

# **Public Involvement Process (PIP)**

## **New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT)**

**Draft for Public Comment**  
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## **Introduction**

Public involvement is vital to planning a transportation system that meets the needs of all users. The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of the New Hampshire Department of Transportation's (NHDOT) Public Involvement Process (PIP). This document pertains to the Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRTP), the State Ten Year Plan (TYP), and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). These documents serve as the core in developing capital planning and improvement programs in NH.

In preparing the LRTP, TYP and STIP, the NHDOT provides multiple opportunities and initiatives to engage the public. This document will help demonstrate how to participate in planning NH's transportation system, where transportation priorities and improvement ideas come from; how individuals, communities and other interested parties can be involved in the process of project solicitation and selection; and why sharing concerns and ideas with decision makers is important to planning the overall transportation system.

The LRTP is 20- year strategic planning document that outlines the priorities, needs and strategies that the State of NH and NHDOT will use in developing and planning transportation improvements across all modes of travel. The TYP identifies the specific projects and programs that will be funded as recommended by NH municipalities and NHDOT, adopted by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT), recommended by the Governor, and ultimately approved by the NH Legislature and signed into law.

The STIP is a four-year document based on the approved Ten-Year Plan and includes all projects and programs that will be funded with federal funding or are regionally significant. The STIP must reflect the projects and programs identified in the Transportation Improvement Programs (TIPs) developed by NH's four Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in conjunction with the communities in their respective regions.

NHDOT is responsible to conduct its statewide transportation planning activities in compliance with federal and state laws that are intended to support public involvement in planning.

There are many federal, state, and regional agencies and organizations involved in NH's transportation planning process that will be discussed in this document. NHDOT and its partners work cooperatively to solicit and facilitate public input into the transportation planning process. Public input is needed, important and critical to the decision-making process.

NHDOT's public involvement process is designed to provide the public and interested stakeholders a variety of opportunities to provide comments, review information and be engaged in planning the transportation system.

Public participation often begins with someone expressing a concern or idea. It may come from a resident, business, elected official, municipal staff, or others interested in the transportation system. The concern or idea may be about a safety issue, elements of the network (roads, bridges, etc.) or other concerns such as traffic signal coordination or transit services.

NHDOT has implemented a wide range of outreach initiatives designed to allow all who want to be involved the opportunity to make their concerns and suggestions about the transportation system known to decision makers at every relevant level of government (local, regional, state, and federal). The concern or idea may be conveyed to a municipal staff person such as the Town/City Administrator, Public Works Director/ Municipal Engineer, Road Agent; member of a local municipal board such as Select Board/City Council, Planning Board; Regional Planning Commission (RPC) or Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO); member of a regional committee such as the RPC/MPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) or Policy Committee; State or Federal legislative representatives or to NHDOT directly.

Decisions regarding the development of NH's transportation system may affect individuals, communities, existing and future users of the transportation system, and other initiatives. Thusly, it is important to hear from the public, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, private providers of transportation (intercity bus operators, employer-based cash-out program, shuttle program or telework program), users of public transportation, pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, providers of freight transportation services and other interested parties.

Public input received during the public comment periods, public hearings or other outreach initiatives is a vital component in planning NH's transportation future. NHDOT will continue to use traditional public outreach methods as well as new and innovative ideas and technology in its public outreach initiatives.

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The key objective of the public involvement process is to ensure public concerns and issues are identified, evaluated, and responded to in a thoughtful, thorough, and timely manner. So, please know NHDOT wants the public to be involved.

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## **Overview of NH Planning Documents Addressed in this PIP**

### **Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan (LRTP)**

NH's current LRTP plan was updated in July 2010 and is titled, "NH Long Range Transportation Plan 2010-2030." The Plan outlines the broad strategic direction for the State and Department of Transportation for a 20- year time horizon.

As of December 2023, NHDOT is selecting a consultant to assist NHDOT with the development of the new LRTP. The update will serve to identify the goals and objectives for planning the transportation system for the next 20 years. The updated plan will incorporate a future forecast period, a vision, and document assets and performance measures of NH's transportation system.

The updated plan will be developed cooperatively with the Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) and Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). Additional details on the process to update the plan will be forthcoming, including opportunities for public involvement. When updating the plan opportunities for public involvement NHDOT will comply with all federal (23 CRF 450.210 & 216), and state requirements.

Electronic copies of the draft and the final adopted plan will be posted on NHDOT's website. A copy of the final plan will be provided to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) for informational purposes.

### **Ten-Year Transportation Plan (TYP)**

The purpose of the TYP is to identify projects and programs, to allow New Hampshire to fully participate in federally supported transportation improvement projects as well as to outline projects and programs funded with State transportation dollars. NHDOT prepares a list of projects intended to be under construction at some point over the next ten years.

Once the TYP is approved and signed into law by the Governor, the process begins again. The process to update the TYP is developed through an extensive public involvement process. The TYP includes details on the location, route, funding, phase, year, program funding category and other relevant details. The TYP is required to include the expected dates and estimated costs of construction for each project and program.

The TYP Plan is updated every two-years, per the requirements of NH RSA 228:99 and RSA 240. The current draft 2025-2034 TYP and previously approved TYPs and other information about the TYP process can be found on the NHDOT website.

There are many steps in the development of the TYP, including holding public meetings and public hearings. The public is informed and invited to participate through notification in the newspaper, social media outlets, coordination with various partners, and other targeted outreach efforts. The goal is to inform and engage with all members of the public, as public participation is the foundation of the TYP process. Below are key steps in the TYP process.

- The RPCs/MPOs solicit project ideas from their respective communities and through their regional planning process rank and submit projects to NHDOT for inclusion in the draft TYP. The regional process includes coordination with the Technical Review Committee (TAC) and Policy Committees. Each RPC/MPO is responsible for the public involvement efforts in their respective region.
- NHDOT coordinates with the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) in preparing the draft Ten-Year Plan. GACIT includes the five NH Executive Councilors and the Commissioner of NHDOT. NHDOT provides an overview of criteria, assumptions, details by modes, funding, performance criteria and other information used in preparing the draft TYP.
- NHDOT publishes the draft TYP.
- NHDOT and GACIT hold at least one public hearing on the draft TYP in each GACIT member's district. It is up to each GACIT member as to number, location, and time of the public hearing they want schedule in their district.
- Anyone may attend the GACIT public meeting and GACIT public hearings. The GACIT public hearings are conducted to solicit public input on the draft TYP. The public is provided the opportunity to offer testimony at the hearing and or submit written comments for the public record.
- Depending on the location and available technology a hearing may be recorded via a local community television network, and/or a virtual meeting option may be offered.
- The GACIT public hearing notice is posted in a newspaper and distributed through various media outlets. The NHDOT website is updated to included information about the public hearings. Information may also be found on the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) websites.
- Following the GACIT public hearings, NHDOT compiles information for GACIT to consider in developing their recommendations on the draft TYP which is formally submitted to the Governor.
- The Governor's draft plan is then submitted through the State's legislative review process, which includes review by various committees of the NH Legislature -Public Work and Highway Committee, NH Senate Transportation Committee, and others. NHDOT and the RPCs/MPOs participate in the State legislative process of the draft TYP. The public is encouraged to fully participate in the NH Legislative process as governed by NH laws.
- Once the plan is approved by the NH Legislature, it is submitted to the Governor for signature. Once the TYP is signed into law by the Governor, it is NHDOT's working plan until it is updated 2-years later.
- Following the approval of the plan, the approved TYP is posted on NHDOT's website.

## **Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)**

The STIP is a list of transportation projects and programs covering a four-year period, showing projects and programs which will utilize federal funding as well as projects which have been identified to be regionally significant that are funded with non-federal sources. The STIP is updated after the TYP is signed into law by the Governor. The first four years of the approved Ten-Year Plan become the basis of the STIP. The STIP is updated via amendments and monthly modifications per the written procedures adopted by the Interagency Partners.

The STIP is governed by the provisions of both federal and state laws, including 23 U.S. C sections 134 and 135 as amended, and NH RSA 228:99. The STIP document is prepared by NHDOT and distributed to the MPOs, rural RPCs and the other Interagency partners (State and Federal agencies) for review and discussion. The STIP must be financially constrained, meaning in simple terms that the funding is reasonably available. NHDOT is responsible for the fiscal management of federal and state transportation funds. The fiscal management responsibilities of NHDOT require thoughtful and deliberate discussions involving many factors including federal requirements, performance measures, asset conditions, availability of other funding, funding categories, project advertising schedule, and so much more. The STIP documents are posted on NHDOT and MPO websites. The STIP must be approved by FHWA and FTA.

STIP amendments require a public comment period and public hearing in the respective MPOs region. NHDOT is responsible for posting the public comment period for the five rural RPCs (non-MPOs in NH) and the State. Each MPO and NHDOT is responsible to continue its public involvement program by conducting the public comment periods and public hearings as required. NHDOT posts the STIP and related STIP documents on the website. Each MPO provides information about the regional transportation improvement plan (TIP) to their MPO Technical Review Committee (TAC), and Policy Committee. The MPO Policy Committee conducts the public hearing for their MPO region. NHDOT is responsible for incorporating the regional TIP amendments into the STIP in whole and submitting the STIP for federal approval.

## **Project Implementation**

NHDOT then continues the process to implement the projects and programs outlined in the approved TYP. Many of the projects are managed by the local community, and many are managed by NHDOT. NHDOT and the local communities coordinate public engagement opportunities as the project advances to construction. NHDOT coordinates and participates in many public outreach initiatives to share information, to learn from the public, and to encourage and foster continued involvement in the transportation planning process from an idea to construction. Most projects are multi-year endeavors, and thusly updates and information sessions are part of project development process.

## **Federal and State Statutory Requirements**

The PIP is being updated to address new federal and state legislative requirements, to incorporate new ideas and methods to enhance public participation, and to inform the public where and how they can get involved. The current PIP document is dated 2012. Since 2012 there have been two significant pieces of federal transportation legislation:

- 2015 - Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST)
- 2021 - The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL).

NHDOT's programs and services are administered in accordance with all applicable provisions of various federal programs, policies, and initiatives. Federal provisions are found in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), United State Code (USC), Executive Orders (EO), including but not limited to the Civil Right Act of 1964, Executive Order 12898 (1994) Environmental Justice in Minority and Low-Income Populations (1994), Executive Order 13166 (2000) Improving Access to Services to Persons with Limited English Proficiency, and other applicable provisions.

Under the provisions of the BIL, more emphasis has been placed on addressing equity in transportation planning by reaching out and engaging traditionally underserved and historically under-represented populations including minorities, disabled, elderly, immigrants, persons with limited English proficiency, refugee populations, and other populations protected under the requirements of Title VI, Civil Rights Act, Justice 40 Initiative and other related Environmental Justice (EJ) requirements.

- Equity in transportation seeks fairness in discussing and addressing mobility and accessibility, and providing options based on the needs of the populations being served or affected by the transportation related decisions.
- Environmental justice places emphasis on encouraging participation of low-income and minority populations in the transportation decision making process.

NHDOT must adhere to specific provisions of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) in implementing the transportation planning functions of the State and when developing its public outreach efforts. Listed below are key provisions and references.

### [eCFR :: 23 CFR Part 450 -- Planning Assistance and Standards.](#)

Some key provisions pertaining to the statewide LRTP and STIP in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

- ❖ 23 CFR 450.206 Scope of the statewide and nonmetropolitan transportation planning process.
- ❖ 23 CFR 450.208 Coordination of planning process activities.
- ❖ 23 CFR 450.210 Interested parties, public involvement, and consultation.
- ❖ 23 CFR, 450. 216 Development of the Long- Range Statewide Transportation.



- ❖ [23 CFR 450.218](#) Development and content of the statewide transportation improvement program (STIP).
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.222](#) Project selection from the STIP.
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.224](#) Applicability of NEPA to statewide transportation plans and programs.
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.324](#) Development and content of the metropolitan transportation plan.
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.326](#) Development and content of the transportation improvement plan (TIP).
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.328](#) TIP Revision and relationship to STIP.
- ❖ [23 CFR 450.330](#) TIP action by the FHWA and the FTA.

Per the provisions of 450:210, the State, at a minimum must address the following in the development of a public involvement process. The regulations require the State (NHDOT) to develop and use a documented public involvement process that provides opportunities for public review and comment at key decisions points, and that the public involvement process address minimum requirements.

[eCFR: 23 CFR 450.210 -- Interested parties, public involvement, and consultation.](#)

1. Early and continuous public involvement opportunities that provide timely information about transportation issues and decision-making processes to the public and others.
2. Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information.
3. Provide adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points.
4. To the maximum extent practicable, ensure that public meetings are held at convenient and accessible locations and times.
5. To the maximum extent practicable, use visualization techniques to describe the proposed long-range statewide transportation plan and supporting studies.
6. To the maximum extent practicable, make public information available in electronically accessible format and means, such as the World Wide Web, as appropriate to afford reasonable opportunity for consideration of public information.
7. Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input during the development of the long-range statewide transportation plan and STIP.
8. Include a process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services; and
9. Provide for the periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all interested parties and revise the process, as appropriate.

The federal transportation planning requirements have specific requirements for public involvement in metropolitan areas. In addition, States also have documented processes for public involvement in non-metropolitan areas. In July 2021, NHDOT posted the document

titled: “Nonmetropolitan Areas of NH Cooperative Public Process for Transportation Planning Efforts in New Hampshire” . This document serves to identify the many opportunities that allow nonmetropolitan local officials and the public opportunities to participate in the transportation planning efforts led by the NHDOT.

NHDOT’s Office of Access, Opportunity and Compliance serves to ensure New Hampshire’s programs and services are administered in accordance with all applicable federal requirements including those of participating partners, recipients and subrecipients.

All NHDOT public notices include information on who to contact if language or other services are needed for anyone wanting to participate in a public meeting. The information presented at public meeting may be conveyed verbally, in written text, and in various visualization formats (maps, graphs, diagrams, pictures, charts, etc.), and assistance is available to help understand the information.

To ensure all are provided the opportunity to participate in the public process, NHDOT and its participating partners may utilize various resources to ascertain details of the population, which are used in tailoring the public outreach efforts. This may include information on English proficiency, access to transportation, persons with disabilities, demographic characteristics such as age and income, vehicle ownership, and a range of other resources.

In addition to federal requirements for public involvement, there are state laws regarding conducting public meetings and other transportation related responsibilities of NHDOT, regional planning commissions, and local municipalities. NH’s state laws are found in the State of New Hampshire Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA), commonly referred to as RSAs.

In the transportation planning process, NHDOT must comply with applicable provisions of both federal and state laws, programs, policies, and initiatives. NHDOT is responsible for the administration of transportation planning functions of the State NHDOT and participating partners must conduct public meetings in accordance with applicable state laws and executive orders. NH RSA 91- A, Access to Governmental Records and Meetings, and is commonly referred to as the Right-to-Know law. Notices for public meetings must be publicly posted, this may include a legal notice in a newspaper of general circulation, in a public building (such as a municipal office), or another public place.

There are many state laws pertaining to the NHDOT’s responsibilities as an agency of the State. There are also laws regarding the responsibilities of municipalities pertaining to the spending of municipal funds and other specific provisions related to infrastructure improvements such as roads, bridges, sewer, water, sidewalks, trails, other municipal assets, and the management and maintenance of state and local transportation system assets. Below are some key provisions:

NH RSA Title I, Chapter 21-L Department of Transportation. The Department of Transportation is responsible for the following general functions.

- NH RSA Title XX, Transportation. NHDOT's responsibilities and requirements related to public participation, including requirements for conducting public hearings as they may related to projects.
  - ✓ Chapter 228, Administration of Transportation Laws, this addresses specific provisions on various transportation matters. RSA 228:99 Statewide Intermodal Transportation Planning and Improvement Program (STIP). Each metropolitan planning organization and rural regional planning commission shall provide a regional transportation improvement program (TIP) to the department of transportation no later than April 1 of each odd-numbered year. Such plans shall include a public involvement plan and education initiative to ensure early and adequate input from residents, municipalities, and any other interested parties in New Hampshire. RSA 228:100 Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT).
  - ✓ Chapter 230 State Highways including provisions of NH RSA 230: 13; RSA 230: 14; NH RSA 230:17; NH RSA 230:18; NH RSA 230:19; NH RSA 230:45.
  - ✓ Chapter 231, Cities, Towns and Village District Highways
  - ✓ Chapter 240 State 10-Year Transportation Improvement Program.
  
- NH RSA Title III, Towns, Cities, Village Districts and Unincorporated Places.
  - ✓ Chapter 32 Municipal Budget Law. Addresses expenditure of public funds for various types of projects including transportation initiatives.
  - ✓ Chapter 34: Capital Reserve Funds for Cities VI. Municipal and regional transportation improvement projects including engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction costs of transportation facilities, and for operating and capital costs for public transportation.
  - ✓ Chapter 35 Capital Reserve Funds of Counties, Towns, Districts and Water Departments- Municipal and regional transportation improvement projects including engineering, right-of-way acquisition and construction costs of transportation facilities, and for operating and capital costs for public transportation.
  
- NH RSA Title X: Public Health. RSA 125-C. Air Pollution.
  - ✓ Air pollution standard of the federal Clean Air Act (CAA), in NH are administered by NHDES through the development of the State Implementation Plan (SIP) relative to Transportation Conformity.
  - ✓ Specific details can be found in NHDES Administrative Rules, Chapter Env-A-1500 Conformity ( Env-A 1503.9 and 1503.10. ).
  - ✓ The NHDOT and Interagency partners are responsible for addressing the transportation conformity requirements.

## **Public, Interested Stakeholders & Interagency Partners**

To carry out the responsibilities outlined in both federal and state laws regarding the transportation planning process involves engaging participation from the public and other interested stakeholders. Engaging the public is an interactive and informative process for all involved. A person may choose to participate at any level of government (local, regional, state, or federal) in sharing their ideas and concerns about transportation issues in their town/city, region, or the state. NHDOT and the Interagency partners facilitate public involvement in the development of the LRTP, TYP and STIP through a continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative transportation planning process (also known as the 3Cs process).

Engaging with the public is about creating awareness, sharing information, and facilitating discussion, so all involved can make informed decisions. The public includes anyone who is interested in participating in the transportation planning process. The public and others are afforded opportunities to participate in the public process and are encouraged to stay engaged throughout the process. The concerns and ideas expressed provide valuable insights and information to understanding the needs of individuals and the community, all of which is very important in planning the overall statewide transportation system. An idea for a transportation improvement or project, typically goes through several stages of discussion. The concerns and needs expressed may facilitate other discussions regarding both current and future transportation system needs, and may lead to a project, program, or policy being considered in the development of a community plan, regional transportation plan, local Master Plan, the LRTP, TYP or STIP.

There are multiple opportunities at the local and regional level to be engaged in the transportation planning process, which helps shape and inform state transportation planning efforts. Public participation can occur as part of a conversation or at a formal meeting. Although not every issue or concern may evolve into a project, know that NHDOT values the input shared with them. Some transportation initiatives are solely the responsibility of the municipality, others are developed as a joint effort of the municipality and the state. What is important to remember is that the local and regional transportation network are important elements of the overall state transportation network.

Advancing an idea from a concept to constructing an actual project takes time and coordination. Once a project is included in the TYP the process for public involvement does not stop. Once a project is included in the TYP it will go through various stages of planning and development - Preliminary Engineering, Right-of Way, and Construction. NHDOT assigns a project manager to each project to be the lead point of contact. There are many steps in the developing a project, such as assessing a project's need, defining the scope of the project, securing funding, collecting, and analyzing data, preparing draft design and final design documents and on to construction. Both NHDOT and local municipalities share in the management of projects.

Depending on the scope and interest in a project, NHDOT may also have a project website. The project website typically includes details regarding upcoming meetings or events, notice of public comment periods and other relevant information, such as maps, studies, and related reports.

**At the local level**, a transportation concern, issue, or project may be discussed at a Select Board, City Council, Planning Board, Capital Improvement Committee (CIP), Economic Development Committee or other local municipal meeting. Local municipalities often manage transportation projects and have responsibility regarding the expenditure of public funds. Discussions on projects and grant opportunities may occur at one or more meetings. Towns and cities must adhere to all applicable NH state laws pertaining to the acceptance and expenditure of funds. To learn more about local transportation projects, contact municipal staff such as the Town/City Administrator-Manager, Engineer/Public Works Director/Road agent, Community Development/Planning Department; review information posted on a municipal website and engaging with others in the community. The input received at local public meetings is important to NHDOT, as the local and regional transportation network represents a significant portion of the statewide transportation network. Listening and responding to local and regional concerns is an important component of NHDOT's public involvement process.

**At the regional level** transportation concerns and ideas may be identified in the Regional Master Plan, Regional Long-Range Transportation Plan, Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) or included in other initiatives of the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The RPCs work cooperatively with the local communities in their region on a range of regional topics including transportation. Local community representatives are appointed by the town/city to serve on the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), or Policy Committee. NHDOT staff and our Interagency partner attend and participate in the TAC and Policy Committee meetings. These public meetings facilitate on-going interaction and cooperation between local, regional, state, and federal entities. The public is welcome to attend the TAC and Policy meetings. Contact the Regional Planning Commission in your area to learn more and how to get involve in addressing transportation needs and concerns. The RPCs solicit input from their communities for projects to include in the MTP. Projects included in the MTP provide the framework for advancing discussions and for identifying potential projects to be considered in preparing the Ten-Year Plan.

**At the state level**, NHDOT is responsible for the overall management of the State's transportation infrastructure assets. NHDOT administers and oversees many Federal and State programs, including but not limited to State Block grant aid, Transportation Alternatives (TA), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ), Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP), State Aid Bridge (SAB), and other new programs under the BIL federal legislation.

### **Regional Interagency Partners**

NHDOT work with their Interagency partners on STIP related issues. The Interagency partners include the nine (9) Regional Planning Commissions, four of which are Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and the five (5) rural planning commissions, Federal Highway (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Environmental Protection Act (EPA), NH Department of Environmental Services (DES) and NH Department of Transportation (NHDOT). Each of these partners plays a vital role in the transportation planning process. A brief explanation of their roles and responsibilities are discussed below. The Interagency partners meet regularly to discuss projects included in the STIP and other transportation initiatives. The MPO partners are required

to have a public comment period and conduct a public hearing on the STIP amendments.

New Hampshire is divided into nine Regional Planning Commissions (RPC) which are political subdivisions of the State. NH RSA Chapter 36 includes specifics on the role, functions, and responsibilities of the nine RPCs. The RPCs are responsible for preparing a comprehensive master plan for development of the region, which includes transportation infrastructure, addressing land use and other broader community issues through a regional public involvement process. The RPCs received funding from local dues, NHDOT, and other funding sources. The funding provided through NHDOT represents the largest revenue source for the RPCs and is used specifically for the tasks outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which includes the development of the LRTP, TYP and STIP and other transportation planning functions.

The five (5) rural RPCs represent the nonmetropolitan areas of the State. The five rural RPCs, although not required by federal regulations, prepare long-range transportation plans that can be project specific.

1. Central New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission (CNHRPC)
2. Lakes Region Planning Commission (LRPC)
3. North County Council (NCC)
4. Southwest Regional Planning Commission (SWRPC)
5. Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC)

There are four RPCs designated by the Governor and federally recognized to represent the metropolitan areas of the State. They are commonly referred to as a Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

1. Nashua Regional Planning Commission (NRPC)
2. Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC)
3. Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC)
4. Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC).

Under federal law, the MPOs have specific responsibilities regarding planning the transportation system. An MPO is a regional policy body, required in urbanized areas with populations over 50,000. An MPO is defined in simple terms as the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process. An MPO is responsible in cooperation with the state and other transportation providers for carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning requirements of federal highway and transit legislation. MPO boundaries are defined using Bureau of Census population data and in accordance with procedures established by applicable federal and state requirements. The MPO boundaries are reviewed every ten years following the Census.

Each MPO is required to develop a 20-year, project specific long-range transportation plan. The development of the 20-year plan and the four-year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) must be approved cooperatively with the NHDOT and the providers of public transit services. The TIP is a list regional projects which will receive federal funding and other

regionally significant projects in the defined four-year period. The TIP must include a list of projects that is consistent with the MPO's regional long-range transportation plan, meet the air quality conformity requirements of the Clean Air Act (CAA), and be financially constrained. TIPs are guided by the goals and objectives outlined in the MPO's long-range regional transportation plans. Each of the MPOs has established a public involvement process that is governed by CFR 450.316(a) and CFR 450.324. Each MPO prepares and post a public notice, including the dates to submit public comments and conducts a public hearing.

Meetings of the RPCs and MPOs are public meetings. The RPCs determine when the meetings are scheduled and the format for the meetings. Agendas, meeting minutes, and other information on transportation planning and other subjects including but not limited to: Regional Long Range Transportation Plan, Master Plans, TIP document, Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), etc. can be found on the RPC websites.

Each of the four MPOs in NH have a Public Involvement Plans (PIP). Each of these plans outlines the process, strategies and evaluation criteria used to engage the public and evaluate the effectiveness of their respective outreach initiatives. Updated information on public engagement opportunities can be found on the MPO websites.

- Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission (SNHPC) Public Participation Plan (PIP) updated July 10, 2023. [Public Participation Plan | SNHPC](#)
- Nashua Regional Planning Commission Metropolitan Planning Organization Public Involvement Process for Transportation Planning adopted June 19, 2019. [Public Engagement \(nashuarpc.org\)](#)
- Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Public Participation Plan Fiscal Year 2020. [Public Participation Plan – Strafford Regional Planning Commission](#)
- Rockingham Planning Commission- Public Participation Plan for Regional Transportation Planning for Rockingham Planning Commission Metropolitan Planning Organization October 2020. [Rockingham Planning Commission: Public Engagement \(therpc.org\)](#)

### **Federal and State Interagency Partners**

NHDOT coordinates with other State and Federal Interagency partners including the Federal Highway (FHWA), Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Environmental Protection Act (EPA) and NH Department of Environmental Services (DES). The role and responsibilities of these partners are defined in both federal and state regulations.

Each agency has a website where information on a range of transportation and other related topics, grant opportunities and other resources can be found and explored. Users can search a particular website to learn about specific topics of interest.

These agencies, and other federal agencies, are involved in the planning of NH's transportation network and system. Because the transportation sector is a major contributor to emissions which affect air quality, air quality is monitored and evaluated as part of the transportation planning process.

The New Hampshire's Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) is one of the Interagency Partners. The role and responsibilities of NHDES are defined in state regulations.

## **Public Outreach Tools, Methods, and Practices**

NHDOT provides a range of opportunities for each person to be involved and encourages all to stay involved. There are many opportunities to participate in the transportation planning process in the development of the LRTP, TYP and STIP.

Participation is an individual choice, and each person can participate in the process where they feel most comfortable. This could mean attending a public meeting or informational session; offering testimony at the public hearing; participating in a virtual meeting; submitting written comments; sharing input with local municipal staff, or with state or federal representatives or others; responding to a survey; and visiting websites to learn more.

Planning and conducting any public outreach effort involves much coordination and consideration, with the goal to facilitate a positive responsive public engagement opportunity for all involved. NHDOT has an open-door policy, and anyone may contact NHDOT for information, to arrange a meeting, or for information about a project or program. NHDOT encourages the exchange of information with public officials, agencies, and citizens during all the stages of planning a transportation project.

The NHDOT's public involvement strategies may vary depending on the project location, project complexity, community needs, public concerns/attitudes, global issues (pandemic), recent events, available technology, and other factors. In implementing its public participation strategies NHDOT strives to understand the community demographics, build upon community relationships, develop an understanding of the community's needs and wants, involve board and far-reaching representation of the community interest, use techniques that will foster input (such as scheduling meetings when and where people can participate), and inform the public of how their input will be used in a decision about a particular project, plan or study.

NHDOT organizes and participates in many types of meetings to share information, receive comments, and to engage in public discussions about the statewide transportation system. All public meetings are open to the public. NHDOT host and post public meeting notices on their website, in newspapers, and on several social media venues. NHDOT is also involved in other meetings such as the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportations (GACIT), Legislative meetings, Municipal meetings, Project specific meetings, Regional Planning Commission (RPC) meetings (including Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Policy meeting of the RPC Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs).

NHDOT shares information on public involvement opportunities via many and varied formats such as legal notices in newspapers, email blasts, mailing lists, newsletters, radio and public service announcements, press releases, posting of notices at various locations, distribution to committees, audio and video recording of meetings, social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, video, television, posting information on websites (NHDOT, municipal, RPC, MPO



and others) and direct communication with individuals and community partners.

Below is a list of several of the key elements taken into consideration when NHDOT is organizing and planning public outreach efforts:

- The format of a meeting reflects the purpose and need for the meeting. A meeting may be scheduled as a public forum, a public meeting, public hearing, open house, informational session, or etc. The information NHDOT shares at its public outreach efforts varies depending on the purpose of the meeting. In many instances, NHDOT will share a PowerPoint presentation to provide the framework for the meeting discussion. If a public hearing is scheduled, there will be opportunities for the public to offer testimony, which may include verbal or the submission of written comments. In other forums the purpose may be to share information and provide an opportunity for dialogue and interaction. The goal of all public outreach initiatives is to listen and provide information to the public.
- Meetings may be conducted as an in-person meeting, hybrid or an all-virtual meeting. Available technology may afford opportunity for a hybrid/ virtual meeting using Zoom, Teams, or other tools such as the Owl, a 360-degree video conferencing device. Consideration is given for those who may use technology or those who may not have access or cannot use the technology.
- Coordination with local municipal leaders and other decisions makers.
- Coordination with other partners to identify at risk groups, and targeted population groups.
- Public notices must include language regarding all applicable ADA, Title VI, and Anti-Discrimination requirements. Meeting locations must be accessible to persons with physical disabilities. Translation services of verbal and written documentation for persons with limited English proficiency and assistance for hearing and visually impaired. Notices and other information may be posted in other languages to targeted populations. NHDOT has an internal directory for language assistance comprised of NHDOT employees and also contracts externally with Rapport International for language translation services.
- Meeting locations are near where a project may be planned or is being considered.
- Meetings are held at times and in a location convenient and accessible. Consideration is given to how people will get to the meeting – is the meeting location accessible to transit routes, is there adequate parking, or opportunities to use non-motorized transportation to get to the meeting.
- Meeting may be rescheduled due to weather or other concerns.
- Meeting should be structured to ensure there is sufficient time for public input.
- Posting of signage to the meeting room location.
- Meetings may be held in a public building such as a town/city hall, community center, library or other venues accessible to the public.
- Survey instruments and mobile application to solicit public input.
- Various applications involving the use of technology such as virtual meetings, mass distribution of public notices via email, on-site survey polling, dissemination of information via social media venues (Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, etc.), Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to share and convey data, maps, and visualization of

information and materials, language translation services, QR code, broadcasting of recorded meetings on community TV etc.

- Visualization tools to convey project details. Visualization techniques may include conveying images using aerial photographs, showing existing and proposed features, before and after photographs, before and after rendering of a project area, video simulations such as how traffic patterns could change, a video of the project area, visual presentation of a project timeline, themes of GIS web-based interactive map features, charts, storyboards, rendering and steps in the process.
- Information shared at meetings or posted on the website may be presented in one or more formats such as written, graphs, diagrams, maps, tables, and other visualization methods. The intent is to present the information for all to understand and may be in the form of handouts, reports, factsheets, studies, or other infographics. Other tools or techniques may include use of crowd sourcing tools, mobile applications, webinars, and survey tools.

NHDOT also requires all sub recipients of federal funding including the RPCs/MPOs, and local agencies/municipalities using federal funding to adhere to all federal and state requirement for equal access and non-discrimination. NHDOT and its participating partners strive to engage and provide information to all interested in participating in the public process. Anyone may contact NHDOT or its participating partners with questions or how they can get information or be involved. Important to NHDOT and its participating partners is the need to continue to monitor and evaluate their public outreach initiatives and ways to improve the process. Below is a general summary of NHDOT's efforts to evaluate its public outreach efforts.

### **Measuring and Evaluating Outreach Efforts**

The USDOT defines meaningful public involvement as a process that proactively seeks full representation from the community, considers public comments and feedback, and incorporates that feedback into a project, program, or plan, when possible.

The terms “performance measures” and “metrics” are used in federal legislation to address how various components of the transportation system are evaluated and assessed, including public participation.

NHDOT believes in the importance of public participation and continuously works to enhance and improve on outreach efforts as time, staff and resources allow. Preparing any public outreach initiatives entails coordination and consideration many factors. In evaluating the effectiveness of NHDOT's public engagement efforts, NHDOT considers many elements. This may include developing and preparing a summary to the following types of questions, observations from a meeting, developing questions which could be included on a post-meeting survey, and solicited and unsolicited feedback received from the public and other participating partners.

In more simple terms, it often begins with a self- assessment of the meeting preparation, how the meeting was conducted, and follow-up initiatives and resources used to share and convey

information to the public. Below are some key questions considered in the assessment process.

**Organizing the Meeting:**

- ✓ How did people hear about the meeting? What specific media outlets were used to disseminate information about the meeting? How often were media announcements made?
- ✓ Were translators in attendance at the meeting, if known non-English speaking people would be attending?
- ✓ Was there adequate parking, access to public transit and accessible access to the building? Were there any complaints or comments about access to the site? Should another venue be considered for future meetings?
- ✓ Were the microphones placed at convenient locations in the meeting room so not to intimidate persons wanting to speak?
- ✓ Was a post-meeting survey available at the meeting?
- ✓ Did the meeting conflict with any local meetings?
- ✓ Review of previous survey questions and tools to engage the public.

**Participation in the Meeting:**

- ✓ What was the demographic composition of the attendees (age, gender, race, persons with disabilities, targeted populations, public, elected officials, etc.). Did people with specific needs participate in the meeting?
- ✓ Who did not attend the meeting? Are there geographic (rural/urban) or demographic gap in the participation at the meeting?
- ✓ Was there signage marking the meeting room location, or was it hard to find the meeting room?
- ✓ Public input noted via raise of hands, at the meeting if a specific question is asked, or applause.
- ✓ Were there any unique or surprise comments raised at the meeting?
- ✓ How many people asked questions at the meeting, compared to the number at the meeting?
- ✓ Were there remote meeting options? Did remote meeting attendees having any technical issues connecting, participating, issue with audio or components?
- ✓ Was there a meeting survey at the end? How many people completed or partially completed the survey?
- ✓ Did anyone ask for a paper survey or handouts?
- ✓ Was sufficient time given to participants to offer input on the presentation, or provide comments on the printed materials?

**Post Meeting:**

- ✓ What did the survey results convey about the participation and issues asked?
- ✓ Were any comments received about the meeting location, meeting time, format, or presentation materials?
- ✓ How many people have asked to be included on an email list for future project updates?

- ✓ How many written public comments were received?
- ✓ What was the theme of the comments?
- ✓ Did people stay after the meeting to ask additional questions?
- ✓ Which social media sites were most visited? Was there an increase in participation after a media blast, or additional public notice?
- ✓ Was there a request for meeting notes and other information from the meeting?
- ✓ Use Survey wrap up-questions such as- Is it preferable to learn about a meeting by email, printed public notice or other electronic communication? Was the meeting scheduled at the most convenient time and location to encourage attendance by those potentially most affected by the project? Is it preferred to have on-site voting or polling at the public meeting or complete a survey? How far away was the meeting to travel to? Would there be a more convenient meeting time, or location to suggest? Are evening meetings or daytime meetings better? Are websites helpful to get information about transportation initiatives in the local community? Does this include the municipal, Regional Planning Commission or NHDOT websites to get information in the last year? What could be changed about how NHDOT conducts public meetings? Did the person presenting speak in a tone and speed that was easy to understand? Was the terminology used in the presentation understandable? Were public comments adequately addressed? Was there an opportunity for everyone to participate? Was too much of the meeting about the presentation and not enough time for the public to offer comments or questions? Was the information presented in a complete and comprehensive manner? Have you attended any other public meetings regarding a transportation project or other transportation issue in the last year?

## **Conclusion**

The public is a key stakeholder in in the transportation planning process. NHDOT encourages you to reach out to them and other partners identified in this document. The RPCs, state and federal partners all have resources on their website which may be of interest to you. Take the time to review their websites to learn more and reach out if you have questions. This document provides a framework for the public to learn how to be engaged in the public transportation planning process.

Public involvement is an opportunity for each person to be involved and share their concerns and ideas. NHDOT and other planning partners value the public input it receives, and the different viewpoints presented. The information is helpful to assessing needs and addressing the challenges of planning a transportation system for all users based on available financial resources. NHDOT and its partners continue to collaborate to enhance and promote increased public participation opportunities. Decisions regarding the transportation system and funding the transportation system are made by decision makers at all levels of government – local, regional, state, and federal. As discussed earlier in this document, public involvement is a process, it is not a one-time event. NHDOT encourages the public to be get involved and stay involved.

**For additional information or questions, please contact:**

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