

AAMPO Public Participation Plan

Summary of Public Involvement

7/25/2014

Summary of Outreach Efforts

Effective public involvement is one of the central requirements for Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). This includes development and implementation of a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing public involvement in the MPO's planning and programming efforts. Central to this is the development of a public participation plan (PPP).

Because the PPP will drive all future public involvement activities of the MPO, it is important to conduct concerted outreach in the development of the plan. Outreach activities completed during the development of the Albany Area MPO's Public Participation Plan include:

- 45-Day public comment period, with public notice on website, in local newspaper and in three paid advertisements.
- Emailed draft Plans to Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration and ODOT Civil Rights staff for review and comment
- Provision of draft plan to member jurisdictions with request to make copies available to the public at their offices
- Provision of hard-copy draft plan at Albany Public Library and Albany OCWCOG office
- Direct outreach to organizations representing stakeholder populations, including:
 - Familias Activas
 - Disability Services Advisory Council (Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments)
 - Senior Services Advisory Council (Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments)
 - Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance
 - City of Albany Monteith Neighborhood Group
 - City of Albany North Albany Neighborhood Association
- An emailed request for public input was sent to the Interested Parties email list, including representatives from the following stakeholder groups:
 - Corvallis Sustainability Coalition Transportation Action Team
 - Benton County Roads Advisory Committee
 - City of Albany Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - Oregon Department of Transportation, Public Transit Division
 - Corvallis Area Metropolitan Planning Organization
 - Linn County Special Transportation Fund Agency
 - Benton County Special Transportation Fund Agency
 - City of Corvallis Public Works Department, including Corvallis Transit
 - City of Corvallis Bike and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
 - Benton County Bicycle Advisory Committee

- Familias Activas
 - Disability Services Advisory Council (Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments)
 - Senior Services Advisory Council (Oregon Cascades West Council of Governments)
 - Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance
 - City of Albany Monteith Neighborhood Group
 - City of Albany North Albany Neighborhood Association
- Collaboration with Oregon State University Masters of Public Health class ‘Community Organization’ to help identify effective public involvement strategies. Student effort included additional direct outreach to Familias Activas, a local Latina group, transit advisory groups, and two neighborhood associations. Final report was presented to the AAMPO Policy Board at their May 2014 meeting by the student group. Recommendations are included in the following section and will advise AAMPO staff on how to effectively implement the requirements listed in the PPP.
 - Presentation of draft plan for review and comment by the AAMPO member jurisdictions as represented on AAMPO Policy Board and AAMPO Technical Advisory Committee. These meetings were open to the public and advertised in in local newspaper, on website and listed on published agenda. All AAMPO meetings are accessible to those with disabilities.
 - During the development of the Plan, additional stakeholders were identified for possible inclusion in the Interested Parties email list. MPO staff is currently contacting these groups to confirm interest in participating:
 - Linn County Public Health Department
 - Freight - May Trucking Company
 - LBCC Student Government
 - Albany Chamber of Commerce
 - Benton County Veterans Service Officer
 - Access Benton County
 - Safe Routes to School and other bike and pedestrian advocacy groups
 - Greater Albany Public Schools and Jefferson School District
 - Jefferson Together!
 - CCO / Good Samaritan

Summary of Public Comments

Define acronyms, such as AMEDC, and avoid jargon in the plan

Use the term ‘People with Disabilities’

Clarify federal legislation, such as MAP-21

Coordinate with the Corvallis Area MPO

Need to educate the public on what the MPO is, and work with public to define biggest issues in the MPO area

Best ways to reach the Hispanic community: Radio (station 880), Local News channels, Univision (Spanish channel), Familias Activas, Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee. Hard copies placed at: Hispanic Stores, Meat Market, Schools, Making phone calls

Reach out to:

- Veterans
- Vulnerable Populations Planning Committee
- Senior Companion Program
- Access Benton County
- CCO
- Safe Routes to School

Newsletters/Media Outlets for Advertising:

- Radio (station 880)
- Local News channels /Univision (Spanish channel)
- Hospital publications (Good Samaritan, Corvallis Clinic)
- Senior News, e.g. 'Generations'
- Freebie papers
- Faith community & church newsletters
- Senior Centers
- Meals on Wheels

Best ways to reach the Hispanic community: Radio (station 880), Local News channels, Univision (Spanish channel), Familias Activas, Linn-Benton Hispanic Advisory Committee. Hard copies placed at: Hispanic Stores, Meat Market, Schools, Making phone calls.

Input from OSU Student Project

Albany Area Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Participation Plan, Plan of Action and Recommendations

Introduction

This plan of action includes ideas for engaging the public in transportation planning in the Albany Area. Below are general and community-specific recommendations and best practices for increasing public participation. Ideally, the public engagement process is long-term and focused on meaningful involvement for all. The recommendations outlined below are best utilized as a whole, however strategies can also be used individually. Recommendations include a framework for building community and increasing public participation as well as examples of community-building activities.

Prior to connecting with community groups or individuals, consider the overall vision of the project. Be sure to know how you would like community participation to look and, from the start, be clear about AAMPO's intentions, and who, ultimately makes the decisions. It is also important to be sure that community involvement is *meaningful involvement*. That is, community members need to feel and know that their participation is valued throughout the entire process.

Community building is not a simple and quick process; it takes time and work. The foundation of building community is building trust and working towards shared values.

General Recommendations for Engaging the Public

Identify who is impacted- who you are targeting, and how they get their information

- Identify members in the community who are impacted by changes in transportation (e.g., who rides the bus, who depends on transportation infrastructure to get to work, who would advocate for different land use- bicycle advocacy groups).
- Connect with existing groups and work with them to build the overall network. One way to do this is to use a *snowball* technique where once you have connected with one community leader you can ask him or her to help you identify and connect with other important people in the community.
- Try to identify *opinion leaders* in the community (opinion leaders are people who both lead the community and who others look up to in the adoption of opinions or ideas. These can include (but are not limited to) faith leaders and strong local business leaders.).
- Ride the bus and have informal conversations with people who use transportation currently.

Marketing and outreach

- Develop materials that are concise and clear, language should be colloquial. Avoid government and transportation specific jargon as much as possible.
- If you develop one message: make it values-driven, with emotionally compelling language and only highlight *one* strong fact (instead of overloading it with statistics).

For example: Albany Area received nearly \$700,000 for transportation projects in 2014, make your voice heard about how the money is spent

- Work with community contacts for pilot feedback on marketing or outreach materials. Ask them if they are understandable, culturally appropriate and engaging.
- Contact the local newspaper to write an article about the importance of public participation in transportation planning.

Community Assessment

- Once some opinion leaders or local experts have been identified and relationships have been built, work with leaders to identify resources and potential issues in the community around your topic.

Meaningful involvement

- Ensure involvement is meaningful and not tokenism.
- Keep promises to the community and follow through.
- Be aware of and sensitive to power dynamics in every meeting.
- Always come back to the values-driven framework.

Have a clear vision for people's engagement

- Consider why their input is important.

- Consistently check if this vision is being met.

Continually build trust and relationships outside of transportation

- Attend community events prior to asking for people's involvement, show that you and people in your organization are active participants in the community.
- Invest in community building by hosting non-official events.
- Try to learn how those you are connecting with interact socially and have non-official events (e.g., potlucks).
- Show that everyone's opinions matter.
- Spend time building relationships and getting to know people before every meeting or event.

Prepare others to engage in the process

- Most individuals are not experts in public participation, government processes, or transportation.
- Before public meetings, offer trainings on how to participate in public meetings.

Make sure meetings are inclusive

- Think back to your target population when planning the time and location of your public meetings.
 - Is there accessible transportation?
 - Is the meeting at a time when many of your participants can attend?
 - Consider the language and reading level of meeting materials.
 - Consider language barriers overall.
 - Will participants need to bring their children?
 - Have food or snacks if possible.

Albany Area Groups we have Connected With

Familias Activas

Familias Activas is a community group consisting largely of Latina mothers. They are based in Albany and are very active in the community. Initially they met up as a physical activity group, but now they are very active in advocating for healthy food in schools and increased accessibility for physical activity in Albany. They recently took part in a photo-mapping project to document Albany Area access to healthy options. They are starting to work on advocating for increased safe physical activity access using this detailed mapping project.

Familias Activas has worked with the City of Albany as liaisons for the Latino community regarding housing development. Best ways to connect with this group are to attend their meetings and speak with the core group of leaders. Although they have a bilingual coordinator, the core leadership of this group speaks Spanish and it is important to them that anyone who comes to talk with them speak to the entire leadership team in Spanish.

We have contacted the group and next steps include attending a meeting on June 4, 2014 and presenting AAMPO work in clear and concise terms (and in Spanish). AAMPO representatives should ask for support in how to connect to the Latino communities in Albany and ask for other community leaders to whom we should reach out.

Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance

The Linn Benton Health Equity Alliance is a coalition funded by the Oregon Office of Equity and Inclusion. The coalition has members from a number of community-based organizations and is committed to meaningful engagement of underrepresented populations.

The Alliance has identified priority health equity issues including increasing participation in policy level change in the community. Further, the Alliance has specifically identified transportation as one of their coalition priorities and may be a starting place for identifying community-based organizations and individuals who have a vested interest in improving public participation in transportation planning.

We have contacted the LBHEA listserv with information about AAMPO. We are waiting to hear back from individuals and the coordinator of the coalition for more information on how to connect with them.

North Albany Neighborhood Association and Monteith Neighborhood Association

We have yet to hear back from these neighborhood associations. They were active in 2007, but it is unclear if they still meet regularly. Next steps include sending a more personalized email and continuing to check online to see if there are local meetings to attend.

Future groups to contact

Faith groups

- In initial meetings with potential partners or participants, ask about faith groups and leaders in the community to get an idea of who to contact and how best to reach them. It is also possible to cold call churches and other faith groups in the area to connect if there are no specific recommendations from existing partners.

Parent Teacher Organizations

- PTAs or PTOs can usually be identified through the schools.

Students (LBCC Associated Students, School Districts)

People who currently use public transportation

- Informally observe and survey public transportation users on their thoughts around public participation and transportation planning.

School groups

- Involving students can increase parent interest. Ideas for involving students include simple and engaging classroom presentations about the government process or invite classes to open meetings.

Hosting a community meeting

- Connect with as many community members as possible and ask what type of public or community meeting they would be likely to attend (what time, where, etc.)
- Host a community meeting (as opposed to a formal policy meeting or public hearing) to gather input on transportation in the community
- Work with community members to identify the issues that are important to them, allow participants to create the agenda for each meeting
- Start with stories (e.g., ask each person to share one story about what they like about the transportation system) or with relationship building exercises, “dinamicas” or ice breakers
- Have a short brainstorming session that is values- framed. Ask participants to brainstorm assets and issues, then give each person a post-it or dot sticker and ask him/her to place their dots on the issues that are most important to them.

- Utilize multiple forms of communication (e.g., small group discussions, writing exercises) so that those who are do not tend to speak out, also have their voices heard