



Every Place Counts Leadership Academy

TRANSPORTATION TOOLKIT



LEARN • ENGAGE • MAKE A DIFFERENCE



This Transportation Toolkit is
dedicated to people like you
who want to learn, engage and
make a difference!

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This Toolkit is a plain language explanation of the transportation decision-making process for educational and informational purposes.

The United States Government assumes no liability for its contents or use thereof.

Welcome to the Transportation Toolkit!

By digging into the Transportation Toolkit, you are well on your way to making a positive difference in the transportation system you use every day — whether you're traveling by foot, bike, bus, train, car or plane.

You're joining other Americans to create better transportation options for your family, your friends, your neighbors ... and for future generations. Whether you want to make your voice heard individually or as a member of a group, this Toolkit will give you the keys to drive change!

You can share the Transportation Toolkit with your neighbors or use it to lead your own Leadership Academy experience in your community! The Toolkit is packed with information and resources that will be valuable to existing and emerging community leaders who want to explore the details of the transportation decision-making process.

Guide to Common Acronyms

These are the most common acronyms that you'll see in this Toolkit.







- ADA:** Americans with Disabilities Act
- DOT:** Department of Transportation
- EJ:** Environmental Justice
- FAA:** Federal Aviation Administration
- FHWA:** Federal Highway Administration
- FRA:** Federal Railroad Administration
- FTA:** Federal Transit Administration
- MPO:** Metropolitan Planning Organization
- NEPA:** National Environmental Policy Act

See the Illustrated Glossary on page 66 for definitions of these and other terms.

Do you have a transportation idea, concern, problem or challenge on your mind? Do you want to participate in the process of making decisions about transportation plans and projects? Then this Toolkit is for you!



This Toolkit will help you learn how to:

-  **Get involved in a meaningful way in the process of making transportation decisions in your community, region and state**
-  **Add your input and insights to those decisions**
-  **Take a proactive approach to improving transportation in your community**
-  **Get involved early and often**
-  **Offer constructive feedback and suggest at least one possible solution each time you point out a problem**
-  **Recommend ways to break down existing transportation barriers and prevent new transportation barriers from being constructed**

How to Use This Toolkit

This Toolkit is meant to help you figure out how to voice your ideas when your community is engaged in the process of making transportation decisions. It will help you learn about laws and policies that give you the right to participate in transportation decision-making processes. It will also help you learn how to take advantage of opportunities that occur during the process of planning, funding, designing, building and maintaining transportation projects.

We hope that this Toolkit gives you the information you need to take those first steps to reach out to your neighbors and your local, regional and state transportation agencies. Together, you can make your community a better place to live, work, study and play. Your knowledge of your community's transportation needs can be a valuable addition to the planning process.

How do you contact your...

Local government

bit.ly/FindUSMayors

Local transit agency

bit.ly/LocalTransitlinks

Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

bit.ly/PlanningCapacity

State Department of Transportation (DOT)

bit.ly/StateTransportationSites

U.S. DOT agencies [Transportation.gov](https://www.transportation.gov)

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

bit.ly/FAAoffices

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

bit.ly/FHWAoffices

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

bit.ly/FRAoffices

Federal Transit Administration (FTA)

bit.ly/FTAoffices

Departmental Office of Civil Rights (DOCR)

bit.ly/CivilRightsOffice

When you look at the Every Place Counts Leadership Academy logo, what do you see?

Here are some ideas to get you started:



- Members of the community gathered around a transportation issue at different levels of engagement
- Different types of communities, from dense urban centers to suburban and rural communities to tribal lands
- A busy city center connected to vibrant neighborhoods
- A map of a bus or subway system with routes that bring people from the neighborhoods into the downtown core

How to Use This Toolkit

Q. What do all these new words and acronyms mean?

*A. Transportation terms are highlighted in **green underlined text** – look in the Illustrated Glossary (on page 66) for the definition. Terms to know and acronyms are also included at the beginning of each part.*



Q. Where are the places that you can get involved?

A. Look for this symbol for opportunities for public involvement.

Q. How can you review the key points quickly?

A. At the beginning of each part, you will find an overview to guide you through the material. At the end of each part, you will find a summary with one concept to LEARN, one way you can ENGAGE and one way you can MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Q. How can you share the Leadership Academy with your neighbors?

A. Show a VIDEO about the Academy in action, share a QUICK GUIDE or lead your own Academy event with help from the FACILITATOR'S GUIDE. These documents, as well as the Online Resource Library, are available at www.transportation.gov/LeadershipAcademy.



PART 1:

An Introduction to Transportation

What's in this section?

When and why you should get involved in transportation decisions

- How we used to make transportation decisions
- How we endeavor to make transportation decisions
- What is public involvement
- What to do if you don't get the outcome you want
- What should you know about civil rights: Title VI, Environmental Justice, Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA)

Terms to Know

- Decide-announce-defend
- Disparate impact
- Disparate treatment
- Equitable development
- Goods
- Infrastructure
- Paratransit
- Transit agency
- Transportation agencies
- Transportation system
- Underserved
- Underrepresented

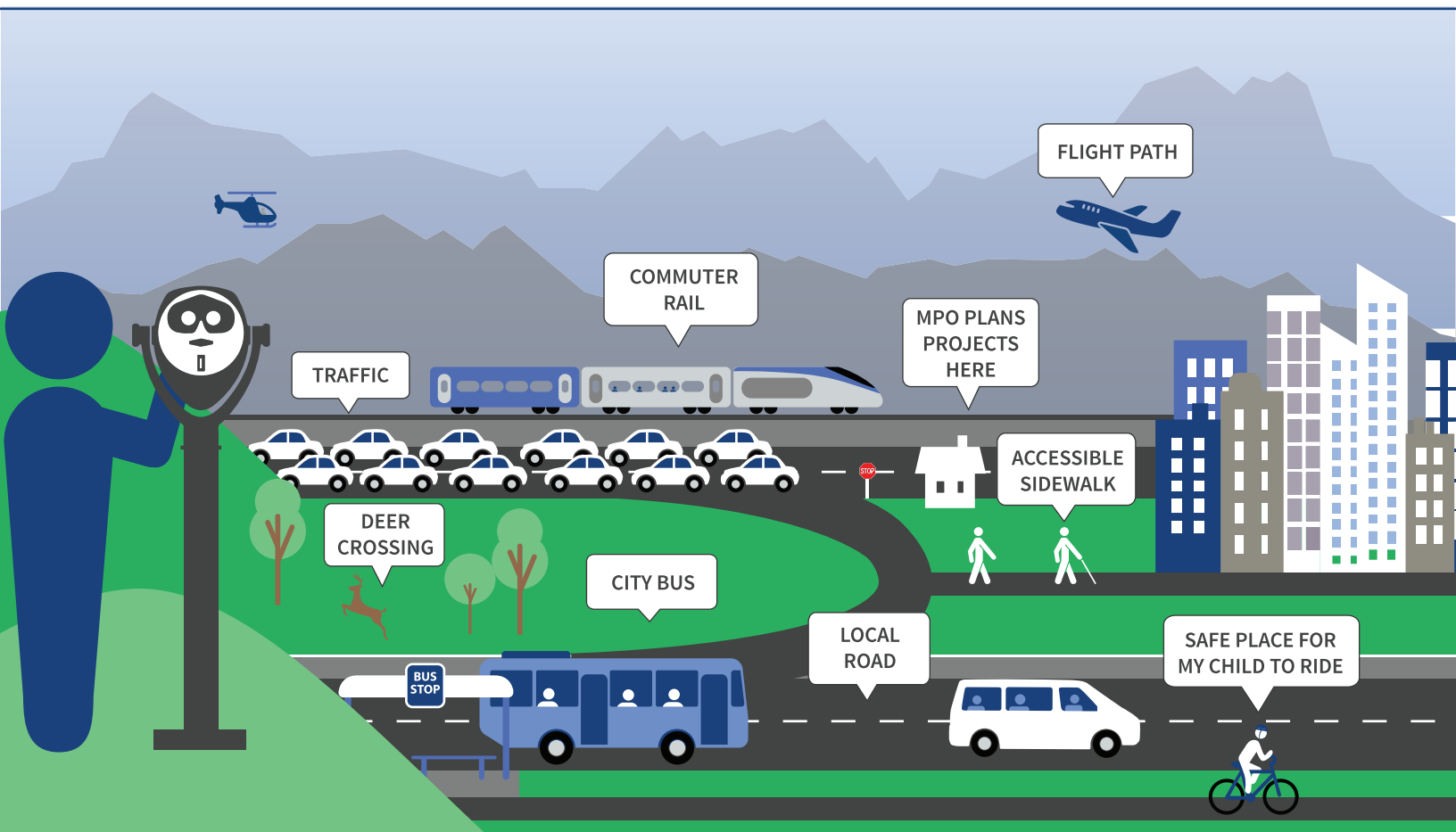
Transportation in Your Community

Transportation moves people and **goods**. We use all kinds of vehicles — cars, trucks, bicycles, buses, planes, ferries and trains — to go from place to place, connect with people and opportunities, and move the supplies and equipment needed to survive and thrive as individuals and communities.

Our **transportation system** is made up of **infrastructure** including roads, walkways, bikeways, airports, airways, railroads, waterways and pipelines that have evolved over many decades. The system can seem so large, complex and established that some people forget that you can — and should — take part in its development and maintenance.

This system is so deeply woven into the way our communities are built and the way we move that we often don't really notice it or think much about it. However, you can train yourself to observe and appreciate how transportation shapes our communities.

Seeing the Transportation System Through a New Lens





Why should you get involved in transportation decisions?



Transportation plays an essential role in your community. It connects you to the places you need to go and the people you need to see. The transportation system gives you access to key places and opportunities:

- work
- school
- family and friends
- food
- health care
- social services
- libraries
- recreation
- worship

And you play an essential role in your community. You don't have to stand on the sidelines and watch transportation grow and change. Since you live and work there, you know your community well. You can help define your community's transportation needs and share your ideas about what may or may not best serve the community as a whole. You can ask important questions and share vital information based on your experience using the transportation system. When your voice is part of the process, you can improve your access to transportation and opportunities.



When should you get involved in transportation decisions?

You can get involved at many points in the process — and getting involved early and often is best. Some routine and emergency repair projects can move quickly, while other complicated projects may need significant planning and phased funding. Recognize that your involvement may need to take place over the many months or even years it can take to proceed from a plan to a project.

- Find out where public meetings are announced and held in your community.
- Follow news about transportation issues.
- Attend a public meeting.
- Look for ways to provide comments online or in person by visiting a transportation agency's website.

Note: If you notice a safety problem, notify the responsible agency right away. This agency might be your local government, transit agency or State Department of Transportation.

How We Used to Make Transportation Decisions

We built world-class interstate highway, rail, airport and transit systems throughout the country. But in hindsight, it is also clear that we often did that in a way that excluded or divided communities, cut people off from their neighbors and opportunities, increased local travel times, and short-changed services, particularly for transit-dependent populations in minority and low-income neighborhoods.

Some of this was intentional, with the stated purpose of dividing and destroying communities. But in many instances, it was the result, not of intentional discrimination, but of carelessness and a failure to include communities in the decision-making process.

Traditionally, transportation officials at various levels of government were often expected to produce quick and efficient solutions to our country's broad, complex transportation issues. Sometimes this meant that transportation decisions were made without the benefit of comments, questions, feedback and ideas from the public. You might have heard this approach called *decide-*

announce- defend (DAD). In those cases, decision-makers made major transportation choices without any meaningful community input, held meetings to announce those decisions to the public, and then defended the decisions against community opposition. This left communities feeling as if their involvement was sought only after the decisions were "baked in," making their input of little value and also undermining trust between communities and government officials.

The social, physical and economic divides this approach created still exist in many places. You may have experienced some negative effects of barriers right in your own community. And these barriers are now built into the infrastructure, meaning they will continue to divide communities even if no one does it on purpose - unless we actively work to eliminate them. Even the most well-meaning decision-makers can unintentionally perpetuate past discrimination if they don't make an extraordinary effort to do things differently moving forward.

Many cities, towns, counties and states are trying to break down these barriers. But they can't do it alone.

They need YOU.

By getting involved in the transportation decision-making process in your community, YOU can help to bridge the divides created by those old transportation barriers and help to prevent new ones from being built.

How We Endeavor to Make Transportation Decisions

It's important for us to acknowledge the missteps of the past so that we can work together to make sure we don't repeat them in the future. We can also rebuild the trust between communities and government agencies.

Did you know there are federal, state and local laws and policies that create specific opportunities to get involved? Understanding your rights and responsibilities will help you be thoughtful and strategic about where and when you get involved in the transportation decision-making process.

Planners and project sponsors are often

required to provide opportunities for the public to participate in the development of transportation plans and projects that include federal funding. Getting engaged early and often throughout the process can help ensure that projects are delivered not only effectively, but also as efficiently and equitably as possible. Meaningful public involvement activities can help meet the needs of community groups and support economic growth and ***equitable development***.

This Toolkit will help you learn the basics of ***public involvement*** requirements. If you want to learn more, you can explore federal and state highway and transit ***transportation planning*** laws at bit.ly/FHWAplanning and ***environmental protection*** laws as applied by FTA at bit.ly/transitNEPA.

Some civil rights laws, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, require transportation agencies to consider the effects of transportation projects on communities, and some of them require project sponsors to take steps to address certain negative effects on those communities. You can learn more at bit.ly/CivilRightsAwareness.

Know Your Rights and Responsibilities: Public Involvement

Public involvement — a process that encourages the public to provide input into transportation decisions — helps to ensure that agencies make better informed decisions. It also builds mutual understanding and trust between **transportation agencies** and the public they serve. Successful public participation is a continuous, coordinated and comprehensive process, made up of activities and actions that both inform and obtain input from the public. This process is more valuable when it is transparent, relevant, timely, and tailored to the plan or project and the community.

To achieve these goals, when an agency is required to involve the public, it should do so in a meaningful way, rather than simply checking the box. Agencies should be proactive and creative about engaging communities that have been traditionally **underserved** by and **underrepresented** during past transportation decisions, including racial and ethnic, low-income, limited English proficient and low-literacy groups. Instead of only relying on traditional public meetings to engage these groups, agencies can rethink the formats, locations and times of public outreach events, as well as the way they invite people to attend.

It's all in the plan

How do officials decide when and how to involve the community in important decisions? They refer to a plan that they created in advance. Transportation agencies may be responsible for creating a **public involvement plan** (PIP) and in the process of creating that plan, they are expected to involve members of the public. This means that the community has the opportunity to participate as agencies make important decisions about

the PIP that determine how the agency will involve the public in the decision-making process, as described in the graphic on the next page.

Agencies should strive to communicate in ways that overcome barriers related to language, culture, income and ability. These efforts make it possible for all members of the community to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

Public Involvement



When public involvement is required for a transportation plan or project, then the agency must reach out to all interested groups in the community.

- Racial and ethnic communities
- Low-income communities
- Older adults and young people
- People with limited English proficiency
- People with low literacy
- People with disabilities
- Tribal communities
- Immigrant and refugee communities



Effective engagement includes a combination of written and non-written communication to reach out to you, such as:

- Graphics and mapping tools to allow you to visualize information
- Personal interviews and audio/video recordings to gather your input



Public involvement requirements and plans may specify where and how many days in advance of public meetings materials should be made available to the public.



Agencies should hold meetings and hearings in places where the community naturally gathers that are:

- Accessible to people with disabilities and compliant with the [*Americans with Disabilities Act*](#) (ADA)
- Conveniently located
- Reachable by transit and [*paratransit*](#)

make the best decision possible. It is a best practice for the agency to follow up with the community and explain how

public comment was incorporated into the final decision.

What if you don't get the outcome you want?

Here are a few reasons that public involvement may not result in the outcome you want or expect:

- There is not enough money to fund all possible projects.
- Ideas are often shared too late in the process.
- The idea will have a negative impact on the environment, an aspect of the project or another community.
- The idea may cause safety risks.
- Political leaders must consider wide-ranging, often-conflicting political, economic, environmental and social factors when making decisions.
- Multiple experts (including planners, engineers, developers and the public) provide conflicting evidence or opinions that decision-makers must balance.
- Members of the public often express opposing needs or preferences.
- The idea may be more complicated or expensive than the owner can design or maintain.



When the process does not yield the result you want, speak to the planner, the project manager or the public involvement representative at the transportation agency and your elected leaders to better understand why the decision was made and how you can be involved in the next project or plan.

What to do when public involvement isn't going well?

Perhaps the agency scheduled a meeting in the middle of the workday, changed the time of a meeting at the last minute, hosted a meeting at a location that was not ADA-accessible or transit-accessible, failed to present information in a clear way or made information available only on the agency's website. Maybe there were other barriers – intentional or unintentional – that kept you or your neighbors from contributing ideas in a meaningful way.

Consider submitting your concerns along with ideas for improvement by doing one of the following:

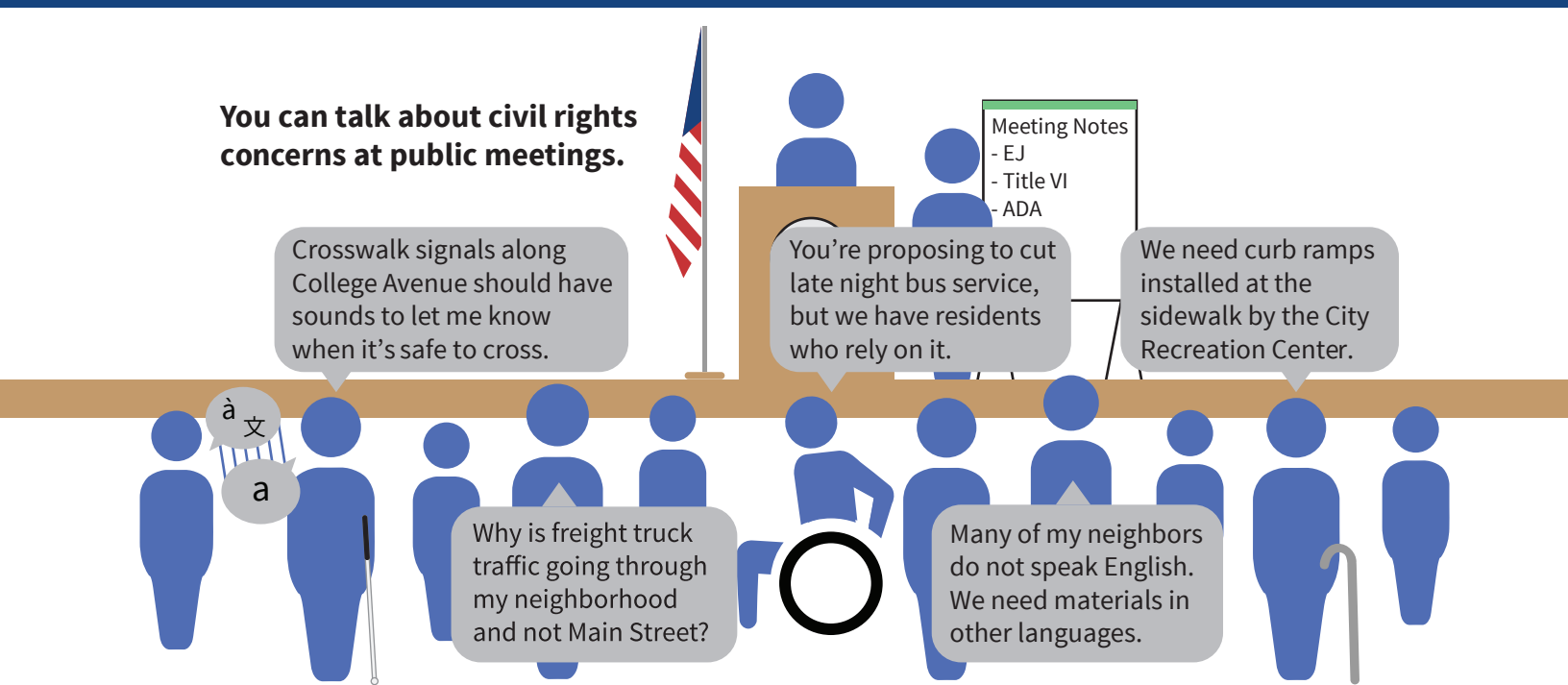
- Fill out an evaluation form, which might be provided at a public meeting.
- Submit a comment on the agency's website.
- Determine what agency organized the public involvement and contact their public involvement or civil rights office.
- Remember, if you believe any civil rights laws have been violated you may elect to file a complaint.



Know Your Rights and Responsibilities: Equity and Civil Rights

You probably know there are laws and authorities that protect you from discrimination in the workplace. There are also laws and authorities that protect you from discrimination in transportation decisions.

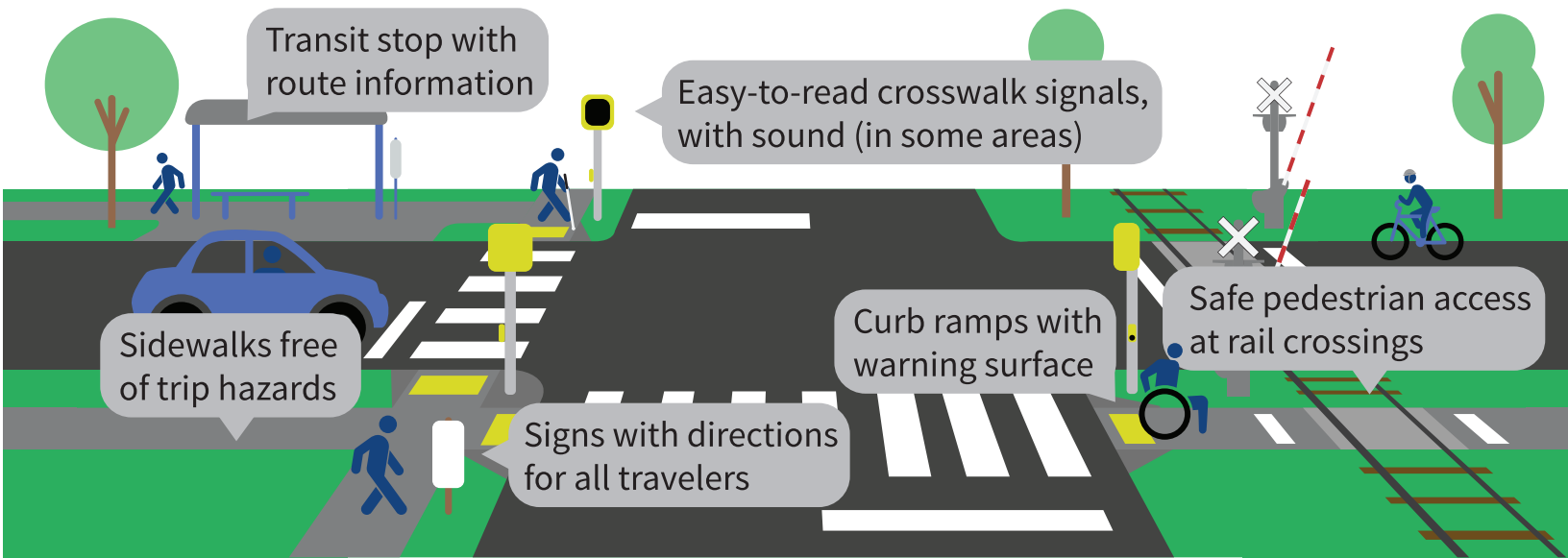
Civil rights laws and policies ensure that decision-makers – including those in transportation - consider the needs of all, including groups that have historically been ***underrepresented*** and ***underserved*** by past and current transportation programs, facilities or services. This includes racial and ethnic communities, low-income communities and people with disabilities.



Title VI is part of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color and national origin. DOT Title VI regulations offer protections against two types of discrimination: 1) policies that cause

intended or unintended racial and ethnic disparities for groups (called ***disparate impact***), and 2) decisions or laws that use race and/or ethnicity to discriminate against individuals (called ***disparate treatment***).

What are some elements of an accessible intersection?



The Executive Order on **Environmental Justice (EJ)** directs federal agencies to identify and address disproportionately high and adverse environmental and health impacts on low-income populations and racial and ethnic communities. EJ creates a set of guiding principles rather than legal rights. It sets an expectation that federal agencies will promote and enforce **nondiscrimination** as one way to make sure that benefits and burdens of transportation programs, projects and policies are equitably distributed in a way that is fair.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities and ensures equal opportunity and




Accessible describes transportation that allows people of any ability to participate in life's basic activities by traveling on our nation's streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, buses, trains, ferries and planes.

access for this community. Accessible transportation systems further the goal of independence for people with disabilities. Areas that are intended to be pedestrian access routes must be accessible to persons with disabilities.

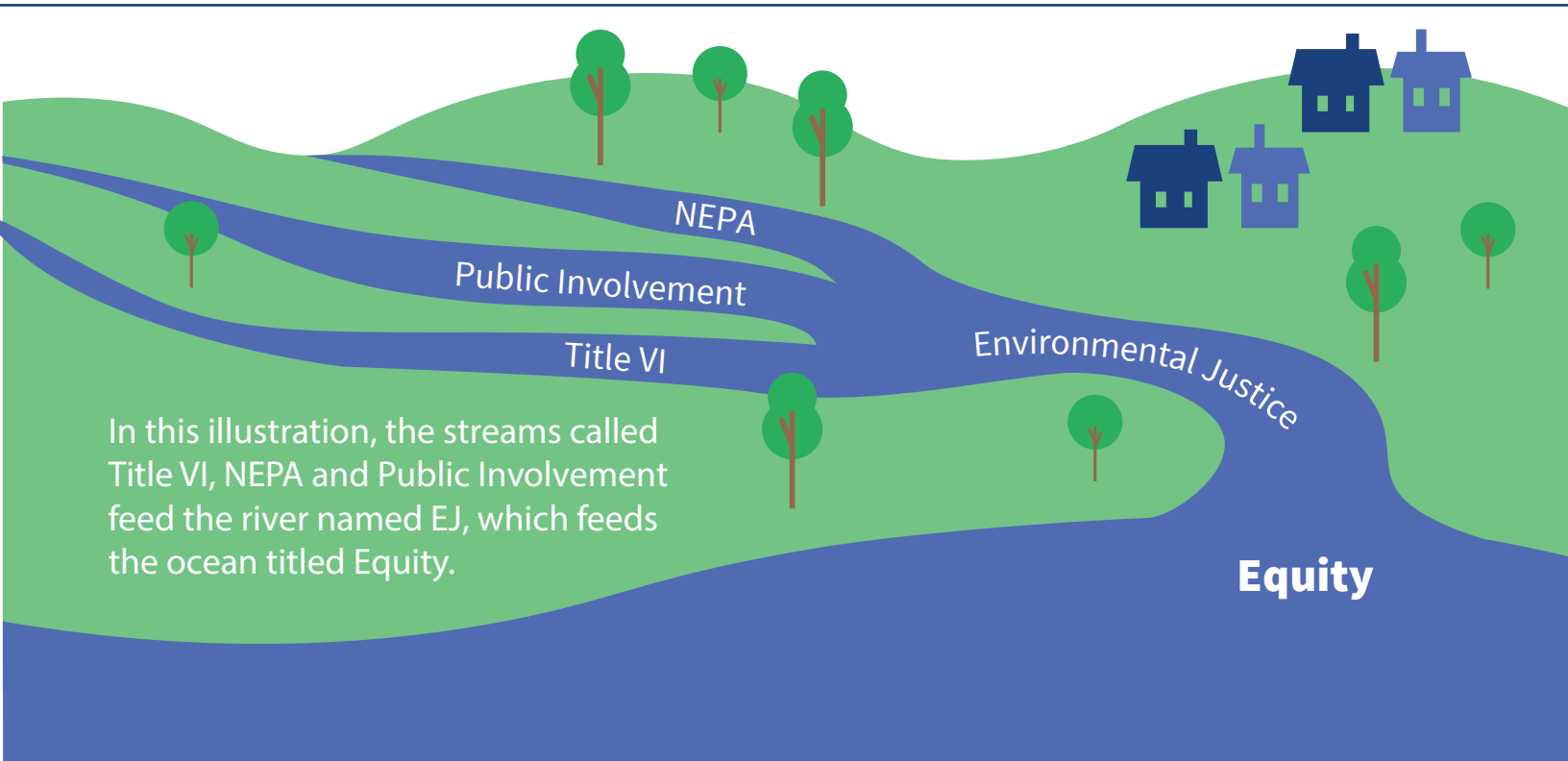
The **Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA)** applies to the accessibility of planes. It prohibits discrimination by U.S. and foreign air carriers on the basis of physical or mental disability.

According to the concept of universal design (otherwise known as access for all), we can structure our environment to be accessed, understood and used by the widest possible range of users, regardless of age, ability, size and status. Transportation facilities including roadways, walkways, bikeways, bus stops and rail stations, as well as transportation vehicles, can be planned and built to be barrier-free and accessible to all.

Civil rights laws and authorities are designed to ensure that people have access and opportunity to participate in the transportation decisions that affect their daily lives and that these decisions are made fairly and equitably. These laws also provide you with a way to raise objections or file complaints about projects when you believe that your rights have been violated. For more information about these laws and authorities, see the Illustrated Glossary.

	Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)	Title VI	Environmental Justice (EJ)
Who must follow?	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local governments • All public organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State and local governments that receive grants or other assistance from federal agencies • Governmental organizations that receive federal assistance • Any organization that receives federal assistance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal agencies
What are agencies required to provide?	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible buildings, buses, trains, sidewalks, and more • When agencies provide transportation options, they must be accessible for persons with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Title VI Plan • Notice to the public • Translation and interpreters for persons who are limited English proficient 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meaningful public participation • Adopt the DOT EJ Guiding Principles (see pg. 83)
Where can you get involved?	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings for new projects • Through state or local disability councils • By filing a complaint with a local, state or federal agency if something is not accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings when governmental organizations do transportation planning • At public meetings during the NEPA process for a project • By filing a complaint with a local, state or federal agency if you feel that a project discriminates 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At public meetings for projects affecting your community

Coming Together for Equity



Learn | Engage | Make a Difference Part 1

Learn: Our transportation system is made up of infrastructure including roads, walkways, bikeways, airways, airports and railroads. Public involvement and civil rights laws create opportunities for *all* members of the public to get involved in transportation decisions.

Engage: You can participate in transportation decisions by following news about transportation issues, attending a public meeting or providing comments to your transportation agency.

Make a Difference: By getting involved in the transportation decision-making process, YOU can help to bridge the divides created by old transportation barriers and help to prevent new ones from being built.



PART 2:

The Process of Making Transportation Decisions

What's in this section?

- An overview of the five steps in the transportation decision-making process
- Plan: How decisions are made about which projects will get built in the future
- Fund: How transportation is funded and financed
- Design: How ideas are turned into transportation projects
- Build: How transportation projects are built
- Maintain: How the transportation system is kept in working order

Terms to Know

- Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)
- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)
- Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
- Highway Trust Fund (HTF)
- Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)
- National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)
- Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO)
- State Department of Transportation (State DOT)
- State Rail Plan (SRP)
- Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP)
- Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

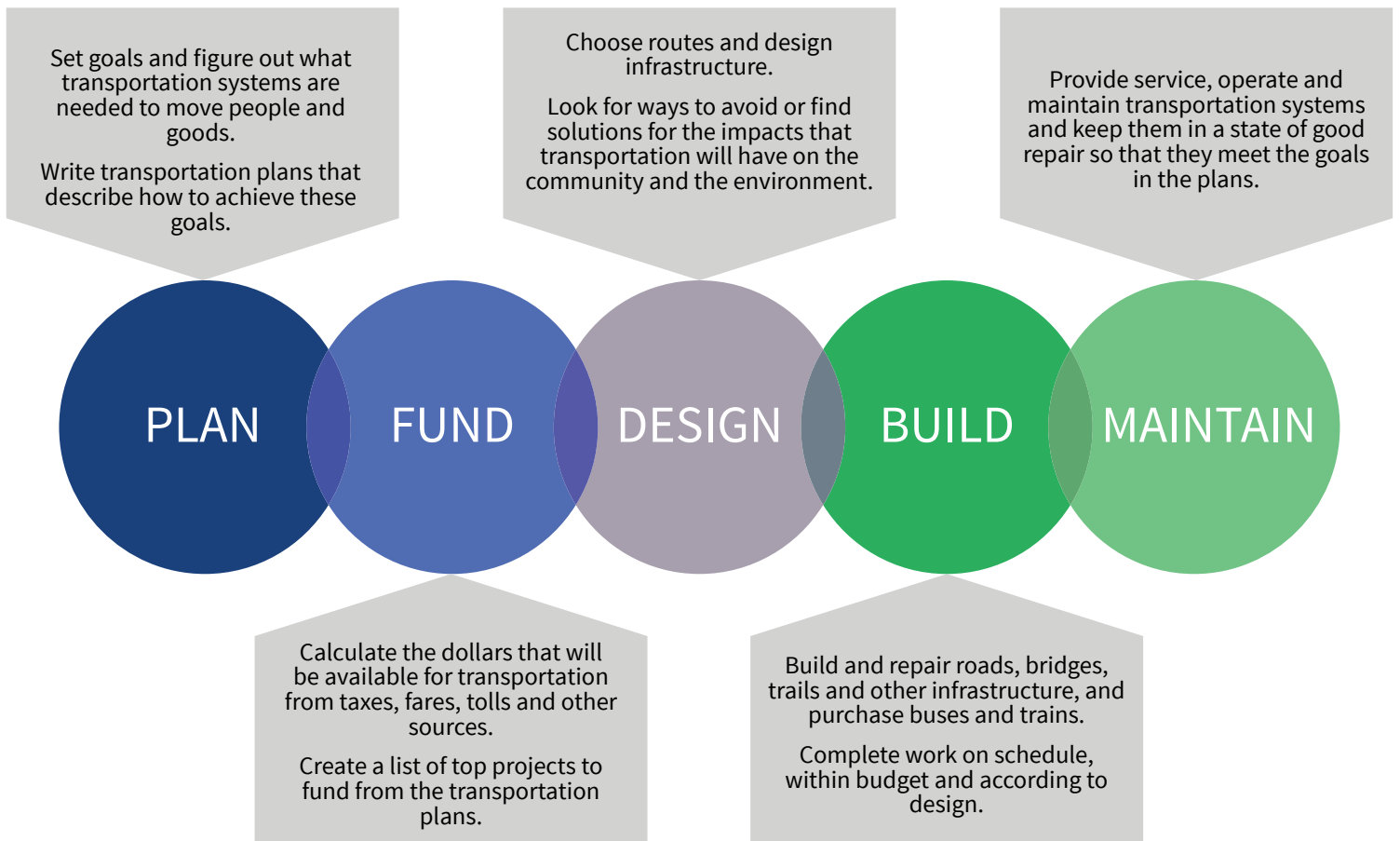
The Five Steps

Part 2 shows you the transportation decision-making process in five basic steps: Plan, Fund, Design, Build and Maintain. These will help you understand what activities and decisions help move a project from an idea to a reality. You can find out who manages each step and how you can get involved. Remember, equity and accessibility principles from Part 1 should be considered at every part of the process.

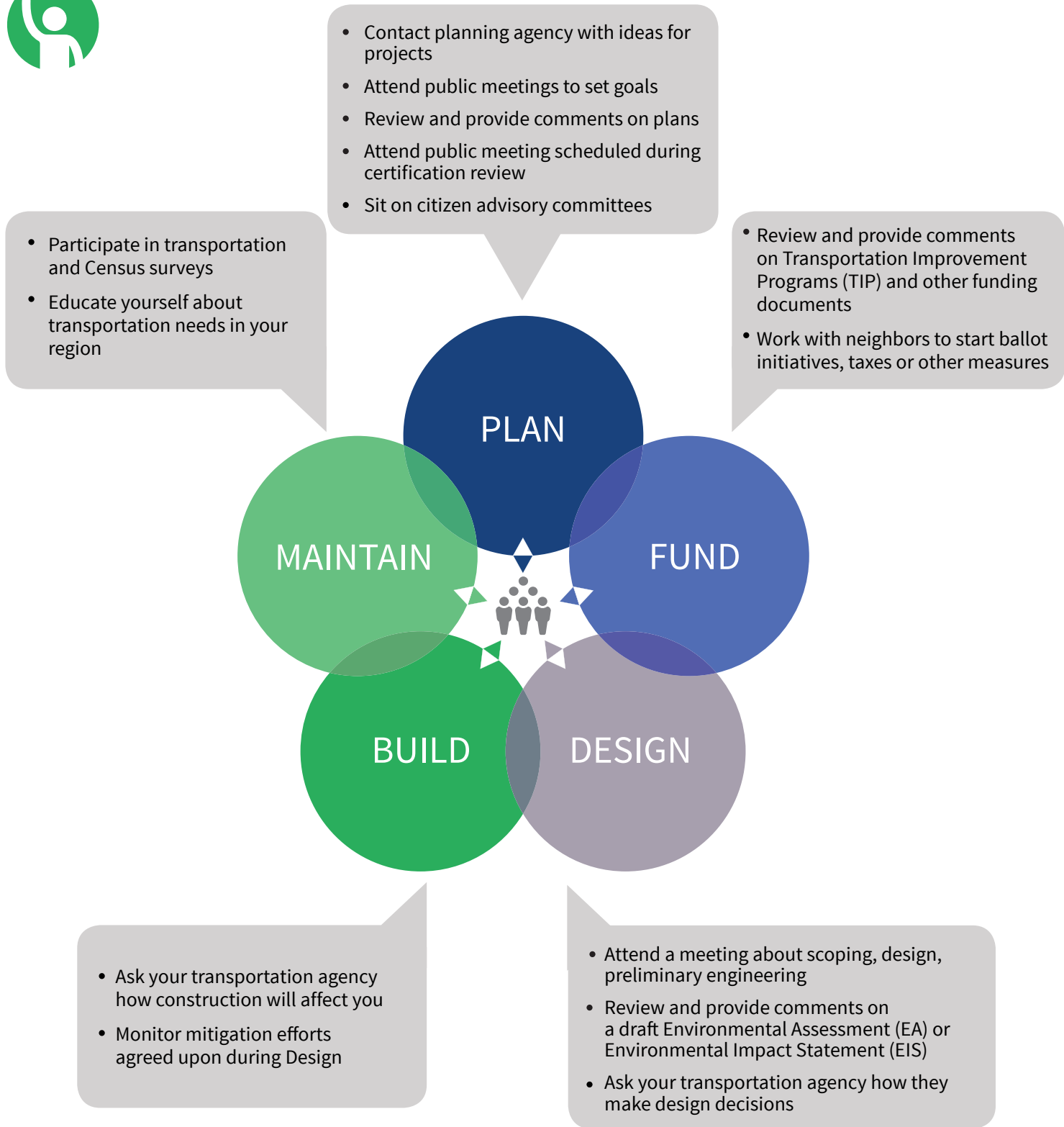
If the Process Doesn't Go As Planned

Part 2 can help you understand how the process is intended to work, but you may recognize that the process doesn't always work perfectly. Part 4 of this Toolkit contains some checklists and ideas to help you make your case, even when the process doesn't go as planned.

Here is a summary of the five steps:



Opportunities to Influence Transportation Decisions



Many, but not all, of these opportunities are required by federal law.

PLAN

How decisions are made about which projects will get built in the future

Highway and Transit Planning



Transportation planning for highway and transit — including bicycle and pedestrian modes — takes place at the local, regional and state levels. Transportation agencies work with members of the public to envision goals for the future transportation system. Planners take a comprehensive approach that includes all modes of transportation.

Under a federal law that governs planning for highways and transit (which includes walking and bicycling), each region is responsible for creating a [Metropolitan Transportation Plan](#) (MTP) every four years. The MTP lays out a vision of what the transportation system will look like in the future. It includes all of the transportation projects that will be funded and scheduled over the next

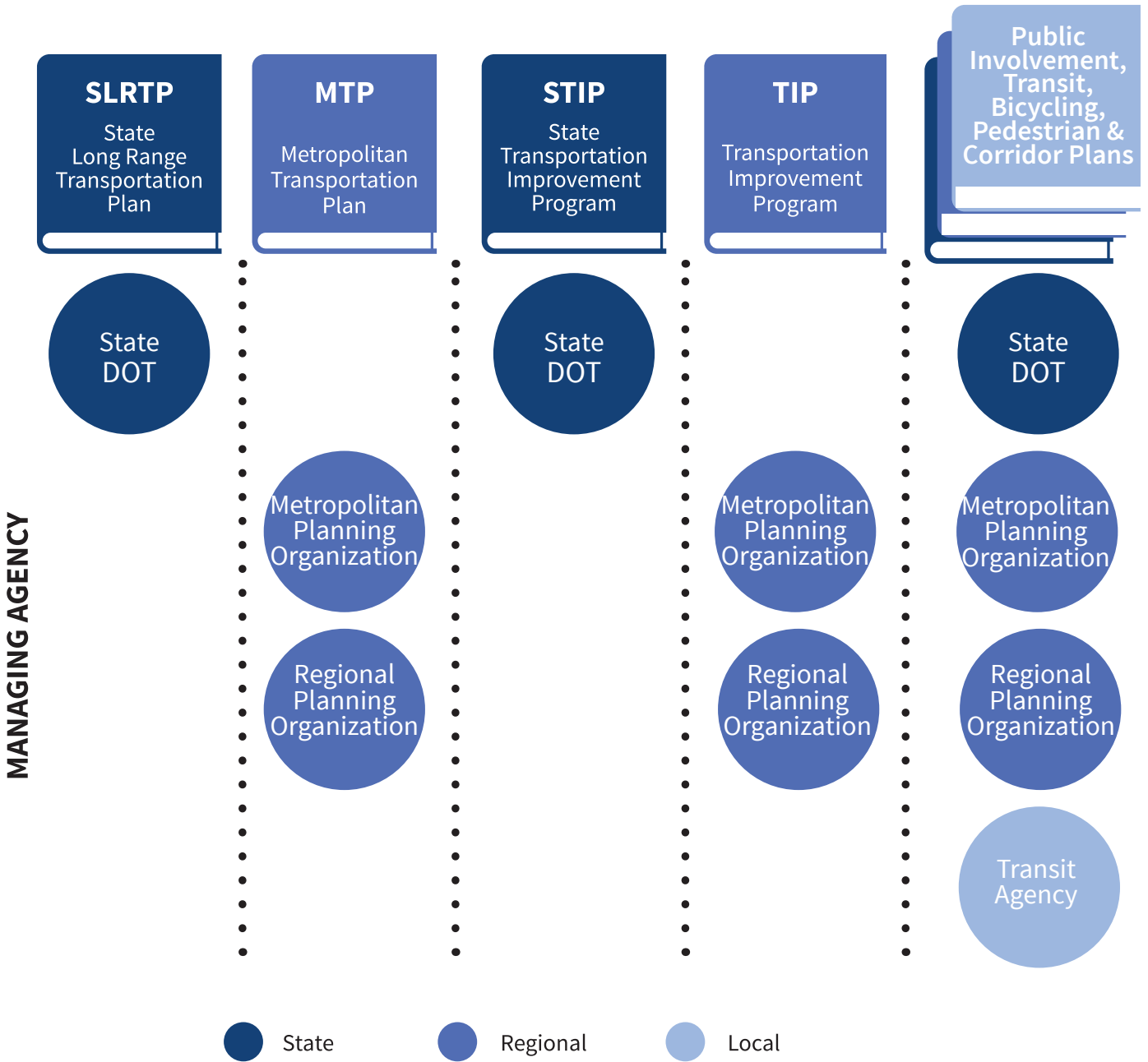
20 years. Each region is also responsible for creating a shorter-range plan called a [Transportation Improvement Program](#) (TIP) every four years. The TIP includes all of the transportation projects that will be funded, designed and built over the next four years.

In a community with a population of 50,000 or more, the agency responsible for MTPs and TIPs is called the [Metropolitan Planning Organization](#) (MPO). In your community, the MPO might be called the [Council of Governments](#) (COG). Outside of urban areas, organizations called Rural Planning Organizations, [Regional Transportation Planning Organizations](#) (RTPOs) or [State Departments of Transportation](#) (State DOTs) may manage the planning process. State DOTs are also responsible for the entire state. Once all the MPOs in a state create their TIPs, then those TIPs are collected by the State DOT and incorporated into the [Statewide Transportation Improvement Program](#) (STIP). This planning process is required by federal law and overseen by the [Federal Highway Administration](#) (FHWA) and the [Federal Transit Administration](#) (FTA).

For example, State DOTs, transit agencies, MPOs, RTPOs and COGs

Which Agencies Manage Which Plans

TYPE OF TRANSPORTATION PLAN



Rail Planning



Federal law requires states to develop a **State Rail Plan** (SRP) and update it at least every five years. State Rail Plans are expected to include:

- An assessment of a state’s current rail system;
- The role of rail transportation within the state’s transportation system; and
- A vision for the future of passenger and freight rail systems in the state.

The SRP must include a **Rail Service and Investment Program** (RSIP) that lists rail investments needed to achieve the state’s vision for its rail system.

In most states, much of the rail network is owned and operated by private corporations. SRPs must identify opportunities for the public and private sectors to work together to achieve mutual planning goals and keep freight and passenger rail operating effectively.

The SRP is developed by a **State Rail Transportation Authority** (SRTA) that is responsible for setting policy for both freight rail and for intercity and commuter passenger rail within their boundaries.

The SRTA also coordinates federal and state rail investments within the state.

Aviation Planning



One type of aviation plan is an airport master plan — a comprehensive study of an airport that describes short, medium and long term development plans that will meet future demand. The elements of the plan vary depending on the size, function and issues of the specific airport, and typically include a schedule, a financial plan and alternatives.

The **Federal Aviation Administration** (FAA) reviews these plans and strongly encourages and supports public engagement during the planning process.

This type of plan is developed by airport sponsors, airport staff, airport consultants, state aviation officials and FAA representatives. This planning process also includes airport board members; municipal officials; state, regional and local planning personnel; and the public.

FUND

How Transportation is Funded and Financed

Who funds transportation in my community?

For surface transportation, projects are funded by a mix of local, state and federal sources. For aviation, the federal government funds the air traffic control system, while for airports, the balance between federal, state, local and commercial investment (including airport revenues from airlines and other users) varies greatly depending upon the size and type of airport. Often when a project uses federal funds, the local or state government is required to "match" those funds with their own funds. The amount of the match varies based on the type of federal funding.

Why is overall transportation funding limited?

Federal funding for roads, rail and transit is generated by a tax on gasoline and deposited into an account called the **Highway Trust Fund** (HTF). The HTF is divided into two accounts: the Highway Fund and the Mass Transit Account (MTA).

- The federal gas tax of 18.3 cents per gallon has not been increased since

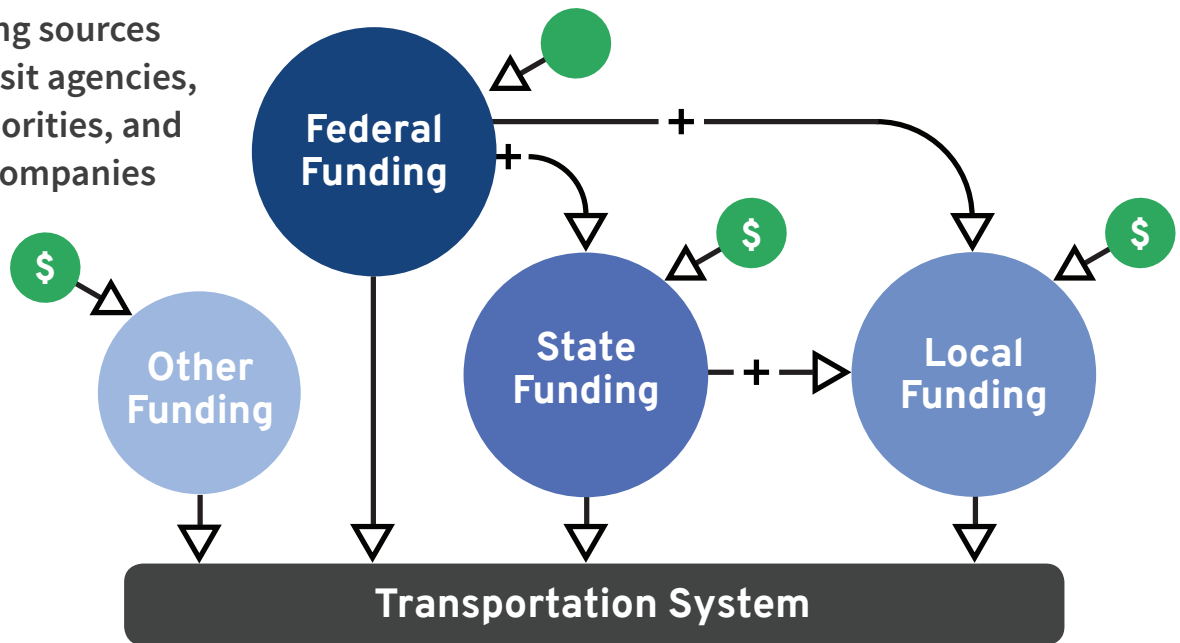
SPOTLIGHT



Mr. Hernandez doesn't own a car and relies on transit to get around his community. However, buses are infrequent and don't connect him to all the places he needs to go. He joined the local transit agency's Rider Advisory Council to promote more frequent transit and new routes. As a member of the Council, he learned that there was limited funding available for transportation, so as a short term strategy, he recommended increasing the frequency of existing service. Later, he talked to his neighbors about supporting the ½ cent sales tax referendum, and then it was approved by voters to provide funding for new bus rapid transit routes.

Funding Transportation

Other funding sources include transit agencies, airport authorities, and freight rail companies



1993. In other words, the gas tax is a fixed amount; it is not tied or indexed to inflation. That means the federal gas tax stays at 18.3 cents per gallon whether gas prices rise or fall and regardless of the state of the U.S. economy.

- Due to higher fuel efficiency standards, people are using less gas overall, which also generates less funding for the HTF.

Also, these limited dollars don't stretch as far as they did in the past. For example, the cost of land and construction materials, like steel and concrete, has been increasing, and the

funds are spread across a growing total mileage of roads, railways and trails.

Additional government transportation revenue - including from state and local government - come from:



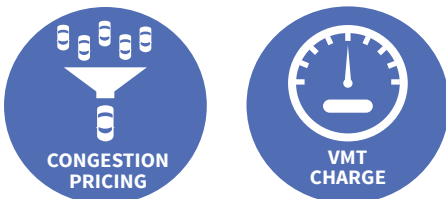
In addition, **transit agencies** generate revenues by charging fares to ride the bus and the train, and airport authorities

generate revenues by charging taxes and fees.



Even with these varied sources of funding, most communities cannot find enough money to take care of all of their transportation needs.

There is an ever-increasing demand for these limited transportation funds. We need to maintain our existing transportation system to make sure it is safe and in a state of good repair. We also need to invest in new transportation projects so we can expand travel choice and capacity, and make our transportation system resilient to climate change. This pressure has driven decision-makers to explore innovative financing techniques like **public-private partnerships** (P3) and **state infrastructure banks**. Some state and local governments are also starting to consider innovative funding techniques like congestion pricing and a **Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)** charge.



How do highway and transit agencies make plans to spend funding?

We mentioned the STIP in the Plan section. Although the STIP begins as a compilation of regional planning documents, it also becomes a programming document. The same is true for the TIP. This means that the STIP and the TIP are both comprehensive lists of highway and transit projects that are slated to use federal funds. You can have a say in how federal funds are spent at the local level by providing comments on the STIP or TIP.

If you are interested in getting funding for a project, recognize that most decisions about federal and state funding are made at the state and local levels. You can work with your local government and elected officials to identify the most appropriate ways to get your project ideas funded.

DESIGN

How are transportation ideas turned into projects?

The next step in the lifecycle of a transportation project is design, which we use to describe all the activities to get an idea ready for construction



When can you get involved in the project development process?

Step 1

Once a transportation official has identified a funding source for a project, you can find out who is building the project. You could do an internet search about a potential transportation project using keywords that you know like place names. Your search might show you things like a plan, a news story or a project website.



Step 2

If you can't find what you need online, then contact your local elected official and ask them who is leading the project.



Step 3

Once you find out who is leading the project – which could be a city, a county, a state – then call them to ask if there will be opportunities for public input. The opportunity available could be:

- A meeting
- A comment period
- There may be no meeting or comment period when a project is on a list of **Categorical Exclusions** that typically don't involve significant impacts on the community or the environment. Most projects fit into this category, and many include:
 - Repaving and restriping roads
 - Installing traffic signals and bus stops
 - Painting bike lanes



Step 4

If you found out that there is a meeting or comment period coming up, then look at the agenda of the meeting and plan to attend.

- Some meetings are formal and include presentations about possible transportation solutions.
- Other meetings are much more informal and provide an opportunity to learn about the transportation solutions.

At both meetings, you can find a way to learn and ask questions.



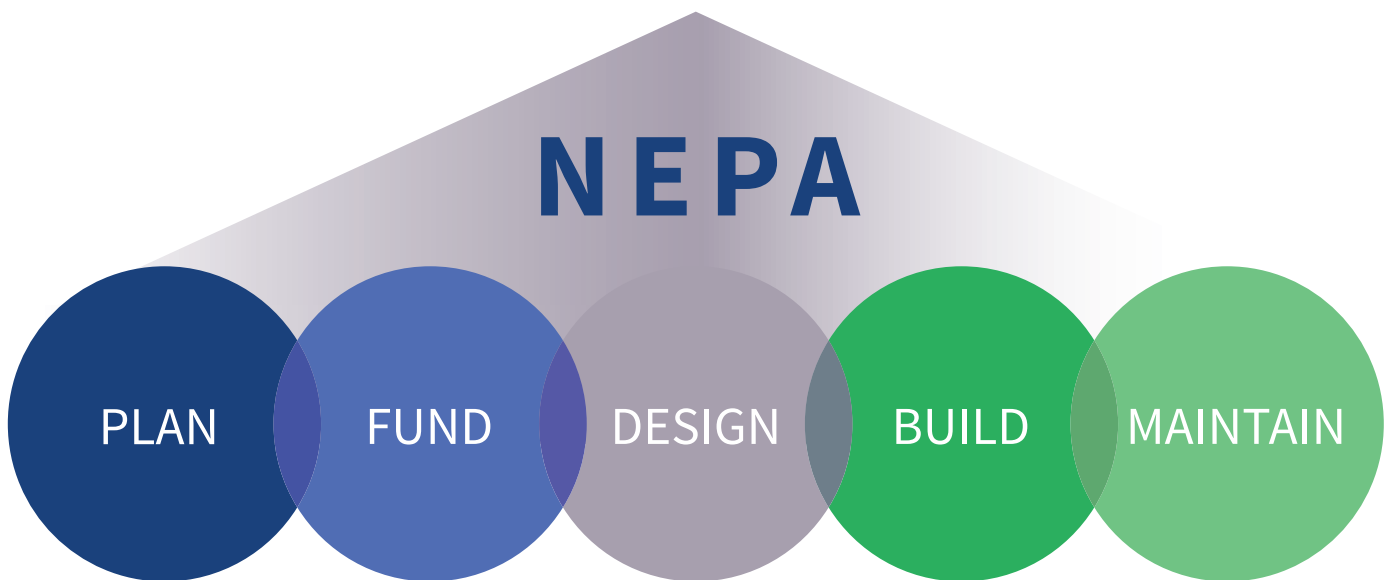
alternatives, the potential impacts of the project on the environment and the proposed mitigations.

The level and type of public involvement required for a specific transportation project depends on the type of project and its potential to cause significant environmental impacts. Some states and agencies also have policies that affect public involvement in the NEPA process. The graphic on the previous page shows how you can have input into the NEPA process at a high level and points out the potential opportunities for public involvement. NEPA requirements are

complex and vary based on the potential environmental impacts of the project, the type of project, and the location of the project, so consider this a guide of where public involvement may occur. A simple graphic overview of the NEPA process is included in the Illustrated Glossary.

NEPA review is required for major projects that use federal funds or require a federal action, such as a permit or other regulatory decisions. Projects that do not include federal funds or have major federal actions may go through other environmental review processes,

The Role of NEPA in the Five Step Process



NEPA-related activities start as early as the Plan and Fund steps. Most NEPA activities occur during the Design step. NEPA-related decisions made during Plan, Fund and Design affect many activities that take place during the Build step, and even some activities that take place during the Maintain step.

SPOTLIGHT



While scrolling through her social media feed, Ms. Edwards read about a proposal to build a county highway bypass near her childhood home. Growing up, Ms. Edwards heard stories from her family about historic events that took place in the area. Ms. Edwards decided to attend a NEPA public meeting and write letters to county officials to make them aware of these important events that took place during the Civil Rights Movement. After hearing Ms. Edwards' comments, other residents shared their stories about the area with officials, too. Officials took this feedback into consideration, and county engineers redesigned the bypass in an effort to avoid historical sites.

based on state and local laws. Many of the decisions and actions related to the NEPA process occur during the Design step, but NEPA may start as early as the Plan step and could continue through the Build and Maintain steps.

The NEPA process begins when the federal agency is asked to take an action, such as to fund a proposed transit project. For most construction projects, NEPA ramps up once a project sponsor finds a way to fund the project. NEPA must be finished before construction can begin. A NEPA review may also have to be completed for decisions that don't involve construction, such as issuing a rule or policy or approving a permit request.

Design and Land Purchase

Preliminary and final design and preliminary and final engineering also happen during the Design step, although final design and engineering occur after the completion of NEPA. Engineers at the project sponsor organization lead these activities. NEPA has specific public involvement requirements for certain types of projects. In certain projects — and depending on commitments in the

the construction process.

In certain projects, and depending on commitments in the Design step, project sponsors may be responsible for informing you about what to expect, especially if you will be directly affected by construction activities. They may do this by providing written notice or holding a public open house or meeting prior to construction.

If you receive this notice, here is some information that may be included or questions you should ask:

- What areas will be affected by construction?
- When will construction start and end (dates and times)?
- What can you expect to see, hear and feel during that time?
- How will traffic patterns change?
- How will the project sponsor make sure that these effects are minimized throughout the construction period?

If you are not informed about construction in your neighborhood or you have additional questions, contact the lead agency to ask for more information. While agencies may not be required to consider public comments during this step, they may still respond to your suggestions.

SPOTLIGHT



Mr. Park owns a restaurant on a congested state highway. The State Department of Transportation (State DOT) announced it would make improvements to the road to help ease congestion, like adding a center turn lane. These improvements would help Mr. Park's business in the long-term, but he worried about impacts during construction. How would customers access his restaurant if lanes or sidewalks were closed? Mr. Park attended a community meeting with State DOT decision-makers to voice his concerns. The decision-makers agreed to mitigate impacts to businesses along the highway by providing temporary signs to businesses and adjusting their construction times.

MAINTAIN

How is the transportation system kept in working order?

The step called Maintain includes monitoring and maintenance of roads, sidewalks, rail, runways and other physical pieces of our transportation system to make sure they are in working condition. This step also includes provision of transit, rail and air service and operation of these systems.

How can we measure whether our transportation system is working and what we need to do to improve it?

An important part of keeping our transportation system in good condition is understanding how well it is working. Many transportation agencies collect data, or information, about how well the transportation system is working and serving people. For example, MPOs, transit agencies, universities, the U.S. Census Bureau and others distribute surveys to ask people about their travel behavior. The information gathered by these surveys can help the agencies to understand how people are using the existing transportation system and to predict future needs.

Transportation agencies also collect information using *intelligent transportation systems* (ITS) that measure traffic patterns. This may include data like how many people are riding transit vehicles, traveling through specific intersections or using high occupancy vehicle (HOV) lanes during rush hour versus non-rush hour.

The agencies feed all of this data into models and ridership projections, which help them prioritize projects and design the transportation system for how people travel.



Who collects good data about maintenance, operations and service?

When you make your case to elected officials, planners, engineers and other transportation professionals, you can present good data to back up your recommendations. Transportation planners and project sponsors generate a lot of important data that they make available on their websites. You might look for data in the following places:

Federal Agencies

- The U.S. Department of Transportation has several agencies and offices within it. These five agencies and offices

collect data about roads, transit, aviation and rail:

- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Federal Aviation Administration
- Federal Rail Administration
- Bureau of Transportation Statistics
- U.S. Census Bureau
- U.S. Center for Disease Control (CDC)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)
- Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ)
- U.S. Department of Interior
 - Bureau of Land Management (BLM)
 - Fish & Wildlife Service (FWS)
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- Many others

Local and State Agencies

- Transit agencies
- State DOTs
- MPOs
- County and state public health organizations
- Local and regional land use planning organizations

Universities and Non-Profit Organizations

- Transportation research centers
- Walking and biking organizations

SPOTLIGHT



Mrs. Jackson and her family recently moved to an apartment a few miles from her city’s airport. Over the past few months, her family noticed an increase in airplane noise in the evenings. They expected to hear some noise living near the airport, but the concentration of noise in the evening was surprising. Mrs. Jackson called the airport’s noise complaint line to file a complaint. Then, she decided to join a community group that works with the airport authority to address airplane noise issues in surrounding communities. Together, they were able to work with the Airport and FAA to adjust some evening flight paths away from her neighborhood.

Learn | Engage | Make a Difference Part 2

Learn: There are five steps in the transportation decision-making process that move a project from idea to reality: Plan, Fund, Design, Build and Maintain.

Engage: All five steps include opportunities to influence transportation decisions, as shown on page 24. Getting involved early and often can increase your chances of influencing projects.

Make a Difference: Read the spotlight stories for ideas about how others have created change in their communities.





PART 3:

Some Common Transportation Scenarios

Scenarios

This section features four common transportation scenarios that can help you learn how to solve the types of issues you may face in your community.

- How to express your needs about a road project
- How to make your case for moving or adding a bus stop
- How to provide input on an airport runway construction project
- How to work to make a rail crossing safer

What do you need to know to get involved?

- Who should you contact?
- What types of information will you need?
- When should you get involved?
- What considerations should you have?

UNDERSTANDING TYPES OF TRANSPORTATION

Roads



TRUCK



CAR



BIKE



WALK

Transit



LIGHT RAIL



CITY BUS



FERRY



COMMUTER VAN



BUS STOP



HEAVY RAIL (SUBWAY)



INTERCITY BUS



PARATRANSIT VAN

Aviation



PLANE



HELICOPTER



UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM (UAS)



AIRPORT

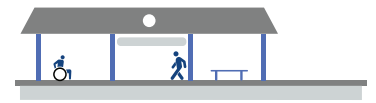
Rail



TRAIN

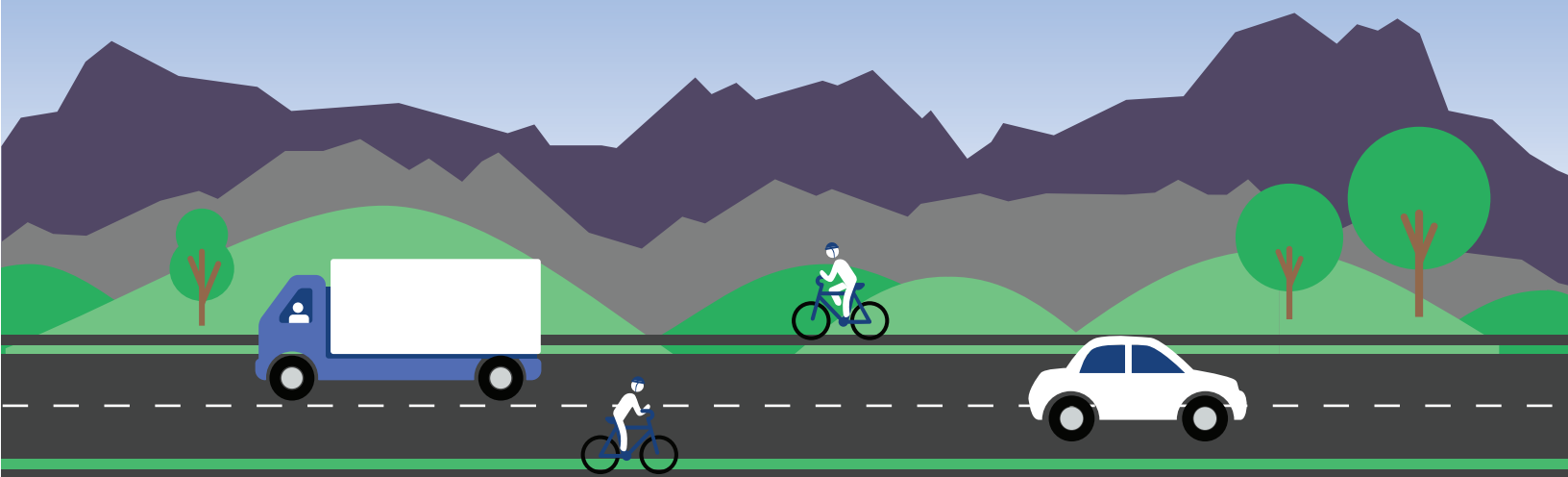


HIGH SPEED TRAIN



RAIL STATION

When you get involved in transportation decisions, you will hear people talking about modes — or types — of transportation. For the purposes of this Toolkit, we will focus mostly on the following modes: roads, transit, rail and aviation.



Roads

In this Toolkit, the term "roads" includes highways, streets, interstates and freeways. These provide the spaces where people and goods travel by car, motorcycle, emergency vehicle, freight truck and other vehicles. Many roads include space for sidewalks and bike lanes, but some roads restrict access to vehicles only.

These are examples of the types of decisions that are made about roads:

- A project to construct a brand new road where one currently does not exist. Can be as small as 2 lanes and as large as 8+ lanes.
- A project to reconstruct an existing road to add or remove lanes or change the alignment.
- A project to resurface, restore, rehabilitate or otherwise preserve and extend the life of a road. This can include adding bikeways and pedestrian access routes, landscape, lighting, guardrails and crosswalks.
- A project to maintain a road, including repainting lane and edge lines, adding signage, filling potholes or cracks, removing debris, repairing drainage, mowing and removing snow.

A SAMPLE ROAD SCENARIO

Issue: You want to express your needs about a road project.



Who

Who owns the road?

- What is the name or number of the road? Look for a sign (see *below*). The name or number of the road will tell you who is responsible for it: a city, a county or the state.
- Where is the road project located?
- Does the project have an official name?

Once you know who to contact

- What is the status of the project? Is it being planned? Being built? Is it open for use?

Not sure who owns or maintains a road?

The signs you see on the side of that road may help you find the answer.



Interstate Highway

- Owned and maintained by State Department of Transportation (DOT)



U.S. Highway

- Usually owned and maintained by State DOT
- In some cities, owned and maintained by local DOT



State Highway

- Usually owned and maintained by State DOT
- In some cities, maintained by local DOT
- Signs may have the state border, a logo, or other design instead of a circle



County Highway/Road

- Owned and maintained by county DOT
- Signs may have a white and black rectangle or other design instead of a blue and yellow shield



Local Road/Street

- Owned and maintained by local DOT

Things to keep in mind:

- Figuring out who to contact about an intersection can be complicated. For example, where a state highway and a local road cross, you might want to contact both the State DOT and the local government.
- Multiple agencies may own and maintain sections of the same road, especially if the road crosses state, county or local borders.



What information do I need to know?

Who or what will be affected?

- Populations (including racial and ethnic communities, low-income communities and people with disabilities)
- Neighborhoods (including buildings, homes, parks and schools)
- Routes (including other roads, sidewalks, rail and bus lines)
- Natural and cultural resources (including waterways, wetlands, animal habitat and historic landmarks)

The road is being planned

- The project must be in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) before it can get funded, designed and built.
- If it is not in the TIP, does the project appear in some other kind of plan (see the Plan section for types of plans, which should be available on the agency's website)?

The road is being designed now

- This project has already gone through the transportation planning process. It is now in the project development process. In order to influence a decision at this stage, you will want to understand the specific opportunities provided by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA).

The highway already exists

- This project has already gone through the planning and project development processes. It is now in the upkeep and repair stage, called maintenance and operations.
- Your needs may relate to:
 - Upkeep (lighting, potholes, overgrown plants or grass)
 - Congestion or traffic
 - Safety related to sidewalks, crosswalks and speed limits



How to get involved

- Attend a public meeting
- Submit a written comment by email, U.S. Postal Mail or social media
- Find public meeting schedules and public comment opportunities on the agency’s website or from public engagement officer



Alternatives

- If you have tried to contact local and state agencies and are not getting a response, then contact your Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Division Office at bit.ly/FHWAfieldofc and talk with the Community Planner who is assigned to your area.

There is an FHWA Division Office located in every state, and in D.C. and Puerto Rico.

- If you believe discrimination has occurred, you may file a civil rights complaint with U.S. DOT by contacting the Departmental Office of Civil Rights at bit.ly/CivilRightsOffice.



Transit

Transit, also called public transportation, moves people by bus, streetcar, light rail, subway, ferry, paratransit and other types of vehicles. Transit services are required to be accessible for people with disabilities. Many transit vehicles include space for bikes. Some transit, including buses and commuter rail, provide service on roads and rails that are owned by other organizations, like state and local governments and rail freight companies.

These are examples of the types of decisions that are made about transit:

- Location and design of bus stops
- Location, design and construction of stations for light rail, subway, commuter rail, bus rapid transit and ferries
- Frequency of transit service
- Hours of transit service
- Addition of bus routes and changes in bus routes
- Cost of transit fares
- How fares are paid (cash, transit pass, stored value card or ticket)
- Design of vehicles or transit stops for accessibility

A SAMPLE TRANSIT SCENARIO

Issue: You want to move or add a bus stop.



Who to contact

Transit agency

- How do I know which [transit agency](#) to contact? What name or logo do you see on the sign at the bus stop or on the transit vehicle? The name or logo will tell you who is responsible for operating this bus service.
- Most transit providers have a rider or citizen advocacy group. Its members may accept requests and comments from the public.
- Search for your transit agency/agencies at this link: bit.ly/localtransitlinks.



What to include in your request

Basic information

- Is this area currently served or has this area ever been served by transit? Identify the location of the bus stop on the route that is currently the closest to you (specify street or intersection).
- How far is that bus stop from your home, school or place of work? There are many ways to find this information:
 - Walk, bike or drive to the nearest bus stop
 - Board a bus and pick up a schedule
 - Call the transit agency
 - Visit the transit agency's website
 - Use an online mapping website to plan your trip using the transit button
 - Use a transit app on your smart phone
- Are you requesting a new bus stop? If so, why?
- Did you have a bus stop that was moved or removed? If so:
 - How many people used the original stop?
 - Have there been complaints about that bus stop?



How to make the request

- Call the transit agency and speak to customer service.
- Visit the transit agency's website and look for a form that allows you to submit a request for a bus stop.
- Attend a public meeting that focuses on service changes to bus routes.



When to act

- You can request a bus stop at any time by completing the transit agency's online or paper form.
- The best time to request a bus stop is when the transit agency is considering service changes.



Considerations

Keep these factors in mind when you request a bus stop:

- Transit agencies have service standards to make sure their buses and trains are accessible to people with disabilities, have a standard distance between bus stops and are safe for all users. Standards also may require minimum ridership at each stop and amenities like shelters for the safety and comfort of users.
- **Parking:** Sometimes, a bus stop eliminates one or more parking spaces on the street.
- **Street furniture:** Many local governments have laws, policies and standards about street furniture (benches, shelters and lighting).
- Some folks may not want a bus stop in their front yard due to concerns about garbage, disturbances, noise/vibration or blocking traffic.
- Transit agencies often receive requests to have fewer bus stops so they can provide more frequent service, faster service or more reliable service.



Alternatives

What if the transit agency is not responsive to my request for a bus stop?

- Contact your mayor, city council member or other local elected official and ask that person to submit the request to the transit agency on your behalf.
- Contact a group in your neighborhood (a citizen or transit riders advisory group) and ask them to assist you in your request.
- Contact your Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and ask that they submit the request on your behalf.
- Call your State Department of Transportation (DOT) and talk with the planner who is responsible for transit.
- On rare occasions, you might need to contact your Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Regional Office (bit.ly/FTAoffices) and talk with the Community Planner who is assigned to your area.
- If you believe discrimination has occurred, you may file a civil rights complaint with U.S. DOT by contacting the Departmental Office of Civil Rights at bit.ly/CivilRightsOffice.



Aviation

Aviation moves people and goods through the air.

These are examples of the types of decisions that are made about aviation:

- Flight paths
- Noise: voluntary noise abatement procedures (FAA, Airline, Airport decision)*
- Airport development
- Runway construction
- Runway maintenance
- Land use in the vicinity of an airport (local government decision)

*Individual airports can propose mandatory restrictions on noise, subject to approval by FAA. Airports are encouraged to hold community roundtables and YOU can encourage your airport to have one!

A Sample Aviation Scenario

Issue: You want to provide input on an airport runway construction project.



Who?

- Many airports are owned and operated by local government entities.
- An airport construction project may require Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) review or approvals.



How do you know what is going on at your airport?

- Airports often have websites that include information on proposed airport construction projects. If you have questions about a project, look at the airport website and see if there is information available.
- If there is no website or project information available, contact the airport for more information.
- An airport construction project may be included in larger airport planning and environmental documents, such as an airport master plan or environmental review document. The airport may provide communities or other stakeholders opportunities to get involved in those processes. They may hold public meetings or forums or provide draft documents on their websites or in public libraries.
- Airports may also host a community roundtable that regularly meets to discuss airport development and operations. Roundtables are an excellent opportunity for airport representatives, community members and stakeholders to discuss airport projects.
- Attend public meetings or forums.



How to get involved

- Contact the airport to learn more about the project.
- Reach out to any established groups in your neighborhood to see if they have any information about the project.
- Submit a written comment on the project by U.S. Postal Mail or email.



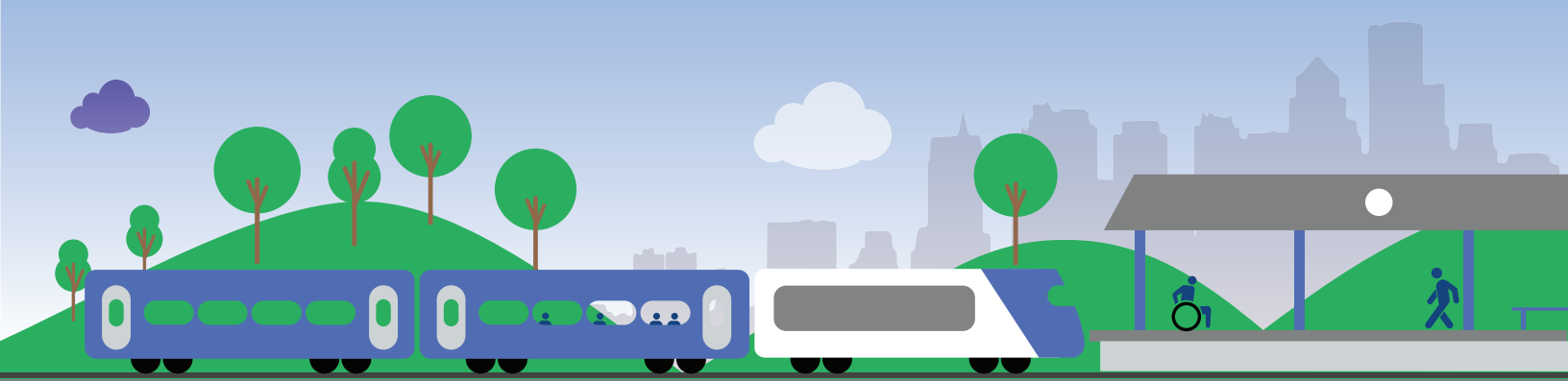
Considerations

- Aviation projects can be very complex.
- Aviation projects may be proposed due to safety or security considerations.



Alternatives

- If you cannot find the information you are looking for locally, you can contact your local FAA Airports District Office. They may be able to provide you with airport contact information or more information on a project.
 - The location and contact information for these offices can be found on the FAA website at: [bit.ly/AirportRegionals](https://www.faa.gov/airports/airports-regional)
- If you believe discrimination has occurred, you may file a civil rights complaint with U.S. DOT by contacting the Departmental Office of Civil Rights at [bit.ly/CivilRightsOffice](https://www.dhs.gov/civil-rights).



Rail

Rail moves people by passenger train and high speed rail, and moves goods by freight train. Rail freight companies move goods by train. Railroad tracks can be owned by private companies, state transportation agencies and Amtrak. Amtrak is a private corporation that receives federal funding to provide passenger rail service between U.S. cities. These organizations work with state and local transportation agencies to manage rail crossings at roads and sidewalks.

These are examples of the types of decisions that are made about rail:

- Location, design and construction of high-speed intercity passenger rail alignments and stations
- Location of rail crossings
- Maintenance of rail crossings
- Designation of quiet zones

A SAMPLE RAIL SCENARIO

Issue: You want to make a rail crossing safer.



Who to contact

Which agency should you contact when you notice a problem at a rail crossing?

- At the rail crossing there will be a small blue sign that shows the rail crossing identification number and a toll free phone number to call to report problems at the crossing.



- You can also download the Rail Crossing Locator app to your smartphone (available for various operating systems) and use it to look up and report information about the rail crossing.

Who is responsible for making repairs?

- It depends on what is wrong with the crossing and who owns the road – could be the railroad, the city/town, the county or the state.



What is wrong with the crossing and how do you get involved?

Rough or dangerous crossing surface

You cannot get yourself and/or your mobility device (wheelchair, walker and power chair) over the crossing because the pedestrian access route is broken or damaged; there is a large gap between the pedestrian access route and the tracks; or the crossing is covered in snow or ice.

- Contact the local agency that owns and maintains the road that crosses the tracks. Describe the surface damage that needs to be repaired.



- The process will vary from state to state, but in general the local road authority will propose a project to repair the roadway surface; the railroad must approve the proposal; and then the state will evaluate, approve and fund the project.

Barriers

The crossing is not accessible because the sidewalk doesn't continue over the crossing; there is no curb cut in the sidewalk that leads to the crossing; or the angle of the crossing is too steep.

- Many communities have a process for removing barriers to walking safely. Contact your local town, city or county to talk with the pedestrian coordinator who can help you get the sidewalk finished, repaired or improved.
- The process will vary from state to state, but most cities and counties can request funding from the state or federal government to improve compliance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and pedestrian access for all users. Your local town, city or county offices can show you how the process works and can help you get involved.

There are no automatic warning devices and you can't see far enough to know if a train is coming.

- Warning devices such as flashing lights, bells or gate arms are only installed at crossings that have been studied by a team of experts and found in need of these specialized devices.
- If you want to request warning devices, use the rail crossing identification number and the toll free phone number to report your concerns about sight distances at the crossing.
- Get in touch with the local roadway authority and share your concerns about visibility and sight distances.



Trains block the crossing for a long time.

- Use the rail crossing number and the toll free phone number to report the blocked crossing. Give the time and date that it was blocked. Also report this blockage to local law enforcement so that they can maintain emergency access.
- Many states, counties and cities will fine railroad companies if their trains block the crossing for too long.



When to act

- If you or anyone else is in danger, call 911 immediately.
 - If your vehicle is stalled or stuck at a crossing, exit the vehicle immediately and move away from the track.
- If you want to improve crossing safety:
 - Call the toll free number
 - Contact the agency that owns the road that crosses the tracks
 - Attend a public meeting of the agency that owns the road
 - Only take photos from outside the roadway



Considerations

- Stay off of railroad tracks and property.
- Railroads are required to inspect lights and gates at railroad crossings monthly.



Alternatives

- If your problem has not been resolved by taking the steps above, contact your Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) Regional Safety Office and ask them to investigate the problem you've noticed.
- If you believe discrimination has occurred, you may file a civil rights complaint with U.S. DOT by contacting the Departmental Office of Civil Rights at bit.ly/CivilRightsOffice.

Learn | Engage | Make a Difference Part 3

Learn: This section features four common transportation scenarios that can help you learn how to solve the types of issues you may face in your community. When you want to express your needs about a transportation project or a transportation challenge you have identified, you will need to know who to contact, when to get involved and what information to have prepared.

Engage: Visit an agency's website to learn about upcoming public comment opportunities. Attend a public meeting, roundtable or open house. Submit a written comment by email, U.S. Postal Mail, web form or social media.

Make a Difference: You can contact your local, regional or state government agency, your transit agency or one of your elected officials to voice your needs. If needed, you can contact the field offices of U.S. DOT agencies.



PART 4:

Becoming a Transportation Leader in Your Community

What's in this section?

- You are an emerging transportation leader
- How to add value to the process: getting heard
- How to make your case
- How you can get involved in transportation decision-making

Ways to get involved

- Stay informed
- Attend public meetings
- Talk with decision-makers
- Work with your neighbors
- Join a group
- Serve on a committee
- Submit comments to the official record

You Are an Emerging Transportation Leader

By living and traveling in your community and taking an interest in transportation, you already have the perspective you need to become a transportation leader in your community. As an emerging leader, you have the opportunity to be an informed partner in the decision-making process. You can provide constructive feedback that helps explain challenges and then offers some solutions.

You're also starting to gather the information you need. For example, you've learned the basics of who to contact and when to get involved. This section will explain how to present yourself and frame your ideas to decision-makers as you participate in the transportation decision-making process.

You are already invested in your community and know what matters to you and your neighbors. Now you can share that knowledge with decision-makers to help them make more informed transportation decisions. By showing interest and providing input, you may be shaping the future of your community. That's what makes you a transportation leader.

How to Add Value to the Process: Getting Heard

(Credit: Citizen's Guide to Advocating Before the District of Columbia Council, by the DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence Policy Department)

- Prepare:
 - Know your issue, including why it is important, what it will cost, how long it will take, who supports it and who opposes it.
 - Familiarize yourself with the decision-making process and the timeline specific to your issue.
 - Decide who to contact – the person or group that will make the decision about your issue – and whether you should communicate with them directly or through a staff member.
- Communicate:
 - Set the right tone. Make your case in a constructive, productive way. For example, when you raise a problem or concern, suggest at least one possible solution.
 - Be clear and respectful. When you engage with elected officials and transportation staff, imagine yourself in their shoes. Decision-makers must weigh many competing priorities, so be as concise, specific and accurate as possible.

- Follow through:
 - If a decision-maker talked with you, send an email to thank that person and offer to send additional information and answer any questions.
 - If you promised to share information or materials with a decision-maker, send it promptly.



How to Make Your Case

When agencies conduct effective engagement, they invite community groups to share their needs and then follow up with them afterward about the status of their requests. You can get involved in a process led by a transportation agency (top-down) or gather your neighbors to raise an issue to your elected officials (bottom-up).

Put yourself in the shoes of the person or group responsible for making a final decision.

Think about what you would want to know if you were the decision-maker.

Ask yourself questions like:

- What kind of data supports the request?
- Is this a common problem or challenge? And does it affect some

people or groups differently? How?

- Are there any stories that can show examples of the problem or challenge?
- How much does it cost to fix the problem? What are the long-term costs of not fixing it?
- What have other communities done in your area, in the U.S. or in other countries?
- How would your idea resolve the issue?
 - Does it improve safety by preventing injuries or deaths?
 - Does it save money in the short or long term?
 - Is it good for the environment?
 - Does it reduce wear and tear or improve the performance of the transportation system?

Find data and facts to support your request.

Think carefully about where you get your transportation news. Some sources are more reliable than others. Make sure you read a well-rounded assortment of articles on your issue.

- Traditional sources like:
 - Media including newspaper, television and radio
 - Public meetings

environmental and social issues that affect your transportation system.

- Your ideas can help decision-makers see opportunities, risks, agreements, conflicts, strengths, fatal flaws and other important parts of the decisions they need to make.
- When public agencies take a proactive, creative approach to public involvement and when members of the public seize the opportunity to get engaged, decisions may move forward more effectively and efficiently.

After decision-makers listen to members of the public, they analyze the ideas and information they've received and then think about how those ideas and that information affects the decision they need to make. Sometimes they ask the public for more information, and sometimes they change their decision based on what they have heard from the public. The decision-makers should always update you and tell you whether they used your input and, if so, how they used it.

Decide when to change your tactics.

Once you have shared your ideas and made your request, you will need to be patient yet persistent. Before and

after a decision is made, a variety of factors can affect when the decision is implemented. Follow up periodically to request updates. At some point, you may think the decision-makers are not hearing you. At that point, think if and how you will continue to push for your voice to be heard.

For example, traditional and social media can be good ways to spread your message to more people than you might be able to reach alone. Media attention can alert the public about the issue that matters to you, educate them about the issue and build support for your request. Media attention can also put pressure on decision-makers. You will want to draft good talking points that include your proposed solution and build relationships with professional and citizen journalists.



How You Can Get Involved in Transportation Decision-making



Stay informed

Pay attention to stories about transportation in the newspaper, on the radio and on television. Sign up to receive newsletters — U.S. Postal Mail and e-mail — from local and state agencies and community-based organizations that focus on transportation. Like or follow transportation-related pages on social media.

Work with your neighbors

Find out if anyone in your neighborhood is interested in the same transportation issue(s) as you. Reach out to your neighborhood association and local civic organizations.



Attend public meetings

Transportation agencies hold regular and special meetings to inform the public about plans and projects and to hear public comments via breakout sessions, open forum or timed statements. You can find out about these meetings in the local paper and on the websites of these agencies, or by picking up a flier at a library. The agenda can help you figure out what may be decided at the meeting, such as alternatives for a transportation project, impacts on the community and the environment, costs and benefits, and potential location and route information.

Submit comments to the official record

Look for opportunities to speak during formal public hearings. Send a letter or statement.



Talk with decision-makers

Contact elected officials and staff at your local and state transportation agencies. Ask them for information about current and upcoming plans and projects, how to get your ideas on the agenda, and how you can get involved.

Join a group

Look for groups that match your interest(s), whether that is a specific transportation plan or project, or broader transportation policy or funding issues.



Serve on a committee

Find out how to apply for or be appointed to an advisory group, commission or committee on an issue you care about. Local transportation agencies often have citizen advisory groups, as well as groups that focus on the needs of transit riders, people with disabilities, young people and older Americans.

Learn | Engage | Make a Difference Part 4

Learn: This section encourages you to be a positive transportation leader in your community and helps you learn how to make your case.

Engage: You can get involved in a process led by a transportation agency (top-down) or gather your neighbors to raise an issue to your elected officials (bottom-up).

Make a Difference: If you want to add value to the process, be well-prepared, set the right tone, communicate clearly and respectfully, and follow through with decision-makers.



Illustrated Glossary

What's in this section?

- Who's who in transportation
- What's what in transportation
- Transportation equity
- Public involvement in transportation

STEPS LEGEND





Many terms in the glossary apply to one or more of the five steps of the transportation process. This key can help you see which steps relate to each term, as shown through the colored circles on the following pages.

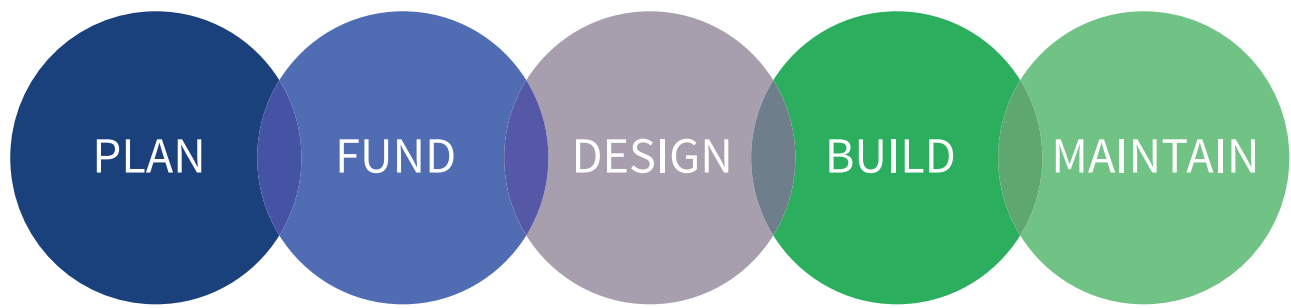








Who's Who in Transportation







Here is a list of the various decision-makers that have a seat at the table and a role in the process. They include State departments of transportation (State DOTs), metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), tribal governments, county and various authorities (transit and airport). The definitions show the part or parts of the process where these transportation agencies have a role.








It is important to understand the roles of key players in the transportation decision-making process, including federal, state, regional and local transportation agencies. Each player has special responsibilities, resources and powers, and you will want to figure out which organization is responsible for the issue or challenge you want to influence.

Organization	Which Steps?
<p>Airport: Airports may be owned and operated by state, county or municipal units of government, or by independent government authorities. In some cases they may be owned by integrated port authorities (which may also operate seaports, bridges, tunnels or other transportation facilities). Some airports are publicly owned but rely upon commercial entities to operate key facilities.</p>	
<p>Airport Authority: An independent governmental organization that manages operations and development of an airport or airports.</p>	
<p>Amtrak: Amtrak is a private corporation that receives federal funding to provide passenger rail service between U.S. cities.</p>	
<p>Council of Governments (COG): These organizations are regional governing and/or coordinating bodies. Some COGs operate an MPO or regional transportation planning organization (RTPO), which means they are responsible for transportation planning. Their other responsibilities might include economic and community development, pollution control, human services, water use, hazard mitigation and emergency planning.</p>	



Organization	Which Steps?
<p>Federal agencies: The U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT) has several federal agencies within it. These agencies work at the national level to distribute federal funding and ensure the safety of the traveling public through regulation and education. This Toolkit focuses on four key U.S. DOT agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Federal Aviation Administration (FAA): FAA oversees the safety and efficiency of the National Airspace System, including non-military aviation such as commercial airplanes. (www.faa.gov) • Federal Highway Administration (FHWA): FHWA provides financial and technical assistance to state and local transportation agencies for the construction, maintenance and preservation of the Nation’s highways, bridges and tunnels. (www.fhwa.dot.gov) • Federal Railroad Administration (FRA): FRA supports passenger and freight railroads with financial assistance and technical assistance to allow for the safe, reliable and efficient movement of people and goods by train. FRA also oversees rail safety. (www.fra.dot.gov) • Federal Transit Administration (FTA): FTA provides financial and technical assistance to local public transportation systems that run buses, light rail, heavy rail (subway), trolley and ferry service. FTA also oversees transit safety. (www.transit.dot.gov) 	     

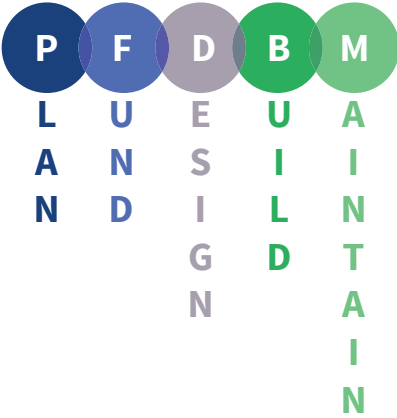
Organization	Which Steps?
<p>Harbor: A protected water body where ships and boats load and unload. Harbors and ports include freight ships, fishing boats, recreational boats and other water-based vessels.</p>	
<p>Interest groups (or interested parties): People or organizations that may be affected by a transportation decision or have an interest in its outcome.</p>	
<p>Lead agency: The Federal agency that provides funding or permits for a transportation project.</p>	
<p>Local government: A local government is a city, county, town, parish or district that owns and operates its own roadways, and controls and makes decisions for its geographic area. Your city, town or village and your county most likely have websites where you can find information about meetings, plans, projects and more. You might find information under the heading of community development, civil engineering, transportation or public works.</p>	
<p>Member of the public: This is you and your neighbors!</p>	
<p>Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO): This is an organization that makes long- and short-range plans for transportation in a particular region. MPOs are directed by boards that have several types of members, including representatives from local government and transportation authorities.</p>	
<p>Other local and regional agencies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Authorities (housing, land use) • Commissions (transportation, planning) • Councils (economic development) 	<p>Varied</p>

Organization	Which Steps?
Port Authority: See definition for Airport, which contains the definition for Port Authority.	
Project sponsor: The public or private party that has requested Federal support for an action.	
Public-Private Partnership (P3): A partnership between a government agency and one or more private sector companies to fund and operate a transportation project.	
Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO): Similar to MPOs, these organizations are responsible for transportation planning, but in non-metropolitan areas. They improve the planning, coordination, and execution of the long-range statewide transportation plan and the Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). State DOTs are required to cooperate with RTPOs, not just consult with them.	
State Department of Transportation (State DOT): Each state in the U.S. has a department that is responsible for transportation planning, design, construction, operations and maintenance. Puerto Rico has a Department of Transportation and Public Works, and the U.S. Virgin Islands has a Department of Public Works.	
State Rail Transportation Authority (SRTA): This group is responsible for setting policy for both freight rail and for intercity and commuter passenger rail within their boundaries. The SRTA also coordinates federal and state rail investments within the state.	
Transit agency: This organization provides public transportation services – which might include bus, rail and/or ferry – to a specific region. It might also be called a public transportation provider, transit district or transit authority. A transit agency may be an independent authority or might be related to the State DOT, the MPO, the county or the city.	






What's What in Transportation




Here are some words and terms people use to talk about the process of making transportation decisions (Plan, Fund, Design, Build, Maintain). The definitions show the part or parts of the process where you will need to understand this word.






STEPS LEGEND



Term	Which Steps?
<p><i>Bicycle and/or Pedestrian Plan:</i> A separate transportation plan that focuses on bicycle and pedestrian policies and goals, as well as specific projects and programs and the financial resources required to implement them. U.S. DOT policy requires incorporating bicycling and walking into transportation projects across modes because transportation agencies have a responsibility for improving opportunities for bicycling and walking in an active transportation system. Therefore, it is recommended that states and MPOs integrate bicycle and pedestrian elements into transportation plans and programs.</p>	
<p><i>Categorical exclusion:</i> A category of projects which do not have a significant effect on the human environment. As a result, these projects do not require an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS). In other words, these projects do not create significant impacts to planned growth or land use for the area; do not require the relocation of significant</p>	

Term	Which Steps?
<p>Environmental Assessment (EA): Under NEPA, if it is unclear whether the anticipated impacts will be significant, then an Environmental Assessment (EA) will be prepared. If the EA does not identify significant impacts, the federal agency leading the process will issue a final finding based on the information within the EA, called a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). If the EA indicates that there will be significant environmental impacts, then an EIS will need to be prepared.</p>	
<p>Environmental Impact Statement (EIS): Under NEPA, if the action is anticipated to have or potentially have significant environmental impacts, or if there is significant public controversy, then an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will be prepared. The selected alternative and the findings of the EIS are then issued in a Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD is the final step in the EIS process.</p>	
<p>Environmental protection: Policies, procedures and practices that are intended to protect the natural environment and the human environment. This includes conserving natural resources, preserving the current state of the environment, and reversing damage to the environment (climate change, pollution, deforestation, endangered species).</p>	
<p>Fiscal constraint: This means making sure that the transportation agency can reasonably expect to receive funding for a transportation project within the time that it is planned to be built, operated and maintained.</p>	
<p>Fuel Efficiency Standards: These regulations aim to increase the average fuel economy of (or reduce energy consumption by) cars and light trucks that are produced for sale in the U.S. The Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) standards are regulations in the U.S.</p>	

Term	Which Steps?
<p>Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP): This plan covers at least 20 years and sets goals and targets for transportation issues including safety, security, economic vitality, accessibility for people and goods, energy, environment, quality of life, development, connectivity of the transportation system for all modes, efficient system management and operation, and preservation of the existing transportation system.</p>	
<p>Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP): Federal law requires this plan to include long- and short-range actions the region will take to invest in its transportation system, including roadways, transit, bikeways, walkways and connections between modes. The MPO must actively engage the public and stakeholders, and cooperate with the state and providers of public transportation, to create the MTP. The MPO approves the MTP, and must update it regularly (every five years in air quality attainment areas, every four years in nonattainment or maintenance areas, or more frequently if required by state and local officials).</p>	
<p>Mitigate: As possible project locations and the impacts associated with them are identified, the project sponsor looks for ways to avoid, lessen, or compensate for the impact of a transportation project. We call this mitigation. Mitigation includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoiding the impact altogether by not taking a certain action or parts of an action. • Minimizing impacts by limiting the degree or magnitude of the action and its implementation. • Rectifying the impact by repairing, rehabilitating or restoring the affected environment. • Reducing or eliminating the impact over time by preservation and maintenance operations during the life of the action. • Compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments. 	

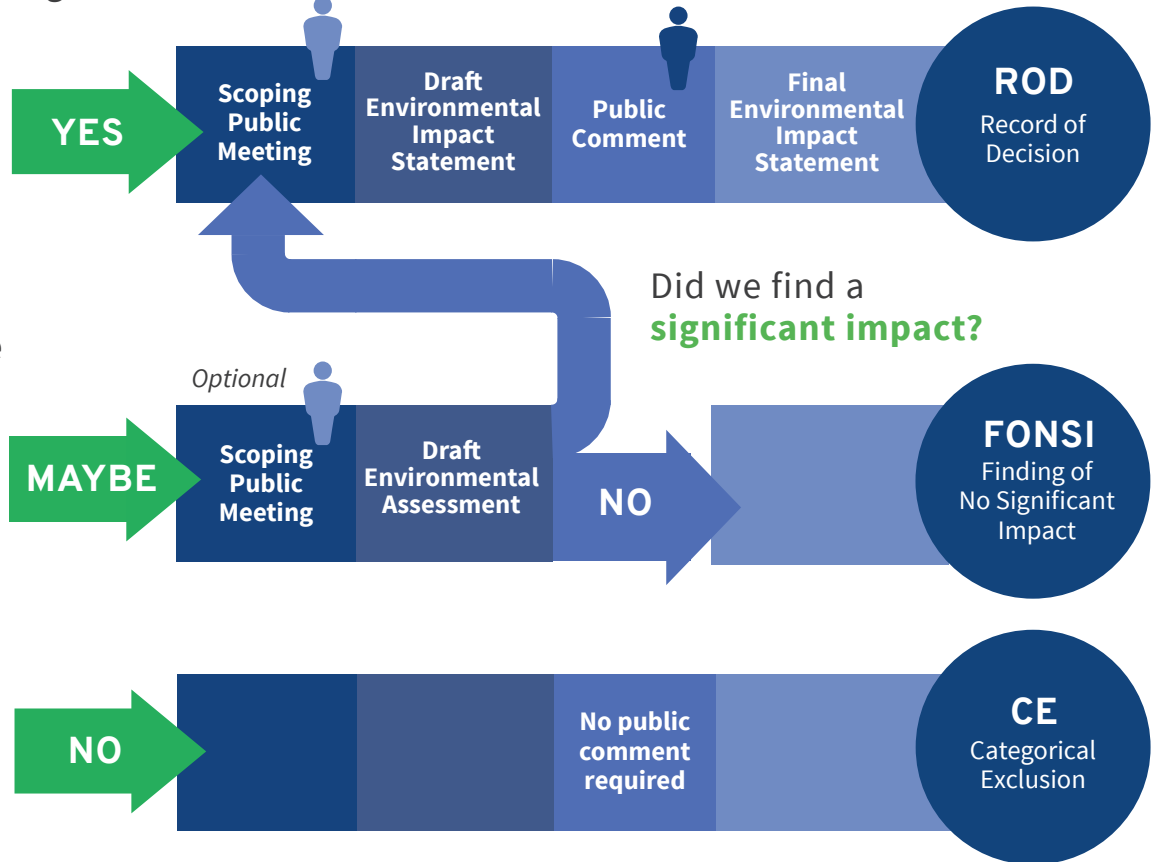
Term	Which Steps?
<p>Natural environment: The natural environment includes all living and non-living things that occur naturally on earth. This includes the interaction of all living species, climate, weather, minerals, and other natural resources that affect human life and economic activity.</p>	
<p>Paratransit: ADA-complementary paratransit is a door-to-door public transportation service for people with disabilities who are unable to use the standard bus or rail service because of their disabilities or obstacles in the environment, such as inaccessible sidewalks or facilities.</p>	
<p>Port: A place (usually in a town or city) where ships and boats load and unload. Ports serve freight ships, fishing boats, recreational boats and other water-based vessels.</p>	
<p>State Rail Plan (SRP): A State Rail Transportation Authority (SRTA) develops an SRP, which includes an assessment of a state’s current rail system, the role of rail transportation within the state’s transportation system, and a vision for the future of passenger and freight rail system in the state. The SRP also includes a Rail Service and Investment Program (RSIP) that lists rail investments needed to achieve the state’s vision for its rail system. SRPs must be updated at least every five years.</p>	
<p>Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP): State DOTs develop STIPs, which are short-range, four-year lists of priority transportation projects that are drawn from the long-range transportation plan and include the projects in the MPO and RPO TIPs. The State DOT develops the STIP in cooperation with MPOs, RPOs and public transit providers. The STIP must be fiscally constrained, so it is created using special management and financial tools. The STIP includes all regionally significant transportation projects that receive funds and/or approval from FHWA or FTA.</p>	

When Can You Influence the NEPA Process?






Does your project have the potential for **significant impact** on your **community** or the surrounding **environment**?







When you can participate



Term	Which Steps?
Rail Service and Investment Program (RSIP): A document that lists rail investments needed to achieve the state's vision for its rail system.	P F D B M
Resilient: Constructed and maintained to withstand natural disasters. The ability to anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to changing conditions and withstand, respond to, and recover rapidly from disruptions.	P F D B M

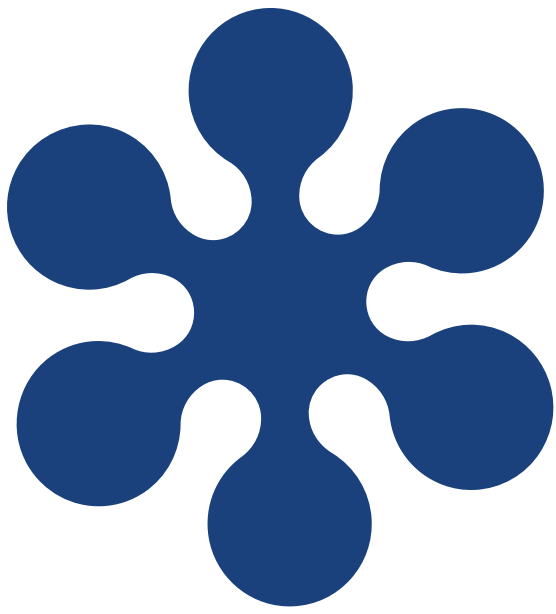
Term	Which Steps?
<p>Transit: Public transportation, or transit, moves people by bus, streetcar, light rail, subway, ferry and other types of vehicles. Transit agencies are responsible for setting transit routes and schedules, as well as operating paratransit service for people with disabilities.</p>	
<p>Transportation Improvement Program (TIP): A short-range, four-year list of priority transportation projects that are drawn from the MTP and help the region achieve its goals and targets. The MPO develops the TIP in cooperation with the state and public transit providers, and the MPO and the governor must approve the TIP. The TIP must be fiscally constrained, so it is created using special management and financial tools. The TIP includes all regionally significant transportation projects that receive funds and/or approval from FHWA or FTA, as well as projects that do not receive federal funds but are consistent with the MTP. It also includes bicycle, pedestrian, highway and safety projects.</p>	
<p>Transportation Management Area (TMA): An urbanized area with a population over 200,000. Since a TMA usually has complex transportation issues, the MPO in a TMA has a strong voice and role in setting priorities for the projects listed in the TIP. Every four years, MPOs in TMAs must go through a federal certification process, called a certification review.</p>	
<p>Transportation Planning: This is the process that transportation agencies use with members of the public and other interested organizations to identify transportation policies, goals and projects to prepare for future needs to move people and goods.</p>	
<p>Transportation System: The entire environment of transportation that moves people and goods, including the vehicles and equipment, the land, water and air routes those vehicles travel, and the operations schedules and other logistics.</p>	

Term	Which Steps?
<p>Transportation Vision: A very long range plan (a 20- or 50-year plan) that describes future transportation goals, objectives and strategies for a community, region or state.</p>	
<p>Unmanned aircraft system (UAS): Sometimes called a drone, is an aircraft without a pilot on board. Instead, the UAS is controlled from an operator on the ground. An Unmanned Ground Vehicle is a vehicle without an operator on board.</p>	
<p>Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT): This is the number of miles traveled by motor vehicles within a specific geographic area for a specific time period. VMT is used to measure the amount of vehicle travel across places and time.</p>	
<p>Walkway: A pedestrian access route that is separated from the lanes for motor vehicles by space or barrier.</p>	

Transportation Equity

This section of the Glossary explains the concepts of equity and civil rights in transportation. Civil rights provide protection under the law, regardless of race, color or national origin. You have the right to receive equal treatment – and to be free of unfair treatment or discrimination – in a variety of settings, including transportation. This section provides more detail on Title VI and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), two laws that offer civil rights protections. It also describes Environmental Justice (EJ), a set of principles that influence federal agency policies to protect civil rights and avoid discrimination.

Access to affordable and reliable transportation provides access to opportunities including jobs, education and social services. Equity helps make sure that all communities share the benefits as well as the negative impacts of transportation in a fair and equitable way. Our transportation nondiscrimination laws and policies encourage transportation equity, and we use civil rights as a way to help achieve transportation equity.



These organizations are required to develop Title VI plans that include methods for data collection, training and program reviews. Additionally, Title VI requires these organizations to engage people who have limited English proficiency. In other words, organizations must ensure that people who do not understand or speak English have meaningful access to programs, activities, benefits, services and vital information.

The prohibition against discrimination applies to people of all races, ethnicity and national origins. Also, the prohibition against discrimination applies to all recipients of federal financial assistance; for example, recipients that carry out emergency management activities or provide emergency-related services must follow the law under Title VI. Proper planning and meaningful community engagement are best practices that help recipients comply with Title VI requirements.

Environmental Justice (EJ)

Executive Order 12898 on Environmental Justice creates requirements for federal agencies to achieve nondiscrimination and equitable distribution of benefits and impacts in their programs and policies. U.S. DOT uses a set of guiding principles to help it achieve the goals of EJ. Those principles are:

- To avoid, minimize or mitigate human health and environmental impacts that are disproportionately high and adverse, including social and economic effects, on racial and minority populations and low-income populations.
- To ensure all affected communities are not excluded and can participate fully and fairly in the transportation decision-making process.
- To prevent denial of, reduction in or significant delay in benefits to people of color and with low incomes.

Transportation agencies should consider these principles in all phases of transportation decision-making, particularly as they conduct transportation planning, project development and public outreach.

Equity Definitions

Equitable development: An approach to creating communities that balances social, environmental and financial interests.

Underserved: This term refers to a group or community that is or has historically been at a disadvantage due to its ability to pay, ability to access services, or other inequalities due to race, religion, ethnicity, language, ability and age.

Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)

ADA prohibits discrimination and ensures equal opportunities and access for people with disabilities. Accessible, affordable and reliable transportation connects people with disabilities to opportunities such as school, work, shopping, services and community life. Transportation choices available depend on several factors, including where you or the person in your care lives, your destination or your physical needs. These choices may include public transportation, paratransit, accessible taxis or rideshare vehicles, accessible airport shuttles or volunteer drivers from nonprofit organizations or local government agencies.

When your neighborhood has sidewalks, they must be accessible and have curb ramps where they cross the street. Your State DOT and local governments have to create ADA plans to provide access to neighborhoods and facilities.

These are some examples of how ADA plays into the transportation decision-making process:

- In transportation and transit planning, participation by the disability community is essential for a key station plan for rail and a bus stop plan.
- People with disabilities often rely on a combination of pedestrian and transit modes for independent mobility. Providing accessible sidewalks, street crossings and vehicles can improve access to transit and therefore be an effective way to reduce the demand for high-cost paratransit options.
- Decision-makers need input on the use of innovative technologies such as wireless communication to lower or remove transportation barriers for people with visual, hearing, cognitive and mobility disabilities.

Many transportation agencies rely on input and recommendations from their accessibility advisory committees, as well as comments gathered from people with disabilities during public involvement activities.

Public Involvement in Transportation

Here are some words and terms people use to talk about public involvement.

Charrette: An intense working session during which planners, engineers, members of the public, elected officials and others collaborate with designers to draft a solution to a transportation problem. Charrettes often take place in multiple sessions. The group divides into sub-groups, which present their work to the full group to spark further conversation. This technique can quickly generate solutions by bringing together the ideas of a diverse group of people.

Community benefits agreement (CBA): A contract between community groups and a project sponsor that requires the sponsor to provide specific amenities and/or mitigations to the neighborhood affected by the project. The discussion begins after the project has been announced, but prior to governmental approval. The process is intended to be inclusive, and the contract holds the project sponsor accountable because it is enforceable. The community groups agree to publicly support the project, or at least not oppose it. Often, the CBA is negotiated by community groups that value smart growth and Environmental Justice.

Community impact assessment (CIA): This process helps planners and communities identify and evaluate the effects of a transportation decision on a community and its quality of life. It also helps agencies comply with federal requirements related to Environmental Justice, civil rights and public involvement as they plan and develop projects.

Health impact assessment (HIA): A way to evaluate and judge how a policy, plan or project will impact the health of the public. An HIA can engage members of the public and consider many different types of data. The results of an HIA can help decision-makers make informed choices so that the transportation policies, plans and projects will promote health and prevent disease, injury and fatality.

Interactive webinar: A webinar is a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the web using video conferencing software. Facilitators can share audio, video and documents with attendees. It is also possible to use webinar software to interact with attendees so everyone can give, receive and discuss information in real-time. For example, attendees can virtually raise their hands, vote and ask questions and share ideas in the chat pod.

Online dialogue: A web-based, moderated conversation that is kicked off with a question or series of questions from the transportation agency. Participants respond publicly to those questions, and can read, rate, respond and comment on each other’s proposals. This type of discussion generates and evaluates ideas.

Public involvement (also known as community engagement, public participation, public outreach): A process that engages the public in transportation decision-making and gives full consideration to public input in making decisions. Public involvement is made up of a series of events that bring together communities with diverse viewpoints and values. This helps to ensure that transportation agencies consider what the public needs and prefers as well as how transportation plans, projects and policies will benefit and burden the public.

Public involvement plan (PIP) (also known as public participation plan): Many transportation agencies are required by federal law to develop Public Involvement Plans that describe how they will communicate with the public and gather input on their plans, programs and projects.

Public meeting: A meeting that is open to the public, and organized by a transportation agency, before that agency makes a final decision about a transportation plan, program or policy that will use government funds and affect the general public. The meeting might be hosted at the offices of the transportation agency or somewhere else in the community. A public meeting provides time for the public to ask questions, present ideas, voice opinions and discuss the topic at hand. There are many types of public meetings, some formal and some informal, including:

- Open house: An informal opportunity to learn about a transportation plan or project by viewing displays, exploring scenarios and talking with staff. Sometimes agencies

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