address the BRTB on issues related to the transportation planning process is provided at the beginning of each meeting with up to three minutes allowed for each individual or five minutes per organization. Should any major issues arise that require additional time, it will be at the discretion of the Chair to take appropriate action to extend the time limit. The BRTB also allows public comment on any action item.

Guidelines for testimony before any meeting of the BRTB were created to ensure that every member of the public has the opportunity to be heard.

Making Public Comments at BRTB Meetings: A Brief How-To Guide

This how-to guide gives you a series of questions that will help you determine if making comments at BRTB meetings is your most effective strategy for getting your message heard, and will give you hints about how to make the most impact.

BRTB Public Testimony Rules and Procedures

These guidelines for testimony before any meeting of the Baltimore Regional Transportation Board were created to ensure that every person has the opportunity to be heard.

How Your Comments Will Be Used

The BRTB values meaningful public engagement, and will therefore follow this process for all comments submitted during a comment period:

- All BRTB members will receive a copy of the comments prior to taking action.
- All organizations/individuals who submit a comment and include their contact information will receive a response to their comment.
- Every effort is made to send a response to the author prior to a final vote on the action item.
- Comments received using the methods detailed above are documented as part of the public record.
- BMC staff is responsible for coordinating a response to comments with project sponsors and BRTB members in a timely manner.

ACCESS FOR ALL

The BRTB values the diversity within the region, as well as the importance of full and fair participation in the transportation decision-making process by those individuals and groups who have been traditionally underserved.

To ensure the public is aware of the BRTB's commitment to ensuring access for all, the following notice will be placed on BRTB agendas and meeting announcements (flyers, advertisements, etc.):

The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board (BRTB) operates its programs and services without regard to race, color, or national origin in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and other applicable laws.

BMC offers interpretation services, including language translation services and signage for the hearing impaired, at public meetings upon request with seven days advance notice. BMC will not exclude persons based on age, religion, or disability. For assistance, contact the Public Involvement Coordinator, comments@baltometro.org, or call 410-732-0500.

Dial 7-1-1 or 800-735-2258 to initiate a TTY call through Maryland Relay. Usuarios de Relay MD marquen 7-1-1

Si se necesita información de Título VI en español, llame al 410-732-0500.

This notice will also be shared in e-newsletters, on websites, and if space allows, via social media.

The BRTB is compliant with federal laws relating to the Americans with Disabilities Act, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority & Low Income Populations, Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency and Executive Order 13985: Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government. For more information about these laws, see page 24.

In addition, the BRTB has a non-discrimination policy and complaint procedure under Title VI. See www.baltometro.org/non-discrimination for details.

Electronically Accessible Formats

Public information is made available, as appropriate, in electronically accessible formats (including the internet). Upon request, all documents available to the public are available in alternative formats for people with disabilities.

The BMC website is also designed to meet the standards set forth in Section 508 of the US Rehabilitation Act to ensure accessibility and usability. Efforts are also made to improve access to the site as technology needs and use change.

Online Translation Tool

In an effort to make information on the BMC website accessible to as many people as possible, an online translation tool has been incorporated into the site. Currently, the free service powered by Google Translate, allows users to choose from over 100 languages. The translation service is available on each page of the BMC website. Additional translation services are also available for those who request assistance by calling 410-732-0500 or emailing comments@baltometro.org.

STRATEGIES FOR OUTREACH, EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

These strategies can enhance public involvement for a specific activity or assist the BRTB in meeting specific public involvement goals. Staff review and modify these strategies on an ongoing basis. Those that best increase outreach, education and involvement are continued. Those that do not are changed or discontinued.

Baltometro.org

The core tool used by the BRTB to disseminate information is this website, operated by the Baltimore Metropolitan Council. This includes information on the transportation planning process, public involvement, emergency preparedness, commuter options, air quality and activities such as socioeconomic and travel demand forecasting. The site also includes a calendar of events, links to agendas, minutes and draft documents under review, and an extensive library of electronic documents produced by the BRTB. Opportunities for the public to provide input and formal comments are also featured on the website.



Visualization techniques

Information published will incorporate images, photos, graphics and other means of visually describing transportation issues and alternatives as a strategy for promoting public understanding of the material being presented. These approaches are consistent with the federal requirements to employ “visualization” techniques to describe plans.



Follow Us On Social Media!

@BaltimoreMetropolitanCouncil

@BaltoMetroCo

@BMoreInvolved

E-Newsletters and Social Media

BMC staff, on behalf of the BRTB, periodically produces a number of publications including B'More Involved and other emails to interested parties. These publications are designed to provide readers with helpful information on transportation and regional planning efforts, equity, upcoming events and other opportunities for involvement. The purpose is to encourage awareness and participation at the regional, state and local levels.

Information is also shared on social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Instagram.

For a full list of current publications and social media, visit www.baltometro.org.



OUTREACH TO TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

Seek out/build relationships with traditionally underserved community leaders and non-traditional participants

Identify and meet with organizations and community leaders who represent traditionally underserved populations. The purpose is to build relationships and earn trust with groups and leaders as well as identify strategies to bring traditional non-participants into the planning process.

BMC staff has developed a mapping tool called the [Vulnerable Population Index \(VPI\)](#) that can be used in the analysis and evaluation of transportation plans and programs, as well as to guide outreach activities.

The VPI uses census data to identify seven vulnerable populations in the region: People in poverty, Hispanic/Latino, Non-Hispanic and Non-White Minorities, Limited English Proficiency (LEP), People with disabilities, the elderly, and Car-less households. This data was added to maps and compiled so that concentrations of vulnerable populations in the region can be identified.

The mapping tool is used with local jurisdictions and community partners to identify individuals, organizations and communities representative of these vulnerable populations in each jurisdiction. These include neighborhood and main street associations, community-based organizations, faith-based institutions, housing associations, nonprofits, etc. This information allows staff to reach out to these groups and help ensure their voice is heard in the regional planning process.

Staff will intentionally seek out and work to build relationships with residents, organizations and community leaders in traditionally underserved communities throughout the region.

Techniques to do this include:

- Person-to-person outreach at locations such as transit stations, grocery and discount stores, flea and farmers markets, laundromats, local food gatherings (ex: volunteer fire department breakfasts, church suppers), community concerts, and cultural festivals.
- Coordinate with government agencies to conduct outreach at health care centers, food banks and food stamp offices, schools, offices on aging, post offices, etc.
- Form relationships with faith-based institutions, cultural centers, community-based organizations that work with immigrants, etc.
- Conduct surveys and focus groups with individuals and organizations/agencies that work with traditionally underserved individuals.
- Distribute flyers and surveys in food distribution boxes
- Advertise in local ethnic and minority media outlets
- Share information with local organizations working on issues related to environmental justice and equity.

Produce and distribute print documents

Produce and distribute documents such as newsletters, white papers and fact sheets to include timely information on targeted topics related to transportation planning and public participation activities. Share these online and make them available in print or alternative formats.

Maintain contact lists

Maintain contact lists to include current and potential stakeholders. Periodically review and update these lists.

Develop an outreach and education program

Produce such materials as pamphlets, brochures and workshop outlines that can be used in various presentations and for distribution. Some of the materials should target non-traditional participants. Periodically review and update materials.



Publicize BRTB activities

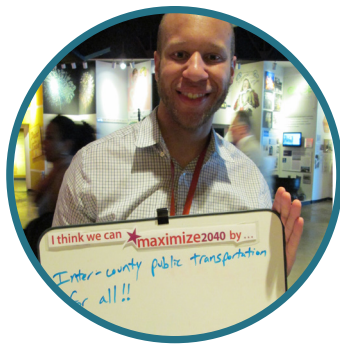
Create and maintain a media strategy to publicize BRTB activities through B'More Involved, the BMC website, newsletters and other media. Provide media with periodic updates of BRTB activities as well as press releases to announce public comment periods for major transportation planning products and activities.

Partner with others that influence/conduct outreach

Create and maintain partnerships with a wide range of outreach professionals, community groups, jurisdictions and agencies. Utilize these resources to publicize activities and events to reach a broader audience and/or take a leadership role in public participation efforts in their area.

Build relationships with stakeholders

Build relationships with stakeholders to maintain a dialogue on transportation and to garner continued interest.



Meet in convenient and accessible locations for optimal attendance

Hold in-person meetings, activities and other public involvement events at various geographic locations at which the targeted populations congregate including community centers, fairs and festivals, churches and other popular destinations. Meetings located near transit lines are most accessible.

Conduct interactive and informational workshops

Host workshops on specific transportation planning topics or general processes. Provide opportunities for comment through interactive discussions, comment sheets and/or verbal comments.

Use interactive activities, games, tours, and other techniques to illustrate and discuss transportation issues, projects, and needs in a meeting setting.

Hold open houses

Present information at tables and exhibits around the room with no fixed agenda or formal presentation. Provide opportunity for involvement through interactive exhibits, exercises, comment sheets and/or verbal comments

Hold public meetings

Provide information and a setting for formal public comment or discussion at various steps in the planning process. These meetings will be held virtually or at various locations throughout the region and will be scheduled at various times, including evenings and weekends to maximize participation by a wide-range of stakeholders, including those traditionally underserved.

Sponsor webinars or webcasts of meetings

In order to reach a greater number of people, the BRTB will, to the extent possible, employ internet-based technologies such as webcasts and webinars to share information and gather input from a wider range of participants. Online trainings on various topics of interest to stakeholders, local organizations and regional planning partners may be held. Speakers may be invited to share information on best practices from around the country or current topics of interest to the region.

Create Videos and Recorded Presentations

Create videos that summarize comment periods or present detailed information in easily-digestible and visually-appealing formats. Post videos on YouTube or project websites to offer the public alternative ways of learning about the planning process.



Advertise opportunities for involvement

Use a variety of outreach methods to reach out to the public and notify opportunities to be engaged in the process. Advertising techniques could include:

- Placing print and online advertisements or notices in area newspapers, including the region's major English-language, Spanish-language and/or minority-community publications.
- Placing posters or fliers on transit vehicles, in an effort to reach transit-dependent populations and other transit riders.
- Sending fliers and a print copy of the document to a number of area libraries and/or government office(s) in each jurisdiction with a request that the documents be displayed.
- Distributing radio or TV announcements.
- Sharing information via direct mail.

Maintain and promote a speaker's bureau

Maintain a speaker's bureau and a set of standard presentations about the MPO process and other relevant topics. Train BRTB members, staff and other volunteers to present information to educate a variety of organizations, businesses and other groups.

Conduct surveys and focus groups

Gather information on people's perceptions, preferences and practices via surveys. Conduct small group discussions to gather perspectives, insights and opinions on a single topic.



EVALUATION

Best practice methods of communicating with the public are continuously identified and implemented when possible. The BRTB, with BMC staff support, also periodically reviews the effectiveness of its public participation program and techniques. A variety of tools are used in an effort to measure both quantity and quality of interactions with the public. Evaluation results are used to modify methods as appropriate in order to maximize effectiveness.

Performance Measures for Public Involvement

A Transportation Research Board (TRB) project for the National Cooperative Highway Research Program (NCHRP) on Measuring the Effectiveness of Public Involvement found that there are six key indicators important to the success of a community engagement effort (Brown et al., 20192). These are:

1. **Influence and Impact:** Public feedback has an impact on the project decisions and ensures that organizations are not just eliciting feedback from the public as part of a “checklist.”
2. **Transparency and Clarity:** Trust of government agencies has increased or improved as a result of the public involvement processes, and agencies were appropriately transparent about the project.
3. **Timing:** Public involvement started early enough and was of sufficient length and frequency to be valuable.
4. **Inclusion:** Public involvement was inclusive and representative of all targeted and affected populations.
5. **Targeted Engagement:** Public involvement included locations relevant to the targeted and affected populations.
6. **Accessibility:** Public involvement activities used multiple methods for participation.



In order to gauge the effectiveness of its public involvement efforts, the BRTB focuses on two main areas of evaluation:

1. The process and tools used to implement the Public Participation Plan, and
2. The outcome of public participation.

These evaluation techniques include the following:

1. Surveys or Polls

Surveys and polls provide important feedback on a variety of topics, including the readability of information distributed; usefulness of public meetings or events; usefulness of techniques utilized, etc. Surveys will be developed to evaluate the effectiveness of the goals for public involvement as seen on page 7. Staff will use feedback to review public involvement practices and policies.

Examples of the types of surveys that can be utilized are listed below.

- **During comment period to gather input** – Staff make surveys available via website, e-newsletters, etc. to provide the public an easy way to submit comments or register support/opposition to a plan or project. Poll attendees of public meetings to determine if questions were answered adequately.
- **After a comment period or major planning activity** – Staff send out a survey within 30 days to individuals/organizations who submitted comments/questions or attended a meeting. This will allow the BRTB to obtain feedback from participants about the information provided, the ease of submitting

comments, etc. In addition, a general interest survey is available in an effort to obtain feedback from those who did participate in order to identify any barriers to participation or opportunities for improvement.

- **Public Involvement Survey** – Staff send out periodic surveys to gauge familiarity with the BRTB, effectiveness of current outreach techniques, suggestions for improvement, etc.

2. Evaluation of Outreach Tools

There are a number of different performance measures that can be used when implementing the Public Participation Plan. Examples are listed below:

Tool	Sample Evaluation Measure
Press Releases	Number of press releases distributed, opened (online), and published
Mailings	Number of pieces sent and number returned
E-newsletters	Number of e-newsletters sent and opened; click-through rate for links
Advertisements (Online)	Number of impressions; click-through rate
Advertisements (Print)	Number in circulation, percent of readership, number of readers per copy
Website	Number of hits, visitors, percent change in visitors before/after outreach initiative
Survey	Number of surveys sent; percent completed
Public Meeting / Event	Number of attendees; percent of affected community members at meeting Number of individuals notified; number attended; percent found meeting helpful Quality and relevance of comments submitted or questions asked
Mailing List	Number of names and contact information in our database
Outreach	Number of presentations made to outside organizations Number of festivals and events attended

In addition to these outputs, the BRTB will measure outcomes. New USDOT guidance on meaningful public engagement outlines the following: Outcomes describe the changes in the planning process resulting from the outputs of an engagement activity. Outcome metrics include: • Whether the participants felt they had adequate notice of a public engagement activity • Whether participants felt their input was valued in the process • Tracking how public input was used • Whether public input affected the resulting planning documents. Outcomes can be evaluated using a combination of both opinions and facts.

3. Staff Debriefings

After comment periods or events, staff will meet to discuss performance measures and evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to engage members of the public. This ongoing tool is useful for reviewing outreach and engagement efforts and developing new strategies or improvements to the process and tools used.

4. Federal Certification Review

In addition, staff also receive an external review of its practices through a federal certification review. Every four years, the U.S. Department of Transportation requires FHWA and FTA conduct an on-site review of the BRTB to certify that the transportation planning process carried out by the BRTB meets federal requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPO). The BRTB is the MPO for the Baltimore region. During this review, members of the public are invited to provide feedback on how the BRTB is doing.





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



[Glossary of Planning Terms](#)

The transportation arena has a language all its own. Navigating your way through the complex web of transportation terminology can be a challenge. So, the BRTB has put together a list of acronyms and commonly used words in transportation planning.

[Public Guide to Transportation Decision-Making](#)

This is a brief guide to the transportation planning and decision making process in the Baltimore metropolitan area and how you can effectively participate in that process.

Federal Laws and Guiding Regulations

[Federal Regulations for Public Involvement](#)

Public involvement in metropolitan transportation planning has long been a federal requirement. Federal law includes a number of specific requirements and performance standards and expectations for state departments of transportation and MPOs during transportation planning. This core set of requirements and performance standards have been amended and reinforced through additional transportation and environmental legislation, and related regulations and orders addressing environmental justice and persons with disabilities.

The BRTB also complies with the following federal laws and executive orders:

[Americans with Disabilities Act](#)

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) is landmark civil rights legislation ensuring equal opportunity for people with disabilities in employment, public accommodations, transportation, state and local government services and communications. The ADA requires coordinating with disabled communities in the development and improvement of transportation services. Individuals with disabilities must also be able to access the sites where public involvement activities occur as well as the information presented.

[Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964](#)

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination based upon race, color or national origin. Specifically, 42 U.S.C. §2000d states that “No person in the United States shall, on the grounds

of race, color or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

[Executive Order 12898 to Address Environmental Justice in Minority & Low Income Populations](#)

Executive Order (EO) 12898: Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority and Low Income Populations – The EO reinforced the requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and focused federal attention on the environmental and human health conditions in minority and low income communities. Further, recent guidance issued by FHWA and FTA emphasizes the importance of considering and addressing environmental justice in all phases of the transportation planning process.

Environmental Justice is the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income. Along the same lines, transportation equity seeks to ensure that the needs of all communities, particularly low-income and minority communities, are addressed in transportation policy and the transportation planning process. Additionally, transportation investments should work to ensure that both the benefits and impacts are distributed fairly.

[Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency](#)

People with limited English proficiency (LEP) are those with a primary or home language other than English. Due to their limited English skills, they must communicate in that primary language if they are to have an equal opportunity to participate effectively in or benefit from any aid, service or benefit in federally funded programs and activities. EO 13166 requires any agency that receives federal funds to make their activities accessible to non-English speaking individuals.

The Baltimore region is a diverse community that includes a wide array of ethnic communities and people, some with limited English proficiency. The BRTB has a plan for outreach and involvement with LEP individuals. This plan includes an analysis to determine language needs of the targeted population. It also includes strategies for announcing meetings, document translation, oral communication and other communication needs during the regional transportation planning process

[Executive Order 13985 – Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government](#)

EO 13985 calls on agencies to advance equity through identifying and addressing barriers to equal opportunity that underserved communities may face due to government policies and programs.

(a) The term “equity” means the consistent and systematic fair, just, and impartial treatment of all individuals, including individuals who belong to underserved communities that have been denied such treatment, such as Black, Latino, and Indigenous and Native American persons, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other persons of color; members of religious minorities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) persons; persons with disabilities; persons who live in rural areas; and persons otherwise adversely affected by persistent poverty or inequality.

(b) The term “underserved communities” refers to populations sharing a particular characteristic, as well as geographic communities, that have been systematically denied a full opportunity to participate in aspects of economic, social, and civic life, as exemplified by the list in the preceding definition of “equity.”



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