

Chapter 10

Public Participation



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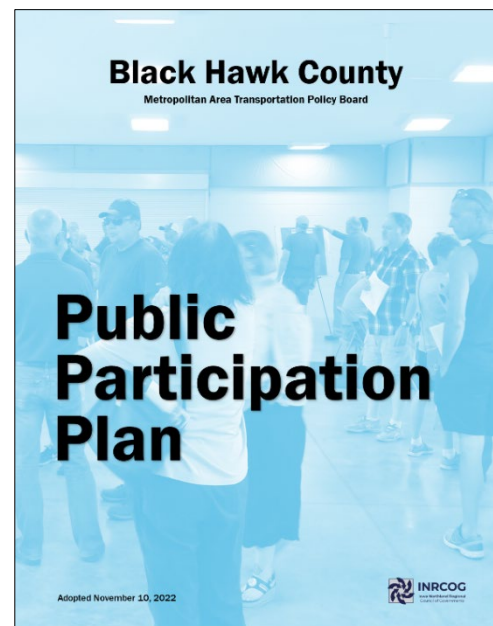
Public Participation and Why It Matters

Public Participation is a crucial and necessary step for all plans and projects administered by the MPO. Public participation provides opportunities for stakeholders to have a say in changes occurring in the community. Stakeholders include a wide array of people and groups who are involved in or impacted by a project. Stakeholders will vary based on a project, but typically include local community members, nearby business owners, local partnerships and organizations, planning agencies, and city staff. Black Hawk County MPO staff consistently strive to expand minority stakeholder involvement and overall community public participation. However, opportunities remain to shift the focus from merely *involving* the public to encouraging greater public *participation*.

Public Participation Plan

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is updated every five years. The most recent plan was adopted November 2022. As detailed in the PPP, there are several federal and state requirements to ensure an open and transparent planning process. In addition, the MPO has several ongoing activities that form the basis of interaction with the public. These include:

- Monthly joint Policy Board and Transportation Technical Committee meetings which are open to the public.
- Work sessions, focus groups, open houses, public input meetings, and public hearings as applicable during the development of major transportation planning documents.
- Publication of transportation articles in the monthly INRCOG electronic newsletter *COG Connection*.
- Notices of opportunities for public input shared via MailChimp marketing program.
- Provision of information and interviews with area media as requested.
- Presentations to city councils, planning commissions, and county supervisors as needed.
- Information, transportation plans, and notices of opportunities for public input shared on the Black Hawk County MPO website, www.bhcmmpo.org, and the INRCOG Facebook page.



The public involvement process utilized for the development of the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan was guided by the PPP which sets minimum requirements for public involvement opportunities. Public involvement actions required include the following:

- Draft LRTP
 - The draft LRTP will be developed by INRCOG staff with further input from jurisdiction representatives and the Iowa DOT, and oversight by the Policy Board and Transportation Technical Committee.
 - Input will be sought from individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle


- transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, providers of freight transportation services, and other interested parties.
- Focus groups will be utilized to represent all pertinent modes of transportation and issues. Focus groups may include transit, highway and land use, bicycle and pedestrian, safety and security, and environmental resources. Focus groups will be tasked with identifying issues and potential solutions and reviewing draft chapters pertinent to their area of expertise.
 - The draft document will be made available at INRCOG, on the BHC MPO website, and upon request.
- Notices and Public Meetings
 - A minimum of two public input sessions will be held regarding the draft LRTP.
 - At least one public input session will be held in an area identified as a low-income or minority neighborhood.
 - All meetings will be held in accessible facilities.
 - Notices for public input sessions will be advertised through local media sources. Notices may be posted at governmental offices, public libraries, post offices, on transit buses, at the INRCOG Center, on the BHC MPO and INRCOG website, and the INRCOG Facebook page. Notices may also be sent to organizations serving traditionally underserved populations, such as minorities, low-income, and elderly populations.
 - Any person with special communication or accommodation needs (i.e., sight, reading, or language barriers, request for online or phone participation, etc.) can contact the MPO (minimum 48 hours prior to the meeting) and arrangements will be made.
 - Public Comment Period
 - Written and oral comments will be solicited during the public input sessions. The public will also have at least a 15-calendar-day comment period following the final public input session to submit comments via, letter, email, or in person.
 - A public hearing will be held at a regularly scheduled Policy Board meeting following the public input sessions to summarize public comments and responses. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) calendar days and no less than four (4) calendar days before the date of the hearing.
 - Final LRTP
 - Following the public hearing, the Policy Board will adopt a final LRTP, including a summary of public comments and responses.
 - The final LRTP will be submitted to the Iowa DOT, FHWA, and FTA.
 - The final LRTP will be available on the BHC MPO website, at INRCOG, and upon request.
 - The public participation process associated with the LRTP will be evaluated and updated as needed.
 - Revisions
 - The LRTP may be revised between full document updates to reflect current project information.
 - Other amendments to the LRTP will be made as needed.
 - Amendments will require a public hearing to be held at a regularly scheduled Policy Board meeting. A notice of the public hearing will be published no more than twenty (20) calendar days and no less than four (4) calendar days before the date of the hearing.

Recent Public Participation Efforts

L RTP Statistically Significant Survey

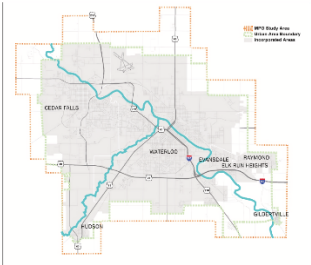
As part of the 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan, MPO staff conducted a statistically significant transportation survey for Black Hawk County metro area residents. Survey questions were related to safety, transit, roads, bridges, and pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The purpose of the survey was to identify the community's transportation needs and priorities to help guide future transportation planning. For the first round of survey collection, MPO staff purchased 1,000 randomly selected addresses within the MPO area to send postcards to. Each postcard contained a QR code linked to an online survey. Information on how to access paper surveys was included on the postcard for those without internet access.

Materials from the 2022 Public Input Survey



IOWA NORTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS
229 E Park Avenue | Waterloo Iowa 50703
(319) 235-0311 | www.inrcog.org


You've been selected to play a role in future transportation planning in your community!



Tell us your thoughts on:

- Safety
- Transit
- Roads & Bridges
- Pedestrian & Bicycle Infrastructure

Take the survey by October 28th!



How to take the survey:
scan the QR code or visit
<https://arcg.is/nuuT1>

We want to hear from you!
Survey Opportunity for Black Hawk County Metro Residents

Play a role in the future of transportation planning in your community! Answer questions related to roads, bridges, transit, bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, and safety. Responses will be used to identify transportation needs and priorities for the next 25 years.

Scan me!



Closes December 9th.
Paper option available by request.



For more information, contact Aldina Dautovic at 319-235-0311 or adautovic@inrcog.org

Brief Background Information: What's an MPO?

Urbanized areas with populations greater than 50,000 require the formation of a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). The Black Hawk County MPO is made up of the following:

BLACK HAWK COUNTY MPO

1 COUNTY
Black Hawk County

7 CITIES
Cedar Falls
Elk Run Heights
Evansdale
Gilbertville
Hudson
Raymond
Waterloo

2 TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
Metropolitan Transit Authority
Waterloo Regional Airport

What is your biggest transportation challenge in the Black Hawk County MPO area?*

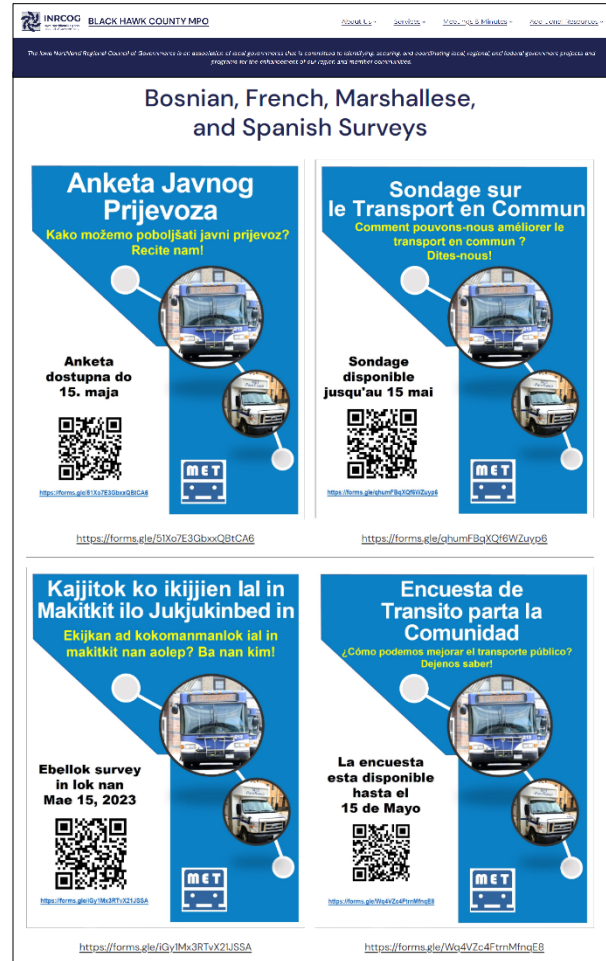
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Mayor's State of the City Address

A second round of the Long-Range Transportation Plan Survey was conducted and open to all Black Hawk County metropolitan area residents. MPO staff attended the 2022 Mayor's State of the City Address in Waterloo, Iowa to further promote the second round of the survey, as well as to educate the public about the full range of services provided by INRCOG. Various plans, documents, and reports were shared with attendees, including the flyer above. Paper survey options were provided for residents without access to the internet. MPO staff further promoted the second round of the survey through MPO meetings, emails, the BHC MPO website, e-newsletter, and the INRCOG Facebook page.

MET Transit Study

MET Transit, the primary mass transportation provider for Waterloo and Cedar Falls, signed a contract with SRF Consulting Group in March of 2023 to conduct a Comprehensive Transit Study. The current route structure, travel times, and service hours do not meet the community's needs, leaving gaps for residents who do not have access to a car in an auto-oriented metro area. In response, MPO staff and MET Transit collaborated to implement a route restructuring project that integrates efficient out-and-back routes instead of a loop system. MET Transit plans to simultaneously implement the restructured routes and conduct a comprehensive transit study to analyze new routes, hours of service, after-hours service, community needs, and overall efficiency. The MET Transit study began in Spring of 2023 and is expected to take one year. The first public engagement piece consisted of an online, public survey that received over 230 English responses. Since a portion of MET Transit riders are made up of underserved and minority populations, MPO staff collaborated with Black Hawk County Public Health to provide additional surveys in Bosnian, French, Marshallese, and Spanish. The surveys were housed on the Black Hawk County MPO website. Additional public input efforts will be conducted throughout the course of the transit study, in which MPO staff and Black Hawk County Public Health will continue to conduct additional outreach to gather input from underserved and non-English speaking populations.



SS4A

As part of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, the Safe Streets and Roads For All (SS4A) grant program aims to achieve the National Roadway Safety Strategy and the U.S. DOT's goal of achieving zero deaths and serious injuries on our nation's roadways. Using the Iowa Crash Analysis Tool (ICAT), MPO staff analyzed serious-crash and high fatality corridors within the metro area and noted downtown Waterloo area as an area of opportunity. After applying for SS4A funding in January of 2023, the MPO was awarded funding to develop a comprehensive Safety Action Plan. This plan will include a safety assessment of high fatality and serious injury corridors, implementation activities to enhance roadway and user safety, and community and stakeholder collaboration. In-depth public outreach efforts are anticipated to be conducted in 2024 as part of the project's community outreach efforts.



Downtown Waterloo Railyard Relocation Feasibility Study

Located in downtown Waterloo between E 4th Street and Martin Luther King Jr Drive is Canadian National Railway Company's (CN) largest railyard in Iowa. The railyard poses longstanding issues related to environmental justice, community connection, and public safety. Stopped trains cause extensively blocked crossings that inhibit residents, downtown employees, school students, and a historically, disproportionately disadvantaged community of color. Public frustration with frequently blocked crossings has led to numerous safety concerns and serious injuries to pedestrians and motorists resulting in civil lawsuits filed against CN. To address these issues, the City of Waterloo applied to the Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods Program through the U.S. Department of Transportation to conduct a Railyard Relocation Feasibility study. If awarded, the study will analyze the social, environmental, and public safety impacts of the railyard's location. A major focus of the study is community testimonials regarding how CN's rail yard location and stopped trains inhibit the community. Comprehensive community outreach efforts will be conducted as the project moves forward.

Downtown Waterloo Walkability and Bikeability

Every year, MPO staff are federally required to hold two public Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Meetings. The TIPs identify transportation projects scheduled to receive federal funding in the next four federal fiscal years. MPO staff take steps to ensure meetings are convenient and accessible to the public by offering in-person and zoom options, as well as morning and evening meetings, though participation from the public is typically sparse. The June 2023 TIP meeting was joined by a resident who identifies as a "non-recreational biker". While they did not have input specific to transportation projects in the TIP, they shared valuable input and suggestions regarding bicycling infrastructure with an emphasis in Waterloo:

- *"Connect strategic places of interests such as the library, commercial districts, retail anchors, plaza, Lincoln Park, etc."*
- *"Establish efficient routes between providing connectivity to areas of interest and residential areas. Focus on long, efficient corridors to increase usage and connectivity."*
- *"Get feedback loops from bikers."*
- *"4th Street is the most desirable street [for bike infrastructure] where people actually want to experience due to high density of retail/restaurants, great pedestrian accommodations and slow/safe moving traffic that people actually respect."*
- *"Both Jefferson and Commercial are wide enough [for bike infrastructure] and have destinations people want to go."*

These comments were shared with MPO staff and with Waterloo Complete Streets. MPO staff strongly encourages and appreciates public feedback and actively work to incorporate it into existing and future project planning. Visit Current and **On-Going Projects – Park Avenue Bike Lanes Redesign** in Chapter 5 to see how these comments were incorporated into a project.

Northeast Industrial Access Study

The Northeast Industrial Area in Black Hawk County contains several industrial and manufacturing businesses, resulting in a high volume of freight traffic moving to and from the area. Concerns over safety, capacity, traffic access, and anticipated growth in future years led to a Planning Study that was completed in 2019. As part of this study, the consultant held two public information meetings, created a project website, and had help from AECOM to reach out to eighteen businesses in the study area to request freight industry comments. The NEIA Planning Study can be found on the Black Hawk County MPO website at <https://bhcmmpo.org/neia/>. The next step for this project will be to conduct a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review process. Additional information can be found under Chapter 6.

Website and Social Media

The Black Hawk County MPO website, www.bhcmpo.org, is commonly used to notify the public of current and ongoing MPO efforts. Information can be found on the homepage under the “News and Highlights” section or under the “Public Participation” tab underneath “Services.” The Black Hawk County MPO website was also used throughout the development of this Plan. Draft chapters were posted on the website as they were completed, and staff contact information was provided to any person who wished to comment on draft materials. Other information on the transportation planning process and additional transportation documents are available on the website. The final LRTP will be posted online and will be available at the INRCOG office.

Long-Range Transportation Plan Public Input Meetings

In September 2023, two public input meetings were held for the draft 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan. To be more inclusive and accommodating to various schedules, two public input meetings were held. The first meeting was held in the third-floor conference room at INRCOG, and the second one was held virtually. The meetings were advertised via a news release, flyers posted at public places, the MPO website, INRCOG Facebook page, and an email blast through MailChimp to the INRCOG mailing list. There were a variety of displays related to the LRTP available for review. Attendees were also given the opportunity to submit formal written comments.

External Stakeholder Consultation

Several Federal, State, Tribal, and local government agencies were notified when the draft LRTP document was available for review (see Chapter 8). Feedback on topics relevant to their field of expertise was requested and incorporated into this document.

Going Forward: How Can We Improve?

There is no single approach to gathering successful public participation. Nowadays, public participation can be difficult to obtain due to varying schedules, lifestyles, and opportunities. Successful public participation requires a creative combination of methods, locations, and platforms to not only receive a wide range of feedback, but to ensure minority representation. MPO staff practices a mixed-use approach for projects included in this plan, ranging from paper and online surveys, presentations, social media, to more active approaches such as open houses and public events. Multiple sessions, languages, and accommodations help to achieve a rich public participation process that the MPO strives for.

Have Your Say: Review the Draft 2050 Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) Today!

We’re excited to announce that the 2050 draft LRTP is now available for public comment. This crucial document outlines the future of our metropolitan transportation infrastructure, addressing issues like sustainability, accessibility, and efficiency. Your input matters, and we encourage everyone to review the plan and share their thoughts.

Comments will be accepted until the MPO Policy Board holds a public hearing to consider adoption of the final Plan at the November 9th, 2023 meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Click the buttons below to view individual draft chapters.

1 – Overview	2 – MPO Profile
3 – Roads & Bridges	4 – Passenger Transport
5 – Bicycle & Pedestrian	6 – Freight
7 – Safety & Security	8 – Environmental Review
9 – Financial Analysis	10 – Public Involvement
Appendix I – Policy Board and Committees	
Appendix II – Acronyms	
Appendix III – 2022 Public Input Survey	
Full Draft Long-Range Transportation Plan	



Source: VectorStock