

MTPO 2020 Title VI Annual Report

In keeping in compliance with Title VI requirements as set forth in the Civil Rights Act of 1964, this report serves as documentation of the activities carried out by the Metropolitan Topeka Planning Organization (MTPO). Activities described herein were conducted from Sept. 2020 to Sept. 2021 by the MTPO staff and MTPO partners. These public participation and outreach techniques are compliant with the MTPO's 2017 version of the Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Public Involvement and advertising for MTPO Outlets and Partners

Due to the ongoing pandemic, all Public meetings held this year were via online alternatives. Notification of these meetings was posted on the City website, in the official city newspaper, on the city's television station, and through invitation by direct mailing to persons or groups who have asked to be on our distribution list. This list included socioeconomically disadvantaged groups representative of minorities, low income, and the physically disabled.

Disadvantaged socioeconomic status as described by the department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) for the purpose of distribution of Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds, are those individuals or families making 80%, or less of the Area median income (Low-Mod. Income). All Neighborhood Improvement Associations (NIA's), by definition, meet this income qualification guideline. Therefore, the MTPO specifically targets all NIAs in its public outreach efforts, to ensure Environmental Justice and Title VI compliance. This is achieved through correspondence with the NIA presidents, all of which are on our email distribution list.

Other groups contacted include the Topeka Independent Living Resource Center (TILREC), an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) organization; Topeka Metropolitan Transit Authority (TMTA); Kansas American Disabled for Attendant Programs Today (ADAPT); local paratransit groups; the NAACP; and the Topeka Justice Unity and Ministry Project (JUMP). Social media outlets utilized to reach Title VI groups included Instagram, Facebook, and Nextdoor.

Public meetings and advertising for MTPO sponsored projects and events

In addition to public notices being advertised through the aforementioned avenues listed above for five TIP Amendments and two UPWP amendments, the following public outreach techniques were carried out for the corresponding projects listed below:

- 1) Created online Story Map presentation for the Final Draft of the Bikeways Master Plan (BWMP) Update. This presentation served as the final public meeting for the BWMP, and was distributed via the MTPO website and various other social media outlets, such as, "NextDoor," an application specifically designed for interaction and information distribution among NIA's and NA's. This Story Map provided a link for direct email feedback to the MTPO on the final BWMP draft. This Story Map presentation was viewed by over 500 persons from all geographic locations within the City and County.
- 2) A ZOOM Meeting was held for Historic Old Town Neighborhood (an NIA) to solicit locations for placement of sidewalks to be installed as part of the annual Pedestrian Plan sidewalk funds allocation. Historic Old Town was the selected focus area. The focus area was along the 8th St. corridor west of the hospital, an area within the Old Town NIA.
- 3) The City applied for two KDOT Cost-Share grants. One for a project that would extended sidewalks and install crossing medians along Topeka Blvd. between 29th and 37th Streets, and another for bikeways infrastructure along 8th street between Topeka Blvd and Kansas Ave. The Topeka Blvd. sidewalk project is on a commercial corridor through Central Topeka, which would facilitate pedestrian and bicyclist mobility for work as well as recreation. This project would help complete sidewalk additions already underway this corridor. Though this Cost-Share grant was not awarded, the MTPO met with KDOT on ways to improve the submission, and intends to resubmit this project for a Cost-Share grant in the Fall of

2020. The 8th St. Bikeways improvements complete a previous TA Grant awarded project on 8th St., west of Topeka Blvd. This project was awarded a Cost-Share Grant this year.

- 4) Applied for and received a Healthy Lifestyles Grant, which was a collaboration grant sponsored by Blue Cross/Blue Shield and the Shawnee County Health Agency. This Grant will allow the MTPO to participate in decisions involving the placement of Complete Streets and multi-modal projects throughout the city that will be funded with these grant proceeds.
- 5) Applied for and received three TA grants for a pedestrian bridge in West Topeka, an extension to the Deer Creek Trail extension in Central/SE Topeka, and funds to TMTA for the installation of bikeways infrastructure and bus stops. All projects which will have a positive impact on the EJ populations for mobility work and for healthy lifestyle choices. The MTPO also has submitted the initial “Concept” projects for the current round of TA projects, that will include several trail and bikeway implementations which correspond to our recently updated Bikeways Master Plan. These upgrades will affect many areas of EJ neighborhoods, if awarded.
- 6) The MTPO participated in Local Consult activities to promote one of our longstanding Capital Transportation projects, the Polk Quincy Viaduct. Improvements to this stretch of I-70 Hwy will have a positive impact on the downtown area as it will make both North and South downtown areas more accessible, thus increasing their economic viability. The Downtown area represents a large portion of the EJ community. The Polk Quincy project was selected as a “pipeline” project and will now finally begin to move forward. This is a significant addition to the MTPO area.
- 7) The TMTA continued to perform outreach via ZOOM meetings, and surveys, available on buses and online, pertaining to bus stop placements and possible rerouting of buses.
- 8) The MTPO helped organize, and participated in, several on-site public meetings for the current modifications to 12th Street. These meetings were held at the public library, churches, and community centers throughout the project area, and were attended by hundreds of people. The project also solicited input from various social media sites.

Paratransit and Senior Transportation groups

No Paratransit meetings were attended by The MTPO staff in the past

Heartland Healthy Neighborhoods(HHN)

MTPO staff attends monthly meetings of the Heartland Healthy Neighborhood and Heartland Visioning meetings. These meetings are attended by persons representing various interests among the City including business, education, recreation, health and transportation. It provides a platform to espouse MTPO issues and in turn gives the MTPO an opportunity to gather opinions and concerns from a broad representation of the community. Many of the persons in these groups also serve on MTPO transportation committees.

Training/presentations

MTPO staff attended the regional APA conference, as well as Seminars for the Regional Economic Model Inc. (REMI), a program utilized for performing model forecasts. The MTPO staff also gave presentations to the City Council and other city departments. MTPO staff also sponsored events for Bicycle month (MAY) with included a public bicycle ride with the Mayor, Police officers and other city officials.

Respectfully Submitted,

Carlton Scroggins AICP, MTPO Manager