

Proposed January 2017 Amendment to the MVMPO 2016 Public Participation Plan (PPP)

Change the public review period for documents from 30 days to 21 days to accommodate monthly MPO meetings.

This would result in changes on pages 3, 8, 64 and 65 of the 2016 PPP, highlighted in yellow on the attached pages.

- One selectman, Mayor or his/her designee from each of the following subregions:
 - Sub-region 1: Amesbury, Newburyport and Salisbury
 - Sub-region 2: Newbury, Rowley and West Newbury
 - Sub-region 3: Boxford, Georgetown, Groveland and Merrimac
 - Sub-region 4: Andover, Methuen and North Andover

The MVMPO is responsible for performing a number of federally mandated transportation planning activities including the development and adoption of its Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP); Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and Public Participation Plan (PPP). Drafts of the UPWP, TIP and RTP, as well as Amendments to these documents, have a 21-day public review and comment period. The PPP Draft has a 45-day public review and comment period.

In addition, the MVMPO is responsible for making air quality conformity determinations for the RTP and the TIP and must certify that it is adhering to the federal transportation planning requirements outlined in the "3C" planning process. Finally, the MVMPO (per a Memorandum of Understanding with the MVRTA) is responsible for administering the MVRTA's public participation process as it pertains to the MVRTA's Program of Projects (PoP) and annual list of obligated transit projects. The MVRTA is in charge of administering its own public participation efforts respective to ongoing operations and service planning, although it engages the MVMPO staff in specific outreach activities (i.e. Coordinated Plan, Active Transportation Plan).

MVMPO Advisory Board and Committees

The MVMPO's advisory board is the Merrimack Valley Transportation Committee (MVTC). The MVMPO staff is responsible for organizing and administering the MVTC. MVTC membership includes agencies and individuals who may already participate in the MVMPO as an official or designee, and representation from non-MVMPO agencies and individuals with interests in transportation. MVTC members include municipal planning directors; transit operators, neighborhood residents, environmental advocates, railroad, and truck freight industry representatives. The MVMPO staff convenes meetings of the MVTC at least once each year, typically at the start of the TIP development process. As the MVMPO region's size works to

2. MVMPO Approach to Public Participation

The MVMPO administers a regulated transportation decision-making and project development process and follows procedures that include providing the public with meaningful opportunities to participate.

The MVMPO structures its public involvement according to its commitment to civil rights related obligations such as removal of barriers to participation, diversity, and inclusive outreach. This Plan describes participation opportunities generally and includes specific protocols and resources designed to facilitate diverse and inclusive public outreach and involvement. This Plan is a flexible and evolving document. As necessary, the MVMPO will revise the PPP based on recurring assessments of successes and/or challenges associated with outreach, as well as suggestions made and the results of public engagement processes.

The MVMPO describes its general public participation activities in this chapter. Chapter 3 contains the specific civil rights protocols utilized by the MVMPO for all public outreach activities, categorized by types of communication formats, including large group discussions, targeted groups, and one-on-one interactions. Chapter 3 also contains the MVMPO Accessible Meeting Policy. The MVMPO believes that consistent application of these protocols will yield inclusive, accessible discussions and issues resolution.

Subsequent chapters of the PPP highlight specific participation opportunities during development of the following MVMPO documents:

- Regional Transportation Plan (RTP);
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP);
- Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP);
- modal and corridor studies, and
- certain transit grants administered by MassDOT's Rail and Transit Division.

Drafts of the UPWP, TIP and RTP, as well as Amendments to these documents, have a 21-day public review and comment period. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) Draft has a 45-day public review and comment period.

The PPP also references relevant federal policy guidance, principles, and techniques that enhance the potential for successful public participation processes. This guidance is derived from Appendix 2 of the U.S. DOT's *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

5. Public Involvement Procedures for the MVMPO Transportation Improvement Program

The MVMPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a MPO financial document required by Title 23 USC, Section 134 (c) as amended by the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act of 2015 and previous federal surface transportation authorizations. The MVMPO lists all transportation projects it expects to fund in a given four-year period in the TIP, including funding for FTA-funded transit activities carried out by the MVRTA. The MVMPO generates a new TIP annually and submits it to MassDOT for inclusion in the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

The MVMPO releases the draft TIP for public review and comment for a period of **twenty-one (21)** days. It places a Notice of the availability of the draft TIP for public review and comment on the MVPC website. Additionally, the MVMPO staff places a legal notice in a newspaper of general circulation within the MVMPO region stating the period that the TIP will be available for public review and that the MVMPO will receive comments. Please refer to Appendix F to review a sample MVMPO Notice.

The MVMPO is now using public participation software tools (i.e. ConstantContact, MailChimp, etc.) to notify the public of TIP development, TIP draft releases, and pending endorsements. These tools feature analytical capabilities that aid the staff in tracking contact additions, deletions, modifications and can generate status reports for individual mailings, including whether addressees viewed a specific notification.

The MVMPO TIP development procedure is intended to be implemented in conformity with Title VI, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and all other protocols, policies and procedures for inclusive and accessible public participation.

5.1 Public Notice and Comment Period

The MVMPO posts notice of the draft TIP's availability on the MVPC website, in newsletters, and in other public communications. MassDOT and MVMPO staff members attend all MVMPO meetings and are available to receive comments and answer questions. The public is encouraged to learn about the TIP process, individual projects, and offer comment. In addition, the MVMPO staff continues to solicit information on the transportation needs of

persons and groups who are “traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems” per Executive Order 12898 on “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations”. The MVMPO staff, by function of its size, is effective in carrying out these responsibilities directly to persons and groups in its communities, and through its MVTC and the MVTC Nondiscrimination Working Group, both of which have direct access to the MVMPO Chair.

The Commonwealth’s STIP public participation process is an adjunct to the regions’ specific outreach processes but also follows the Commonwealth’s commitment to transparency and civic engagement in government. The STIP is essentially the composite of all MPO TIPs. Accordingly, projects programmed in each TIP must be included in the STIP. The MVMPO, MassDOT and other affected parties work together to reconcile any discrepancies between a TIP and the STIP should they occur. There are instances in which the draft TIP’s **twenty-one (21)**-day comment period will coincide with or overlap MassDOT’s **twenty-one (21)**-day public comment period for the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

MassDOT encourages its constituents to stay informed on all of its activities, including but not limited to the STIP, using various social media tools such as Twitter (www.twitter.com/massdot), YouTube (www.youtube.com/youtovemass.com), the Commonwealth’s transportation blog (www.transportation.blog.state.ma.us), Flickr www.flickr.com/photos/massdot/, and RSS feeds.

After review and consideration of all public comments, a final TIP and STIP are prepared and submitted to the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Transit Administration, the Environmental Protection Agency and the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection for review and approval. Explicit consideration and response is given to public input, and all who submit written comments are notified of the availability of the final approved document. The MVMPO posts its approved TIP on the MVPC webpage at www.mvpc.org/transportation and MassDOT posts its STIP on MassDOT’s webpage at <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/planning/Main/StatewidePlans/StateTransportationImprovementProgram.aspx>