

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

**APPROVED  
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**[www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org)**

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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 things as how 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 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.

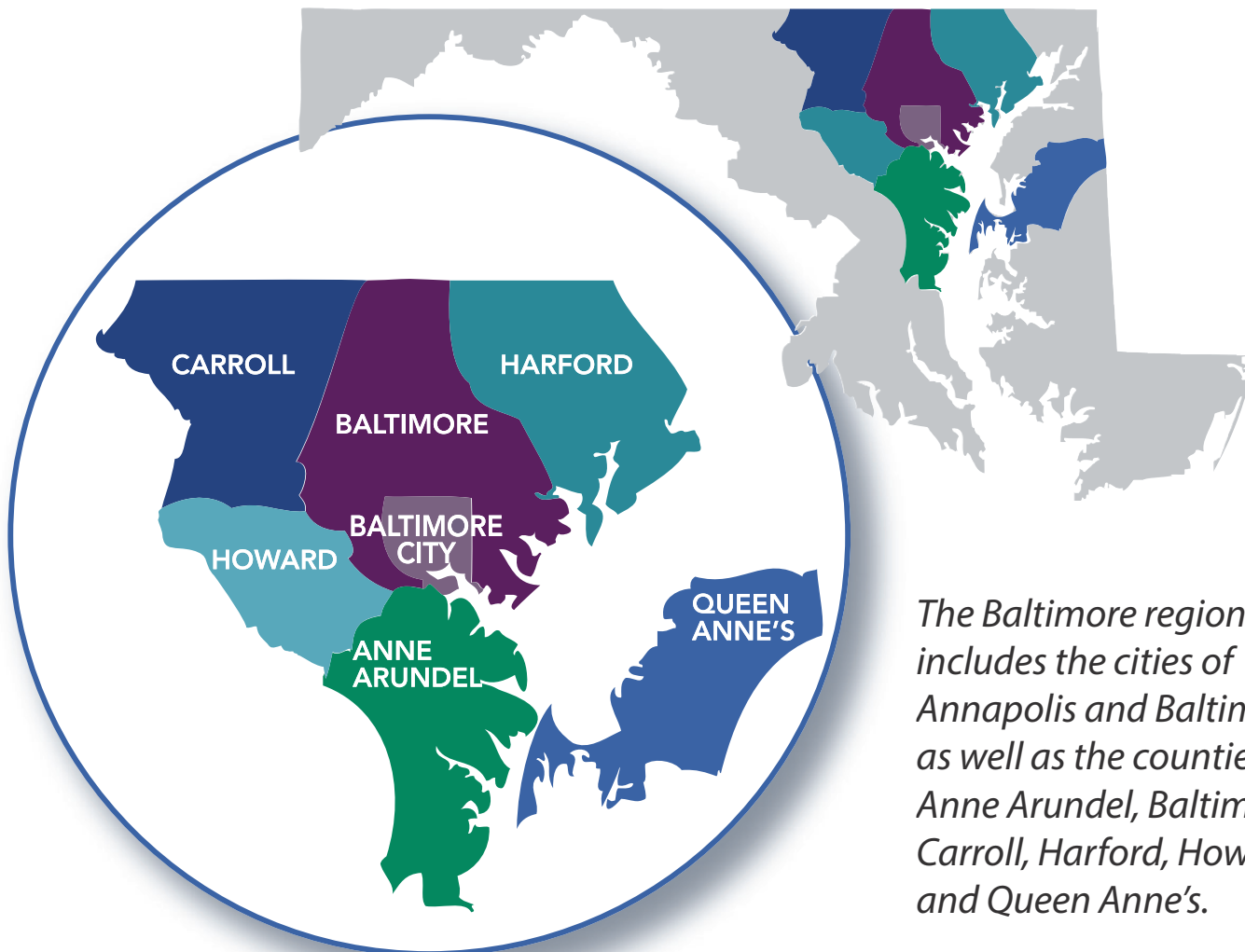
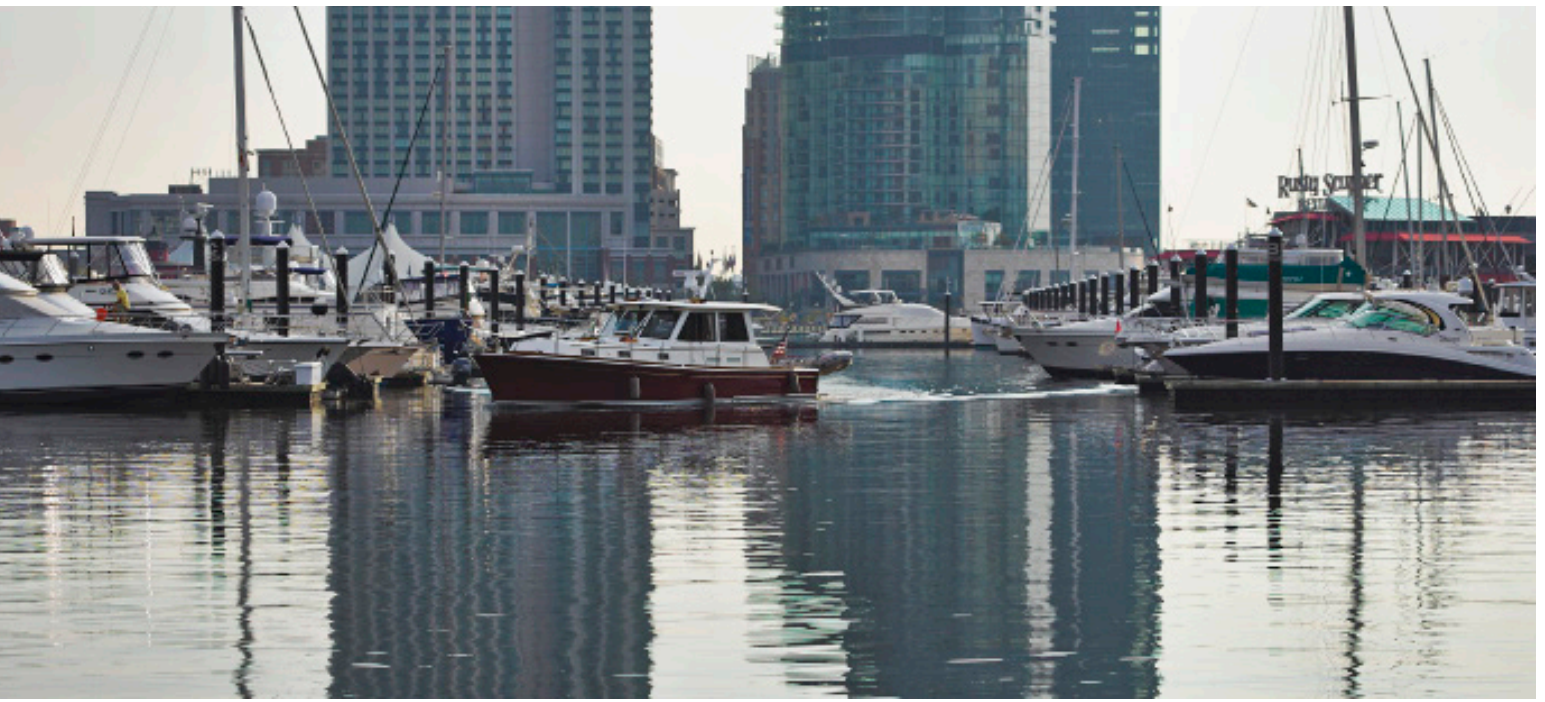
### *Evaluation*

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 planning process and 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 established Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Baltimore region.

As an MPO, the BRTB is directly responsible for making sure that any 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 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 several 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
- Maryland Transit Administration
- Local Transit Agencies



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.

BRTB meetings are generally held at the BMC offices located at [1500 Whetstone Way, Suite 300, Baltimore, MD 21230](https://www.baltimoremetro.org/locations/1500-Whetstone-Way).

To learn more about the BRTB and the metropolitan planning process, or to see a current calendar of meetings and events, visit [www.baltimoremetro.org](http://www.baltimoremetro.org).

# 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 are guided by the following principles:

### *Provide adequate and timely public notice for key decisions*

It is critical that the public is informed, in a timely manner, of key upcoming decisions. This information will be provided in plain language that enables 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 the public is 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 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 engages 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 participation 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*

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 20-21 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 the disabled
- Limited English proficient persons
- Low-Income communities
- Minority communities
- 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
- 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](mailto:comments@baltometro.org) or 410-732-0500 or, visit [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org) and click on “Contact Us”.

# HAVING YOUR SAY

## *Policies and Procedures for Public Comments*

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

### *Public Comment Periods*

A key opportunity for the public to share their thoughts and ideas is during public comment periods.

A 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 Program](#)

[Federal Certification Review](#)

[Long-range Transportation Plan \(LRTP\)](#) (multi-year development with several opportunities to comment on goals, projects, etc.)

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

[Air Quality Conformity Determination](#)

#### *Amendments to the 3 documents listed above*

Any project proposed for the TIP or LRTP that requires a new regional emissions analysis will automatically trigger 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. A resolution with project information will be available online for the public to view 5 weeks prior to a BRTB vote. The Executive Committee will continue to review and approve Administrative Modifications (minor amendments).

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 may also be made available for public comment.

Information necessary for the public to understand and comment on each document will be released to the public for review. This includes items such as a readable, public-friendly executive summary, information posted on our web site and/or in printable flyer format, detailed project sheets or reports, and links to project or sponsor web sites 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 (but not less than 7 days) before a BRTB vote on these items.

### *How to submit comments*

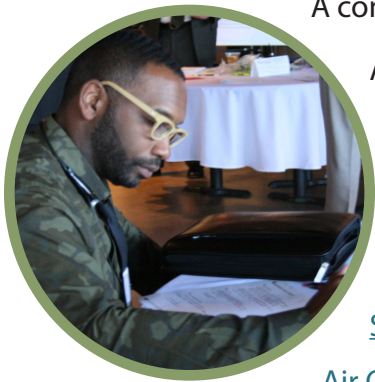
The BRTB prefers comments in writing (as identified below) to accurately respond to your concerns. If you need assistance submitting a written comment, please contact the Public Involvement Coordinator at 410-732-0500 or [comments@baltometro.org](mailto:comments@baltometro.org).

Please send all comments in writing using one of the following methods:

**Mail:** The Baltimore Regional Transportation Board  
1500 Whetstone Way, Suite 300  
Baltimore, MD 21230

**Fax:** 410-732-8248

**E-mail:** [comments@baltometro.org](mailto:comments@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 the public to address the BRTB on issues related to the transportation planning process is provided at the beginning of each meeting for up to 15 minutes. 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. In addition, the Public Advisory Committee and Technical Committee Chairs may participate in the discussion of all agenda items.

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. The Public Testimony Rules and Procedures, as well as A Guide for Making Comments to the BRTB are available online at [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).

**Social Media:** Comments related to BRTB comment periods will be accepted through current BRTB sponsored social media accounts, as listed on the project/plan web page or press release for each comment period.

The public can also make comments in person at monthly BRTB meetings or scheduled public meetings.

All comments must be received by the close of the comment period. Visit [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org) or call 410-732-0500 for a current schedule of meetings.

## *How Your Comments Will Be Used*

### **Consideration and Response to Public Comments Received During Comment Periods**

The BRTB recognizes and values public input, therefore the BRTB will 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 in writing 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 and are posted online at [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).
- BMC staff is responsible for coordinating a response to comments with project sponsors and the BRTB in a timely manner.



## *Comments received via 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 accounts on various social media outlets and uses them to share information, engage the public, and collect comments. When possible, staff will use commonly used or custom hashtags (or other appropriate metadata tools) to reach a wider audience or collect comments on a specific project or plan.

Comments received via social media will be shared with the BRTB as follows:

- Comments are submitted within the timeframe and relate to a BRTB action item open for public comment; and
- Comments were submitted through BRTB identified social media accounts or custom hashtags.

Given the changing world of technology, staff keep abreast of changing communication tools and maintain an in-house social media guide that clearly outlines BMC/BRTB's use of social media in the public involvement process.

# GETTING INVOLVED

## *Public Meetings*

The BRTB holds events throughout the year to address transportation issues and to deliberate on the strategies, projects, plans, and programs that the BRTB oversees. In addition, the BRTB hosts public meetings to share information and obtain feedback on various plans and projects. The BRTB also has a number of committees, including a Public Advisory Committee, that meet throughout the year. A current calendar of meetings and events is online at [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).

## *Guidelines for BRTB Public Meetings and Events*

In accordance with BRTB Bylaws and federal guidance, 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 posted on the BMC website no less than 14 calendar days prior to the date of BRTB meetings.

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.

For those without access to the BMC website, a list of BRTB meetings is available in alternative formats upon request.

- Allow for public comment regarding all aspects of the transportation planning process.
- When possible, have BRTB members in attendance to listen to and discuss public comments.
- Be held at various locations throughout the region.
- Be scheduled at various times, including evenings and weekends to maximize participation.
- Be accessible to persons with disabilities. Additional accommodations for people with disabilities will be provided on an as-needed basis, if requested 7 days in advance.

BMC staff will maintain a list of resources for auxiliary aids and services.

- As often as possible, be held in locations that are convenient to public transit and/or traditionally underserved communities.
- When feasible, be conducted using technologies such as webinars, conference calls, etc.



## Public Meeting Schedule

To reach the widest audience and participation among the diverse population in the Baltimore region, the following procedures have been outlined for major planning activities:

- **Long-range transportation plan** – At least one meeting in each jurisdiction within the region.
- **Short-range transportation program (TIP)** – A meeting at BMC or another central location within the region.
- **Amendments to the long-range plan or TIP that trigger a new regional emissions analysis** – A meeting is held in or near the community that is affected by the amendment.  
If there are multiple amendments or an amendment is regional in nature, a meeting is held at BMC or another central location within the region.



Comments on the corresponding regional emissions analysis are also accepted during these meetings. Additional meetings on other plans such as the Public Participation Plan, Unified Planning Work Program, etc. may be held if needed to better inform interested persons or organizations.

When scheduling public information and participation meetings, the BRTB will consider significant civil, religious, and cultural holidays and do its best to refrain from holding meetings on those dates.

## Notification of Public Comment Periods

The BRTB places a great deal of importance on providing the public with easy access to information and timely notice about the transportation planning process.

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

- **BMC Website** – All documents released for public review are available online at [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).
- **Press Releases** are sent to local media professionals and other press release subscribers, as well as being posted at [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).
- **Announcements** are posted in various sources such as e-newsletters, social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.), other websites and blogs, newsletters, etc. Upon request, the public may request print notification via U.S. mail.
- **Print Documents** – All documents posted for comment are available to review in print at the Regional Information Center.
- **Advertisements** – The BRTB will utilize a variety of outlets and media techniques, dependent upon the project, plan, and/or audience trying to be reached. Advertising plans and budgets will be developed by staff and submitted to the BRTB Secretary (BMC Director of Transportation Planning) for approval.

### About the Regional Information Center

The Regional Information Center (RIC) is a library located at the Baltimore Metropolitan Council (BMC) at 1500 Whetstone Way, Suite 300, Baltimore. It is open to the public by appointment.

The RIC is a partnership between BMC and the Enoch Pratt Free Library. The collection includes regional and urban planning materials with a focus on local demographic information, economic development, transportation planning, land use and environmental issues. Documents are available through the state's Interlibrary Loan Program. A catalog of materials is available online and the RIC librarian is available via telephone and e-mail to answer questions and provide data or other info.

Reach the RIC at 410-732-9570, or [ric@baltometro.org](mailto:ric@baltometro.org).

# 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.*

*Appropriate services can be provided to qualified individuals with disabilities or those in need of language assistance, who submit a request at least seven days prior to a meeting. Call 410-732-0500.*

## *Traditionally Underserved Populations*

The traditionally underserved can be defined as those specifically identified in Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice—that is, low-income populations and minority populations including Hispanics/Latinos, African Americans/Blacks, Asian Americans, Native American/ Alaskan Natives and Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders—as well as other populations recognized in Title VI and other civil rights legislation, executive orders, and transportation legislation, including those with limited English proficiency such as the foreign-born, low-literacy populations, seniors, persons with disabilities, and transit-dependent populations.

*Source: [onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp\\_rpt\\_710.pdf](https://onlinepubs.trb.org/onlinepubs/nchrp/nchrp_rpt_710.pdf)*

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, and Executive Order 13166: Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency. For more information about these laws, see page 21.

In addition, the BRTB has a non-discrimination policy and complaint procedure under Title VI. See [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org) 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.





# OUTREACH TO TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS

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, community leaders, as well as other 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, 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.



# 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, information, 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 and print documents produced by the BRTB. Opportunities for the public to provide input and formal comments are also posted 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.

## *E-Newsletters and Social Media*

BMC staff, on behalf of the BRTB, periodically produces a number of publications including COG Quarterly and B'More Involved. 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 and Instagram.

For a full list of current publications and social media, visit: [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org).

## *Maintain a Public Advisory Committee with a Public Involvement Subcommittee*

The mission of the PAC is to provide independent, region-oriented advice by members of the public on a variety of issues, as well as to promote public awareness, participation, and equity in the regional transportation planning process.

Staff works with the PAC's Public Involvement Subcommittee to review, evaluate, and improve upon public involvement techniques and outreach efforts. In addition, staff conducts outreach in partnership with the PAC.

The BRTB conducts an annual application process for those interested in serving on the PAC. All PAC meetings are open to the public and members of the public are encouraged to attend.

Visit [www.baltometro.org](http://www.baltometro.org) to learn more or apply to serve on the Public Advisory Committee.



### *Produce and distribute print documents*

Produce and distribute print documents such as newsletters, white papers, and fact sheets to include timely information on targeted topics related to transportation planning and public participation activities. Make these documents available online as well.

### *Maintain contact lists*

Maintain contact lists to include current and potential stakeholders.

### *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 can 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.

### *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.



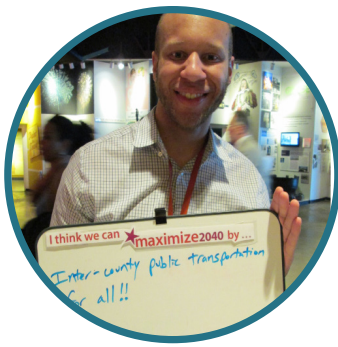
### *Meet in convenient and accessible locations for optimal attendance*

Hold 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 on transit lines are most accessible.

### *Conduct interactive and informational workshops*

Host workshops on specific transportation planning topics or general process. Provide opportunity 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 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.

### *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:

- Print advertisements or notices in area newspapers, including the region's major English-language newspaper, Spanish-language newspaper, and/or minority-community newspaper.
- Posters or flyers on transit vehicles, in an effort to reach transit-dependent populations and other transit riders.
- Online advertisements on local news media websites, targeted ads on social media pages, etc.
- Libraries – Send flyers 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 are displayed.
- Radio or TV announcements.
- 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.



# VI. 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*

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 6.

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

- **During comment period to gather input** – Staff make survey 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 survey 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

## 3. Staff Debriefings

This ongoing tool is useful for reviewing outreach and engagement efforts and developing new strategies or improvements to the process and tools used.







## VI. 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 this list of acronyms and commonly used words in transportation planning.

### [Effective Participation in the Regional Transportation Planning Process](#)

This short video, produced by the Regional Transportation District in Denver, is a great way to learn more about the regional transportation planning process and how to be effectively engaged.



### [Making Public Comments at BRTB Meetings: A Brief How to Guide](#)

At the beginning of each meeting of the BRTB the public have an opportunity to make comments. This is a very important, regular, on the record opportunity to be heard by BRTB members.

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.

# 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.

Regulations related to public participation require the BRTB to:

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

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

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

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

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

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

## Additional Federal Laws

The BRTB also complies with the following federal laws:

### *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. [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov)

### *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.” [www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titlevi.php](http://www.justice.gov/crt/about/cor/coord/titlevi.php)

### *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. [archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/1994.html#12898](http://archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/1994.html#12898)

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

People with limited English proficiency 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. [justice.gov/crt/about/cor/13166.php](http://justice.gov/crt/about/cor/13166.php)





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