

A 45-day comment period on the draft 2022 Public Participation Plan (PPP) was held from Monday, August 22 through Friday, October 7, 2022.

Many of the comments below are shortened for purposes of space. The full set of comments was shared with all BRTB and Technical Committee members and are also available on the project website at publicinput.com/2022ppp.

Let us say up front that we are very appreciative of the effort so many individuals and organizations have gone through to review materials and send in comments. This is informative for all of our members and does have an impact on the planning process. As is customary for the BRTB, we share all comments and responses with everyone who commented as well as on the BMC website.

1. Comments related to recordings of meetings

** The proposed updates are welcome, especially the commitment that "there will always be a virtual option for the public to join the BRTB or any of its subcommittee meetings". I'd like to see the plan reach further and also call for publishing video recordings of the meetings, so members of the public are able to view the proceedings after the fact. civic@oluho.com*

** Does BRTB live-stream public meetings through its Facebook page, and do you archive videos of past meetings? James Knight*

BRTB Response: Thank you for this recommendation. The BRTB recognizes the importance of access to information as an essential part of an informed decision-making process. The BRTB is exploring necessary procedures and logistics to expand the sharing of video recordings to include committee meetings. Part of the logistics will be a decision on where to post the recordings. On page 14 of the draft final PPP, new language reads: "and share recordings online."

2. Comments related to changes to documents made per public comment

** While it's great that the BRTB does "seriously consider input", it should establish a practice of recording and communicating actual changes resulting from input received. civic@oluho.com*

** I appreciate the focus on having multiple channels of communication about opportunities for public comment. I also approve of the addition of virtual and hybrid meetings as an important addition. However, there is one area that I found quite lacking in the plan, a description of the role of public comment and feedback in the planning process ... but none measure whether or not public interaction had any impact on the policies pursued. If so, greater transparency would be appreciated that allows a commenter to see exactly how their comment is reflected in a corresponding document. ...establish a practice of recording and communicating actual changes resulting from input received. Henry Cook*

BRTB Response: To address this point, the PPP will incorporate practices from two different resources. One is from the Transportation Research Board and the other is October 2022 guidance from USDOT on evaluating meaningful public engagement.

Page 22 of the draft final PPP has been updated to add the following text:

“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.”

Also added on Page 23 of the draft final PPP the following language from U.S. DOT guidance on meaningful public engagement:

“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. Allowing time to review comments and make any resulting changes

** ...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." First of all, do you actually mean "at most 14 days" (not "least")? The intent communicated here is confusing. Regardless, 14 days seems like a too-short time span to allow for sincere consideration of input and modification of the document in question. 7-14 days equates to, at most, 5-10 business days. civic@oluho.com*

BRTB Response: To clarify, page 10 of the draft final PPP will now read: “If additional time is needed, the BRTB will consider modifying the voting schedule to allow further time to review and incorporate changes.” In fact this has happened in the past.

4. Lots of communication options

** It will be interesting to see which ones are most used. There is a lot flying around in digital space. Paul Verchinski*

BRTB Response: We are glad that you noticed our effort to expand options to reach a wide range of individuals and groups in the medium they frequent. We will track where folks receive information and how they provide comments to us, and this will inform our future public engagement efforts.

5. Consideration of civil rights and fair housing issues

** Public participation and outreach techniques should extend to Title VI planning and the evaluation process and those organizations be consulted for all planning processes. Relatedly, Title VI and Title VIII impact evaluation should be integral part of all BRTB plans and processes. Barbara Samuels*

BRTB Response: Thank you for this recommendation. Staff periodically update our list of Interested Parties. On Page 9 of the draft final PPP, civil rights organizations were added to the list of those we seek to consult. Housing organizations were already on this list. Staff will conduct another update of this list in 2023 and reach out to any new civil rights and fair housing groups to ensure they're informed of opportunities to comment or be engaged. Also, the BRTB will be reviewing its Title VI plan, policies and practices in 2023. This review will be done with the benefit of an equity scan the BRTB has funded in its FY 2023 Unified Planning Work Program.

6. Support for plain speech

** I love the plan to use plain speech to help make things more accessible to a wider variety of people! Colette Gelwicks*

BRTB Response: Wonderful – we look forward to writing easy-to-read and easy-to-grasp material.

7. Are public comments logged and reviewed over time

** I am curious how public comments are logged, tracked, and considered long-term. Is there a time when all comments from the last 3-10 years are looked at and considered for general trends or changes? Colette Gelwicks*

BRTB Response: While it has not been systematic, staff do review comments from various comment periods prior to launching a new activity. That process will become more structured as we consider best practices for ensuring meaningful public comment.

8. Safety at certain transit stations and stops

I am a daily transit user and frequently use light rail, subway, and bus. I enjoy my commute. Safety at certain stations and more bus stop seating and shelters. Derek Moore

BRTB Response: While this does not relate to the Public Participation Plan, we can bring this to the attention of MDOT MTA or the local transit service as appropriate. Moreover, safety is one

of the key factors considered across our transportation planning efforts. If you would like, please do not hesitate to follow up with more detail about specific stops of concern.

9. comments related to facilities for bicycles

** Several comments related to having facilities for bicycles and also for keeping them off the road. – various*

BRTB Response: While these comments do not relate to the Public Participation Plan, the BRTB will be engaged in developing a vision for an integrated regional bicycle network throughout 2023. We will include you in our outreach, and welcome a more detailed discussion of your concerns in that planning process.

10. How can I find out about committee meetings?

** Can Transportation CORE members get calendar invites of BRTB meetings. Mike Davis*

BRTB Response: BMC publishes a calendar of upcoming events on the BMC website. This fall, staff have added a feature to the BMC calendar that allows visitors to add the meeting to their own calendar. To do this, open the event of your choice and below the date and location you will find a button that says “Add to Calendar” and offers you the opportunity to add to google, outlook, etc.