



# Appendix A – Public Engagement Plan

Kingsport 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan

Kingsport Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization

December 2021 (final version)

**Prepared for:**

Kingsport Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization



**Prepared by:**

AECOM

**NOTE:**

The original version of this document was created in December 2020. The plan was reviewed, and updated, in December 2021.

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# Introduction

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The Kingsport Metropolitan Transportation Planning Organization (KMTPO) and its partner AECOM are developing the Kingsport 2045 Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) to guide transportation decision making in the Kingsport Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The organizations are committed to an open, inclusive, proactive and transparent program of public engagement as part of this undertaking. This Public Engagement Plan (PEP) outlines an approach to communications and outreach during plan development. It includes goals and objectives for public involvement and strategies and tactics to be used to meet those objectives and support a robust planning process whose recommendations reflect the needs and priorities of regional stakeholders.

## Background

Public engagement and stakeholder involvement are critical elements of the LRTP process. Developing a transportation system that meets the changing needs of the Kingsport MTPO's residents, businesses, and visitors will support the region's growth and development and provide a range of safe, efficient multimodal options for everyone. The plan is also an important element in supporting local and regional economic development and contributes to the region's quality of life. The purpose of the KMTPO 2045 LRTP is to evaluate potential existing and future conditions that affect regional access and mobility and to evaluate potential transportation improvements to address existing and emerging issues. This PEP will assist KMTPO with managing and facilitating public engagement to guide the LRTP planning process.

## Engagement Overview

The AECOM team will work with KMTPO to share information, identify stakeholders, and align on key issues supporting and enhancing the plan's technical analyses. The PEP structures engagement in two phases:

- **Issues and Opportunities** - a phase of identifying and direct outreach to key stakeholders, the traveling public, and environmental justice populations. Using a variety of communications tools, this phase will enable stakeholders to understand the planning process and likely outcomes and to identify key transportation issues in the planning area. This phase corresponds to Technical Task 2: Goals & Objectives, as set forth in the detailed LRTP project schedule.
- **Draft and Final LRTP** – this phase of direct outreach features opportunities for all stakeholders to review and comment on the transportation system solutions identified in the Draft 2045 LRTP. Multiple channels of communication activities will be used to engage stakeholders at levels of details appropriate to their interest in support of Technical Task 8: Recommended Plan Development.

## Stakeholder Engagement Goals & Objectives

The PEP outlines a technically and culturally appropriate approach to consultation and communications. The goal of this PEP is to improve and facilitate decision making and create an atmosphere of understanding that actively involves stakeholders in a timely manner, and that these groups are provided sufficient opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns so that they may influence project decisions. The PEP is a useful tool for managing communications between KMTPO and its stakeholders.

KMTPO has defined overall objectives for the agency's public engagement activities in its Public Participation Plan of 2019. In addition to those overarching goals, the key objectives of the PEP can be summarized as follows:

- Provide guidance for stakeholder engagement such that it incorporates best practices as well as meets KMTPO's requirements;
- Identify key stakeholders that are affected by or able to influence the plan;
- Identify the most effective methods and structures through which to disseminate study information and accomplish regular, accessible, transparent and appropriate consultation that provides stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to plan outcomes;
- Define reporting and monitoring measures to ensure the effectiveness of the PEP and periodic reviews of the PEP based on findings and;
- Establish formal concern/resolution mechanisms and outline methods to incorporate input into the planning process and report back to stakeholders regarding the use of their input.

## STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION & ANALYSIS

### Stakeholder Identification

Stakeholders are persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a proposed action, as well as those who may have interests in the LRTP process or the ability to influence or contribute to its outcomes.

Example stakeholder groups include:

- Traveling public, residents and employees
- State and local government officials, including Regional and Metropolitan planning organizations and transit agencies
- Special interest groups (economic development, tourism, environmental, bicycle, manufacturing, distribution and freight hauling industries, etc.)
- Environmental Justice populations

Each category is described in Table 1.

**Table 1: Stakeholder Groups**

Traveling Public, Residents and Employees	
	Commuters
	Visitors
	Residents within the MPA
	Workers employed within the MPA
Government Officials	
	Kingsport MTPO
	First Tennessee Development District
	Kingsport Board of Mayor and Alderman
	Sullivan County Commission
Transit Agencies	
	Kingsport Area Transit
Special Interest Groups and Agencies	
	Chamber of Commerce
	Northeast Tennessee Valley Regional Industrial Development Association
	Northeast Tennessee Regional Economic Partnership

	Emergency service providers
	School District Transportation Officials
	Sierra Club or other Environmental Organization
	Transit System Officials
	Bicycle Organizations

## Environmental Justice, ADA, and Other Groups with Specialized Transportation Needs

Federally funded projects may not engender disproportionately high and adverse impacts on environmental justice populations. By executive order, these groups include certain racial minorities and low-income persons. Similarly, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires transportation facilities be designed to adequately serve disabled persons. Other populations may also have specialized needs, such as young people and the elderly. The PEP recognizes that effectively engaging these persons in the planning process may require culturally sensitive outreach and developing partnerships with organizations serving environmental justice populations. In addition to the organizations listed above, these may include:

- Churches and Faith-based organizations
- Non-profits
- NAACP Tennessee Conference of Branches
- Urban League
- United Way
- Catholic Charities
- Alliance for Native American Indian Rights of Tennessee
- Seniors, Inc.
- Tennessee Disability Coalition
- Tennessee Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Tennessee Immigrants and Refugee Rights Coalition
- Agency for Aging and Disability
- Employment Agencies
- Social Services Agencies
- Community Centers
- Libraries
- Schools

The study team will work with KMTPO to determine appropriate organizations for consultation, relying on input from regional stakeholders.

## Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder analysis determines the likely relationship between stakeholders and the plan and helps to identify the appropriate consultation methods for each stakeholder group. When evaluating the frequency and the appropriate engagement technique used to consult a particular stakeholder group, three criteria should be considered:

- The *extent of impact* of the study on the stakeholder group;
- The *extent of influence* of the stakeholder group on the Study; and,
- The *culturally acceptable* engagement and information dissemination methods.

All engagement should proceed with an understanding of culturally acceptable and appropriate methods for each of the different stakeholder groups. For example, when consulting government officials, formal presentations may be the preferred consultation method, while residents may prefer public meetings, and interest groups may desire informal focus group discussions facilitated by community leaders.

There are a variety of engagement techniques used to build relationships with stakeholders, gather information from stakeholders, consult with stakeholders, and disseminate study information to stakeholders. When selecting an appropriate consultation technique, culturally appropriate consultation methods, and the purpose for engaging with a stakeholder group should be considered. Table 2 provides a list of consultation techniques and suggested appropriate applications. The use of selected techniques



for the LRTP is described in detail in the following section. **Items in gray text are not recommended for this project but may be implemented if acceptable results are not achieved with the initial effort.** For applicability to Environmental Justice populations, techniques may require adjustment and monitoring for effectiveness.

**Table 2: Outreach Activities**

ENGAGEMENT TECHNIQUE	POTENTIAL APPLICATION
<b>Outreach Database</b> Email database and record of comments.	Government officials, special interest groups, traveling public, residents and employers
<b>Project Advisory Committee</b> Stakeholder committee to build outreach list, identify issues, vet solutions. Facilitated group workshops.	MPOs, government officials
<b>Stakeholder Interviews and Small Group Interviews</b> Confidential, in depth input in a facilitated interaction.	Special interest groups, Environmental Justice representatives
<b>Study Website</b> Distribute Study information and gather general input.	Traveling public, government officials, special interest groups, residents and employers, Environmental Justice populations (limited applicability)
<b>Custom On-line Engagement Surveys</b> Broad outreach with ability to distribute information and gather specific, targeted input.	Traveling public, government officials, special interest groups, residents and employers, Environmental Justice populations (limited applicability)
<b>Interactive Mapping</b> Broad outreach with ability to distribute information and gather specific, targeted input on Study elements with a specific location attribute.	Traveling public, government officials, special interest groups, residents and employers, Environmental Justice populations (limited applicability)
<b>Public Meetings</b> General outreach with ability to distribute less technical information and gather location-specific input and opinion. Can be virtual.	Traveling public, residents, special interest groups
<b>Social Media Support</b> Targeted information distribution through electronic media	Traveling public, special interest groups, residents and employers, Environmental Justice populations (limited applicability)
<b>Virtual Room</b> Custom online engagement website mimicking attendance at public meeting. View exhibits, take surveys, leave comments, engage with mapping	Traveling public, government officials, special interest groups, residents and employers, Environmental Justice populations (limited applicability)
<b>Environmental Justice Outreach</b> Coordinate with representatives to meet directly with affected communities to distribute Study information and gather input regarding nature and proportionality of impacts.	Environmental Justice populations.

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## 3.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

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Details about specific engagement activities to support plan tasks are provided in this section. A table showing a draft implementation schedule for planned activities along with their relation to the overall LRTP tasks follows. The use of the virtual room for this plan will centralize the distribution of a variety of engagement tools.

### Outreach Database

The AECOM team will work with KMTPO to establish an electronic database using MS Excel to facilitate e-mail communications with study stakeholders, planning partners, and the general public. The database will include sortable contact information for all participants involved in the study, including organizations, agencies, and individuals who have an interest (or who have specifically been identified as targets). The database will be amended and expanded as the project progresses. The outreach database will be used to facilitate communications with stakeholders and to support other engagement strategies.

### Social Media Support

Key outreach notification will be made using the KMTPO's social media accounts, along with those of partner organizations. This will leverage the existing connections of interested parties and allow the easy sharing of project information. AECOM has found that using existing platforms is more effective at building participation than creating standalone social media efforts. AECOM will create notifications introducing the project and directing the public to the LRTP Virtual Room. The notices can be posted by project partner organizations and be tailored to the specific messaging needs of various stakeholder groups.

### Virtual Room

AECOM's Kingsport LRTP Virtual Room is the center of public engagement activities for the project, an intuitive and easily navigated online portal housing study documents, input tools, and information gathering. The LRTP Virtual Room can house the following elements

#### *Introduction and Exhibits*

A station that provides an overview of the LRTP process and schedule. A brief recorded video, featuring KMTPO staff, could also be used to welcome visitors and explain the purpose of the project and navigation of the virtual room (this might be used during the virtual "open house.") A station featuring up to six exhibits relevant to current study activities is available for a self-guided tour. Exhibits will be added to the virtual room throughout the LRTP update.

#### *Stakeholder Survey*

Visitors may take an online survey during the existing conditions and needs assessment phase of the LRTP update. The survey will be accessed via the Virtual Room and will allow participants to describe issues and opportunities for the future of transportation in the Kingsport MPA. Survey results will be used to complement technical analyses in developing goals and objectives, and will also help identify key desired projects. An additional survey may be used to maintain public interest in the planning process during the long review period prior to publication of the draft plan. Additional surveys could be posted between major study activities to promote continued interest in the project.

## **Interactive Mapping Tool**

Transportation studies benefit from capturing local knowledge about travel behavior, transportation system conditions, and opportunities for improvement. To engage stakeholders visually and to capture spatial data, the AECOM team plans to utilize GIS mapping that will allow individuals to comment on regional transportation (multimodal) issues. The mapping component will be accessed through the Virtual Room. The first mapping component will invite the public to identify and discuss existing conditions or areas needing improvement. The team will utilize the mapping results to help inform the technical analysis. A second mapping component could be used to allow individuals to comment on proposed multimodal transportation investments.

## **Open Houses**

AECOM will plan, develop, and facilitate a hybrid in-person/virtual open house to support the public comment opportunity on the draft plan. The event will consist of an in person public meeting and simultaneous updates to the Virtual Room exhibits and could include a live chat for participants to interact with the study team. The open house will focus on provisions of the draft plan, and seek to generate public comment regarding the draft recommendations. In addition to capturing public input at the in-person event, a virtual comment box will gather feedback from online attendees.

The open house will be publicized using the partnerships and social media channels described above, along with a news release. AECOM will summarize the meeting results. In addition, the Virtual Room allows the ability for an “on-going” open house for a few weeks as the material can be viewed online by participants at any time of the day.

## **Key Stakeholder Interviews or Small Group Interviews**

To develop in depth understanding of issues and opportunities, AECOM will conduct individual interviews with leaders of stakeholder groups with special interests in regional transportation. These groups will be identified with KMTPO staff based on key transportation issues indicated in the issues and opportunities analysis. MTPO staff will schedule and AECOM will facilitate up to three interviews, which could potentially include developers, transit systems representatives, major employers, or other high-level policy areas. The interviews will be conducted virtually, and AECOM will summarize the key findings.

## **Environmental Justice Outreach**

AECOM understands that outreach tools must be culturally appropriate in order to be effective. Minority and low-income populations covered under Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice) are historically underrepresented in transportation planning engagement; in the Study team’s experience, special tools are required to generate proportional participation. In addition to reaching out to partner with the organizations identified above, AECOM will conduct up to three stakeholder interviews with representatives of those organizations to be selected with KMPTO staff based on the demographics of respondents to the general engagement activities. The key is to gain participation that is reflective of the proportions of various age, race, ethnicity, and ability groups. The interviews will be conducted virtually, and AECOM will summarize key findings.



# Stakeholder Involvement Schedule

Table 3 summarizes the anticipated engagement activities that will take place during the KMTPO 2045 LRTP update process. These dates, and activities, are subject to change based on the adjustments to the project schedule, and/or COVID. Any modifications to the proposed activities will be discussed/approved by KMTPO staff and will be made to enhance the public and stakeholder engagement process.

**Table 3: 2021 and 2022 Calendar of Engagement Activities**

<b>ENGAGEMENT PHASE</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>	<b>APPROXIMATE TIMEFRAME</b>
<i>Issues and Opportunities</i>	Virtual Room Development	Dec 2020-Jan 2021
	Database Development	Jan 2021
	Social Media Partnership Development	Jan 2021
	Virtual Room Goes Live	Jan 2021
	Online Survey	Jan-Feb 2021
	Interactive Mapping	Jan-Mar 2021
	Key Stakeholder Interviews	Mar-Apr 2021
	EJ Interviews	Mar-Apr 2021
	Virtual Room Update (MetroQuest Survey)	Jun-Jul 2021
<i>Draft and Final LRTP</i>	Virtual Room Update	Jan 2022
	Hybrid Public Open House	Feb 2022
	Public Review of and Comment on Draft LRTP	Feb-Mar 2022
	Plan Adoption	May 2022

## 4.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

The implementation of the actions outlined in this engagement plan will be monitored in two ways. First, outcomes of these activities will be monitored in terms of their effectiveness in supporting the LRTP goals and objectives. Second, the results of stakeholder input will be regularly summarized and communicated with the Study technical team to incorporate public priorities into the analysis of transportation system deficiencies and in development of solutions to address those deficiencies. Systematically communicating the issue raised by stakeholders will enable the development of recommendations that are responsive to the concerns of regional transportation users. The results of both efforts will be communicated to KMTPO staff and summarized for the public.

The majority of stakeholder input opportunities will include the ability to input basic demographic information by users. The participants will be characterized by a high level and anonymized demographic profile. At the conclusion of the issues and opportunities analysis period, the profile of the respondents will be compared to the demographic profile of the Kingsport MPA. If particular segments of the population appear to not be providing input, those segments will become the focus of future activities to enable the respondents to “look like the region” and to develop input from a multiplicity of voices.

A summary document will be prepared showing how community input, concerns, and suggestions influenced and directed the plan’s recommendations.