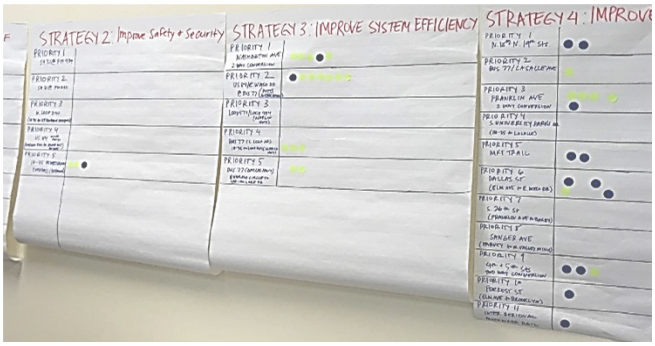

Public Participation Plan

for the Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization

Proposed Draft for Public Review – September 19, 2020

Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization

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Section 1 – Introduction

1.1 About the Waco MPO

The Waco Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) was created in 1974 in order to comply with federal requirements that all areas over 50,000 population must incorporate local input into decisions involving federal highway or transit funds. Today the role of the MPO has expanded to identify all mobility needs for the Waco Region and determine regional transportation policy. Inherent within this role is the need to involve the citizens of McLennan County into the transportation planning process and incorporate their concerns into the various plans, programs and policies adopted by the MPO.

Governing the MPO is a 20-member policy board consisting of elected officials and other representatives from the 19 member cities, McLennan County and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) (See Appendix A for a map of the Waco Metropolitan Area). Assisting the Policy Board is the MPO staff and Technical Committee, producing drafts of necessary plans and programs and providing policy recommendations to the board. The staff also administers the public involvement procedures for the MPO and ensures that public concerns are voiced to the MPO Policy Board.

1.2 Purpose of Public Participation Plan

The Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST) and predecessor federal transportation acts require MPOs to develop a Public Participation Plan (PPP) to specify the MPO's efforts to involve the public in the development of the Metropolitan Transportation Plan. In addition to the FAST Act, there are several other federal acts, regulations and executive orders that include public involvement requirements for the transportation planning process. The Waco MPO adheres to federal requirements for public involvement and strives to go beyond these requirements by finding new ways to engage the public in the transportation planning and programming process. Appendix B outlines the laws and legislation relevant to public participation.

The Waco MPO recognizes that an effective public participation process is a vital element in the development and implementation of transportation plans and programs. Thus, the MPO continuously seeks to create opportunities for its citizens to participate in transportation planning activities and in reviewing its mobility projects and programs. The PPP outlines the MPO's plan of action to involve the public in the planning process and to ensure that decisions are made in consideration of and to benefit public needs and preferences. One of the primary purposes of this plan is to ensure that all policy actions of the MPO Policy Board are made only after the public and key transportation stakeholders have been informed about the issues and been given a reasonable opportunity to provide input.

1.3 MPO Plans and Processes

The MPO creates and amends many documents on a regular basis for adoption and approval by the Policy Board. The following narrative briefly describes these documents.

Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)
In metropolitan areas, the MTP, or long-range plan, identifies how the region intends to invest in the transportation system. Each 5-year period, the Waco MPO produces an MTP identifying and

analyzing existing and future multi-modal mobility needs for the Waco planning area for a 25-year period. It identifies needed transportation network improvements to meet mobility requirements over that time period. It also evaluates whether the condition and performance of the transportation system is meeting performance targets.

The Waco MPO's MTP is the final product of several years of research through the continuing, comprehensive, cooperative effort of the MPO staff, MPO Policy Board, MPO Technical Committee, TxDOT, Waco Transit, and the various municipal and county governments within the MPO planning area. It is prepared through active public engagement. The MTP reflects policies and priorities of the Waco MPO Policy Board and it serves as the blueprint from which future mobility projects are developed. Only those projects that can be realistically funded during the 25-year planning period may be included in the MTP, and to be eligible for federal funding each project must be identified within the document (23 CFR 450.322).

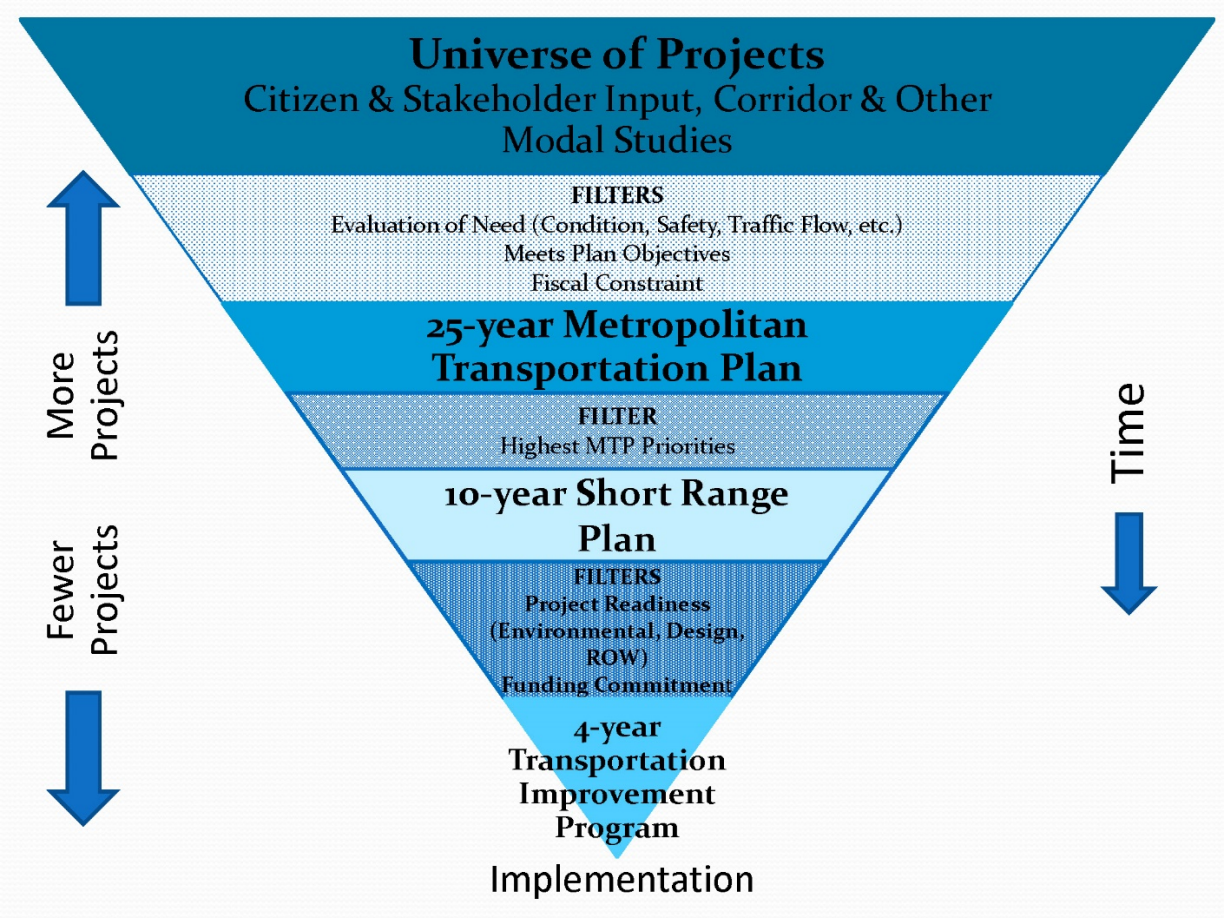
Each project considered for inclusion in the MTP is scored and ranked through project evaluation criteria. Once projects are scored, they are recommended for inclusion within one of the MTP's six strategies based on that project's anticipated efficacy in making progress towards that strategy's guiding principle. Ultimately, the selection and prioritization of MTP projects are generally determined using the project score, Policy Board considerations, and fiscal constraint.

Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP)

MPOs use a TIP to identify the transportation projects and strategies they will pursue during the next four years, similar to a municipal or county capital improvement program. The primary purpose of the TIP is to serve as the financial programming document for the Waco MPO. Top priority projects from the MTP are proposed for inclusion within the TIP based on consensus of owners and operators of various portions of the regional transportation system and a formal commitment of necessary funds. Once programmed into the TIP, projects are cleared for phased implementation. This means that necessary environmental and engineering studies and acquisition of any necessary right-of-way may commence, followed by project construction (23 CFR 450.324).

See Figure 1 for a diagram of the MPO project development process from conception to implementation.

Figure 1 - MPO Project Development Process



Thoroughfare Plan
The Thoroughfare Plan outlines the functional classification of existing streets and roadways and proposed thoroughfares within the Metropolitan Area based on levels of mobility and access. In addition, the thoroughfare plan proposes long-range facility improvements, and recommends conceptual design criteria for each roadway classification which vary based on the land use context area.

Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
The UPWP is a biennial budget report that identifies specific work tasks and mobility planning studies the Waco MPO and its partner agencies will undertake during the next 2 years. The work identified in the UPWP assist in further defining the comprehensive and multimodal transportation plans for the Metropolitan Planning Area. The funding source, responsible agency, and schedule of activities are identified for each work task. Examples of UPWP work tasks include monitoring of demographic and environmental trends; preparation of the required plans and programs; corridor or transit route studies; and public outreach conducted in study preparation.

Transportation System Performance Reports
Transportation System Performance Reports are a series of four reports required by the FAST Act which monitor various performance metrics of the transportation system. These reports compare progress towards meeting targets established by the State of Texas, Waco Transit or the Waco MPO. These reports include the following metrics: Safety (Fatalities, Serious Injuries

and Non-Motorized Fatalities & Serious Injuries), Transit Asset Condition (Vehicles, Facilities and Infrastructure), Pavement & Bridge Condition and Travel Time Reliability. Performance updates on these metrics are also incorporated into the MTP.

Active Transportation Plan (ATP)
The ATP focuses on the improvement and maintenance of non-motorized transportation facilities, in order to make biking, walking, and rolling viable transportation modes. The plan serves as a resource for MPO member governments to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian elements into roadway construction and maintenance; provides a menu of potential best practices, policies, outreach and educational activities to promote biking, walking, and rolling; and identifies regionally significant priorities for inclusion in the MTP and federal or state funding eligibility.

Annual Listing of Federal Projects (APL)
The APL is a listing of projects for which federal funding was obligated in the previous fiscal year. The APL also provides a record of project delivery and is intended to increase awareness of government spending on transportation projects. Note that per federal statute, the APL cannot be released for public review until approved by US Department of Transportation (USDOT). As such, there is no action taken by the MPO Policy Board and the only public involvement for this document is the opportunity to review after USDOT approval.

Annual Performance and Expenditure Report (APER)
The APER is an annual work performance review of all proposed transportation planning and related activities of the Waco MPO as submitted in the UPWP. Note that per federal statute, the APER cannot be released for public review until approved by USDOT. As such, there is no action taken by the MPO Policy Board and the only public involvement for this document is the opportunity to review after USDOT approval.

1.4 Consistency with Public Transportation Planning Activities

Many of the planning activities of Waco Transit System, Inc., the public transportation provider for the Waco Metropolitan Area, overlap with the activities of the MPO. Similarly, significant public transportation projects and services are incorporated within the documents produced by the MPO. As a result, this public participation plan will be used to meet Federal Transit Administration (FTA) public participation requirements for the City of Waco, the regional recipient of federal transit funds, and Waco Transit for FTA Section 5307 funds.

Section 5307 funds refer to federal resources apportioned to urbanized areas for public transit capital and operating assistance, and for public transportation related planning efforts through the FTA's Urbanized Area Formula Funding program (49 U.S.C. 5307). The planning and programming of 5307 dollars is accomplished through MPO processes. Community desired public transportation projects are identified through the MPO's long range planning process and captured in the MTP. Then as a combination of other federal, state and local funds are made available to fund identified projects, those projects are readied for implementation through the project programming process captured in the TIP.

Although Waco Transit uses strategies outlined in the Waco MPO's Public Participation Plan and partners with the MPO during community meetings, the MPO's outreach does not satisfy the public involvement required for other planning related tasks that Waco Transit may conduct. Examples include public transportation service adjustments and operational policy modifications. The Waco Transit Advisory Board, comprised of community stakeholders,

oversees these efforts by Waco Transit to ensure equitable, efficient and effective public transit operations.

The Waco MPO's public participation process does, however, satisfy the public participation process for the Program of Projects (POP), and the public notice for public involvement activities and time established for public review of and comments on the TIP, and will satisfy the POP requirements for Waco Transit System, Inc., the public transit provider for the City of Waco.

Section 2 – Public Participation Goals

This Public Participation Plan outlines the MPO's responsibility to include the public in the transportation planning and programming process. The MPO adheres to federal requirements for public involvement and strives to go beyond these requirements by finding new ways to engage the public. To accomplish this, the MPO has adopted the following goals for informing, involving, and engaging the diverse populations in the Waco Region.

Goal 1: Educate and Inform the Public

- Increase awareness and understanding of the role of the MPO and transportation planning process, including sources of funding and impacts of regional planning decisions
- Clearly define the purpose and objectives for public dialogue on transportation plans, programs, projects, policies and partnerships
- Make information accessible and understandable, and develop visual aids when appropriate to illustrate and enhance communications
- Provide timely public notice of information resources and opportunities to comment on plans, policies and programs, and decisions involving federal highway or transit funds within the Waco Metropolitan Area
- Ensure transparency and accessibility for open meetings, and provide language translation upon request

Goal 2: Engage Diverse Audiences

- Identify the affected public and other stakeholder groups with respect to the plans, programs, projects, and policies under development
- Connect with organizations and community leaders who can help reach more people and engage those individuals in the planning process
- Provide people with a variety of ways to participate and provide input, including flexible, creative, and innovative approaches
- Strive to eliminate barriers to participation by hosting public meetings at accessible locations and/or virtual meetings, and convenient times
- Post all relevant information online, including staff presentations, so that people can participate in the public process and provide input at their convenience
- Document and respond, as needed, to comments from public meetings, outreach events, mail, email, web forms, and social media.
- Share public input with the Policy Board and Technical Committee and facilitate information flow between the public and policy makers
- Consider (and when appropriate respond to) public priorities and concerns collected through the public process
- Consider public priorities and concerns during preparation of planning documents and reports

Goal 3: Meet Legal Requirements

- Meet all federal and state legal requirements for noticing meetings and providing opportunities for the public to comment on proposed actions of the MPO

Goal 4: Evaluate Public Participation Strategies and Efforts

- Regularly review quantitative and qualitative data for public input processes and adjust methods as needed to meet the goals of this plan
- Review and document how public input influenced transportation planning and programming decision-making

Section 3 – Target Audiences

One of the primary purposes of this Public Participation Plan is to ensure that all policy actions of the MPO Policy Board are made only after the public and key transportation stakeholders have been informed about mobility issues and been given a reasonable opportunity to provide input. MPO staff maintains a stakeholder contact list that is updated on a continuous basis. Individuals and groups regularly included in MPO outreach efforts are included in Table 1 below. This list is not exhaustive; it's intended to provide an overview of the various types of transportation stakeholders, or target audiences, within the Waco Region.

Table 1- Target Audiences for Waco MPO Public Participation

Stakeholders / Target Audiences
Airport operators
Bicycle clubs and advocacy groups
Board, committee and work group members
Business and trade organizations
Civic and public interest groups
Colleges and universities
Community-based associations
Commuters
Disabled populations
Elected local, state and federal officials
Emergency response and natural disaster risk reduction agencies
Environmental groups
Faith-based organizations
Freight shippers
Hospitals
Micromobility operators and users
Neighborhood associations
Local media outlets
Major employers
Pedestrian advocacy groups
Private transportation organizations
Providers of freight transportation services
Public agencies and staff
Public at large
Public health organizations
Public transportation providers

Stakeholders / Target Audiences
Ride share operators and users
School districts
Social service organizations
Tourism and hospitality industry
Traditionally underserved populations
Transportation advocates
Workforce development organizations and programs

3.1 Diversity, Inclusiveness, and Equity

Designing a functional and integrated network of mobility options for residents of the Waco area should be based on the need for logical connections between roadways, transit routes, bicycle and pedestrian networks and any other future modal options regardless of the socioeconomic status or resident mix of communities in which these routes travel. Ensuring fair and equitable participation by potentially affected communities in every phase of the transportation decision-making process is essential.

As a federally sponsored agency, the Waco MPO is required to incorporate policies and procedures of Environmental Justice (EJ) and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) into its transportation planning studies and programs (see Appendix B). EJ policies ensure federally funded plans address disproportionate health or environmental effects of plan implementation on minority and low-income populations. Within the Waco area, EJ populations include Black and Hispanic minority populations, and low-income populations. Limited English Proficiency (LEP) persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. Within the Waco Region, the majority of LEP individuals are native Spanish speakers.

The MPO's Title VI Plan documents how the MPO integrates EJ and LEP policies into its required programs and demonstrates its commitment to engaging traditionally underserved and historically underrepresented communities in transportation planning efforts. These communities include residents of lower socioeconomic status, people of color, immigrants, individuals with disabilities, and groups with federal protected status, as defined in Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act and related legislation (see Appendix B). The goal of these efforts is to ensure that EJ and LEP populations in the Waco region can participate in the transportation planning process and understand how transportation decisions impact their lives.

The Waco MPO deliberately plans inclusive, diverse public participation opportunities as part of its transportation planning processes. Efforts include communication and outreach methods specifically tailored to the Waco region's audiences and stakeholders. Opportunities include collaboration with local governments and agencies, schools, and a variety of special interest groups including, but not limited to, public and private transportation employees and stakeholders, bicycle and pedestrian stakeholders, freight interests, and stakeholders with and representing those with disabilities as demonstrated in Table 1.

Section 4 – MPO Board, Committee and Work Group Meetings

The MPO holds Board, Committee, and Work Group meetings on a regular basis. The public can participate in many of these meetings, regardless of the topic of discussion. This section summarizes the various types of meetings, their purpose, and how meeting information will be conveyed to the public.

Note that if there is an Emergency Order (federal, state or local) in place, the directives of those orders may supersede the policies described below (See Section 4.5).

4.1 Meeting Formats

The following is a description of the various types of MPO meetings. Table 2 provides logistical details for ongoing MPO meetings.

MPO Policy Board Meetings
Board consisting of elected officials and other representatives of member cities, McLennan County and TxDOT. The Policy Board approves adoption and amendment of all plans and programs for the MPO and adopts regional transportation policy for the Waco Metropolitan Area.

MPO Technical Committee Meetings
Committee of professional engineers and planners from member governments as well as regional transportation stakeholders and modal operators. The Technical Committee provides recommendations to the Policy Board regarding actions on MPO plans and programs as well as on matters requiring technical advice.

MPO Subcommittee Meetings
The MPO Policy Board and Technical Committee may appoint subcommittees to study specific topics and provide recommendations to the Policy Board or Technical Committee. Subcommittee meetings are scheduled as needed.

MPO Work Group Meetings
The MPO Policy Board and Technical Committee may approve the formation of work groups to facilitate ongoing discussion on various transportation topics. Work Groups are informal, and members are not appointed. Instead, local stakeholders/interested parties may be solicited by the MPO, or they may request to participate. Work Group activities and outcomes are shared with the Technical Committee and Policy Board and may be used to inform policy decisions and priorities.

MPO Executive Sessions
The MPO Policy Board may call executive sessions in order to discuss the following items:

1. Pending or contemplated litigation;
2. A settlement offer;
3. An attorney/client privilege/relationship;
4. The purchase, exchange, lease, or value of real property;
5. A gift and/or donation; or
6. The appointment, employment, evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline or dismissal of the MPO director or subordinate staff.

Executive Sessions are closed to the public and are scheduled as needed.

MPO Emergency Meetings
Meetings of the Policy Board to act on matters of life or death and are scheduled as needed.

Table 2 - Ongoing MPO Boards, Committees, and Work Groups

Board or Committee	Date/Time*	Location*	Meeting Frequency*
Policy Board	3rd Thursday of the month at 2:00 pm	South Waco Community Center 2815 Speight Ave Waco, TX 76711	As needed, but not less than quarterly
Technical Committee	1st Thursday of the month at 2:00 pm	Waco Transit Center 301 S 8th St Waco, TX 76701	In tandem with Policy Board meetings
Bicycle and Pedestrian Work Group	2nd Wednesday of the month at 11:30 a.m.	Dr Mae Jackson Development Center 401 Franklin Ave Waco TX 76701	As needed, usually every other month
Other Work Groups	To be determined	Dr Mae Jackson Development Center 401 Franklin Ave Waco TX 76701	As needed

**Meeting dates and locations are subject to change. For the most current information, please visit https://www.waco-texas.com/cms-mpo/*

Persons with disabilities who plan to attend these meetings and who may need auxiliary aids or services are encouraged to contact the MPO at (254) 750-5650 or via email at mpo@wacotx.gov at least 24 hours prior to a meeting in order that appropriate arrangements can be made. Table 3 below identifies MPO website posting targets for meetings and informational materials.

4.2 Meeting Notices

Section 551.041 of the Texas Open Meetings Act requires governmental bodies to give written notice of the date, hour, place, and subject of each meeting held by the governmental body. Table 3 summaries meeting information that will generally be posted on the MPO website and Table 4 summarizes the various types of noticing the MPO will undertake to facilitate public participation in the transportation planning process.

Table 3 - MPO Meeting Website Posting Guidelines

Meeting Information / Materials	Target Web Posting
Meeting Information (Date, Time, Location)	1 month prior OR 3 days prior for Executive Session
Meeting Agenda and Packet	3 days prior
Virtual Meeting Information (e.g., call-in phone number, webpage or meeting link) *IF APPLICABLE*	3 days prior *IF APPLICABLE*
Post-meeting Materials (recordings, presentations, packets)	7 days after meeting

Table 4 - MPO Meeting Notices

Type of Notice	Guidelines
Legal Notice in Waco Tribune Herald	Per publication requirements
Email #1- Save the Date to Board or Committee Members and Stakeholder List – Meeting Date, Time, and Location	10 days prior
County Courthouse Post agenda on bulletin board	3 days prior OR 2 hours prior for Emergency Meeting
Email #2 – Meeting Materials to Board or Committee Members – Meeting Agenda and Packet	3 days prior
Press Release (English) – Distribute to Waco Municipal Information	2 days prior OR 2 hours prior for Emergency Meeting
Press Release (Spanish) – Distribute to Spanish-language publications and/or social media channels, as determined in periodic reviews with Hispanic community stakeholders *	2 days prior OR 2 hours prior for Emergency Meeting

** Currently, the only significant LEP population in the Waco MPO region is native Spanish speakers (see Waco MPO's Title VI plan). As additional LEP populations are identified, the Waco MPO's meeting notification process will be expanded accordingly.*

4.3 Public Hearings

All Policy Board meetings will end with an opportunity for interested persons to address the Policy Board regardless of whether the topic is on the agenda or not. Additionally, members of the public can speak to any item on the meeting agenda, regardless of whether a public hearing is included for that item. Persons wishing to address the Policy Board are encouraged to register their intent to speak with MPO staff or submit their comment in writing prior to each meeting. The Policy Board, however, cannot respond if the topic is not on the posted agenda.

All persons are given 3 minutes to speak; longer if the Policy Board chairperson permits. If representing a group of persons or an official association recognized by the Policy Board, then the person may speak up to 10 minutes; longer if the Policy Board chairperson permits. If a person requires the use of a translator, then the allowed speaking time will be doubled.

4.4 Meeting Cancellations

From time to time, previously scheduled MPO meetings will need to be cancelled. Should the need to cancel a meeting arise, except in the case of a lack of a quorum, the MPO will post a notice of cancellation at the meeting location and the McLennan County Courthouse no less than 24 hours prior to the scheduled meeting time. In addition, a notice of cancellation shall be announced via press release at the applicable time. For disasters, states of emergency, pandemics or other situations in which travel or person to person interaction is considered unusually hazardous, notice of cancellation will be posted to the MPO website and announced via press release no less than one hour prior to the scheduled meeting time.

In the case that a quorum of members should not be achieved for an MPO Policy Board meeting, the Policy Board chair may officially cancel the meeting 30 minutes after the scheduled meeting time. Without action, the meeting is cancelled one hour after the scheduled meeting time should a quorum not be achieved at that time. Technical Committee and Work Group meetings are not subject to quorum requirements.

4.5 Emergency Orders and Disaster Proclamations

For disasters, states of emergency, pandemics or other situations for which compliance with any or all requirements of the Public Participation Plan would be considered hazardous or harmful to public health or safety, the MPO Policy Board chairperson may temporarily replace those requirements with another process deemed safe but still allows for public participation. This provision can only be implemented upon issuance of an official proclamation of disaster or emergency by either the McLennan County Judge, Governor of Texas or the President of the United States.

Table 5 – Summary of MPO Boards, Committees, and Work Group Meeting Guidelines

Meeting Type	Website Posting				Noticing						Public Participation		
	Meeting Information	Meeting Agenda & Packet	Virtual Meeting Information (if applicable)	Post-meeting Materials	Legal Notice in Newspaper	Email #1 – Save the Date	County Courthouse Agenda Posting	Email #2 – Meeting Materials	Press Release (English)	Press Release (Spanish)	Open to General Public	Public Hearing Opportunity	Public Comments Accepted at Meeting
Policy Board Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Technical Committee Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Subcommittee Meeting	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Work Group Meeting	✓		✓										
Emergency Meeting	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		
Executive Session	✓				✓		✓						

Section 5 – Public Participation Toolbox

In order to achieve the Public Involvement Goals outlined in Section 2, the MPO has identified several outreach and communication tools and strategies to engage the public in the transportation planning process. The MPO uses the "Spectrum of Public Participation" methodology developed by the International Association of Public Participation to convey the scope and intent of public involvement for each type of outreach and communication tool.

The toolbox represents the different tools and strategies the MPO ***may*** use to achieve this plan's public participation goals and comply with applicable laws and regulations. MPO staff tailors the public participation process to best match the scope of each planning document / policy action, affected stakeholders, and other special circumstances. However, there will always be a minimum level of noticing and public participation for each type of policy action as shown in Table 12.

It is important to note that Tables 6 through 9 omit the Empower level of participation. Public input is considered by MPO staff, the Technical Committee, and the Policy Board. MPO staff frequently works with stakeholders to collaborate on solutions (e.g., MPO work groups). However, Policy Board members have the ultimate decision-making authority, and therefore the highest level of public participation the MPO can feasibly offer is Collaboration.

IAP2'S PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM

The IAP2 Federation has developed the Spectrum to help groups define the public's role in any public participation process. The IAP2 Spectrum is quickly becoming an international standard.

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Table 6 - Outreach and Communication Strategies: Meetings and Speaking Engagements

Type	Description	Format	Level of Participation			
			Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Community Workshops / Open Houses	Workshops and Open Houses are events that provide the public "hands-on" involvement in the development of plans or programs. During these workshops, the public will be invited to identify transportation needs and to propose ideas, concepts or solutions to those or other previously identified needs. A variety of visioning tools and techniques will be used (in person and/or online) to envision different tradeoffs and public preferences. The intended results of these workshops are either an agreed upon scenario or solution or a better understanding of tradeoffs and consequences of proposed alternatives. Feedback received from this process will be used to develop a policy framework that, in turn, will be used to guide transportation & land-use decision making.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pop-Up Outreach / Tabling	MPO staff is periodically asked to participate in community events. This could involve providing visual aids, brochures, and general information about the MPO. This type of outreach provides an opportunity for MPO staff to have informal discussions with the public about the MPO's roles and responsibilities. If the event coincides with an active comment period, MPO staff will also seek input from event attendees.	In person	✓	✓	✓	
Stakeholder Meetings and Interviews	During projects such as planning studies, meetings or interviews may be held with small stakeholder groups that have an interest in the project. Examples include neighborhood associations, civic groups, special interest groups, or other groups of affected or interested in the topic.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓	✓	

Type	Description	Format	Level of Participation			
			Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Public Informational Meetings	An organized large group meeting or virtual meeting usually used to make a staff presentation and give the public an opportunity to ask questions and give comments on an MPO plan, program, or policy decision. Public informational meetings are open to the public at large. They are set up to be welcoming and as receptive as possible to ideas and opinions. Virtual public meetings will include the same information provided at in-person public meetings and will be advertised at the same time as in-person opportunities. Most public informational meetings will be virtual, with in-person meetings reserved for major policy actions such as the adoption of a new Metropolitan Transportation Plan.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Comment Periods	A period when the public is invited to submit formal comments on any proposed policy action by the MPO Policy Board. The public can submit comments by a variety of methods, including in-person, by phone or fax, by email, social media, or completing a comment card online.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓	✓	
Public Hearings	A formal opportunity for public comment. Public hearings involve a staff presentation before the MPO Policy Board where the public is invited to make final comments immediately prior to a policy action. Typically, this is the last step in the public participation process, after the public comment period has closed.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓		
Speaking Opportunities	MPO staff actively looks for opportunities to present to stakeholders on a variety of transportation-related topics.	In-person or virtual	✓			

Type	Description	Format	Level of Participation			
			Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Partner Agency Meetings	MPO staff attends and participates in as many transportation partner public participation activities as is feasible to enhance public consideration of transportation issues, plans, and programs and to reduce redundancies and costs. This includes federally required consultation with agencies involved with either tourism or natural disaster risk reduction. 23CFR450.516(b) requires that MPOs demonstrate consultation with specific agencies during development of required plans and programs.	In-person or virtual	✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 7 - Outreach and Communication Strategies: Online Tools

Type	Description	Participation Level			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
MPO Website	The MPO website has all the information necessary for interested persons to stay informed and engaged in the MPO planning process. It includes meeting information and active comment periods (including submittal of comments online). It includes all the federally required MPO planning documents (MTP, TIP, UPWP, ATP) as well as any other plans or studies produced by MPO staff. The site is continually maintained and updated by MPO staff and is used to promote regular and special meetings, planning studies, bicycle and pedestrian events, active comment periods, publications and work products. Meeting information, such as staff presentations, meeting recordings, exhibits and handouts, and comment forms, are all available on the MPO website.	✓	✓	✓	
Email Distribution Lists	The MPO maintains several distribution lists that are updated on a regular basis to ensure interested parties receive timely information about MPO meetings, policy decision-making, plans and studies, and active public comment periods.	✓			
Social Media	The MPO will utilize appropriate social media avenues to post pertinent information and notices on a frequent basis. This also provides another opportunity for the public to provide input into the MPO's on-going planning process. The MPO may use its own social media channels or partner with other organizations or its fiscal agent.	✓			
Shareable content	The MPO may create shareable information for social media to support MPO meetings, programs, and initiatives. The type of content can vary from shareable graphics sized for different social media platforms, infographics, videos, and sample posts. This content is shared to other public information officers at their monthly meeting, as part of media kits, and with partner organizations.	✓			

Type	Description	Participation Level			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Project-specific Web Sites	For individual projects or special studies, project-specific websites may be used. These sites are used when project information is too extensive to be included on the MPO site. Links to project sites are provided from the MPO website.	✓	✓	✓	
Surveys and Opinion Polls	The MPO may periodically conduct qualitative surveys or opinion polls to seek public opinion on upcoming or current planning issues.	✓	✓		
Live webinars	These meetings combine telephone and video technology to allow people to see each other and view information online sing web-based technology.	✓			

Table 8 - Outreach and Communication Strategies: Public Notice Delivery

Type	Description	Participation Level			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Email	Email is the primary means of distributing public noticing to stakeholders and community members.	✓			
Legal Newspaper Notice	A legal newspaper notice is published in the official organ for the MPO fiscal agent for community workshops, public comment periods, public hearings, and Policy Board meetings.	✓			
Press Releases	Formal press releases (English and Spanish language) are sent to local media to announce upcoming meetings and activities and to provide information on specific issues.	✓			
Phone	Infrequently, the MPO may need to contact members of the public and potential meeting participants via telephone to notify them of upcoming meetings and events. This method is used if they do not have access to email or other special circumstances.	✓			
Flyer/ Notice Distribution	Meeting notices are posted in high traffic gathering places, including but not limited to: libraries, community centers, Transit Centers, and other such gathering places.	✓			
US Postal Service	On rare occasions, traditional mail service may be used for formal public hearing notices, as well as to publicize public meetings/workshops.	✓			
Public Transit	Meeting flyers and related collateral material may also be available on buses, notifying riders of upcoming meetings.	✓			

Table 9 - Outreach and Communication Strategies: Other Potential Tools

Type	Description	Participation Level			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
Social Media Ads	Social media advertising is used to target audiences on specific networks through demographic information. The MPO may use social media ads to targeted stakeholders with messages that appear in their feeds.	✓			
TV and Radio	MPO staff will occasionally participate in TV or radio shows, such as the City of Waco public information channel, to provide information or to promote events and topics as appropriate.	✓			
Video and Audio Public Service Announcements	MPO staff may produce, or participate in production of, audio and video public service announcements for selected events or topics of interest and distribute them to the appropriate media (or social media) channels.	✓			
Project Newsletters	For individual projects, such as corridor studies, that are typically performed using consulting services, newsletters are often used to address specific project issues. These newsletters are mailed to targeted residents, businesses and property owners in the area affected by a particular study. Information regarding upcoming project meetings, alternatives being proposed in the area and other project news is reported in these newsletters	✓	✓	✓	
Other Newsletters	When project-specific newsletters are not used, articles may be prepared for publication in other newsletters produced by municipalities, homeowner associations, religious organizations, civic groups, or others that may have an interest in the project. These articles are subject to the publication dates and space restrictions of publishers.	✓	✓	✓	
Flyers, Posters, Fact Sheets and Rack Cards	To provide summary information regarding MPO policy, programs and projects, flyers, posters, fact sheets and rack cards may be distributed at public meetings, posted on the MPO website, and displayed in public places such as libraries and community centers. Individuals and special interest groups can also request these	✓			

Type	Description	Participation Level			
		Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate
	items directly from the MPO staff office.				
Bus Placards	The MPO may use advertising space in Waco Transit System buses when available	✓			
Banners	The MPO may consider using banner advertising such as internet page banners as appropriate for MPO events and activities.	✓			

Section 6 – Public Participation Procedures

The MPO creates and amends many documents on a regular basis for adoption and approval by the Policy Board, as described in Section 1.3. The approval process can vary based on the purpose of the document, and the scope of the requested action (for example, adoption of a new plan versus amendment of a previously approved plan). Therefore, the Waco MPO utilizes two categories of policy actions, "Major Actions" and "Minor Actions," to assign the appropriate public participation process that corresponds with the scope of the request. Table 10 summaries the different types of policy actions of the MPO Policy Board.

Table 10 - Policy Actions of the MPO Policy Board

MPO Document	Major Actions	Minor Actions
Public Participation Plan (PPP)	Adopt or Amend	NA
Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP)	Adopt	Amend
Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)	Adopt	Amend
Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP - MPO Budget)	Adopt	Amend* Add or Delete a Task OR Revision ≥ $25,000
Thoroughfare Plan	Adopt	Amend
Transportation System Performance Reports	NA	Adoption or Amend
Active Transportation Plan	Adopt	Amend
Annual Listing of Federal Projects (APL)**	NA	Review
Annual Performance and Expenditure Report (APER)**	NA	Review
Special Study Recommendations	Adopt	NA
All Other Plans and Programs	Adopt	Amend
Policy Board Statement Resolutions	NA	Approval
Administrative Corrections***	NA	NA

**A UPWP amendment will be considered a Minor Action if it includes 1) addition or deletion of a UPWP task; or 2) a change to the budget equaling $25,000 or more. If an amendment does not meet either of these thresholds, it would not require a public process prior to Policy Board action.*

***The APL and APER are approved by USDOT and not by the MPO Policy Board. Per federal statue, neither document can be released for public review until after USDOT approval, usually in February.*

****Administrative Corrections applies to an amendment for the sole purpose of correcting a scrivener, clerical, or mathematical error or omission within a document previously approved by the Policy Board. This type of correction does not require Policy Board action.*

6.1 Public Comment Periods

The public is invited to submit formal comments on any proposed major or minor policy action by the MPO Policy Board as identified on Table 10. MPO Staff will respond to all formal comments within 10 days of receipt for new plans or programs and 5 days or receipt for amendments to existing plans and programs. For the staff to respond, comments must be received via methods posted within the corresponding public notice and prior to the posted deadline. All comments and staff responses will be forwarded to the MPO Policy Board prior to proposed actions. Table 11 below summarizes the different comments periods that will be utilized for various Policy Board actions.

Table 11 - Public Comment Period Requirements

Type of Action	Minimum Lead Time Prior to Policy Board Action	Comment Period Length	Staff Revision Time
Public Participation Plan	55 days	45 days	10 days
Major Action	40 days	30 days	10 days
Minor Action	15 days	10 days	5 days

Table 12 – Summary of MPO Actions: Approval, Noticing, and Minimum Outreach

Policy Action	Approval Process							Noticing Requirements					Minimum Public Participation / Outreach			
	Major Action	Minor Action	10 Day Comment Period	30 Day Comment Period	45 Day Comment Period	Public Hearing at Policy Board Meeting	Federally Required Agency Consultation (23CFR450.516(b)	Legal Notice in Newspaper	Press Release	MPO Website	Stakeholder Email Distribution List	Spanish Language Outlets / Other LEP Languages	Community Workshop / Open House	Public Informational meeting (Virtual Only)	Public Informational meeting	2nd Public Informational meeting
Public Participation Plan *Adoption*	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Public Participation Plan *Amendment*	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Metropolitan Transportation Plan *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Metropolitan Transportation Plan *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Transportation Improvement Program *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Transportation Improvement Program *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Unified Planning Work Program *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Unified Planning Work Program *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		

Policy Action	Approval Process							Noticing Requirements					Minimum Public Participation / Outreach			
	Major Action	Minor Action	10 Day Comment Period	30 Day Comment Period	45 Day Comment Period	Public Hearing at Policy Board Meeting	Federally Required Agency Consultation (23CFR450.516(b)	Legal Notice in Newspaper	Press Release	MPO Website	Stakeholder Email Distribution List	Spanish Language Outlets / Other LEP Languages	Community Workshop / Open House	Public Informational meeting (Virtual Only)	Public Informational meeting	2nd Public Informational meeting
Thoroughfare Plan *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Thoroughfare Plan *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Transportation System Performance Reports *Target Adoption*	✓			✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
Transportation System Performance Reports *2- or 4-year Performance Reports or Target Amendments*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Active Transportation Plan *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
Active Transportation Plan *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Special Study Recommendations *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
All Other Plans and Programs *Adoption*	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓
All Other Plans and Programs *Amendment*		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Policy Board Resolutions (*Other Action*)		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		

Section 7 – Monitoring and Evaluation

The Waco MPO will regularly evaluate its measurable public participation strategies to help determine whether the Public Participation Plan is achieving desired outcomes for public involvement in the transportation planning process. Evaluation helps staff understand how to better engage the public and more effectively allocate time and resources. Table 13 lists the measurable public participation strategies, the corresponding performance metrics for each strategy, the desired outcomes for public participation, and the relevancy to the goals of this Public Participation Plan.

Table 13 – Monitoring and Evaluation Plan

Public Participation Strategy / Tool	Performance Metrics	Desired Outcomes	Goals Addressed			
			Goal 1 Educate & Inform the Public	Goal 2 Engage Diverse Audiences	Goal 3 Meet Legal Req.	Goal 4 Evaluate Strategies & Efforts
MPO Website	• Number of meeting materials posted • Number of resources posted • Number of staff presentations posted	• Prioritization of, and increased accessibility of, information and public input opportunities • Greater awareness of MPO role and responsibilities	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Informational Meetings, Community Workshops, Open Houses (in person or virtual)	• Number of attendees / participants • Demographic diversity of attendees (in person only) • Geographic diversity of attendees (in person only) • Number of views (virtual only)	• Information about policies, programs and projects accessible in multiple formats • Increased feedback and public input • Planned opportunities for the public to interact directly with staff • Increased accessibility of staff to member jurisdictions and partners • Transparency in public involvement efforts and the planning process • Increased participation in the planning process by EJ and LEP populations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Public Comment Periods and Public Hearings	• Number of comments received • Most common comment topics • Most used comment mode (e.g., email, comment card)	• Transparency in public involvement efforts and the planning process • Identification of trends and changes in public attention and concerns • Increased input received from EJ and LEP populations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Press Releases	• Number of press mentions	• Broad distribution of information	✓	✓	✓	✓

Public Participation Strategy / Tool	Performance Metrics	Desired Outcomes	Goals Addressed			
			Goal 1 Educate & Inform the Public	Goal 2 Engage Diverse Audiences	Goal 3 Meet Legal Req.	Goal 4 Evaluate Strategies & Efforts
	• Number of media interviews	• Extended reach of messaging about transportation and public input opportunities • Increased awareness among EJ and LEP populations				
Stakeholder Email Communication	• Number of contacts receiving stakeholder email notifications • Net change in number of contacts for the year	• Broad distribution of information • Strong relationships with partner organizations willing to help disseminate information to the public through multiple channels • Extended reach of messaging about transportation and public input opportunities • Increased connections with communities not actively involved in the planning process • Increased participation by LEP populations, including Spanish-speaking populations	✓	✓	✓	✓
Speaking Opportunities and Community Events	• Number of events attended by staff • Number of presentation requests • Number of presentations given by staff • Total estimated attendance for all events • Geographic representation	• Greater awareness of MPO role and responsibilities, especially among EJ and LEP populations • Extended reach of messaging about transportation and public input opportunities • Increased connections with communities not actively involved in the planning process • Increased participation in the planning process by EJ and LEP populations	✓	✓		✓

Public Participation Strategy / Tool	Performance Metrics	Desired Outcomes	Goals Addressed			
			Goal 1 Educate & Inform the Public	Goal 2 Engage Diverse Audiences	Goal 3 Meet Legal Req.	Goal 4 Evaluate Strategies & Efforts
	• Audiences / groups reached by events / presentations • Topics of events / presentations					
Social Media	YouTube • Number of Subscribers • Number of Views • Estimated Minutes Watched Facebook / Shareable Content • Number of partners that shared content • Type of partners that shared content • Type of content shared by partners • New audiences reached through partners	• Broad distribution of information and public input opportunities through engaging, readily accessible, shareable content • Strong relationships with partner organizations willing to help disseminate information to the public through multiple channels • Extended reach of messaging about transportation and public input opportunities • Increased connections with communities not actively involved in the planning process • Increased participation in the planning process by EJ and LEP populations	✓	✓		✓
Surveys	• Number of responses • Demographic diversity of responses • Geographic diversity of responses	• Increased feedback and public input, especially by EJ and LEP populations • Identification of trends and changes in public attention and concerns	✓	✓		✓

7.1 Social Media Policies

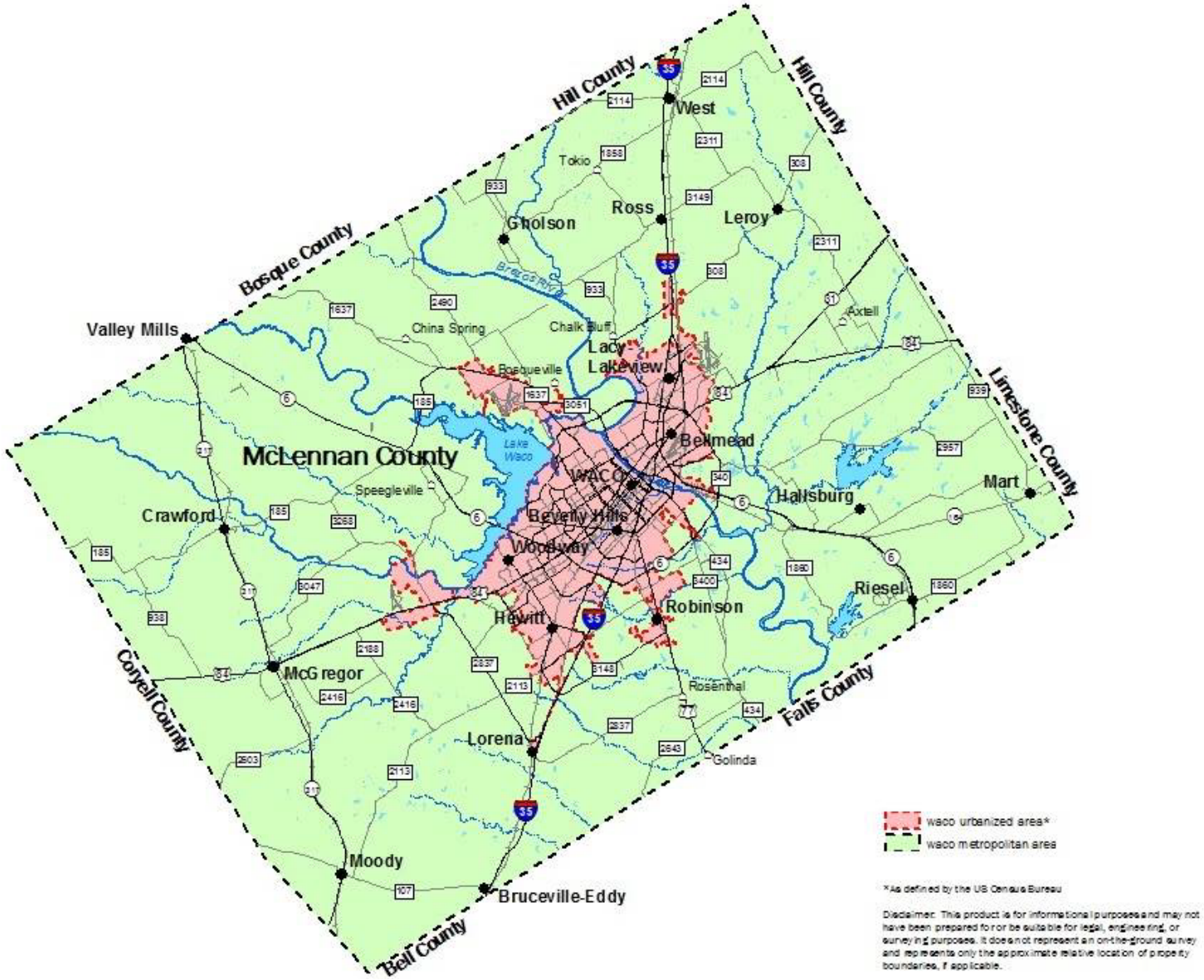
The MPO recognizes the value in reaching out to the public on social media platforms. The MPO uses these tools (MPO managed, City of Waco, or partner agencies) to communicate information to the public. They are also a convenient option for the public to communicate comments and questions directly to the relevant organization. Social media communication will be conducted in accordance with the City of Waco's policy ADM-15: social media policies and procedures.

7.2 Section 508 Compliant Website

The MPO is committed to ensuring that any MPO-sponsored website is accessible for all people regardless of ability or access method. The MPO will work with the City of Waco to periodically evaluate the MPO website for compliance with Section 508 and identify deficiencies. Violations will be corrected to the best of our ability. Upon request, all information contained on any MPO-sponsored website can be made available in an alternative format by contacting the MPO at 254-750-5650 or by email at mpo@wacotx.gov. MPO staff will meet with individuals one-on-one and determine the best way to assist them in gaining access to MPO information.

The MPO is committed to assessing, prioritizing, and updating MPO webpages found to be non-ADA compliant. At any point in time, we are in varying stages of progress toward our accessibility goal. Some of our content is in PDF format only. We are working on a process to ensure all PDFs are accessible. Due to current technology constraints, there are some instances where we are unable to provide information in an accessible format (e.g. mapping information)

Appendix A – Metropolitan Area Map



Appendix B – Applicable Laws and Regulations

This PPP follows the federal, state, and local laws listed below.

Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA)
Federal rules for metropolitan transportation planning (23 CFR 450.316) and FHWA guidelines state that MPOs shall develop and use a documented participation plan. The plan defines a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)
The current transportation authorization is the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. The FAST Act authorizes $305 billion nationwide over fiscal years 2016 through 2020 for transportation spending. Included within the FAST Act are several new requirements for MPOs to incorporate Performance Based Planning and Programming within the transportation planning process.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990
The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) stipulates involving the community, particularly those with disabilities in the development and improvement of services.

The Age Discrimination Act of 1975
The Age Discrimination Act of 1975 prohibits discrimination based on age in programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance. The Act prohibits recipients of Federal financial assistance from taking actions that result in denying or limiting services or otherwise discriminating based on age.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964
Title VI states that "No person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving federal financial assistance." Title VI serves as the legal foundation for what is today referred to as environmental justice.

Executive Order 13166 of 2000 – Limited English Proficiency (LEP)
As defined within this Executive Order, LEP persons are those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited ability to read, speak, write or understand English. The MPO monitors information published by the US Census regarding persons who speak English less than 'very well' and which languages they speak and provides certain services in languages most likely to be needed within the Waco region. The Waco MPO's LEP plan provides further guidance for serving limited English-speaking persons.

Executive Order 12898 of 1994 – Environmental Justice
Executive Order (EO) 12898 requires recipients of federal funding to identify and address disproportionate health or environmental effects of federally funded plans and projects on minority and low-income populations. It reinforces Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that focused federal attention on environmental conditions and the health of residents in minority and low-income communities. This requirement is referred to as environmental justice (EJ) policy.

Federal EJ policy guides the Waco MPO in reviewing its planning programs and activities to confirm compliance with Title VI and related statutes and regulations.

Executive Order 13175 of 2000 – Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments
Executive Order 13175 states that "in formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes."
At least one American Indian tribe has expressed an interest in being notified of activities throughout the state of Texas. Though there are no tribal governments located in the Waco MPO study area, the MPO actively seeks to keep tribal governments informed of major decisions affecting the region. The MPO continues to communicate with Native American Indian tribal leaders on an ongoing basis to identify issues of common concern.

For more info related to Title VI rights and regulations refer to the WMPO Title VI Program and Implementation Plan.

Appendix C – Agencies Required for Direct Notification of Major or Minor Policy Board Actions per 23CFR450.516(a)

The following entities require direct notification of major and minor Policy Board Actions:

- Public Ports
- Private Providers of Transportation
  - Intercity bus operators
  - Employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool programs
  - Vanpool programs
  - Transit benefits programs
  - Parking cash-out programs
  - Shuttle programs
  - Telework programs

As of August 6,2020, the following agencies located within the Waco Metropolitan Area were identified as meeting the requirements for direct notification under 23CFR450.516(a):

Company / Agency	Location	Agency Type
Greyhound Bus Lines	301 S 8th St, Waco	Intercity bus operator
Tornado Bus Company	1900 Speight Ave, Waco	Intercity bus operator
Flix Bus	2409 S New Rd, Waco	Intercity bus operator

MPO staff will maintain a separate list of agencies meeting these statutory requirements for direct notification in order that necessary notifications may begin immediately after establishment of these services within the Waco region.

Appendix D – Agencies involved with Tourism or Natural Disaster Risk Reduction

Note: List current as of August 6, 2020

Company / Agency	Location	Agency Type
Waco Convention and Visitors Bureau	100 Washington Ave, Waco	Tourism
McLennan County Office of Emergency Management	721 N 4th St, Waco	Natural Disaster Risk Reduction

MPO staff will maintain a separate list of agencies involved in tourism or natural disaster risk mitigation in order to conduct appropriate consultation during development of plans and programs.