

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Policy Advisory Council

May 10, 2023

Agenda Item 7

What We Heard — MTC’s Draft 2023 Public Participation Plan (PPP) Update

Subject:

Summary of key takeaways from public engagement on MTC’s Draft 2023 Public Participation Plan and PPP next steps.

Background:

Federal regulations require MTC to adopt a PPP to inform the public and our partners about how they can participate in the development of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). State statutes further require MPOs to develop an engagement plan for the development of the RTP and the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), which is the Bay Area’s long-range plan known as Plan Bay Area 2050. Due to the nature of the specific federal and state requirements, the PPP has historically been focused exclusively on the long-range plan and the TIP; however, the latest iteration of the PPP informs members of the public of the various other opportunities to get involved in MTC’s work. The current update provided a timely opportunity to incorporate MTC’s Equity Platform into the PPP, as well as update our Guiding Principles and Engagement Strategies.

Summary of What We Heard

Starting in late 2022, MTC staff conducted public and stakeholder engagement to aid in the PPP’s development. This engagement included a month-long online survey, interviews with members of MTC’s Policy Advisory Council and a review of partners’ public participation plans, as well as public engagement best practices. The feedback staff received as part of this engagement was [presented to the Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee](#) on March 10, 2023. On February 24, 2023, MTC released the Draft PPP for a 45-day public comment period. Multiple e-mail blasts, a direct mailer to Equity Priority Communities, a press release and a digital engagement campaign encouraged the Bay Area public to read and comment on the PPP. The public comment period closed on April 10, 2023. Additionally, MTC staff conducted a second round of engagement that tested the document’s proposed strategies, especially those aimed at engaging historically underrepresented and hard-to-reach populations.

Starting in early March 2023, MTC staff began planning discussion groups with leaders from community-based organizations that serve people with limited English proficiency, persons with disabilities, and persons who are unhoused or housing unstable. Between March 20–29, 2023, staff conducted the following discussion groups via Zoom:

1. Spanish-speaking discussion group: **March 20, 2021**
 - a. Participant organizations: Arriba Juntos, El Tímpano, La Luz and UpValley Family Centers
2. Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking discussion group: **March 20, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Chinatown Community Development Center and Community Youth Center
3. Mandarin/Cantonese-speaking discussion group: **March 21, 2023**
 - a. Participant organization: Self Help for the Elderly
4. Persons with disabilities discussion group: **March 22, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Center for Independent Living, Community Resources for Independent Living and Lighthouse for the Blind
5. Unhoused/housing unstable discussion group: **March 23, 2023**
 - a. Participant organizations: Building Opportunities for Self Sufficiency, Hamilton Families and Lao Family Community Development
6. Unhoused/housing unstable discussion group: **March 29, 2023**
 - a. Participant organization: Brilliant Corners

The discussion groups yielded robust feedback that informed a variety of strategies to improve engagement with the represented communities. The following are the key takeaways from these discussions:

- Create and maintain relationships with community-based organizations.
- Go to where the people are.
- Use small groups or focus groups to receive input on complex topics.
- Offer incentives to drive better attendance.

- Use online engagement to reach persons with disabilities, youth and those who are unhoused or housing unstable.
- Promote and advertise upcoming events and engagement opportunities broadly.
- For email and regular mail correspondence, use catchy, relevant email subject lines or make envelopes/mailers stand out.

In addition, the public comment period yielded 124 comments in the form of emails, comments submitted via the web and written correspondence from members of the public as well as our partners. No one topic dominated public sentiment, but the key takeaways from this feedback include:

- While not related to the PPP, several of the comments called for improvements to public transit.
- Increase accountability and build trust, especially by reporting back on how the public's feedback influenced the process.
- Include specific communities that were missing from those MTC aims to meaningfully engage, such as families and labor unions.
- Increase education and raise the public's awareness about who MTC is and its work, and especially Plan Bay Area.

Next Steps:

Staff is continuing to analyze the comments and is making changes to the draft PPP based on all the feedback received. Staff will then present the summary of feedback and any recommended changes to the Joint MTC ABAG Legislation Committee on June 9, 2023. Staff also will recommend that the Committee forward the PPP to the Commission for approval at its June meeting.

Issues:

None identified

Attachments:

None