

visualize
2045 A long-range
transportation plan
for the National
Capital Region

APPENDIX H

Public Participation Summary: Public Outreach and the TPB Participation Plan

Draft, March 2022



**PUBLIC OUTREACH AND THE TPB PARTICIPATION PLAN FOR THE VISUALIZE 2045 UPDATE (2022)
LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN FOR THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION**

March 2022

ABOUT VISUALIZE 2045 & THE TPB

Visualize 2045 is the federally required long-range transportation plan for the National Capital Region. It identifies and analyzes all regionally significant transportation investments planned through 2045 to help decision makers and the public “visualize” the region’s future.

Visualize 2045 is developed by the National Capital Region Transportation Planning Board (TPB), the federally designated metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for metropolitan Washington. It is responsible for developing and carrying out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process in the metropolitan area. Members of the TPB include representatives of the transportation agencies of the states of Maryland and Virginia and the District of Columbia, 24 local governments, the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority, the Maryland and Virginia General Assemblies, and nonvoting members from the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority and federal agencies. The TPB is staffed by the Department of Transportation Planning at the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG).

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Introduction

This appendix describes the public outreach and participation activities conducted during the process to update Visualize 2045 and explains how these activities were developed consistent with the TPB's Participation Plan and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The outreach activities include:

- Voices of the Region public opinion survey
- Voices of the Region focus groups
- Voices of the Region Aspiration to Implementation (QR outreach)
- Public comment April 2021
- Public comment April 2022
- Virtual open houses

TPB Participation Plan

The TPB updated its Participation Plan in 2020. This update reflects a year-long process to make the plan easier for the public and staff to use.

The plan articulates the TPB's policy for public participation. It describes how members of the public can get involved and demonstrates how staff work to meet and exceed federal requirements. The plan guides TPB staff interactions with the public so that public-facing work can: 1) reach as many people as inclusively as possible, and 2) collect meaningful input and build support to inform TPB plans and programs, and aid in decision making.

The Participation Plan is required under federal laws and regulations pertaining to metropolitan planning. The plan builds on previous efforts designed to encourage participation in the TPB process and provide reasonable opportunities for residents and other interested agencies to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

As a required by federal regulation, TPB staff developed the Participation Plan in consultation with interested parties, including residents, representatives of people with disabilities, users of public transportation and bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and affected public agencies.

PARTICIPATION POLICY

The TPB Participation Policy consists of four parts.

- The *Policy Statement* articulates the TPB's commitment to making its process and products accessible to everyone who lives in metropolitan Washington.
- The *Policy Goals* state what the TPB is trying to achieve through its public-facing work.
- The *Principles of Engagement* declare the TPB's values or interacting with the public.
- The *Constituencies for Engagement* describe three target audiences to help staff focus information and participation activities.

POLICY STATEMENT

It is the TPB's policy to provide public access and involvement under a collaborative planning process in which the interests of all TPB constituencies are reflected and considered. It is the TPB's intent to make both its policy and technical process inclusive of an accessible to all constituencies.

The TPB believes that public input into its process is valuable and makes its products better.

Regional transportation planning cannot, and should not, be based simply upon technical analysis. The information derived from public involvement is essential to good decision-making.

POLICY GOALS

The Policy Goals describe what the TPB is trying to achieve through its participation activities. When planning public-facing work, staff should use these goals to set desirable outcomes, and then refer to the goals when evaluating their work.

- Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools.
- Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities.
- Gather input from diverse perspectives.
- Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully.
- Promote a regional perspective.

PRINCIPLES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The Principles for Engagement state the TPB values around informing and engaging the public. These principles recognize that most people who are impacted by transportation decisions are not technical experts and that being inclusive means meeting people where they are. These principles guide engagement and point towards the Policy Goals without specifying those goals or the means to achieve them.

- **Equity perspective** - Staff strive to incorporate an equity perspective into their work activities so that work acknowledges and seeks to accommodate different contexts, experiences, and abilities.
- **Plain language** - Staff strive to use plain language and prepare their materials in a variety of ways.
- **Early and continuing participation** - Staff strive to maximize public input by involving the public early in planning processes. Staff also strive to involve the public throughout processes to create repeat interactions with the public.
- **Timely response** - Staff strive to acknowledge receipt of public input in a timely manner and provide information about how public input will be used.
- **Clarity of purpose** - Staff strive for clarity of purpose when planning public-facing work.

CONSTITUENCIES FOR ENGAGEMENT

The TPB acknowledges that not every person is aware of the TPB or has an understanding for how decisions are made at the regional, state, and local levels. To make sure that TPB participation efforts are most effective, it is important to tailor communications and outreach to different constituencies.

The constituencies below are grouped according to varying levels of engagement in regional transportation planning processes and awareness of regional transportation issues.

- **Active participants** are both knowledgeable about transportation policy issues in general, as well as in the TPB’s role in regional transportation planning process.
- **Community leaders** have some knowledge of transportation policy issues but are less familiar with the TPB’s role in the regional transportation planning process.
- **The general public** has an inherent interest in transportation challenges but often possess little direct knowledge of transportation policy making.

An equity perspective is vital for understanding how to work within these different constituencies. The TPB recognizes that each of these constituent groups include people of color, people with limited English proficiency, differing abilities, people with low incomes, and people of all ages, including youth and elders. Staff remain aware of the need to make extra efforts to engage these populations through information and participation.

Voices of the Region

For the Visualize 2045 update, the TPB conducted public engagement known as ‘Voices of the Region’ to gather information about public opinions on transportation through a survey, focus groups, and a regional virtual activity about the TPB’s Aspirational Initiatives. The role of the Voices of the Region is to gather public opinion on issues important to the TPB, provide a more nuanced understanding how regional transportation policies affect people in the metropolitan Washington region, and to highlight voices that have been underrepresented in the past.

As a package, the Voices of the Region outreach accomplished all five of the TPB’s Policy Goals for participation. Each activity took different approaches to incorporating the Principles for Engagement into its planning and execution. And while the primary constituency for participation in the three activities was the general public, the audience for the input collected was the other constituencies — active participants, community leaders, and decision-makers who serve on the TPB.

The following sections provide a summary of the specific Voices of the Region participation activities and a description for how they sought to achieve the Policy Goals, incorporate the Principles for Engagement, and engaged the Constituencies for Engagement.

For more information on Voices of the Region visit: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEY

The Voices of the Region public opinion survey was a representative and statistically significant regional survey of residents in the metropolitan Washington region.

The purpose of the survey was to gather information on attitudes and behaviors related to transportation topics in order to inform the Visualize 2045 update and other regional planning efforts. The study focused on topics addressed in the plan, including transportation access and mobility, future technology, and climate change.



Dash bus, City of Alexandria, VA (Martin Barna/City of Alexandria)

Respondents were randomly selected using an address-based sample of 10 county and city-level jurisdictions in the metropolitan Washington region, and were invited to participate in a web survey via a series of letters they received in the mail.

2,407 people participated in the survey.

The TPB conducted this study in collaboration with the Survey Research practice within ICF. The survey report and presentations can be found online at: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region.

Table 1.1: Public Opinion Survey & the Policy Goals

Policy Goals	
Gather input from diverse perspectives	The public survey solicited input from a randomly selected group of residents from the Washington region. This group was selected to represent the region's diversity and so that survey results were statistically significant. Effort put into soliciting a representative selection of the region's residents helped to ensure that feedback represented diverse perspectives. The methodology is documented in the survey report online at: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region .
Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully	Results of the public opinion survey were summarized in a report that was posted to visualize2045.org . The findings were also presented to the Technical Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Access for All Advisory Committee, and the TPB. Additionally, findings from the public opinion survey were included in the Visualize 2045 plan document. Findings were made available online via a report and presentations at: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region .
Promote a regional perspective	By ensuring that the participants in the public opinion survey were statistically representative of the Washington region, the output of this activity promotes a regional perspective. To further the use of the survey results at the local level the TPB collected data of statistical significance for all member counties and made that data available.

Table 1.2: Public Opinion Survey & the Principles for Engagement

Principles for Engagement	
Plain language	The survey was prepared using plain language so that it was accessible to adults with a basic reading level. Additionally, the survey was prepared in Spanish to make it more accessible to Washington area residents. For those that preferred to complete the survey over the phone, a call-in number was an option for survey respondents.

Table 1.3: Public Opinion Survey & the Constituencies for Engagement

Constituencies for Engagement	
General public	The general public was the primary audience for participation in the public opinion survey. Survey respondents were selected at random.
Active participants	Findings and analysis from the public opinion survey were shared with people who are active in the TPB process, including presentations at the Technical Committee, Access for All Advisory Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee. Additionally, the findings were shared with the TPB at the February 2021 TPB meeting. An audio and video recording of the briefing to the TPB is posted to COG's website and at: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region .
Community leaders	In addition to the ways that the findings were shared with active participants, the primary way that the public opinion survey was meant to reach community leaders was via TPB News and social media. As the survey results were of regional interest, numerous media outlets sought TPB staff for interviews about the survey results. TPB staff also produced a Story Map of the results as another means of access for community leaders to engage with and share the results.

FOCUS GROUPS

In the winter of 2021, the TPB conducted 11 virtual focus groups with 112 residents from around the Washington region. Each session was created with a specific demographic or geographic focus to better understand the perspectives of different population groups of the region. The groups discussed the participants' lived experiences, challenges, and opportunities associated with transportation equity, safety, and climate change. Through the lens of these three topics, insights were provided across a range of TPB policy priorities.

These "Voices of the Region" focus groups were designed to be part of a wider package of public engagement activities that supported the update of Visualize 2045.

The purpose of the focus groups was to gather qualitative and in-depth data that contextualizes and informs how different population groups understand and experience transportation equity, safety, and climate change. The project prioritized recruiting and selecting participants from historically underrepresented population groups to supplement perspectives received in the public opinion survey.

Table 2.1: Focus Groups & the Policy Goals

Policy Goals	
Gather input from diverse perspectives	The focus group activity was explicitly planned to supplement the public opinion survey by seeking out input from groups that were underrepresented in the survey responses and whose voices are not often heard in the transportation planning process. In addition to groups consisting of people who live in the core, inner suburbs, and outer suburbs, there were focus groups for the following demographics: people with low-income; young adults (18-25 years old); older adults (60+ years old; people of color; people with long-term disabilities; Spanish-speaking people. These groups were selected because their voices can often be left out of discussions about transportation.
Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully	Like the public opinion survey, results of the focus groups were summarized in a report that was posted to visualize2045.org. The findings were also presented to the Technical Committee, Community Advisory Committee, Access for All Advisory Committee, and the TPB. Additionally, findings from the public opinion survey were included in the Visualize 2045 plan document.
Promote a regional perspective	By ensuring that the participants in the focus groups were selected from the three geographic areas the output of this activity promotes a regional perspective.

Table 2.2: Focus Groups & the Principles for Engagement

Principles for Engagement	
Equity perspective	An equity perspective was built into the plans for the focus groups from the start. The focus groups designed to gather input not captured during the public opinion survey and to gather input from groups that have historically not participated at the TPB.
Plain language	To ensure that the focus groups were conducted using language and concepts accessible to participants, focus group facilitators received several trainings. In addition to sharing standards and techniques for leading the discussions, these trainings also included discussion of strategies to use to help understand complex issues. These trainings were supported with scripts that facilitators used as they lead discussion.
Clarity of purpose	To achieve clarity of purpose, participants received a consent form in advance of the focus group. Facilitators also read this document and shared it on the screen before the discussion started. This helped set standards for participation. It also clarified the purpose of the focus groups and explained how content generated through discussion would be used.

Table 2.3: Focus Groups & the Constituencies for Engagement

Constituencies for Engagement	
General public	The general public was the primary audience for participation in the focus groups. The focus groups sought the opinion of people who have an inherent interest in transportation, but typically are not typically involved in the planning process. The specific constituent groups that participated in the focus groups were selected to supplement and provide a more diverse perspective than captured in the public opinion survey.
Active participants	Findings and analysis from the focus groups were shared with people who are active in the TPB process, including presentations at the Technical Committee, Access for All Advisory Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee. Additionally, the findings were shared with the TPB at the November 2021 TPB meeting. An audio and video recording of the briefing to the TPB is posted to COG’s website.
Community leaders	In addition to the ways that the findings were shared with active participants, the primary way that the public opinion survey was meant to reach community leaders was via TPB News and social media. The TPB staff also produced a Story Map of the results as another means of access for community leaders to engage with and share the results.

ASPIRATION TO IMPLEMENTATION

In the summer of 2021, the TPB conducted a public engagement campaign called Aspiration to Implementation to solicit input for the update of Visualize 2045, the region’s long-range transportation plan. The campaign, which was conducted virtually, used posters and signs with QR codes to obtain comments from the general public about ways in which regional transportation projects, programs, and policies have affected their daily lives.

The campaign’s QR code posters asked people for their personal reflections on projects or policies that are linked to the TPB’s seven Aspirational Initiatives, which are policy-level strategies approved by the TPB in 2018.

The Aspirational Initiatives are:

- Bring Jobs and Housing Closer Together
- Expand Bus Rapid Transit and Transitways Regionwide
- Move More People on Metrorail
- Provide More Telecommuting and Other Options for Commuting
- Expand Express Highway Network
- Improve Walk and Bike Access to Transit
- Complete the National Capital Trail Network



Aspiration to Implementation sign (TPB)

Table 3.1: Aspiration to Implementation & the Policy Goals

Policy Goals	
Engage different audiences effectively using a variety of tools	The Aspiration to Implementation activity was open to the general public, unlike the public opinion survey and the focus groups. Posters were placed throughout the region as an invitation to participate. The public could either use their phone to scan a QR code and take a quick survey or document the URL and take the survey later on a computer.
Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities	Access to the activity is considered open because it was available to anyone who passed by one of the posters.
Gather input from diverse perspectives	The Aspiration to Implementation was designed “to meet people where they are.” Signs were placed in 40 locations throughout the Washington region, including some Equity Emphasis Areas. Demographics for activity participants can be found in the final report: visualize2045.org/voices-of-the-region .
Promote a regional perspective	By ensuring that posters were placed throughout the Washington region, the output of this activity promotes a regional perspective.

Table 3.2: Aspiration to Implementation & the Principles for Engagement

Principles for Engagement	
Plain language	To make the Aspiration to Implementation accessible to everyone that saw a poster, the posters were designed using graphics and language that clearly communicated the purpose of the activity and how to engage with the activity.

Table 3.3: Aspiration to Implementation & the Constituencies for Engagement

Constituencies for Engagement	
General public	The general public was the primary audience for participation in the Aspiration to Implementation. This activity sought the opinion of people who have an inherent interest in transportation. TPB staff also produced a Story Map of the results as another means of access for community leaders to engage with and share the results.
Active participants	Findings and analysis from the Aspiration to Implementation campaign was shared with people who are active in the TPB process, including presentations at the Technical Committee, Access for All Advisory Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee. Additionally, the findings were included in materials shared with the board for the February 2022 TPB meeting.
Community leaders	In addition to the ways that the findings were shared with active participants, the primary way that the public opinion survey was meant to reach community leaders was via TPB News and social media. TPB staff also produced a Story Map of the results as another means of access for community leaders to engage with and share the results.

Public Comment

To support plan development, provide the public an opportunity to weigh in on plan technical inputs, conformity findings, plan and TIP documentation, and meet federal requirements the TPB conducted two public comment periods. Each 30-day public comment period sought feedback at different critical steps during the development of the Visualize 2045 update.

PUBLIC COMMENT – APRIL 2021

At the April 2021 TPB meeting, the board was briefed on the draft project submissions to be included in the Air Quality Conformity Analysis of the constrained element (project list) of the update to Visualize 2045 and the FY 2023-2026 TIP. The project submissions were released for a 30-day public comment and interagency review period at the TPB Technical Committee meeting on April 2, 2021. The comment period closed on May 3, 2021.

During this comment period, the TPB received: 163 comments via email, 65 from the public comment form on the TPB website, 1 comment via phone call, and 11 letters sent by individuals and advocacy groups.

Comments were summarized in a memo dated May 13, 2021 and were presented to the board on May 19, 2021. The board was asked to take these comments into consideration when approving project inputs and the Air Quality Conformity Analysis scope of work at the June TPB meeting. This comment period was not required by federal regulations.

PUBLIC COMMENT – APRIL 2022

This section will be updated after the April 2022 Comment Period is complete.

Table 4.1: Public Comment & the Policy Goals

Policy Goals	
Engage different audiences using a variety of tools	There are several ways for the public to comment on TPB plans and activities. The public comment periods for Visualize 2045 sought feedback via email, online form, phone number, and letters. Making the comment period available through different mediums made the comment periods more accessible to more people.
Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities	TPB public comment periods are always open to the public. To announce and promote public comment periods for the Visualize 2045 update by posting announcement in regional newspapers: The Washington Post, the Washington Hispanic, and the Afro American. The TPB also gets the word out via email to subscribers of TPB email lists, TPB News, social media, websites (mwkog.org and visualize2045.org), and through TPB and committee meetings.
Gather input from diverse perspectives	Comment received during the public comment periods reflected a variety of perspectives from residents of the Washington region. Some were motivated by specific projects and others by reducing the climate change impacts of the region's transportation system.
Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully	Both 30-day comment periods were scheduled so that there was sufficient time for TPB staff to summarize comments and when possible provide a response from member agencies and jurisdictions. The memo summarizing these comments and responses was distributed with TPB materials six-days before the board meeting. This plan schedule added two months, so that the TPB would have a full month to consider public comment before taking any action on the plan inputs or plan/TIP approval.
Promote a regional perspective	Comments from both comment periods were received from residents across the Washington region, reflecting that the activity promotes a regional perspective.

Table 4.2: Public Comment & the Principles for Engagement

Principles for Engagement	
Plain language	<p>The 2021 comment period materials were provided in numerous formats to make the information accessible to various constituencies. An introductory memorandum summarized the purpose of the comment period and the materials included in the packet. The memo highlighted major projects in the plan, with mode-specific maps to illustrate project location in the region. For new major projects, attractively designed 'project profiles' were produced to highlight information about these projects. Simple, organized project description forms were made available in the comment packet as well, providing detailed but straightforward information about the projects. TPB staff produced an interactive website to show projects proposed for the plan inputs. Lastly, the detailed conformity list was made available to the public for the purposes of transparency.</p> <p>The TPB also prepared infographics and animated videos for the comment period to make learning about the plan and the Aspirational Initiatives more public-friendly.</p>
Early and continuing participation	The TPB continues to share information through meetings, media, websites. Members of the public have an opportunity to provide comments at the start of each TPB meeting year-round.
Timely response	When comments are submitted by email, which is how most comments are received by TPB, an automated email thanks the individual for his/her comment. After the comment period closes, the TPB summarizes the comment and presents the summary in a memorandum, to which all detailed comments and letters are attached.
Clarity of purpose	For each comment period, the TPB communicates the general purpose of the comment period.

Table 4.3: Public Comment & the Constituencies for Engagement

Constituencies for Engagement	
General public	The public comment periods were open to the general public.
Active participants	The public comment periods were open to active participants, including advocacy groups and other organizations. Through public notices as well as other means of engagement, such as TPB committees, the TPB ensures that all parties that are federally required to have the opportunity to comment are given the chance to do so.
Community leaders	The public comment periods were open to community leaders.

Virtual Open Houses

This section will be updated after the April 2022 Comment Period is complete.

Table 5.1: Virtual Open House & the Policy Goals

Policy Goals	
Engage different audiences using a variety of tools	The virtual open houses are just one of the ways that the TPB promoted Visualize 2045 and educated the public about plan contents. The open houses used recorded presentations and a question and answer session to make the meeting accessible. Similar content was shared via TPB News, etc.
Provide clear and open access to information and participation opportunities	The first part of the open house program featured a recorded presentation. This presentation included closed captions. The presentation was also presented to the visualize2045.org website so that the public could review the content before and after the open house. The video content is supported by plan documents, charts, infographics, and other materials on the Visualize 2045 website.
Gather input from diverse perspectives	This activity was not primarily designed to seek input from the public. The purpose of the virtual open houses was to share information with the public.
Give consideration to input received and respond meaningfully	This activity was not primarily designed to collect input from the public. The purpose of the virtual open houses was to share information with the public.
Promote a regional perspective	The virtual open houses promote a regional perspective by highlighting the collaborative process for developing the plan and the shared vision and priorities for the shared future of the region's transportation system.

Table 5.2: Virtual Open House & the Principles for Engagement

Principles for Engagement	
Plain language	When preparing the presentation for the open houses, staff worked to use plain language and clearly explain technical jargon when necessary. The video was also close captioned to provide another way for viewers to access the content.
Early and continuing participation	The virtual open houses were not primarily designed to seek input from the public. They did, however, cap off a series of continuing participation activities starting in 2020 and continue into 2022. These activities include Voices of the Region and the public comment periods.
Timely response	The virtual open houses were not primarily designed to seek input from the public. There was no response for staff to provide.
Clarity of purpose	The purpose of the open houses was clearly stated on postcard invitations, social media posts, and a TPB News article. The purpose was restated at the beginning of the program.

Table 5.1: Virtual Open House & the Constituencies for Engagement

Constituencies for Engagement	
General public	The general public is the primary audience for the virtual open houses.
Active participants	Active participants were invited to attend the virtual open houses. Active participants likely interacted with plan content during TPB committee meetings, while watching TPB meetings, or participating in public engagement. This group was encouraged to attend open houses and promote the opportunity to their colleagues, members of their community, and other community leaders who might not be familiar with Visualize 2045.
Community leaders	Community leaders were invited to attend the virtual open houses. They were invited to attend by active participants in the TPB process, through TPB emails, and xxx.

Title VI

The TPB Participation Plan is part of the COG Title VI Plan and Program.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and its amendments (Title VI) prohibit excluding people from participating in or being discriminated in any federally funded program or activity on the basis of race, color, or national origin.

The public engagement activities for the update to Visualize 2045 were all designed to be supportive of and consistent with Title VI requirements and principles. In preparing for all the activities described in this appendix, staff actively considered options for expanding outreach to historically underserved communities and individuals. When appropriate and possible, enhancements were

made to widen engagement. In one case, the Voices of the Region focus groups, the outreach activity was conducted for the explicit purpose of including “hard-to-reach” voices in the long-range transportation plan.

In FY 2023, the TPB will conduct an evaluation of its public engagement activities, which, among other factors, will examine the effectiveness of outreach to underserved communities during the development of Visualize 2045. This evaluation will help the TPB and its staff craft engagement activities in the future that will effectively solicit input from these communities and individuals, and identify ways to incorporate consideration of their needs, preferences, and suggestions into the regional planning process.