Final Report

2018 Assessment of the Practice of Public Involvement in Florida

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Rusty Ennemoser, Project Manager

Prepared By
USF Center for Urban Transportation Research
Jeff Kramer, AICP, Principal Investigator
Nicole Tremblay, Graduate Research Assistant

October 2019

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Metric Conversion Table

SYMBOL	WHEN YOU KNOW	MULTIPLY BY	TO FIND	SYMBOL
LENGTH				
in	inches	25.4	millimeters	mm
ft	feet	0.305	meters	m
yd	yards	0.914	meters	m
mi	miles	1.61	kilometers	km
VOLUME				
fl oz	fluid ounces	29.57	milliliters	mL
gal	gallons	3.785	liters	L
ft^3	cubic feet	0.028	cubic meters	m^3
yd^3	cubic yards	0.765	cubic meters	m^3
NOTE: Volumes greater than 1,000 L shall be shown in m^3				
MASS				
oz	ounces	28.35	grams	g
lb	pounds	0.454	kilograms	kg
T	short tons (2000 lb)	0.907	megagrams (or "metric ton")	Mg (or "t")
TEMPERATURE (exact degrees)				
°F	Fahrenheit	5 (F-32)/9 or (F-32)/1.8	Celsius	°C

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This study was designed to document the current state of the practice of public involvement in transportation decision-making and provide an update to the 2006 report documenting public involvement in the state of Florida. A literature review was completed as the first phase. Surveys and interviews were then conducted with metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) and Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Districts. The final report comprises a synthesis of these findings. The first chapter provides an introduction and key findings from the literature review. The second chapter is a detailed description of observations from each agency type. Noteworthy practices are included in the third chapter, particularly early communication, flexibility, and inclusion. Suggestions for improvement are provided, and include the need for better public education, more effective social media use, greater commitment to performance measurement and evaluation, more frequent and comprehensive training, and participation in networks of shared responsibility. These suggestions include examples where applicable.</td></tr>
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Executive Summary

This report provides results of a comprehensive assessment of public involvement in transportation planning in the State of Florida, which addressed public involvement issues and practices at all phases of transportation decision-making. The study was designed to address the following specific research objectives:

- Document current public involvement practices of the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Florida's metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) through a combination of online and telephone interviews and surveys and relevant document review.
- Compare findings of current practices to those identified in 2006 to identify results of efforts to modify practices following the 2006 report (Kramer et al., 2006).
- Identify additional training needs and process improvements at the FDOT and MPO levels.
- Develop clear suggestions for improved public involvement practices in Florida.

The assessment of public involvement was conducted in three phases: first, a detailed literature review was conducted to determine the state of the practice nationally, identify related research efforts, and provide an updated explanation of legal requirements for public involvement in transportation decision-making. The results of this review were presented in a technical memorandum and provided a foundation for the next two phases of the study. The second phase involved data collection on MPO and FDOT issues and practices. Finally, the team conducted an analysis of the detailed findings and further synthesized these into overarching themes, noteworthy practices, and suggestions for improvement.

The following summary of general observations represents a synthesis of findings from the interviews with FDOT District staff, along with MPO responses to a detailed online survey. Additional explanatory information is provided in the report.

- A diversity of techniques is used to engage the public. Both types of agencies showed interest in non-traditional techniques, but both also expressed a need for more training and guidance to implement these techniques.
- Roles and responsibilities have become clearer since the last report in 2006, even though the two agency types are not organized in the same way.
- There is an evident commitment to reaching underserved populations and new audiences.

- Performance measures exist across MPOs and FDOT Districts, but these generally remain at the level of "outputs" rather than "outcomes."
- Inter- and intra-agency communication has reportedly improved since the previous study in 2006.
- Social media are emerging as an important method for engaging the public in transportation planning.
- Methods for documenting public input and activities have become more uniform since the last assessment of public involvement in the state of Florida.
- Key challenges faced when involving the public include reaching all groups affected by a given project, reduced capacity to conduct public involvement activities as resources become more constrained, differing goals among planning agencies, and trying to gain the interest of members of the public.
- The level of public involvement training received by staff varied by District and by MPO but was generally regarded as helpful, but incomplete at times.

The data presented in this report demonstrate an ongoing commitment to meaningful public involvement among all of Florida's DOT Districts and MPOs. Most survey respondents and interviewees expressed a desire to improve their public involvement practice and saw public involvement as a vital component of transportation decision-making. A variety of techniques, resources, and strategies are being applied by both agency types to involve the public more effectively and to make decisions with greater public consensus. Challenges to effective public involvement remain; however, some of these same challenges and needs existed at the time of the 2006 report, while some – like social media – are relatively new.

One continuing challenge was the difficulty of measuring performance in public involvement activities. Providing adequate public involvement, particularly on larger or more controversial projects, was a challenge that persisted from the previous report due to budget constraints – a challenge generally addressed by increased reliance on consultant support and consolidation of staff roles. Other commonly identified challenges included inadequate public understanding of the transportation planning and development process (including construction) and managing competing interests and difficult personalities. Perhaps the most controversial challenge discussed in these interviews and surveys was that of effectively – and appropriately – using technologies like social media to conduct public involvement activities.

Best or noteworthy practices were detailed in the third chapter of this report, including early and constant communication with the public, meeting people where they are, and using a variety of techniques (particularly during large projects) to ensure all members of the public

have the opportunity to participate including integrating community needs into project scopes, social capacity programming, workforce development, and environmental justice actions.
In the fourth chapter, the following suggestions are offered to help address the identified issues in current practice: provide a mix of general and project-specific resources where possible, helping the public to be informed about how best to participate in transportation planning; reconsider the flexibility and effectiveness of social media guidelines (or create guidelines where there are none) and use technology as part of a complement of public involvement strategies; implement performance measurement and evaluation tools, especially for the purpose of creating a business justification for spending on effective activities; partake in more frequent and comprehensive training, after consideration of why training might be underutilized currently; and consider how sharing responsibility for public involvement activities and data gathering might improve relationships, reach, and returns on investment. These suggestions are a combination of ideas and issues uncovered through responses by MPO and FDOT staff, as well as observations of the research team, and are described in detail in the final chapter of the report.

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Background

Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Districts and metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs) are required by federal and state law to provide opportunities for members of the public to become involved in their transportation planning and project development decision-making processes. An understanding of how the Districts and MPOs are fulfilling these requirements is necessary for the state to design appropriate training and guidance to support and enhance their respective public involvement practices and activities.

In 2004, FDOT funded a research project to assess the practice of public involvement in Florida's transportation processes and practices. The research included interviews with FDOT Districts and a survey of MPOs in Florida, as well as a literature review to assess national practices. The final report, submitted in 2006, provided several suggestions for improved practice in several broad categories including involvement and outreach, continuity and commitments, training and information exchange, and performance measures and evaluation (for a detailed list of suggestions, logon to the FDOT Public Involvement webpage at https://www.fdot.gov/environment/pubinvolvement.shtm).

This research project (funded by FDOT) refreshes the research conducted over a decade ago to identify contemporary public participation practices across the state. A similar methodology was employed, including identifying current public involvement practices across the country through a review of the literature, a round of interviews with FDOT Districts, and a new survey of MPOs in Florida. Based on the information learned through the District interviews and MPO surveys, a fresh set of suggestions for practice improvements was developed.

Project Objectives

The purpose of this research project is to document how FDOT Districts and Florida MPOs address public involvement requirements and implement various techniques to engage the populations they serve. The structure of their organizations and resource allocation towards public involvement has shaped how they meet these responsibilities, and their use of technology has changed the landscape of public involvement since the previous report.

The study assesses public involvement practices by Florida Department of Transportation Districts during the Planning, Project Development and Environment (PD&E), and Design phases of transportation decision-making. The assessment includes such topics as the roles FDOT staff play in public involvement, public involvement techniques and methods of communication,

coordination with other FDOT functional units and other agencies, consultant usage for public involvement activities, documentation practices, performance measurement, and training needs.

This study also covers aspects of MPO public involvement practices and structures, including staffing for public involvement, training, performance measurement, internal and external communication, and the use of social media and other technologies for public involvement purposes. Environmental justice, equity, and issues related to transportation disadvantaged populations are addressed as well. Included in the report are innovative practices for public involvement employed by MPOs in Florida, as well as key challenges to carrying out effective public involvement.

Methodology

The assessment of public involvement was conducted in three phases. The first phase involved a detailed review of the literature to determine the state of the practice nationally, identify related research efforts, and determine legal requirements for public involvement in transportation decision-making. The results were documented in a technical memorandum and provided a foundation for subsequent phases of the study. A summary of the key conclusions from this memorandum are provided in the next section. The next phase involved data collection on MPO and FDOT issues and practices in Florida. The data collected from the FDOT Districts and MPOs was used to conduct a content analysis of the detailed findings and synthesized into broad themes, including general observations, noteworthy practices, and suggestions.

Review of FDOT Practices

Upon completion of the literature review, a detailed assessment of public involvement practices within FDOT was conducted at the District level. This was accomplished through a combination of personal interviews and a review of agency documents. An interview guide for this purpose was prepared in coordination with the FDOT project manager. FDOT staff were selected to participate in the interviews based on their public involvement roles or responsibilities in transportation planning, project development (PD&E and/or Design), or general role in public information, involvement, and outreach. The list of participating staff from each District and functional unit was prepared through coordination with the FDOT project manager and a brief scanning survey distributed to each District. However, FDOT District 3 was not able to participate in the interviews due to hurricane damage that occurred during the interview phase.

Interviews were conducted online in a group setting, with participant sample sizes of between two and seven staff members. They were advised that only those practices they identified as effective would be identified with any specific District or functional unit.

Interviews were conducted with staff from the following key positions within FDOT District offices:

- Communications Manager
- Design Engineer
- Environmental Management Engineer
- Government Operations Manager
- Growth Management Coordinator
- Metropolitan Planning Administrator
- MPO Liaison Supervisor
- Planning and Environmental Administrator
- Planning Manager
- Program Manager
- Project Development and Environment (PD&E) Administrator/Engineer
- Project Development Manager
- Project Management Engineer
- Public Information Officer/Manager/Director
- Public Involvement Coordinator
- Transportation Planner

The interviews were intended to shed light on the roles various staff members play in public involvement at the District level, what techniques were employed by the District to engage the public, and what their impressions were relative to what worked (and did not work) for that purpose. Staff were asked to comment on the organization of their District as it pertains to public involvement, their own role in public involvement, methods of communication with the public, degree of coordination with other functional units on public involvement, balance of responsibilities among project managers and consultants, documentation of public involvement activities and feedback, techniques for involving traditionally underrepresented groups, efforts to evaluate the effectiveness of public involvement activities, the degree of support from and coordination with other agencies, and training needs with regard to public involvement. Other questions addressed challenges faced by staff in involving the public, lessons learned, and any practices, techniques, or strategies they feel have been particularly effective.

The results of the structured interviews were documented, and some public involvement plans and related documents were collected from participants. Researchers then conducted a detailed content analysis to identify common themes in current practice, as well as practices that participants felt worked particularly well, and suggested areas for improvement.

Review of MPO Practices

Florida's twenty-seven MPOs were asked to complete a survey (conducted during a two-month period in the autumn of 2018) about their public involvement activities. The survey covered a variety of topics related to public involvement including budget, performance measures, communication methods, and training. The survey also asked for each MPOs' perceptions of their effectiveness and the challenges of public involvement. This survey was administered through personalized email links and contained up to forty-two questions, depending upon relevance. For example, an MPO reporting no social media presence did not see a block of eleven questions on the topic of social media use and policy. "Yes" or "No" questions were used throughout the survey to determine whether topics would be relevant to each respondent.

Population figures used to compare responses from the survey are based on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) 2017 estimates of the total population served by each MPO (referred to as the metropolitan planning area population or MPA population), not to be confused with urbanized area populations upon which MPO designations are based. The MPA population was used as this is the total population for which an MPO is responsible for reaching out to as part of their public involvement efforts. Three MPOs in northern Florida share one staff (the Bay County TPO, the Florida-Alabama TPO, and the Okaloosa-Walton TPO). As such, these MPOs have been combined where noted (for example, when reporting the number of public involvement staff per MPO) and are referred to as West Florida Regional Planning Council MPOs (WFRPC MPOs) for the purposes of this report (note that the WFRPC changed its name to the Emerald Coast Regional Council toward the conclusion of this research project, but will continue to be referred to as the WFRPC in this report to maintain continuity with technical memoranda developed in earlier stages of this project).

Table 1 - 1 displays MPOs divided into three categories by population size, which will be referenced when reporting the results of the MPO survey. These categories are not evenly distributed but are divided along natural breaks in population size for ease of comparison along factors like available resources and level of effort.

Table 1 - 1. MPOs Categorized by Population Size.

MPO Size Category	MPO Name	2017 Population
Small MPOS (under 500,000)	Indian River County MPO	149,000
	Martin MPO	153,000
	Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO	172,700
	Gainesville MTPO	209,700
	Heartland Regional TPO	258,500
	St. Lucie TPO	297,600
	Hernando/Citrus MPO	325,700
	Ocala/Marion County TPO	349,300
	Collier MPO	357,500
	Capital Region TPA	368,100
	Lake-Sumter MPO	452,400
Medium MPOs (500,000 to 1,000,000)	Pasco County MPO	505,700
	Space Coast TPO	575,200
	River to Sea TPO	619,700
	Polk TPO	661,600
	Lee County MPO	698,500
	Sarasota/Manatee MPO	776,000
	WFRPC MPOs Bay County TPO (178,800) Florida-Alabama TPO (469,300) Okaloosa-Walton TPO (237,200)	885,300
	Forward Pinellas	962,000
Large MPOs (over 1,000,000)	Hillsborough MPO	1,379,300
	Palm Beach TPA	1,414,100
	North Florida TPO	1,455,500
	Broward MPO	1,874,000
	MetroPlan Orlando	2,106,300
	Miami-Dade TPO	2,743,100

Content Analysis

The final phase of the study methodology was to conduct a content analysis of findings from the FDOT District interviews and MPO survey responses. Interview results were summarized, and findings from each District were organized by question and by District. MPO survey results

were similarly aggregated by question, with answers presented in graphic and narrative form (these results are reproduced in Appendix A). Using these master summaries, the research team conducted content analysis in brainstorming sessions to identify trends and highlights. This process involved several iterations. Findings were summarized in this final report under broad themes. Issues and challenges, as well as lessons learned or problems in current practice, were reported generally to protect confidentiality.

Insights from the Literature

A review of the literature demonstrated that the state of the practice has evolved considerably since the 2006 public involvement study was completed, and that new technologies and creative techniques have been tested in various contexts during this time. Challenges and successes have emerged, highlighting the continuing need for performance measures and nontraditional forms of outreach.

Key themes from the national literature review include:

1. The literature review confirmed that public involvement guidance from the 2006 report is being implemented to various degrees across all agencies studied nationally (Kramer et al., 2006). Some of these guiding principles include early and continuing involvement, personalizing and contextualizing involvement activities, providing alternatives to traditional meeting places, and providing incentives to increase participation.

2. Responsibility for involvement was a focal point for agencies and stakeholders, including identifying which agency or organizations would be best situated and able to conduct, document, communicate, and evaluate public involvement activities. In some cases, planning agencies found ways to shift responsibility for public involvement to the interested public, making the process more resource-efficient and reaching people in more appealing ways. This often involved using community or group leaders to bring in an existing network, be it a group of college students, local business owners, or sports fans. Conversely, the responsibility for interagency coordination and performance measurement and evaluation remains an area of ongoing concern in the literature.

3. Reaching underserved populations has become a major focus for many transportation agencies, most of whom are moving beyond traditional public involvement methods to achieve improved access to decision-making for those populations. Staff not only consider the needs of the public when determining the location and timing of public hearings, but have also increased their sensitivity to language diversity, differing concerns based on age, and the need to meet people where they live or congregate. Self-paced activities and multiple modes for providing feedback contributed to this engagement, along with efforts to locate existing meeting places or community groups.

4. Public involvement performance measures are widely applied, but the focus on "outputs" remains dominant over evaluation of the "outcomes" of public involvement efforts. Few state DOTs and MPOs have implemented a defined goal-setting process, backed by clear strategies to achieve these goals and a mix of qualitative and quantitative measures by which to evaluate them. Many agencies have, however, created less rigorous methods of evaluation.

5. Technology has driven many, but not all, of the innovative public involvement strategies currently used in transportation planning and project development. Geographic Information Systems (GIS) applications have emerged as particularly useful to both agencies and stakeholders, allowing the public to comment on specific locations and cross-reference existing projects. Social media remains a murky field of communication, but those who have used it successfully note the importance of ongoing responsiveness – even when faced with negative commentary – and the need for clear usage policies and staff training. Agencies have also found that low-tech strategies like a "meeting in a box," site walks, or community event booths can be highly successful in drawing participation. Context and atmosphere are key in determining what level of technology and information will be most effective.

Chapter 2
General Observations

Several general observations were made based on a synthesis of findings from the interviews with FDOT District staff and the MPO surveys. These are listed in this chapter and more complete descriptions of general observations follow. A complete summary of findings from the MPO survey is provided in Appendix A.

Summary of General Observations

- A diversity of techniques is used to engage the public. Both types of agencies showed interest in non-traditional techniques, but both also expressed a need for more training and guidance to implement these techniques.
- Roles and responsibilities have become clearer since the last report in 2006, even though the two agency types are not organized in the same way.
- There is an evident commitment to reaching underserved populations and new audiences.
- Performance measures exist across MPOs and FDOT Districts, but these generally remain at the level of "outputs" rather than "outcomes."
- Inter- and intra-agency communication has reportedly improved since the previous study in 2006.
- Social media is emerging as an important method for engaging the public in transportation planning.
- Methods for documenting public input and activities have become more uniform since the last assessment of public involvement in the state of Florida.
- Key challenges faced when involving the public include reaching all groups affected by a given project, reduced capacity to conduct public involvement activities as resources become more constrained, differing goals among planning agencies, and trying to gain the interest of members of the public.
- The level of public involvement training received by staff varied by District and by MPO but was generally regarded as both helpful and incomplete at times.

A diversity of techniques is used to engage the public. Both types of agencies showed interest in non-traditional techniques, but both also expressed a need for more training and guidance to implement these techniques.

On the survey, MPOs were presented with twenty-four possible techniques for public involvement and asked to select as many as their organization used. FDOT Districts were asked more generally about their techniques, but all agencies were asked to describe the effectiveness of the strategies chosen. All but one MPO indicated that they have an advisory committee that provides regular input from representatives from the public, and the same percentage also presents and prints their materials in plain language for accessibility and ease of understanding. The next most popular techniques were dedicated web pages, facilitated meetings, public meetings, and social media, all with a prevalence at or above 85%. Many MPOs selected that they use some form of game for public involvement, which was described in free response format as using "play money" to role play project prioritization. Text polling was another type of "game" employed by MPOs.

Other techniques, which were reported as free response answers, included outreach (to students, seniors, and the general population), participation in other types of community meetings, safety activities, and televised interviews and meetings. One organization made a video describing the role of MPOs and showed it at local movie theaters as a preview; this video was also made available on YouTube. Another MPO partners with their Downtown Development Authority to promote bicycling while collecting data and making connections to get people involved in the transportation planning process. An outreach toolkit was another technique, described as including newsletter articles, infographics, social media posts and links to a survey that member cities could use in outreach to their constituents.

The techniques most frequently chosen as "least effective" for MPOs were newspaper advertising and public meetings. Of those who selected public meetings, a common theme was lack of attendance and motivation for long-range planning, and one MPO mentioned that attendees are often a small core group of people with a specific agenda rather than a representative sample of the population. Online town halls were suggested frequently as a preferred substitute for traditional public meetings. Newspaper articles – rather than advertisements – were described as effective, and many MPOs reported that newspaper advertising was ineffective but legally required. Open houses were described as ineffective by one MPO because the public served by this MPO typically prefers more information and interactions than they were receiving at these events. In contrast to those organizations preferring community fairs, a few MPOs answered that these were the least effective because

they felt people would prefer to have fun and do not want to consider planning topics at community events.

FDOT Districts explained that in addition to required meetings, hearings, and public notices, Districts use a variety of techniques to get the public involved. Some go door-to-door, when resources allow, and many try to reach users of the facility and not just residents or business owners along a project route. Stakeholder meetings and workshops are another common technique used to get quality feedback from interested parties. Online meetings are also used in many Districts, where they are reported as effective by all who mentioned using them. Most Districts consider their techniques to be flexible and can change their strategy as new information is brought forward.

Many Districts expressed that it can be difficult to involve people who are users of a facility but not residents, as well as people who are not otherwise involved in local issues. For this reason, project-specific websites have been developed in many Districts. Visualizations are also popular for depicting alternatives or explaining complicated projects, as they can be shared widely online and can answer questions for the public without requiring much interaction. These visualizations come in the form of videos, interactive maps, 3D models, and more.

Regarding techniques, a District 7 consultant for FDOT provided many insights into what people want from a public involvement strategy; people generally want multiple opportunities to engage, and feedback shows that more online avenues would be helpful. The consultant also finds that collaborative problem-solving workshops and other in-person techniques are most successful. This is reflected in their observation that there is a mismatch between what people say they want and what they choose to do; online engagement is more convenient, but in-person activities may be more meaningful.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- “Techniques can be changed in the middle of a project based upon the needs of the community as identified through the project. For example, the District has set up special working groups in the community (e.g., meetings with pastors at black churches can lead to huge turnout and lots of feedback). It is important to be flexible during the project and pay attention to stakeholders identified throughout the process, for example, a CRA or a coalition.”
- “Visualizations are used, including video or 3D (e.g., diverging diamond interchanges, roundabouts, right-of-way). Videos are more effective for social media and at public meetings; these answer 90% of questions in a low-key, non-emotionally charged way.”

Roles and responsibilities have become clearer since the last report in 2006, even though the two agency types are not organized in the same way.

The previous study detailed the inconsistencies in public involvement roles for staff within FDOT, as well as the differences in interpretation of district public information office (PIO) responsibilities. Interviews for this report demonstrated that PIO staff still have significant variability across Districts regarding how they interact with public involvement activities. The current research explains the role of the PIO in different Districts, along with the various uses of project managers and consultants.

The 2006 report on the practice of public involvement in Florida (Kramer et al., 2006) found that the primary point of contact for the public was a switchboard operator, who would forward calls to the relevant functional unit. It was noted in that report, however, that locating the appropriate functional unit – and subsequently, the project manager – was not likely unless the caller had project information taken from a flier or other posting in hand. The current findings from FDOT interviews show that information is now readily available to the public through District and project-specific websites and most public inquiries are now directed to the Public Information Office (PIO) as the initial point of contact.

The Department considers public information to be related to media and communication, while public involvement is a two-way process involving input from the public. However, the District PIO has become increasingly involved in both “public information” and “public involvement” activities in recent years. In fact, many of the staff interviewed for this research project were representatives of the District PIO. Project managers (PMs) and consultants work together to carry out public involvement and meet all requirements, but the PIO generally approves or is at least very involved in these activities. PIO staff can also be helpful in organizing and addressing legal requirements and deadlines, removing these tasks from the project managers’ list of responsibilities. Not all Districts use PIO staff this way, though; roles of each type of public communication (PIO and public involvement) vary both by District and by phase, with several interviewees indicating that the PIO in their District is typically more involved during the Design phase than the PD&E Phase.

Project managers do not remain consistent across all project phases in all Districts. In some cases, PMs described the relationship with consultants responsible for implementing public involvement activities as being more collaborative than supervisory. Consultants are even less likely to remain the same throughout a project. Generally, PMs are responsible for ensuring that legal requirements are met and overseeing the consultants’ execution of the District’s public involvement activities for ongoing project phases. Consultants are employed through

contracts that are typically customized by project. Often, consultants are subject matter experts with a repertoire of creative techniques, though some are fulfilling a more straightforward request from FDOT and some have sub-consultants to provide additional expertise. In an effort to combat rotating consultant and PMs, District 5 is currently working to standardize public involvement procedures across functional units and create a more robust website for the public to access.

The organization of public involvement roles within MPOs was not discussed in the 2006 report, but the current survey did ask about the staff responsible for carrying out these activities. Agencies varied in the number of public involvement staff, though no MPO had greater than four public involvement specialists. Of those who responded "No" when asked if they have dedicated public involvement staff, four MPOs indicated that their professional planning staff handled public involvement, two stated that the Executive Director was responsible for public involvement, and one of those two indicated that their "[a]dministrative assistant is responsible for meeting current requirements, which focus on legal ads and press releases…hard copy and email distributions." One MPO reported that all staff undertakes public involvement activities.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "PIO is the clearinghouse for all public communications at the project level and at the District level. This office provides guidance through all phases and participates in all project activities, as available."
- "Until about 2.5 years ago, "public involvement" meant public meetings and "public information" included some access management meetings, but this overlap got confusing. Now the District has a coordinated calendar and Public Information Officers (PIOs) attend public involvement meetings from the beginning (rather than waiting until design/construction and maintenance phases)."
- "The PIO is responsible for reviewing fact sheets and editing for plain language. The District is creating a new one-stop website with a design and construction focus, with plans to integrate PD&E information. The public can generate project fact sheets and provide comments – general or project-specific. The District also has a general email account."
- "The public involvement coordinator's (PIC) role is to help them deal with the public and get information out so they can develop the project, to make sure they know laws and relevant deadlines to keep them on track; the PIC removes these burdens from their work, so they can focus on interacting with the public."

There is an evident commitment to reaching underserved populations and new audiences.

Both types of agencies are sensitive to the needs of underserved populations, as evidenced by their responses, and some MPOs and Districts described their efforts to go beyond federal and state public involvement requirements for including these groups. A few questions on the MPO survey asked about how agencies make their public meetings more accommodating for the community and how they attempt to reach underserved populations. All but one MPO hold their meetings close to neighborhood or community centers to make them more convenient, and about three-quarters hold their meetings at convenient times and close to transit. Only one MPO offers childcare services at their meetings. Other short-answer responses included locations accessible to persons with disabilities or other transportation disadvantaged groups, as well as online options for replaying meetings and commenting remotely.

One MPO also described their technique for "meeting people where they are" staff engages the public through interactive neighborhood maps and general literature about the planning process, opening up conversations about planning at community gatherings like concerts and farmers' markets. Looking from another angle, a different MPO noted that overly specific outreach materials can prevent effective participation, and still other MPOs wrote that their top challenges were reaching young people and getting people interested in projects that will take a long time to complete. All of these examples speak to a need for better public education around the value of long-range planning, including a need for general educational resources and greater engagement with the next generation of citizens.

When asked about their outreach and accommodation strategies, most FDOT Districts said that they provide materials in multiple languages, and a few noted that geography and economic status play a role in equitable representation. Districts are sensitive to the need for in-person events in communities where access to the internet is less common. In other Districts, online formats work better for reaching new audiences, including disabled and transportation disadvantaged persons. Many Districts mentioned visiting homeowners' associations, community events, and other neighborhood meetings to reach people where they are and to remove time and cost burdens (as well as apathy) for the public. Bus tours in multiple languages, engagement with environmental justice nonprofit groups, and implementation of workforce development programs for large projects are other strategies used to overcome inequity in transportation. Another common response was that consultants have community knowledge and can advise on engaging underrepresented groups; one technique for this is to have community members alert FDOT when they are having a major event that would interfere with project activities.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "The District tries to reach groups of all ethnicities and economic statuses, as well as seasonal populations (e.g. by sending things at the appropriate time for these people to be informed, not assuming they are getting mail forwarded or checking emails and continuing to inform people even if they are currently out of state and definitely won't make the meeting). Some groups are reluctant to talk to any arm of government. The District doesn't care about citizenship, etc., but just wants to reach every user. A large portion of the District population is agricultural (migrant workers) who are included in public involvement despite not being present all year."

Performance measures exist across MPOs and FDOT Districts, but these generally remain at the level of "outputs" rather than "outcomes."

Findings from the 2006 report displayed a desire to use performance measurement as a way to overcome internal and external skepticism of the value and efficacy of public involvement, better target public involvement activities, and right-size agency expenditures on a modern public involvement strategy. Overall, though, performance measures have not yet reached a level of sophistication that would allow Districts or MPOs to make strides toward meeting those desires. That said, both FDOT Districts and MPOs report making significant changes to projects and even delaying projects because of public input, demonstrating that information gathered as part of the public involvement processes is being used to make significant decisions, despite not being quantified or otherwise formally evaluated by a specific performance measurement process.

Regarding formal measurement tools, none of the FDOT Districts asked were aware of the public involvement performance measurement framework developed for the Department following the 2006 report, but many had their own means of evaluating performance. Districts primarily used output-based measures, especially counts for attendance, comments received, social media interactions, and other qualitative data. Outcome-based measures, such as increased satisfaction with meeting options available, were used in several cases, and some Districts had clear success with these kinds of measures. Conversely, others felt that people's misunderstanding of the planning process led to inaccurate feedback.

On the survey, MPOs who reported using output-based measures or a combination of output- and outcome-based measures responded by selecting from a list of potential dimensions of measurement. The most commonly selected output-based measure was attendance at meetings, followed by the number of communications sent and the number of website hits.

Other measures mentioned in free-response answers included number of requests for translated materials, social media interactions, press releases, and general media coverage. Some text-based responses revealed that the difference between output-based measures and outcome-based measures was not fully understood, leading to some misreporting of targets like accessibility and number of public comments received.

Outcome-based measures were all reported as text answers by MPOs. A common theme among these responses was the summary of public comment provided in plans and major studies, which are intended to demonstrate how plans or projects were changed based on public input. One MPO has a public involvement evaluation matrix, and another keeps outcome data about the quality of their communications with legislators and stakeholders, the effectiveness of their strategic plan, and the quality and frequency of their blog content and social media posts. One MPO divides its measures of effectiveness into four categories: visibility and productivity, participation opportunities, public interest and feedback, and input; this organization has a true mix of output- and outcome-based measures. Table 2 - 1 shows this breakdown from the MPOs "Measures of Effectiveness for a Public Participation Plan."

Table 2 - 1. Measures of Effectiveness for a Public Participation Plan.

	Metrics	
Measuring Visibility and Productivity	Number of MPO publications produced	Number of MPO newsletters and brochures distributed, such as Bicycle Suitability Maps, Ride Guides and Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning
	Number of newspaper advertisements and public notices placed in publications with minority audiences	Media inventory of newspaper articles, television and radio coverage
	Number of West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee brochures distributed	Number of MPO sponsored maps distributed, as well as any other sponsorship or advertisement opportunity
	Number of meetings broadcast on Hillsborough County Television	Number of publications available on the MPO website, at a minimum to include the LRTP, TIP, and an annual list of obligated projects
Measuring Participation Opportunities	Number of MPO public forums, workshops and community meetings at which displays, presentations, discussions, and feedback occurred	Number and origin of participants at such public forums, workshops, and community meetings
	Number of participants at public forums, workshops and community meetings held in historically underserved areas or with such populations	Number of participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities, such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida
	Number and origin of participants at monthly MPO and committee meetings	Number of persons on the MPO mailing list receiving regular agendas
	Number of draft plans, reports, other preliminary documents or surveys posted to MPO website for public comment	
Increasing Public Participation Efforts with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, & Transportation Disadvantaged	Ensuring the MOE report details representative public involvement	Developing maps with updated, community-specific demographic and socioeconomic data within the MPO's geographic boundaries at the census tract, block group, or zip code level
	Listing all MPO committee members' demographic data, including race, ethnicity, age, and whether or not they are disabled	
Measuring Public Interest & Feedback	Number of returned comment cards distributed with Newsletters and other MPO publications	Number of verbal comments received at open forum discussions, public hearings, and at any other opportunities for public interaction
	Number of phone, fax, mail, and email inquiries or comments cards received	Number of visitors to the MPO website
	Seeking feedback that is immediate and project specific	
Measuring Input Results	Number of issues identified through public input and responded to by the MPO	Documented revisions to plans based on citizen input
Refining PPP Process	Periodic public involvement process surveys	Update the PPP in conjunction with, and at the outset of, each LRTP update
	Recommendations to enhance the PPP	

Source: Hillsborough MPO, 2018

The MPO survey also asked whether performance measurement data had led to changes to the public involvement process and whether public input had changed planned or programmed projects. A majority of MPOs answered yes, process and project changes have been made. A few were not sure about changes, and three said that no changes were made in either case.

One MPO stated, “we have changed projects, sometimes not to the most beneficial transportation related improvement, but to get public buy-in.”
Of those MPOs responding yes to this question about changing decisions, one captured their strategy by stating: “[a] series of multi-day public workshops and open house design charrettes were held [for a] multi-modal corridor study which will inspire projects and presumably attract economic reinvestment in some communities. We have not made program changes due to performance measurement data nearly as much as we have focused on and modified what gets measured and how it is reported.”

Changes to public involvement processes, described in short-answer format, were themed around “non-traditional” outreach; nearly all of these responses referred to fewer public meetings and increased use of technology (social media, presentations, online surveys, and interactive maps). Other MPOs mentioned equity and environmental justice.

Some MPOs reported stopping or modifying projects because of public input, and others mentioned that public comments can determine project prioritization or inspire new projects. Many MPOs included a focus on non-automobile modes in their response, demonstrating that public input is changing the organizations’ decisions about transit, bicycle infrastructure, and walkability.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- “Efforts are made to show how input influences decisions, without making it a direct connection always (e.g. we did/didn’t do this because the public said ___).”
- “Surveys are sent out after public meetings (ready to be mailed back). Questions asked include ‘did you attend? Was the time convenient? Location? Did you have enough notice to attend? Did you have an opportunity to participate? Was it useful?’”
- “The District has previously set a target for participation (e.g. 75%), but a question like “do you feel the meeting was useful?” leads to answers of “no” when people’s comments did not lead directly to changes in the project.”
- “The Work Program public hearing has been switched to an online format after the District completed a report to show buy-in/reach. Included in this report was demographic information and attendance numbers.”
- “Sometimes staff expectations do not match public perception, and sometimes people just leave when they realize they are not in opposition to the project being presented. These people typically do not fill out comment cards or leave tangible evidence of their support.”

Inter- and intra-agency communication has reportedly improved since the previous study in 2006.

Each agency studied has at least one method for communicating their public involvement findings among their own staff and with relevant outside agencies. Both MPOs and FDOT Districts use a technique called "piggybacking" to increase their reach; this technique involves presenting or gathering input at a meeting hosted by another organization, and the level of sharing among organizations varies.

In the case of MPOs, nearly 80% use other agency meetings to engage the public in their decision-making processes, and 85% coordinate to share meetings relatively equally with other MPOs or various other agencies. For FDOT, piggybacking sometimes involves less detailed presentation methods, and one District notes that any feedback surveys that would be presented at their own hosted meetings were not distributed when the District considered themselves a guest at another agency's meeting.

Contact lists are another way of sharing information across agencies and functional units, which FDOT interviewees noted can be especially helpful over long projects, where residential or business turnover may make it difficult to reach all stakeholders. Sharing public comments is also an important aspect of interagency communication, practiced by some FDOT Districts and about two-thirds of MPOs. MPOs are not always implementing agencies for the projects for which they collect public comment, so sharing information can be particularly necessary for this agency type. All FDOT Districts share comments between phases internally. Their process has been refined since the 2006 report to include multiple documentation systems, matching increased federal requirements for documenting public input. Examples of these include the SWEPT (State-Wide Environmental Project Tracker) and EDTM (Efficient Transportation Decision Making) systems, along with PIPs (Public Involvement Plans) and CAPs (Community Awareness Plans).

Many Districts also discussed the role of local government in FDOT projects; one common theme is the inclusion of government officials in public involvement activities. One District reports that, while officials are always invited, they are particularly helpful at public meetings to answer questions about facilities in their jurisdiction. Local governments are necessary partners in every project, but some take a more active role.

District 4 has shared activities and outreach with their MPO for Complete Streets initiatives, which has brought in other community leaders and stakeholders, such as a City Manager and Chambers of Commerce. Meeting sharing is a technique used by several Districts, and an MPO

liaison often serves to coordinate public meetings and presentations and relay public comments. MPOs can also serve as contextual experts for an area.
Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "The MPO can help host public meetings …, identify stakeholders, and post things on their website and social media (with fewer restrictions, there can be more of a dialogue). The MPO also coordinates with PM/liaison to address comments received."
- "Projects work best with decisive municipalities, especially if they know what their constituents want and can come up with a scope. Projects stall when municipalities do not know what they want."
- "The District asks agencies what type of outreach they use or need and helps to identify stakeholders prior to public information meetings. MPOs help with local knowledge (especially where the District does not have an office) and can help find locations and security – e.g. the MPO may recommend churches, gyms, facilities in rural areas, and other things that are hard to find without community connections."

Social media is emerging as an important method for engaging the public in transportation planning.

As previously mentioned, use of websites and multimedia resources has become a common method for Districts and MPOs to involve the public. Findings about attendance and effectiveness of online meetings are variable, but many report positive results from adding this kind of option for public participation. The most controversial and transformative technology discussed, however, was social media.

Social media is a relatively new technology that can be used for public involvement purposes, and its use was not covered in the 2006 report. Both agency types had successes and challenges with this public involvement technique. Primarily, the challenges come from balancing the appropriate tone for official government communication with the informal communication that takes place on social media platforms. The Florida Turnpike Enterprise succinctly explained that using social media for public involvement purposes was a driver of attendance, but not an end goal. Other FDOT Districts and MPOs expressed similar perspectives on using this technique.

All MPOs reporting that they used social media were asked a series of follow-up questions about which platforms the organizations use and how they use them. Most used Facebook and about half used Twitter and YouTube. Instagram and LinkedIn were used by four MPOs each, and no other social media platforms were used, according to survey responses. Over half of MPOs using social media post regularly scheduled content, while the remainder post

sporadically or are unsure about posting frequency. A larger number report active monitoring of their social media pages, regardless of post schedules; active monitoring was defined by various respondents as continuous, hourly, and daily.

Two MPOs mentioned that they engage in bidirectional communication on social media, stressing the need for continuous monitoring and immediate responses. Eighteen of the twenty-one MPOs using social media have a dedicated staff person to maintain this online presence, while the remainder do not. This person could be a director, administrative assistant, public information officer, dedicated outreach coordinator, or a consultant, according to text responses.

Most FDOT Districts employ Facebook and Twitter to provide information to the public. Some Districts are also on YouTube and found the platform effective for complex projects. Facebook and Twitter are most commonly used to post fliers and press releases related to public meetings, along with project decisions and safety campaigns, while Facebook Live sometimes serves as a platform for broadcasting online meetings.

Unlike MPOs, social media use among Districts is unidirectional. Where comments are posted, they do not receive a direct response. Many Districts expressed understanding of the challenges to responding to public social media comments, notably the need to remain professional and official, provide responses to all commenters equally, and maintain consistency in all information presented. All social media content is routed through PIO staff and Central Office, a system of checks and balances that, while restrictive, is understood as necessary by most Districts.

Central Office control over social media presence seems to vary by District, as well; while one reports that Central Office has recommended branching out from Facebook and Twitter to post additional content on Instagram, another District has said that they were prohibited from using Facebook. One District has experienced significant difficulty with social media-driven misinformation campaigns, which has led to emotionally charged public meetings and even safety concerns. Others described the value of social media as a driver of interest and a way to reach younger populations.

- Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews: “Project-specific [social media] accounts would be helpful in letting the public tune out noise from irrelevant projects to them.”
- “It would be helpful to be less constrained in communication, especially to combat bad information. This could be done so that content goes through the PIO but is more flexible and targeted, which is important because people focus on their own town/city.”

- "The District does not take comments on its pages, but people have tagged District social media on their own page. For example, a picture was posted on Twitter of a railing that blocked a pedestrian crosswalk button; the District did not respond via Twitter, but the maintenance office did go and make this button accessible. The District also tried to respond to the poster individually, just not publicly on social media."

Methods for documenting public input and activities have become more uniform since the last assessment of public involvement in the state of Florida.

The 2006 report found that FDOT Districts generally left documentation procedures up to project managers' discretion, and physical folders or journals of public comment and commitments were more common than online storage. Other key challenges for public involvement documentation in the past have included widely variable data collection techniques and a loss of momentum (and information) between project phases. One District commented that a way to avoid these pitfalls is the Community Awareness Plan (CAP), which can provide a roadmap for the project's public involvement strategy once it has reached the Design phase. One drawback is the lack of enforcement potential for CAPs; one District notes that there are no consequences for leaving the plan uncompleted, and another mentions that gaps still occur with a CAP in place. Many other Districts find them to be a good way to ensure consistency and record public involvement data. Overall, some form of documentation – whether the Public Involvement Plan (PIP) or the CAP – was noted to be crucial for connecting public involvement activities across phases, which can sometimes take place many years apart.

Another strategy for ensuring consistent reporting is the Statewide Acceleration Team (SWAT). The SWAT is a way to compress the PD&E and Design phases and can reduce information loss that was sometimes experienced between phases. Formal handoffs between phases are practiced by nearly every District when there is a separate PD&E and Design phase, and these are another way to maintain uniformly documented public involvement activities. Handoff meetings generally include discussions about commitments made, stakeholders involved, and controversies that exist, in addition to a passing along of all documents for the project. One District noted that an external hard drive is the best way to pass on the volume of information involved in each project. Level of detail seems to vary some by District, but overall, respondents described a stringent process for coordination and consistency.

Despite a detailed handoff process, a few Districts discussed high rates of turnover in personnel and stakeholders, making it difficult to maintain consistency throughout the life of a project. It was noted that new data is collected for every project, even in locations where another project occurred in the past. While this may result in redundancies, the turnover in stakeholders and

the changing nature of project locations make some redundancy necessary to gain a better understanding of the current conditions of the project location.

For MPOs, no uniform documentation strategy was mentioned, and no specific software like the SWEPT system is employed. Because these agencies are not organized into separate functional units for different project phases, information loss and project handoffs are not as large of a concern. MPOs do, however, make efforts to communicate with the public and with implementing agencies like FDOT when they receive input. According to short-answer survey responses, some use email or phone calls to communicate their findings, while others use face-to-face meetings, and at least one MPO has a system to share "analytics and other feedback." Types of information shared include public comment, meeting minutes, and survey results.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "Turnover in residents/commercial occupants is high; a current database is needed. There is a new database built for every project, regardless of proximity to other projects."
- "Detailed public involvement info is kept throughout all phases and transferred to the next phase. Going from design to construction, there are standalone public involvement hand-off meetings, covering issues to expect, what was resolved, who stakeholders are, etc. Appendices in all final reports document who has been involved."
- "The District uses a court reporter to get verbatim transcripts of public hearings and creates a transcript as part of NEPA requirements that includes a copy of notices, comments and responses, where notices went, who attended, etc. These are all uploaded to EDMS (the FDOT document storage system), and an online system called SWEPT allows the State to approve NEPA documents."

Key challenges faced when involving the public include reaching all groups affected by a given project, reduced capacity to conduct public involvement activities as resources become more constrained, differing goals among planning agencies, and trying to gain the interest of members of the public.

Challenges can be specific to regional context, project design, agency type, and many other factors. There were several themes common to the challenges reported by all agencies, however; these include a desire to extend their reach, constraints on their resources, and coordination. In the MPO survey, each respondent was asked to gauge their level of public involvement effort and explain their selection. Many MPOs noted that social media either helped or had the potential to help them reach an appropriate level. Having additional staff was

mentioned as a contributing factor or potential factor for having what they considered an appropriate level of public involvement effort, and budget limitations were noted as a hindrance to public involvement efforts.

One MPO mentioned that a low budget allocation did not preclude substantial public participation; their community was described as small but with "high awareness" and interest in the planning process. Nearly every other MPO noted resource constraints as a reason for not doing more public involvement. One pithy response summarized involvement as follows: "Our advocates would say not enough, and our elected officials would say too much."

MPOs were also given a list of eight potential challenges to public involvement and asked to select as many as apply to their efforts. The top three challenges selected were poor attendance by the public, lack of resources, and the public becoming involved too late in the planning process. Short-answer responses mentioned apathy and a general lack of interest, particularly from young people or when projects have a long-time horizon.

When FDOT Districts were asked about their greatest challenges to effective public involvement, many expressed that some groups were overrepresented, despite the multiple strategies they have employed to get input from new voices. Some people interviewed considered a lack of attendance as its own statement; not coming to public meetings is seen as a vote of confidence in a project. Other factors proposed to explain low turnout included busy schedules and a mobile population, who may move on before a project is completed and therefore have no interest in public involvement on a project, they cannot see themselves ever experiencing. One District acknowledged that sensationalizing a project can be necessary to draw attention, but that a balanced and meaningful discussion should follow. Even where people are interested in the project, it can be hard to reach an area that is largely residential and lacks cohesive social or business groups.

Some Districts have also faced staff and budget cutbacks, and there was frustration surrounding the inability to do effective public involvement with reduced resources. There was also a sentiment among several respondents that public involvement was not considered a particularly high priority by FDOT staff (including senior management) not directly responsible for conducting public involvement activities.

While several Districts discussed the value of coordinating with MPOs and local governments, pitfalls of interagency work were also mentioned. The main issue described was top-down decision-making by the MPO, or an ends-justify-the-means approach, which is antithetical to

public involvement processes. Where goals diverge, MPOs and local governments can effectively block a project, particularly during the PD&E and Design phases.

Despite challenges, almost every FDOT District reported that they believed that their public involvement efforts went beyond those required by law, and that these efforts have been worthwhile. Extra public involvement is particularly beneficial for complex projects, which can involve emotional responses and often require sophisticated explanations. Another common theme was that each project needs varying levels of public involvement and a different mixture of techniques to engage people in relevant ways.
Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "A key challenge has been making sure the right groups are reached. Some places are easy and more homogeneous; gated communities have neighborhood associations, etc. so that makes it simpler. Some areas are not, so public involvement activities have to go far beyond the required distance from the project and be creative about how to reach people."
- "People don't think about getting engaged until the project starts affecting them personally. The public asks questions during construction, but it is hard to get their attention during planning."
- "The District's public involvement staff is down …, which means fewer resources and makes it harder to think outside the box (less time, space for ideas, etc.). Public involvement staff are not replaced when they leave."
- "Participation is a challenge, as are political views that oppose public needs. Changes in elected officials are another challenge; their positions are term-limited, and interests shift, priorities change, and aspects of a project may change in a community."

The level of public involvement training received by staff varied by District and by MPO but was generally regarded as both helpful and incomplete at times.

Engaging with social media, reaching underserved populations, dealing with tense situations, scenario planning, and employing best practices were among the training topics of interest to FDOT staff. MPOs reported interest in many of the same training topics, along with clarification of legal requirements, data collection techniques, and tools for agencies with small staffs. Training in public involvement was completed by about three-quarters of MPOs, and many have completed more than one type of training. Likewise, every FDOT District completed some form of training, and in some cases have received training from both internal and external sources. In-person training for both types of agencies has been conducted by organizations like

the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and the National Highway Institute (NHI).

A couple of training highlights for FDOT include a role-play exercise with NASA and learning to communicate in plain language. Generally, PMs and other staff who have attended one training, especially an FDOT-provided training, do not continue to attend training when it is offered. Some Districts did express a desire for more opportunities to participate in additional training focused on different areas of competency in public involvement; topics of interest included technology, equity, and civility.

Highlights of the training for MPOs included new techniques, equity and environmental justice information, and comparisons or case studies from peer organizations. Many MPOs also reported that training was helpful in learning the legal requirements of public involvement. One MPO stated that learning these laws saved them resources that were being spent on ineffective advertising. A few MPOs, however, came away from training less sure of legal requirements, and reported wishing there had been more clarity about hearings, meetings, and ways to interpret Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act.

Other topics MPOs indicated would be useful to include in training ranged from using social media and branding to engaging youth to learning data collection techniques. This quote from one MPO represents the data collection concerns faced by a few organizations: "[We want to learn] how to get a statistically valid survey. More [information] on making it more standard across our MPO so we can get better buy-in…" Social media was mentioned frequently in the survey responses. Reaching young populations was also an area of interest, typified by this response: "Efforts to attract the young, working, non-retired segment of the population…Way too much emphasis [is] placed on the retiree segment of the population, the NIMBY's and the anti-growth, anti-everything over-70 crowd." Smaller MPOs responded that more case studies and tools for organizations with limited staff would be a helpful training topic.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "The most effective was media training. This included not just how to talk to media personnel, but also how to talk about projects in a way that most people can understand, as well as how to improve messaging and get rid of jargon."
- "Helpful training strategies would include working through scenarios, being given an example project and tasked with designing a plan for public involvement. These techniques can sharpen the mind for how to do involvement."

- “Demographics was recently added to training, which was useful (knowledge about census blocks, etc.), but the District would like the training to expand on reaching certain communities.”

Chapter 3
Noteworthy Practices

Participants in the FDOT interviews and MPO survey were asked to indicate which techniques, in their experience, had been the most effective or that they would characterize as a best or noteworthy practice. A related question was "What lessons have you learned in your public involvement efforts that you would pass on to others?" The results reported in this section refer to noteworthy practices and principles that the agencies feel have been successful for them.

Summary of Noteworthy Practices

- Early and constant communication creates an environment of mutual respect and facilitates successful projects; this extends to communication between District functional units and among agencies. Including online engagement in this strategy opens lines of communication with previously unreached populations.
- Meeting people where they are can provide quality opportunities for engagement; this applies to both the public and local officials.
- Bridging societal divides and reaching all members of the public are key challenges for both FDOT Districts and MPOs, which can be addressed by using a range of public involvement techniques.
- Integrating community needs into project scopes leads to more effective public involvement strategies. Every community has specific concerns about equity that must be addressed, which can be identified through multiple means.
- Large projects present an opportunity for community programming, including social capacity-building, workforce development, and environmental justice actions.

Early and constant communication creates an environment of mutual respect and facilitates successful projects; this extends to communication between District functional units and among agencies. Including online engagement in this strategy opens lines of communication with previously unreached populations.

MPOs and FDOT Districts both report difficulty getting people interested in transportation projects, particularly when long time horizons are involved. The literature review for this report also demonstrated that a binary choice is likely to produce high emotions than a more open field, in which priorities are being set and alternatives are explored (Christiansen, 2015). To avoid uninterested or inflamed public reactions, agencies promote early interactions long

before a project is ready for construction. An understanding of community needs and concerns can be gained through consultant research or internal staff efforts, and may include interactions through media, surveying, and revisiting old lists of key stakeholders and updating them to name a few.

FDOT Districts almost universally recognize the need to engage the public early in a project's development. This strategy helps Districts build consensus around a transportation solution, often avoiding conflict and expensive project changes in later phases. Early public buy-in, especially during project scoping, can endure throughout the life of the project. For example, one District distributes scoping surveys, asking the public how they use the transportation system in a project area and what issues are relevant to them, so those issues can be addressed as an integral part of the project development process. This District reports fewer combative interactions as a result of this effort. Another District made several references to an issue with property lawyers; these interviewees wished to reach their public before legal mailings were sent out, as this first contact can set the tone for a project as either adversarial or cooperative. MPOs were less vocal about this need for early engagement, though they were not asked a direct question about it on the survey. About half of MPOs did list "getting the public involved too late" as a common challenge, however – this answer was tied for the second most popular "key challenge."

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "The most effective approach is to be transparent about what the District wants to achieve, and to get buy-in as early as possible – even if it takes a long time to begin the project."
- "Constant communication throughout the entire process is key. This includes more than just a defined/targeted time to take comments (although there is a specific time where comments are more heavily documented)."

Meeting people where they are can provide quality opportunities for engagement; this applies to both the public and local officials.

Both MPOs and Districts described techniques for meeting people at places where they would normally gather, including community centers, neighborhood events, and other types of public meetings. The technique of "piggybacking" on other agencies' meetings is also becoming increasingly common.

Many Districts report success with engagement outside of traditional meeting locations and times. Though one expressed that a farmer's market location was not as well attended as hoped, most described the public's willingness to interact in novel situations such as at a local market, a drive-up tent, a church popup, a neighborhood association meeting, or a door-to-door campaign.

When meeting in nontraditional locations, quick yet meaningful techniques are useful. Some of these include polling, role-playing budget games, and map-based activities. Bringing SmartBoards to instantly capture public feedback is another innovative technique used by a consultant for the Turnpike Enterprise, which is easily implemented "in the field" because the boards are mobile and the public is familiar with this type of interface.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "Tampa Bay Next uses weekend markets to meet people where they are. The consultants ask people how they want to be engaged, try to reach new segments of the population, and work to be more visible and welcoming."
- "The District has a Planning Studio to work with local governments and counties to help realize a vision (Complete Streets, urban design, etc.) and provide guidance and expertise. This is a new program created to address a need; local governments were asking for help, especially with Complete Streets."

Bridging societal divides and reaching all members of the public are key challenges for both FDOT Districts and MPOs, which can be addressed by using a range of public involvement techniques.

Many of the survey and interview answers demonstrated agencies' sensitivity to the communication needs of different sectors of their populations. For example, one FDOT District explained that their service area covered both rural and urban geographies, and while the Internet may be a great way to reach urban populations, rural Internet access is not as ubiquitous. Likewise, some radio stations or newspapers might never be seen by residents of denser areas, while rural residents in the District are more likely to use these media. An MPO respondent described another kind of population divide, writing that temporary residents and permanent ones tend to have different priorities, and that these can be tough to balance through public involvement.

One MPO reported that, in contrast to many other organizations' experiences, their community was not interested in social media or online formats for involvement, so they saw better results

from newspaper advertisements and community fairs. Others recognized that transportation or time challenges made online engagement much easier for their public. Regardless of which strategy is best suited to the agency's environment, the variety of outreach and accommodation techniques used by Districts and MPOs support the claim from the literature review that a mix is needed to reach all segments of the population. Outreach techniques for underserved populations were widely reported across all agencies, and many have expressed a deeper understanding of their communities through the use of these techniques, such as language and location accommodations. MPOs and Districts would both prefer to do more outreach for users of the road, businesses, and underserved populations, given additional resources.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "People feel like the District cares. They ask questions, feel informed, and are appreciative when the PIC goes door-to-door. This technique is more effective than meeting approaches; it gives people a sense that there is a real person to talk to, and it can build bonds with the public."
- "The District is very diverse (not only ethnically, but in terms of development patterns – e.g. wealthy coastal counties, disadvantaged rural counties, educational attainment levels, prominent industries and interests in the area), and resources are not the same across counties/localities. For example, if social media platforms are the only tools used to engage the public, a lot of people might be overlooked. Conversely, only engaging the public in person may not be effective in coastal areas."

Integrating community needs into project scopes leads to more effective public involvement strategies. Every community has specific concerns about equity that must be addressed, which can be identified through multiple means.

Public Involvement Plans for PD&E and Community Awareness Plans for Design and Construction have embedded data about demographics and specific community needs in the project scope received and executed by consultants and project managers. Inclusion of information such as environmental justice issues, languages spoken, transportation disadvantaged populations, and community culture creates an expectation that these will be treated as important factors during the public involvement process. Implementing a plan like PIPs and CAPs legitimize the use of special and innovative engagement techniques.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "Field research and finding out project needs are part of the formalized process done by consultants as technical experts and participants."
- "A change in roles happened through the community awareness program. Consultants/designers are now given a scope that includes community awareness activities; this was a culture shift."
- "The District should go beyond project-specific efforts and use new techniques (e.g. roundabouts, CFIs, DDIs), incorporate ideas from other districts and departments, engage different types of stakeholders, and be more innovative with outreach. It may be possible to rewrite contracts to include more innovation rather than waiting for a task work order for a public hearing or other traditional techniques."

Large projects present an opportunity for community programming, including social capacity-building, workforce development, and environmental justice actions.

Smaller projects tend to focus on land use issues and access management as community needs, in addition to considerations for underrepresented groups such as speakers of other languages. Larger projects, however, impact communities on a greater scale and may have more potential to create economic and social changes in the project area. District 7 provides a strong example of how to do this; the District has been coordinating with local environmental justice nonprofits and creating a workforce development program to complete major bridge projects. This shows a more holistic understanding of "community" and the role that FDOT can play as a public agency in planning for community needs.

Representative quote(s) from FDOT interviews:

- "For the Gateway expressway and Howard Frankland Bridge, the District has been identifying workforce development opportunities and reaching out to nonprofits that serve environmental justice communities."
- "As an example, the SW 10th street project was very complex and had a lot of interest in favor and against the project. The District worked with the MPO, County, and City to develop a citizen's advisory committee as a standing committee; this group is very vocal and has a written charter that is honored by the FDOT."

Chapter 4
Conclusions

Districts and MPOs were also asked to provide suggestions, for both District and MPO-level and statewide improvements. Many of these suggestions focused on a few key themes, especially resources (monetary and informational), social media, and process improvements like performance measurement and training. Responses to these questions, taken together with content analysis of all responses, observations of the research team, and comparisons with the public involvement literature, have produced five broad suggestions for the future of public involvement in Florida. These suggestions are outlined and elaborated upon in this chapter. The previous study divided suggestions by topic area, including Involvement and Outreach, Continuity and Commitments, Training and Information Exchange, and Performance Measurements and Evaluation (see Appendix B for the full list of previous suggestions; Kramer, et al., 2006). Of these topic areas, most suggestions remain relevant, apart from Continuity and Commitments. Where applicable, these suggestions are updated and better organized to serve the current state of the practice. Of the key findings from the literature review, only the point about responsibility (including difficulties in determining responsibility and innovations in sharing responsibility) is not well-reflected in the findings from this study's interviews and surveys.

In comparison to the first technical memorandum produced by the current study, a national literature review of best or noteworthy practices, FDOT Districts are generally participating in at least two, and often three, of the four identified trends in successful public involvement (summarized in Table 4 - 1). The literature review noted that transportation planning agencies nationwide were engaging in innovative practices centered on these themes: diffusing responsibility to use resources more effectively, reaching underserved populations, measuring and evaluating their own performance, and using both high- and low-technology solutions to move beyond traditional techniques. Neither agency type reported using techniques that leveraged stakeholders to diffuse responsibility, though coordination among functional units and agencies was common, as was the use of consultant expertise in FDOT Districts.

Table 4 - 1. Summary of Public Involvement Trends in Comparison to FDOT District Practices.

Public Involvement Trend	Generally Practiced by FDOT Districts
Shared responsibility (with other agencies, public)	No, except with consultants
Reaching underserved populations	Yes
Measuring performance	Yes, mostly output-based measures
Using innovative techniques	Sometimes, varies by District

Similarly, MPOs tend to participate in three out of four trends or noteworthy practices identified in the literature (summarized in Table 4 - 2). In Florida, MPOs are focusing on populations not typically represented at public involvement activities, as well as using alternative techniques (such as going to community fairs, doing online surveys and text polling, and posting on social media). Most MPOs also have performance measures in place, but – as with many other agencies around the country – these measures remain at the level of "outputs" rather than "outcomes." Several organizations reported on this survey that they do have outcome-based measures, but many also said that they are unaware of changes that may have been made because of these measurements. This may imply that the measures are either ineffective or improperly applied.

Table 4 - 2. Summary of Public Involvement Trends in Comparison to Florida MPO Practices

Public Involvement Trend	Generally Practiced by Florida MPOs
Shared responsibility (with other agencies, public)	No
Reaching underserved populations	Yes
Measuring performance	Yes, with varying sophistication
Using innovative techniques	Yes, most MPOs

Other techniques noted in the literature review include use of technology like GIS and interactive games, some of which are being used by Florida MPOs, and building networks of shared responsibility, which was not generally mentioned by survey respondents in this study. Organizations with small staffs and small populations tended to know how much was being devoted to their public involvement efforts, whereas larger ones were less likely to know, which suggests these smaller MPOs are sharing responsibility internally if not with the community. There is also an overall effort to use context-sensitive techniques, along with multiple modes of information sharing; this shows improvement in the quality of MPO's public involvement since the previous report.

Summary of Suggestions

- Districts and MPOs should provide a mix of general and project-specific resources where possible, helping the public to be informed about how best to participate in the transportation decision-making process both broadly and at the project level.
- Social media guidelines should be reconsidered in light of how they might be made more flexible and effective for use as a public involvement tool. Both agency types should continue to expand their use of available technology to reach the public in ways that complement or supplant traditional methods, provided that agencies are prepared and knowledgeable of local needs and are provided resources and training in effective technology use.

- Comprehensive evaluation techniques for public involvement, particularly outcome-based performance measures, should be more widely implemented. Measuring the effectiveness of public involvement techniques and practices can drive budgeting and management support for public involvement activities that work.
- More frequent and more comprehensive training should be considered, including higher level training focusing on specific aspects of public involvement practice. An inquiry into reasons for the perception of inadequate training, especially among FDOT Districts, may help refine existing training offerings and provide direction for developing additional training that effectively addresses existing and future needs.
- Networks of shared responsibility and opportunities for partnership should be leveraged to extend agencies' reach, strengthen relationships with shareholders, and increase the value of public involvement spending through more effective feedback.

Districts and MPOs should provide a mix of general and project-specific resources where possible, helping the public to be informed about how best to participate in the transportation decision-making process both broadly and at the project level.

Many Districts and MPOs report frustration with the public submitting irrelevant or impractical comments, and in turn, it is likely that the public feels frustration at a less-than-transparent process. Part of the strain in the relationship between these agencies and the public, described by most Districts and MPOs to some degree, comes from misunderstanding of one another's roles. General educational resources, like FDOT's Citizen Transportation Academy or a video series explaining transportation planning, can help to answer questions before a project comes up, potentially avoiding negativity, confusion, and ineffective public involvement activities. A few MPOs also have (or are developing) factsheets describing the planning process; though they seem to be primarily distributed at community events, these resources could potentially be provided in-person or online. Ensuring that expectations are clear for all parties can create a smoother process

Project-specific resources should also be developed and made available for the public, as they allow people to focus on the information that is relevant to them. Effectively marketing both general and project-specific information to the public, including underrepresented populations, can foster more interest in project activities, ensuring that more than the same core groups of participants participate in public engagement opportunities. Marketing may also help avoid one of the greatest challenges reported by MPOs, that of the public getting involved too late in the decision-making process. This marketing of available resources can be low cost and is partly tied to the next suggestion regarding social media and technology usage.

Social media guidelines should be reconsidered in light of how they might be made more flexible and effective for use as a public involvement tool. Both agency types should continue to expand their use of available technology to reach the public in ways that complement or supplant traditional methods, provided that agencies are prepared and knowledgeable of local needs and are provided resources and training in effective technology use.

Social media clearly holds potential for public involvement; nearly every participant in this study acknowledged its ability to reach people and capture their attention. Some MPOs are already taking advantage of the opportunities social media provides, including bi-directional communication with the public, and have interest in expanding into areas like paid advertising or promoted posts. While most use Facebook and YouTube, and some were on Instagram and LinkedIn, one MPO stated unequivocally that Twitter was best suited to their needs. About half of MPOs have social media guidelines already, with a focus on avoiding negativity. Others reported efforts to update or introduce guidelines, and many voiced a desire for better training with social media. MPOs that do not currently have any social media guidelines would do well to consider drafting some, perhaps after seeking peer input if needed, so that they are prepared for a technology that is becoming increasingly necessary to reach a wide and varied population.

FDOT Districts have a more delicate approach to social media so far; guidelines are reportedly limiting, though for the valid reason of maintaining standards for official government communication. However, it may be possible to relax guidelines for approval and responses while continuing to behave appropriately.

Using social media to replace traditional techniques may be even more controversial and difficult to navigate than a Twitter feed. However, it may be possible to use platforms like YouTube or Facebook Live to supplement in-person meetings. This could be particularly useful for agencies like the FDOT District that mentioned a clear technology divide among the population they serve. Members of the public who prefer traditional meetings will have the opportunity to attend, and those who do not may be able to participate in the same meeting through virtual means, or may be able to attend a separate, online-only meeting. Agencies beginning to experiment with this could provide further insight into which of these strategies works well and in what contexts they are most effective.

Other technology-based opportunities for public involvement include 3D visualizations, interactive maps, project-specific and general videos, and enhancements for in-person meetings (such as a polling game or SmartBoard activity). Websites appear to have improved greatly since the previous report, in which many FDOT participants reported a lack of user-

friendly sites and content (Kramer et al., 2006). The online landscape is changing rapidly, and social media is already used to drive traffic to agency websites, but the public needs to remain engaged through captivating materials once on the site. These materials can also be used during community events, meetings, and other types of live public involvement activities. However, agencies must provide staff with training and resources (budget and personnel) to take full advantage of the ever-expanding technology available to them.

Interested agencies may take advantage of the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Virtual Public Involvement Initiative; this initiative provides fact sheets and resources about several types of online public involvement activities, including virtual town halls. Technical assistance is also offered by this initiative, including peer exchange, case studies, conference presentations, and more. Grant applications for the current round of funding were due in June 2019, though agencies may be interested in applying if offered in 2020 and after (for more information, visit the FHWA Virtual Public Involvement website at https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/public_involvement/vpi/).

Comprehensive evaluation techniques for public involvement, particularly outcome-based performance measures, should be more widely implemented. Measuring the effectiveness of public involvement techniques and practices can drive budgeting and management support for public involvement activities that work.

Overall, MPO choices for most and least effective public involvement techniques demonstrate contextual knowledge of the populations they serve. For example, some report success with open houses for their casual atmosphere, whereas others know their public prefers more detailed information and more formal interaction. FDOT Districts also know their populations very well, particularly their needs for language and accessibility. However, both agencies report that more resources are needed to meet public involvement needs and to increase senior management support. Quantifying the value of this knowledge through performance measurement can make the strongest case for supporting public involvement activities.

Some MPOs and Districts around the state reported distributing surveys as a performance measure to gauge public perception of their activities. Most, however, relied on output-based figures (e.g. attendance numbers or website hits). MPOs tended to use a summary of public comments rather than a meta-analysis of how the public viewed the process itself. FDOT Districts used more feedback surveys, although some said that the public's misunderstanding of the process led to inaccurate survey responses. This may be its own indicator; if the public does not understand how to answer the survey, perhaps in some cases there is information that has

not been clearly relayed by the agencies. A need to understand this issue was also discussed in the previous suggestion.

The performance measurement framework developed by the Center for Urban Transportation Research in 2008 was almost universally unknown to FDOT Districts during interviews for this research project; recirculating (and perhaps modifying) this framework may be a starting point for introducing more uniform measurement strategies. Adherence to measurement standards can help Districts and MPOs make a case for public involvement spending to senior management, a challenge heard especially among FDOT interviewees. While public involvement may not be as easily quantified as other spending, such as a decrease in fatalities per safety barrier installed, there are meaningful ways to describe the value of public involvement activities.

For MPOs and Districts interested in implementing a feedback survey as an outcome-based measure, the National Cooperative Highway Research Program has a recently published survey that includes a scoring guide, which could serve as a standardized tool (Brown et al., 2019). If a standardized tool is not desired, agencies can begin by deciding what indicators are important to them. Public involvement spending is mandatory, so it should be used as effectively as possible. Defining its impacts is a critical step in determining what is effective and what adjustments should be made.

More frequent and more comprehensive training should be considered, including higher level training focusing on specific aspects of public involvement practice. An inquiry into reasons for the perception of inadequate training, especially among FDOT Districts, may help refine existing training offerings and provide direction for developing additional training that effectively addresses existing and future needs.

Every agency reported that they had received training, but respondents frequently mentioned that they had not attended a training session since they began working at their agency, or that only one person on a team might be trained in public involvement topics. FDOT Districts, in particular, expressed that training was not received often enough, though some MPOs reported feeling undertrained for some aspects of public involvement.

It is unclear why training is perceived as lacking; it could be a result of limited resources and marketing, or possible lack of interest or prioritization on the part of potential trainees. FDOT should consider conducting an internal analysis about training needs and perceptions, whereas MPOs may be better served by a process for suggesting needed topics and seeking qualified providers for popular suggestions, perhaps through the FDOT or the Florida MPO Advisory

Council (MPOAC). FDOT and MPOs can both consider whether internal or external training would be most helpful, and how to engage staff on relevant issues. Data collection, social media, and getting the most out of limited resources would all be helpful topics for training, and both agency types requested some version of these topics.

Networks of shared responsibility and opportunities for partnership should be leveraged to extend agencies' reach, strengthen relationships with shareholders, and increase the value of public involvement spending through more effective feedback.

While stakeholders are often invited to participate in public involvement activities, they are rarely or never provided an opportunity to help gather data for the transportation decision-making process in Florida. State transportation planning agencies and MPOs around the country have had success using shared responsibility models, breaking away from the core group of participants with which many District and MPO staff are familiar (and at times frustrated). Some examples of shared responsibility use existing networks, like housing groups, community-based organizations, advocacy groups, universities, and nonprofits, to reach new and often underserved segments of the population (Kramer et al., 2006). Other examples of this strategy come from agencies who have built their own stakeholder groups; these include more permanent groups, like advisory boards, as well as short-term groupings, such as student research symposia. In these cases, outcomes of public involvement are generally not directed by the transportation agency, but resources and technical support are provided to help these stakeholder groups reach their intended audiences.

Consultants do the bulk of outreach and stakeholder identification for most Districts, but where budgets are small and personnel are limited – particularly with small MPOs – using the momentum of other interested groups to bring in new community members and share some of the work of data gathering in transportation decision-making can broaden an agency's reach. Showing people that participating in these activities can be relevant to other interests in their life, for example, their housing coalition or bicycle advocacy group, may allow them to feel a greater connection to the process and improve the quality of feedback they provide. Even if an agency feels that its public involvement resources are adequate to handle its own outreach or consultant contracts, these shared networks can improve performance measurement data and foster community building around transportation issues.

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Appendix A
Assessment of Florida Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Public Involvement Practice

This appendix details the methodology and results of a survey of Florida's twenty-seven Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). This information is also summarized in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 of this report.

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Introduction

The purpose of this research task is to document how Florida MPOs address public involvement requirements and implement various techniques to engage the populations they serve. The structure of their organizations and resource allocation towards public involvement has shaped how they meet these responsibilities, and their use of technology has changed the landscape of public involvement since the previous report.

The study covers aspects of MPOs including staffing, training, performance measures, internal and external communication, and the use of social media and other technologies. Environmental justice, equity, and issues related to transportation disadvantaged populations are addressed as well. Included in the report are innovative practices for public involvement employed by MPOs in Florida, as well as key challenges to carrying out effective public involvement.

Methodology

Florida's twenty-seven Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) completed a survey (conducted during a two-month period in the fall of 2018) about their public involvement activities. The survey covered a variety of topics related to public involvement including budget, performance measures, communication methods, and training. The survey also asked for each MPOs' perceptions of their effectiveness and the challenges of public involvement. This survey was administered through personalized email links and contained up to forty-two questions, depending upon relevance. For example, an MPO reporting no social media presence did not see a block of eleven questions on the topic of social media use and policy. "Yes" or "No" questions were used throughout the survey to determine whether topics would be relevant to each respondent.

Population figures used to compare responses from the survey are based on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) 2017 estimates of the total population served by each MPO (referred to as the metropolitan planning area population or MPA population), not to be confused with urbanized area populations upon which MPO designations are based. The MPA population was used as this is the total population the MPO for which an MPO is responsible for reaching out to as part of their public involvement efforts. Three MPOs in northern Florida share one staff (the Bay County TPO, the Florida-Alabama TPO, and the Okaloosa-Walton TPO).

As such, these MPOs have been combined where noted (for example, when reporting the number of public involvement staff per MPO) and are referred to as West Florida Regional Planning Council MPOs (WFRPC MPOs) for the purposes of this report. Table A - 1 displays MPOs divided into three categories by population size, which will be referenced in reporting the

results of the survey. These categories are not evenly distributed, but are divided along natural breaks in population size for ease of comparison along factors like available resources and level of effort.

Table A - 1. MPOs Categorized by Population Size

MPO Size Category	MPO Name	2017 Population
Small MPOS (under 500,000)	Indian River County MPO	149,000
	Martin MPO	153,000
	Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO	172,700
	Gainesville MTPO	209,700
	Heartland Regional TPO	258,500
	St. Lucie TPO	297,600
	Hernando/Citrus MPO	325,700
	Ocala/Marion County TPO	349,300
	Collier MPO	357,500
	Capital Region TPA	368,100
	Lake-Sumter MPO	452,400
Medium MPOs (500,000 to 1,000,000)	Pasco County MPO	505,700
	Space Coast TPO	575,200
	River to Sea TPO	619,700
	Polk TPO	661,600
	Lee County MPO	698,500
	Sarasota/Manatee MPO	776,000
	WFRPC MPOs - Bay County TPO (178,800) - Florida-Alabama TPO (469,300) - Okaloosa-Walton TPO (237,200)	885,300
	Forward Pinellas	962,000
Large MPOs (over 1,000,000)	Hillsborough MPO	1,379,300
	Palm Beach TPA	1,414,100
	North Florida TPO	1,455,500
	Broward MPO	1,874,000
	MetroPlan Orlando	2,106,300
	Miami-Dade TPO	2,743,100

Results

Resources

When asked about allocating resources for public involvement, most MPOs reported few staff specialists and low budget availability. There are eleven MPOs in Florida that serve fewer than

500,000 people, though only nine distinct sets of staff; all three WFRPC MPOs are in the small MPO size category. Of these nine, seven have dedicated public involvement staff, while the other two do not have dedicated staff, and reported that they spend either <10% or 10-24% of their budget on public involvement. The WFRPC MPOs have three public involvement staff members, while most of the rest of this category have one or none. Looking at the six MPOs serving populations greater than one million, only one lacks dedicated public involvement staff, and all but one MPO either spends <10% or was not sure about their budget. Four out of five MPOs with three public involvement specialists on staff were unsure of their budget as well, whereas only three out of twenty MPOs with one or zero dedicated staff members did not know how much was spent on public involvement.

Figure A-1 displays the number of public involvement specialists on staff at all MPOs, and Figure A-2 shows the percentage of the organizations' budgets that are dedicated to public involvement activities. No MPO had greater than four public involvement specialists. Of those who responded "No" when asked if they have dedicated public involvement staff, four MPOs indicated that their professional planning staff handled public involvement, two stated that the Executive Director was responsible for public involvement, and one of those two indicated that their "[a]dministrative assistant is responsible for meeting current requirements, which focus on legal ads and press releases…hard copy and email distributions." One MPO reported that all staff undertakes public involvement activities.

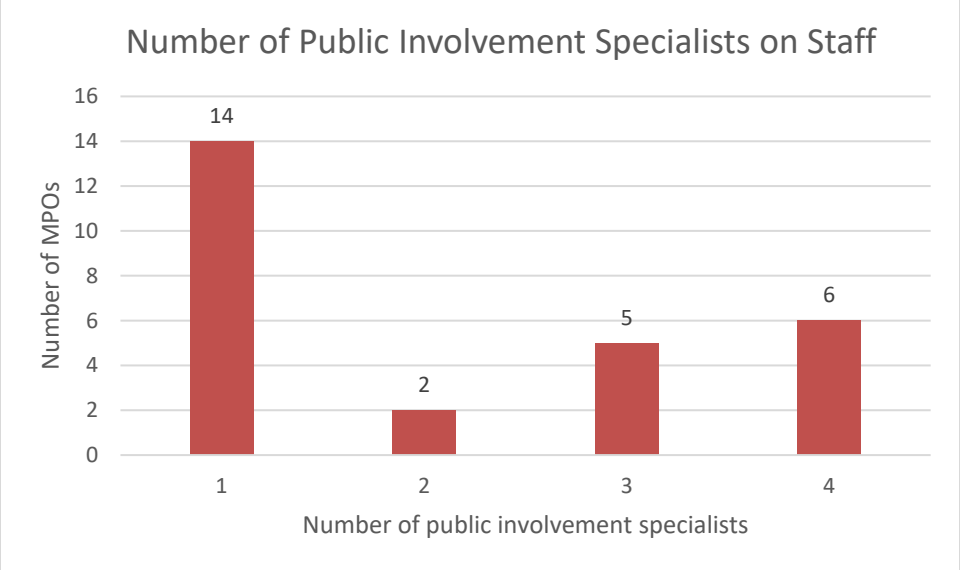

Figure A-1. Number of public involvement specialists on staff

One-third (n=9) of MPOs reported in the survey that they allocate ten percent or less of their total budgets to public involvement. Only four (14%) spend above twenty-five percent, and none spends at fifty percent or greater. Seven (26%) of MPOs indicated that they did not have a

specific sense of how much of their overall budget was committed to public involvement activities.

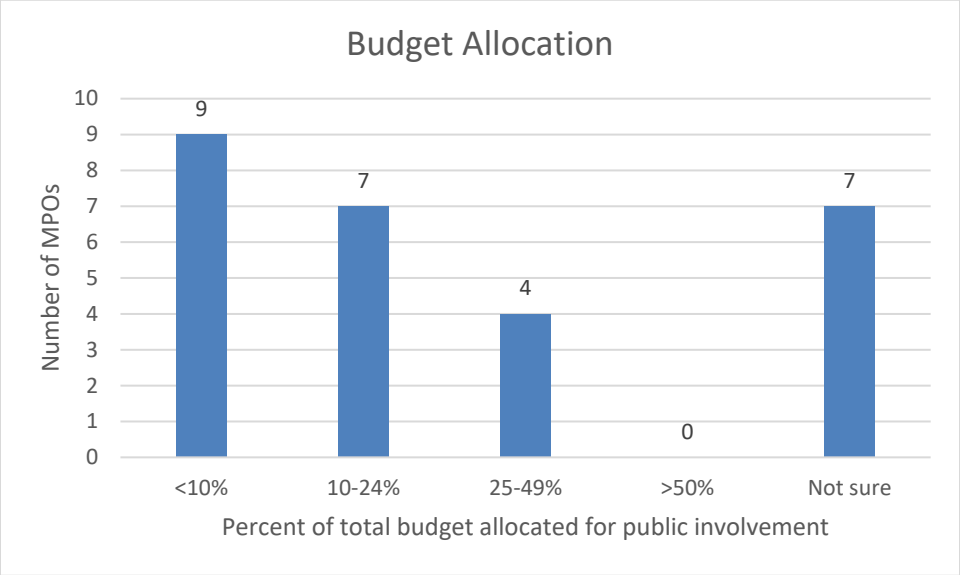

Figure A-2. Budget allocation for public involvement

Two-thirds (n=18) of MPOs reported spending the majority of their public involvement resources on long-range transportation planning (Figure A-3). Only one MPO chose transportation improvement programming as the activity using the most public involvement resources. Corridor plans and studies and "Other" accounted for the remaining 8 MPOs. Responses to these questions were well dispersed across population size categories. In short-answer responses explaining why "Other" was chosen, MPOs mentioned special projects like a Clean Fuels Coalition, as well as transportation disadvantaged plans and bicycle and pedestrian plans as their main public involvement activities.

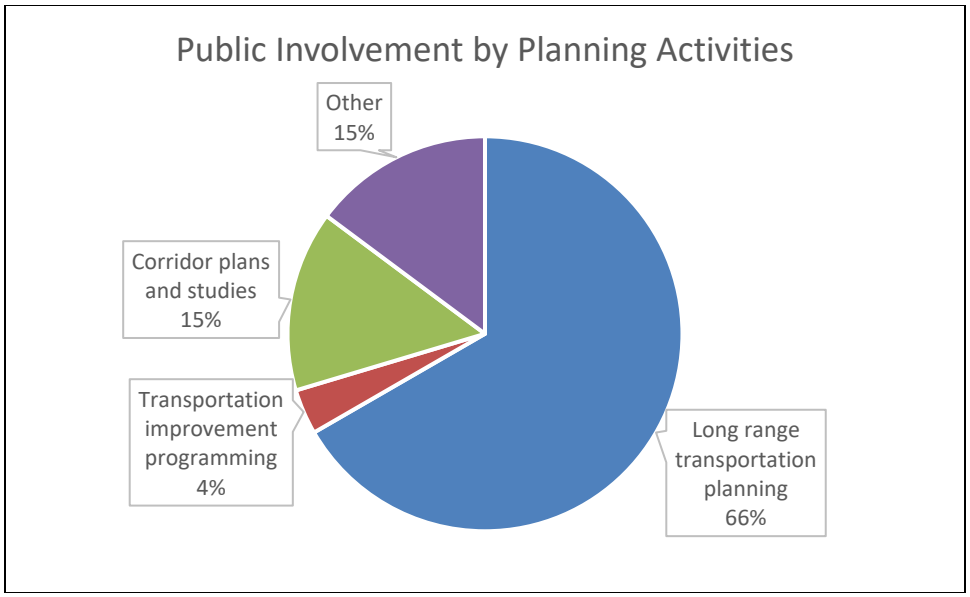

Figure A-3. Planning activities receiving the majority of MPOs' public involvement

When asked about their commitment to public involvement (Figure A-4), no MPO felt that they were doing too much. Effort in this area was reported as appropriate by 81% (n=22) of MPOs. In comparison to population size, one of the five MPOs that reported that their level of effort was "not enough" was in the small MPO category, two were medium, and two were large. Three out of these five had only one public involvement staff member, one had none, and the fifth had three – this was a large MPO.

Each respondent was asked to explain their selection gauging their level of public involvement effort. Many MPOs noted that social media either helped or had the potential to help them reach an appropriate level. Having additional staff was mentioned as a contributing factor or potential factor for having what they considered an appropriate level of public involvement effort, and budget limitations were noted as a hindrance to public involvement efforts. One MPO mentioned that a low budget allocation did not preclude substantial public participation; their community was described as small but with "high awareness" and, according to the respondent, draws greater public attention using only 10% of their total budget than MPOs covering populations above 1 million. Nearly every other MPO noted resource constraints as a reason for not doing more public involvement. One pithy response summarized involvement as follows: "Our advocates would say not enough, and our elected officials would say too much."

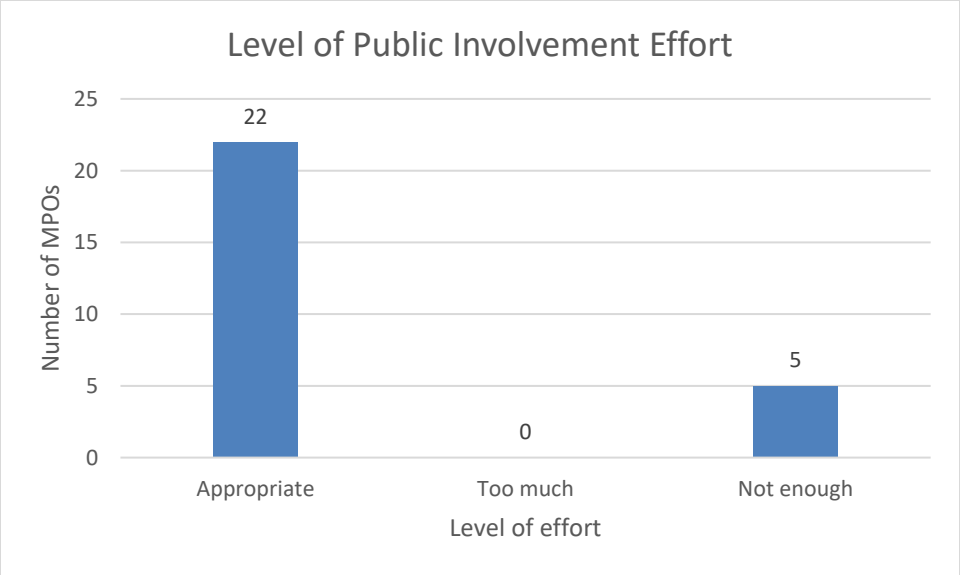

Figure A-4. Respondents' opinions of level of effort towards public involvement

Training

Training in public involvement was completed by 78% (n=21) of MPOs, and many have completed more than one type of training (Figure A-5). A majority, 52% (n=14), participated in at least one online training session, and 63% (n=17) received in-person training from organizations like the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and the National Highway Institute (NHI).

Highlights of the training sessions included new techniques, equity and environmental justice information, and comparisons or case studies from peer organizations. Many MPOs also reported that training was helpful in learning the legal requirements of public involvement. One MPO stated that learning these laws saved them resources that were being spent on ineffective advertising. A few MPOs, however, came away from training less sure of legal requirements, and reported wishing there had been more clarity about hearings, meetings, and ways to interpret Title VI of the Federal Civil Rights Act.

Other topics MPOs indicated would be useful to include in training ranged from using social media and branding to engaging youth to learning data collection techniques. This quote from one MPO represents the data collection concerns faced by a few organizations: “[We want to learn] how to get a statistically valid survey. More [information] on making it more standard across our MPOs so we can get better buy-in…” Social media was mentioned frequently in the survey responses. Reaching young populations was also an area of interest, typified by this response: “Efforts to attract the young, working, non-retired segment of the population…Way too much emphasis [is] placed on the retiree segment of the population, the NIMBY's and the anti-growth, anti-everything over-70 crowd.” Smaller MPOs responded that more case studies

and tools for organizations with limited staff would be a helpful training topic. Finally, distinguishing between requirements and outdated traditions was a concern: "[We need to know] the difference between absolute legal requirements and those we choose to place on ourselves as an agency through the adoption of our Public Participation Plan, especially with regard to timing requirements, alternate forms of public notice, and the provision of information in other languages."

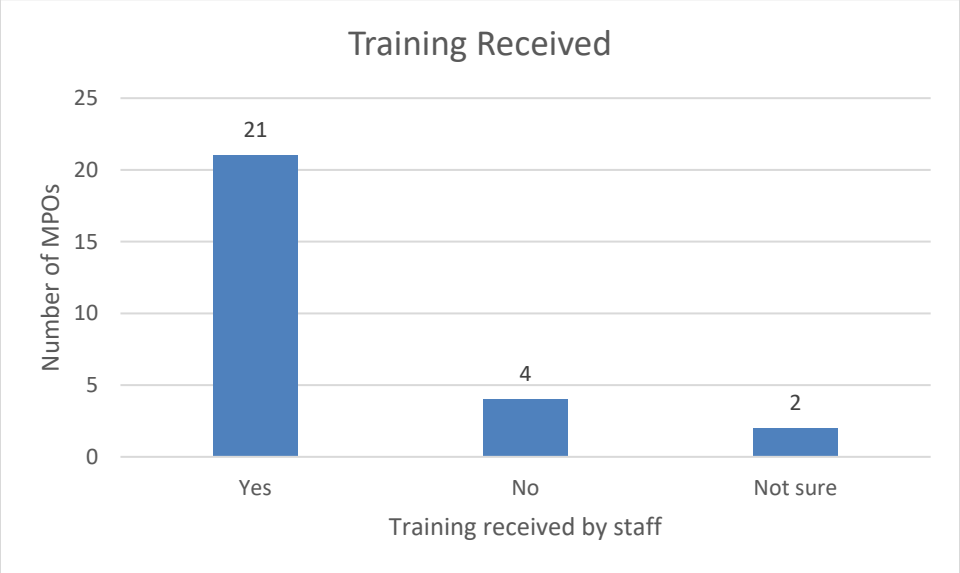

Figure A-5. Number of MPOs receiving public involvement training

Techniques

MPOs were presented with twenty-four possible techniques for public involvement and asked to select as many as their organization used. All but one MPO indicated that they have an advisory committee (96%) that provides regular input from representatives from the public, and the same percentage also presents and prints their materials in plain language for accessibility and ease of understanding (Figure A-6).The next most popular techniques were dedicated web pages (89%, n=24), facilitated meetings (85%, n=23), public meetings (85%, n=23), and social media (85%, n=23). Most MPOs who selected that they use some form of game (56%, n=15) for public involvement described using "play money" to role play project prioritization. Text polling was another type of "game" employed by MPOs.

Other techniques, which were reported as free response answers, included outreach (to students, seniors, and the general population), participation in other types of community meetings, safety activities, and televised interviews and meetings. One organization made a video describing the role of MPOs and showed it at local movie theaters as a preview; this video was also made available on YouTube. Another MPO partners with their Downtown

Development Authority to promote bicycling while collecting data and making connections to get people involved in the transportation planning process. When asked at the end of the survey to report any public involvement techniques not mentioned, one MPO described an additional technique: “We have used outreach toolkits to send to our member cities and agencies to help get the word out. [For] example for the first round of our MTP update we put together newsletter articles, infographics, social media posts and links to a survey that they could use in their outreach to their constituents.”

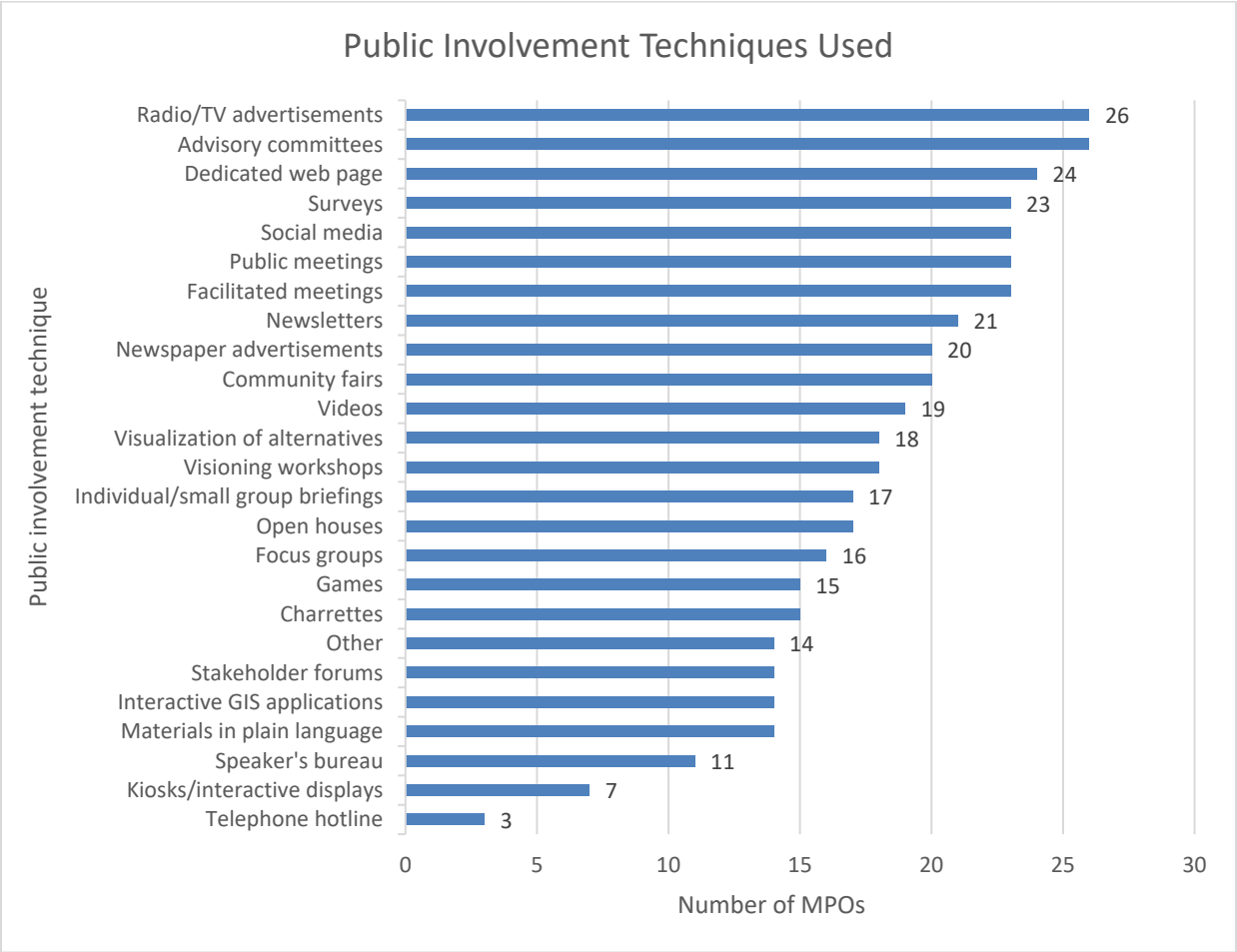

Figure A-6. Public involvement techniques used

MPOs selected one choice from the same list of twenty-four techniques as the most effective for their organization (Figure A-7), as well as one technique that they rated as least effective (Figure A-8). Most techniques received between zero and two responses as the most effective for MPOs, but surveys were chosen with three responses while community fairs were rated as most effective by four MPOs. Public meetings, small groups, advisory committees, and materials in plain language were each chosen twice. Advisory committees were valued for their members’ knowledge and influence in the community. Online surveys and newsletters were

also appreciated by respondents for their ability to reach more people and be more easily translated into other languages. Small group briefings were valued because "[these] tend to be somewhere between a briefing and a stakeholder forum [and] we can have an actual conversation with the public, as opposed to open houses or huge public meetings. People also feel like it's more personal to them and their concerns."

One MPO described the ability to engage in more meaningful conversations when public involvement activities are conducted in a community setting (e.g. concerts, fairs, or farmers' markets) rather than at a formal meeting. This MPO said the following about meeting the public where they are: "Rather than inviting people to meetings (most people in the general population do not even have [a] reference for the subject matter) we are developing easy-to-understand collaterals about the planning process and engaging people about transportation at public gatherings -concerts, farmers' markets, etc. We take devices to use our interactive map to get people looking at their own neighborhood, which starts the conversation about projects and the projects priorities. We will have more meaningful conversations in one event than combining an entire year of traditional public workshops (where typically the only people who show up are already involved or on the CAC)." Another MPO reported that, in contrast to many other organizations' experiences, their community was not interested in social media or online formats for involvement, so they saw better results from newspaper advertisements and community fairs.

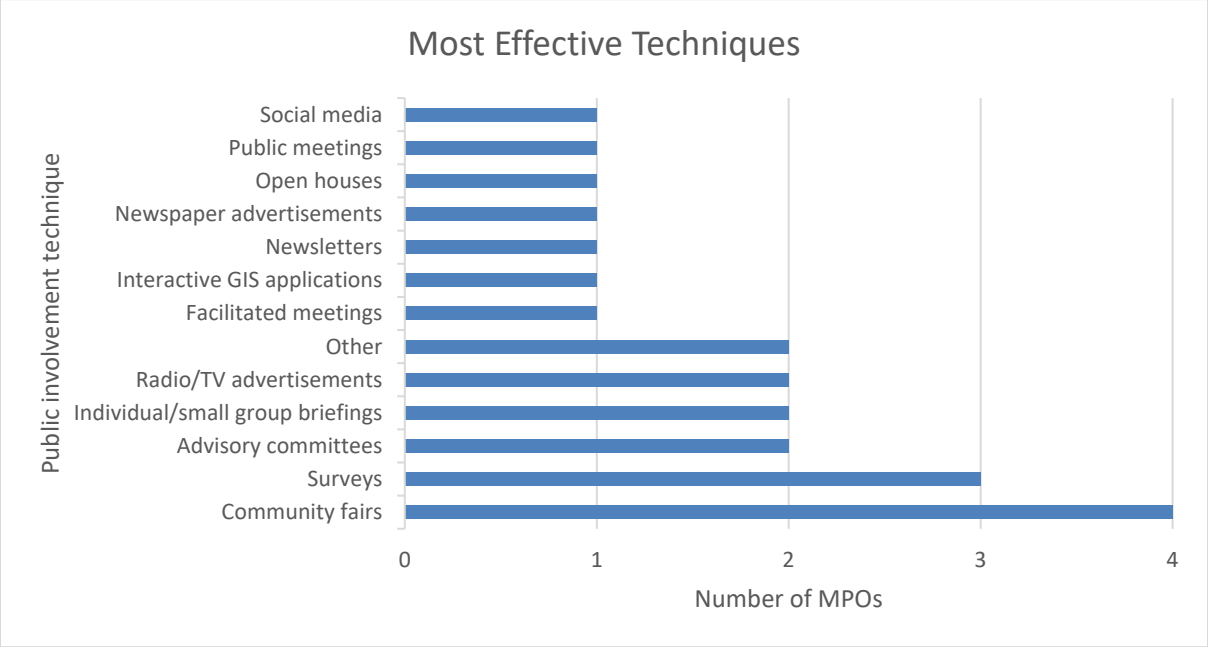

Figure A-7. Most effective public involvement techniques

The least effective techniques were newspaper advertising (26%, n=7) and public meetings (30%, n=8). Community fairs and newsletters were also reported as ineffective by three and

four MPOs, respectively. Dedicated webpages, telephone hotlines, and open houses were also noted as ineffective by one MPO each, and facilitated meetings were chosen by two. Of those who selected public meetings, a common theme was lack of attendance and motivation for long-range planning, and one MPO mentioned that attendees are often a small core group of people with a specific agenda rather than a representative sample of the population. Online town halls were suggested frequently as a preferred substitute for traditional public meetings.

Newspaper articles – rather than advertisements – were described as effective, and many MPOs reported that newspaper advertising was ineffective but legally required. Open houses were described as ineffective by one MPO because the public served by this MPO typically prefers more information and interactions than they were receiving at these events. In contrast to those organizations preferring community fairs, a few MPOs answered that these were the least effective because they felt people would prefer to have fun and do not want to consider planning topics at community events.

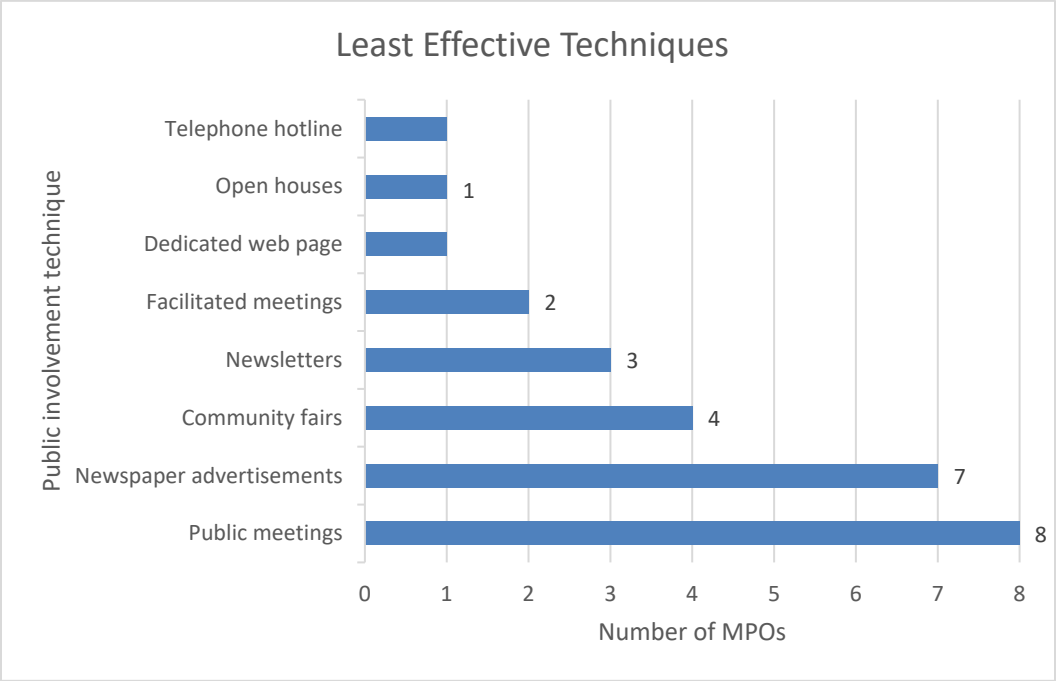

Figure A-8. Least effective public involvement techniques

Accommodation and Outreach

A few questions on the survey asked about how MPOs make their public meetings more accommodating for the community and how they attempt to reach underserved populations. As can be seen in Figure A-9, nearly all (93%, n=26) MPOs hold their meetings close to neighborhood or community centers to make them more convenient, and about three-quarters hold their meetings at convenient times (78%, n=21) and close to transit (74%, n=20). Only one

MPO offers childcare services at their meetings. Other short-answer responses included locations accessible to persons with disabilities or other transportation disadvantaged groups, as well as online options for replaying meetings and commenting remotely. One MPO noted that offering childcare services sounded like an interesting approach, but potential insurance implications and lack of a process for implementation were current barriers.

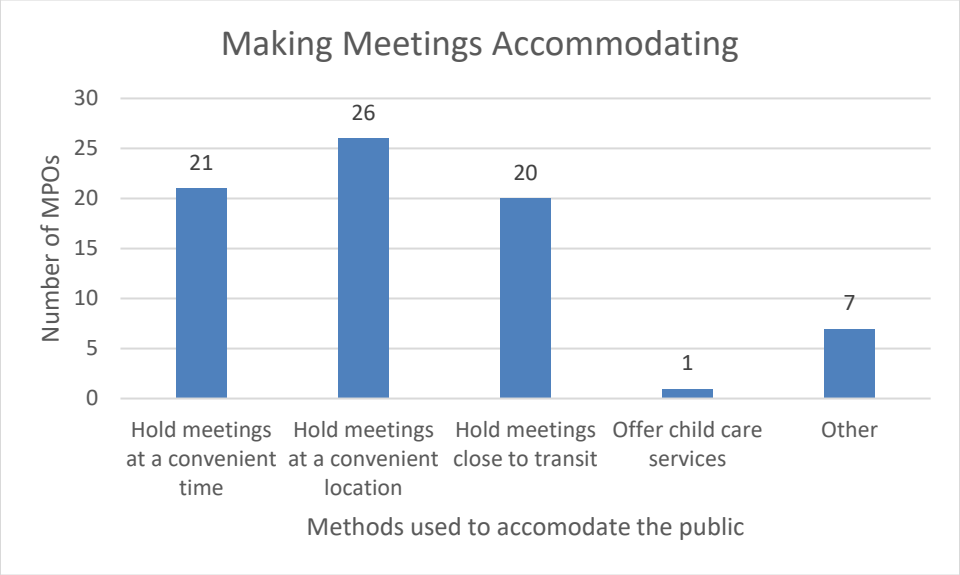

Figure A-9. Methods used to make public meetings accommodating

A large majority (85%, n=23) of MPOs used targeted outreach events to bring opportunities for involvement to underserved populations, and about two-thirds (n=20) provide translated materials (Figure A-10). The most common language used in these translations is Spanish, followed by Haitian Creole. Representation of elderly, disabled, racial and ethnic minorities, women, and economically disadvantaged persons on committees was reported by 60% (n=16) of MPOs. Other moderately popular techniques to reach special populations included accommodating schedules of full-time workers and engaging community leaders. Two out of four explanations of the "Other" choice mentioned outreach to schools, one referenced community action committees, and one provided a link to a Title VI Nondiscrimination Plan.

This plan is comprehensive, including descriptions of communities of concern and cross-referencing primary program areas with their relevance to these communities' needs. A methodology used to identify communities of concern is part of this plan. Further, a regional planning model is discussed as a means to determine plan equity; other tools for ensuring equity in access to basic needs, traffic safety, and household costs are included as well.

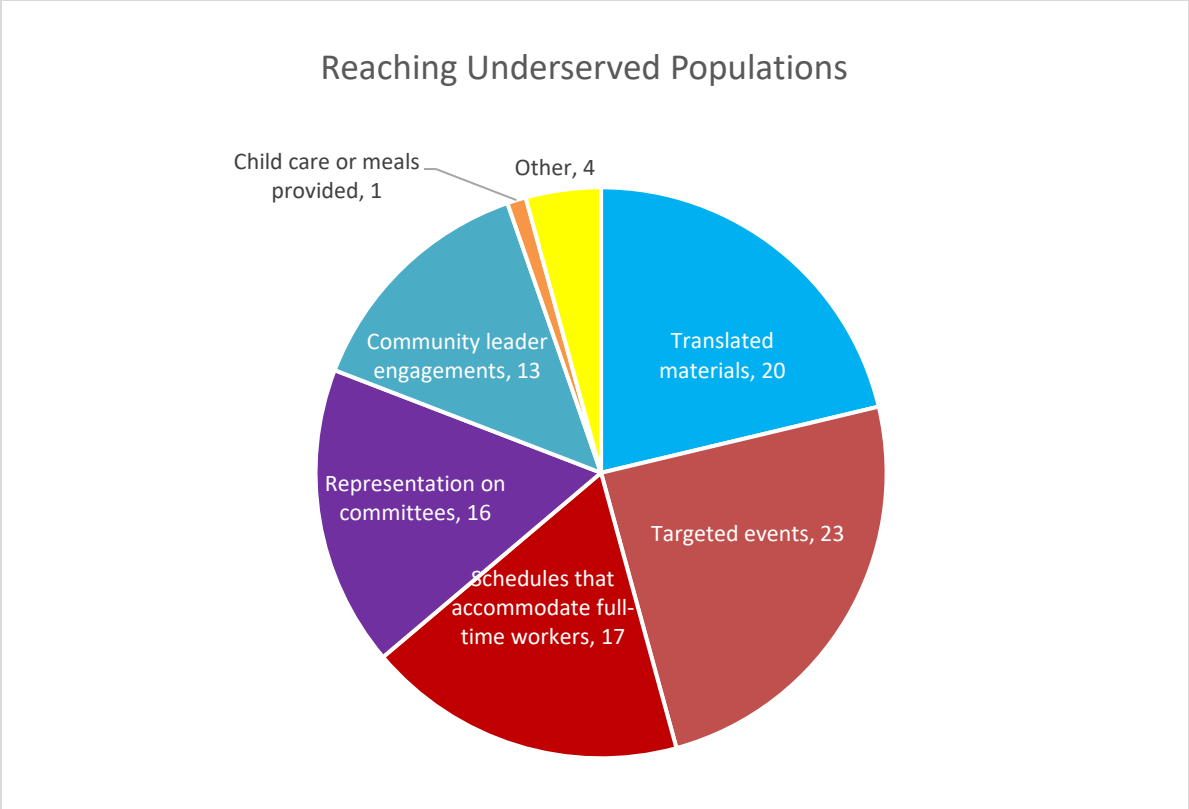

Figure A-10. Methods for reaching underserved populations

Performance Measures

Of the twenty-six MPOs who replied to this survey questions and indicated employing performance measures, half used either outcome-based or output-based measures, while the other half used a combination of these two approaches. Figure A-11 and Figure A-12 demonstrate these responses.

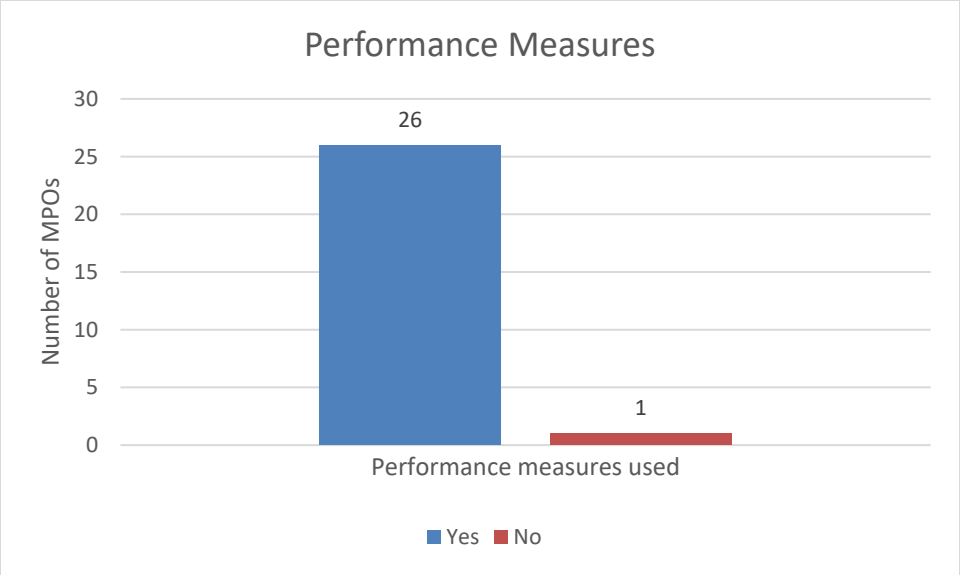

Figure A-11. Presence of performance measures in public involvement processes

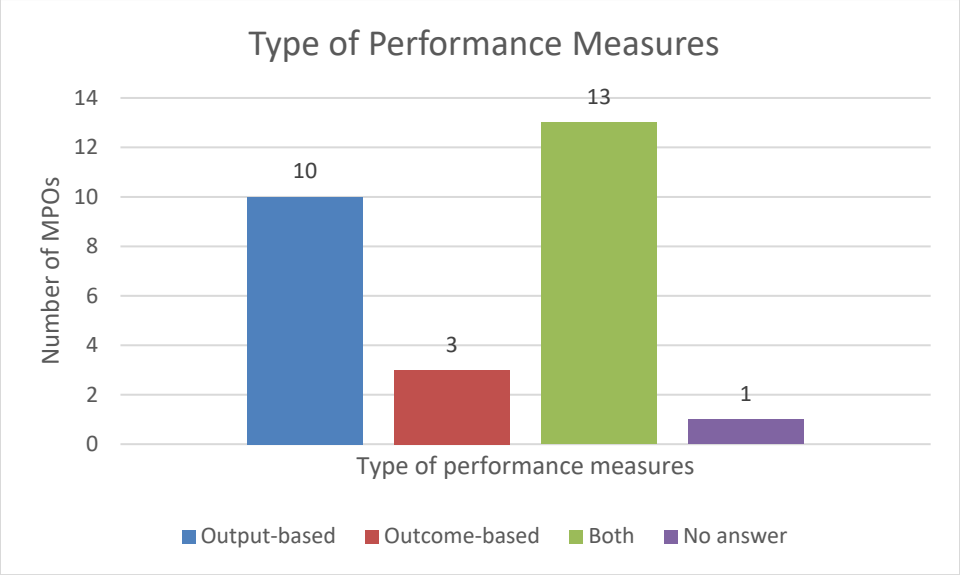

Figure A-12. Types of performance measures used by each MPO

MPOs who reported using output-based measures or a combination of measures selected from a list of potential dimensions of measurement (Figure A-13). The most commonly used output-based measure was attendance at meetings (78%, n=21), followed by the number of communications sent (74%, n=20) and the number of website hits (67%, n=18). Other measures mentioned in free-response answers included number or requests for translated materials, social media interactions, press releases, and general media coverage. Some text-based responses revealed that the difference between output-based measures and outcome-based measures was not fully understood, leading to some misreporting of targets like accessibility and number of public comments received.

Outcome-based measures were all reported as text answers. A common theme among these responses was the summary of public comment provided in plans and major studies, which are intended to demonstrate how plans or projects were changed based on public input. One MPO has a public involvement evaluation matrix, and another keeps outcome data about the quality of their communications with legislators and stakeholders, the effectiveness of their strategic plan, and the quality and frequency of their blog content and social media posts. One MPO divides its measures of effectiveness into four categories: visibility and productivity, participation opportunities, public interest and feedback, and input; this organization has a true mix of output- and outcome-based measures. Table A - 2 shows this breakdown from the MPOs "Measures of Effectiveness for a Public Participation Plan."

Table A - 2. Measures of effectiveness for a Public Participation Plan

	Metrics	
Measuring Visibility and Productivity	Number of MPO publications produced	Number of MPO newsletters and brochures distributed, such as Bicycle Suitability Maps, Ride Guides and Citizens Guide to Transportation Planning
	Number of newspaper advertisements and public notices placed in publications with minority audiences	Media inventory of newspaper articles, television and radio coverage
	Number of West Central Florida MPO Chairs Coordinating Committee brochures distributed	Number of MPO sponsored maps distributed, as well as any other sponsorship or advertisement opportunity
	Number of meetings broadcast on Hillsborough County Television	Number of publications available on the MPO website, at a minimum to include the LRTP, TIP, and an annual list of obligated projects
Measuring Participation Opportunities	Number of MPO public forums, workshops and community meetings at which displays, presentations, discussions, and feedback occurred	Number and origin of participants at such public forums, workshops, and community meetings
	Number of participants at public forums, workshops and community meetings held in historically underserved areas or with such populations	Number of participation opportunities offered to American Indian entities, such as the Seminole Tribe of Florida
	Number and origin of participants at monthly MPO and committee meetings	Number of persons on the MPO mailing list receiving regular agendas
	Number of draft plans, reports, other preliminary documents or surveys posted to MPO website for public comment	
Increasing Public Participation Efforts with Minorities, Low-Income Individuals, & Transportation Disadvantaged	Ensuring the MOE report details representative public involvement	Developing maps with updated, community-specific demographic and socioeconomic data within the MPO's geographic boundaries at the census tract, block group, or zip code level
	Listing all MPO committee members' demographic data, including race, ethnicity, age, and whether or not they are disabled	
Measuring Public Interest & Feedback	Number of returned comment cards distributed with Newsletters and other MPO publications	Number of verbal comments received at open forum discussions, public hearings, and at any other opportunities for public interaction
	Number of phone, fax, mail, and email inquiries or comments cards received	Number of visitors to the MPO website
	Seeking feedback that is immediate and project specific	
Measuring Input Results	Number of issues identified through public input and responded to by the MPO	Documented revisions to plans based on citizen input
Refining PPP Process	Periodic public involvement process surveys	Update the PPP in conjunction with, and at the outset of, each LRTP update
	Recommendations to enhance the PPP	

Source: Hillsborough MPO, 2018

Table A - 3 displays another MPO's output-based targets for outreach, which elaborates on public involvement tools used, along with their tasks, target numbers, and descriptions.

Table A - 3. One MPO's Targets for Effective Outreach

Tool	Task	Target	Description
Community Outreach Events	Conduct Community Outreach Events	24 events	Coordinate with local transportation agencies and MPO Board to participate in their outreach events in the community
	Input MPO Outreach Events in Database	Input stats within 5 days	Verify that community outreach event evaluation forms are complete and properly record in database
Media Relations	Produce/air MPO materials on Radio and TV Stations	9 radio and/or TV segments	Work with Miami-Dade County Communications Department and local radio and TV stations to produce interviews in English, Spanish, and Creole
	Produce/air Public Service Announcements (PSAs) in English, Spanish & Creole	2 PSAs	Work with MDTV along with local colleges and high schools to produce public service announcements about the MPO and the transportation system
	Press Releases	12 press releases	Produce and distribute one Press Release per month for all major MPO activities
Website	Enhance MPO Website users' experience by creating a more user-friendly Website	Update information regularly	Continue to advertise the MPO program and make it easy for citizens to efficiently access information
Newsletters	Produce Three Seasonal Newsletters	Distribute 6,000 copies each; translate into Spanish & Creole	Develop quarterly newsletters to coincide with the "hot topic" of the quarter
	Produce an Annual Newsletter	Distribute 700,000 copies; translate into Spanish & Creole	Prepare a themed Annual Newsletter with a year in review of various transportation initiatives
	Post Newsletters on MPO Website	100% of newsletters	Update website to reflect latest Newsletters and up-to-date information
Public Involvement Database	Input comments into MPO Database	Increase by 5% yearly	Track all correspondence that comes into the office
	Track how comments were Received	100%	Email Mail Phone Fax Outreach Event LRTP Workshop Walk In
	Establish a protocol promoting prompt response to comments	Maintain 10-day response rate	Take comment cards to outreach events, input information from the public into the database, and respond in a timely manner
Public Involvement Management Team	Coordinate quarterly PIMT meetings	Quarterly Meetings	Coordinate Public Involvement Team meetings to discuss transportation issues with various transportation agencies
Citizens Transportation Advisory Committee (CTAC)	Prepare CTAC Materials and Minutes	20 Meetings	Develop agendas, resolutions, and back-up information; prepare minutes after each meeting, ensure issues are addressed; respond to inquiries regarding agenda items w/in 1 business day; respond to/acknowledge all written correspondence of agenda items w/in 3 business days
	Track all Resolutions	100% of resolutions	Follow-up on all CTAC Resolutions by ensuring the agencies affected by the Resolutions take action and that their responses are communicated back to the Committee in a timely manner

Source: Miami-Dade TPO

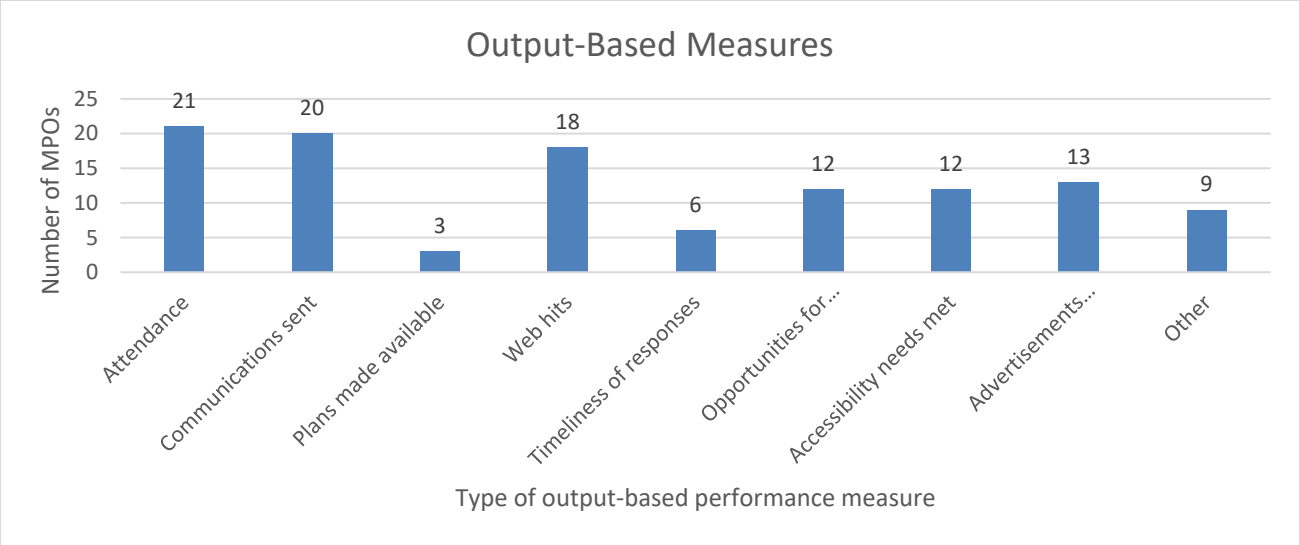

Figure A-13. Selection of output-based measures used by MPOs

While a few MPOs were unsure how often their performance measures are evaluated (Figure A-14), most (63%, n=17) reported that they consider their measures annually. The remainder (22%, n=6) review their performance measures every two to three years.

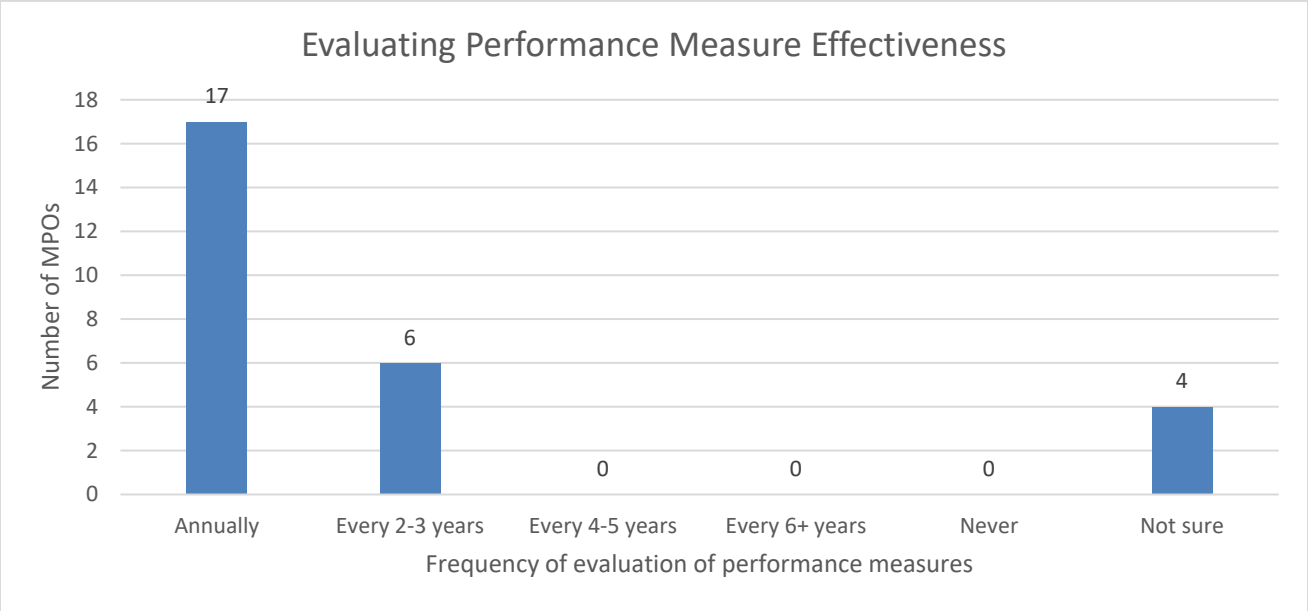

Figure A-14. Frequency of evaluation of public involvement performance measures

The survey also asked whether performance measurement data has led to changes to the public involvement process (Figure A-15) and whether public input has changed planned or programmed projects (Figure A-16). A majority of MPOs answered yes, process and project changes have been made. A few were not sure about changes, and very few (11%, n=3) said no changes were made in either case. One MPO stated “we have changed projects, sometimes not

to the most beneficial transportation related improvement, but to get public buy-in." Of those MPOs responding yes to this question about changing decisions, one captured their strategy like this: "[a] series of multi-day public workshops and open house design charrettes were held [for a] multi-modal corridor study which will inspire projects and presumably attract economic reinvestment in some communities. We have not made program changes due to performance measurement data nearly as much as we have focused on and modified what gets measured and how it is reported."

Changes to public involvement processes, described in short-answer format, were themed around "non-traditional" outreach; nearly all of these responses referred to fewer public meetings and increased use of technology (social media, presentations, online surveys, and interactive maps). Other MPOs mentioned equity and environmental justice.

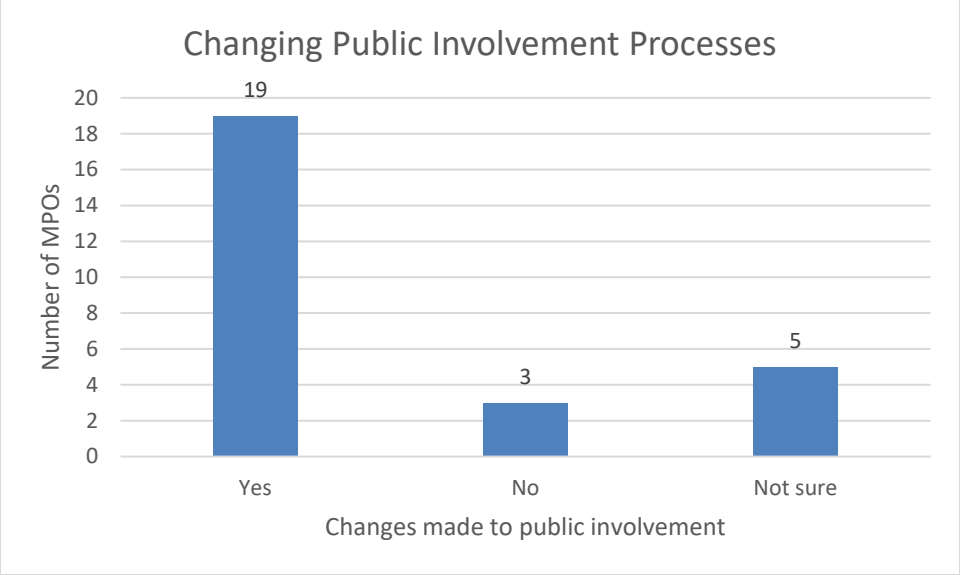

Figure A-15. Decisions to change public involvement processes based on performance measurement

Some MPOs reported stopping or modifying projects because of public input, and others mentioned that public comments can determine project prioritization or inspire new projects. Many MPOs included a focus on non-automobile modes in their response, demonstrating that public input is changing the organizations' decisions about transit, bicycle infrastructure, and walkability.

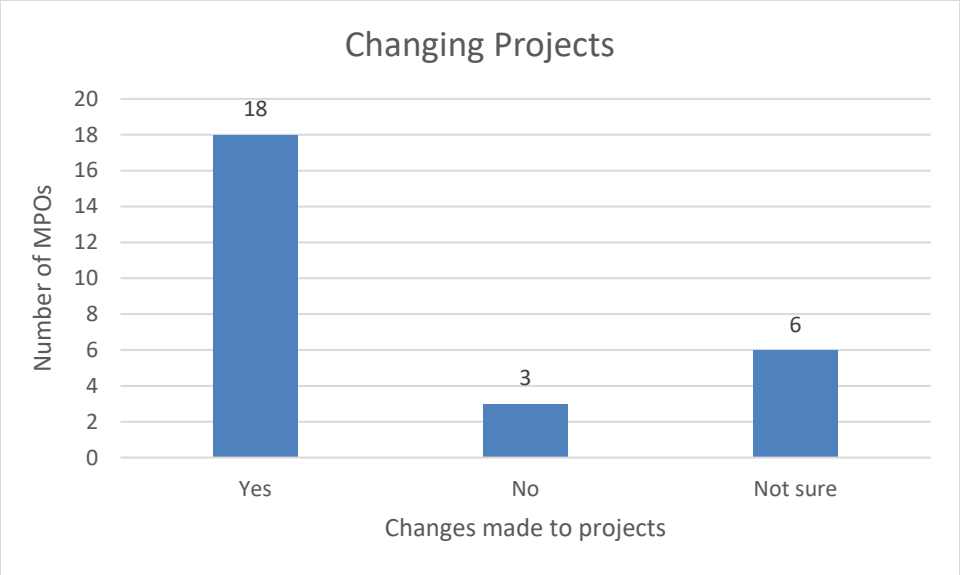

Figure A-16. Decisions to change projects based on public input

Social Media

All MPOs reporting that they used social media were asked a series of follow-up questions about which platforms the organizations use and how they use them. Most used Facebook (78%, n=21) and about half used Twitter and YouTube. Instagram and LinkedIn were used by four MPOs each, and no other social media platforms were used, according to respondents (Figure A-17).

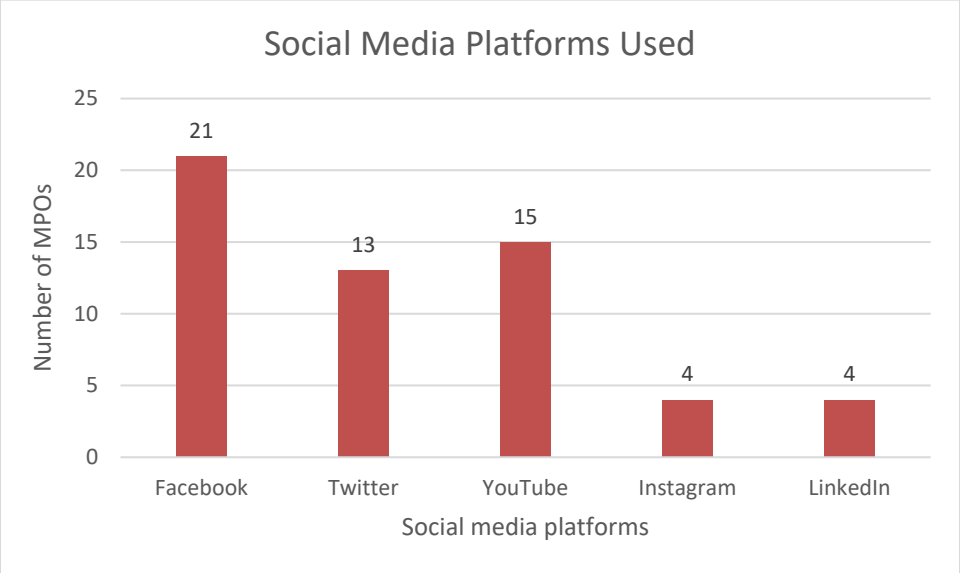

Figure A-17. Social media platforms used by MPOs

Over half of MPOs using social media (57%, n=12) post regularly scheduled content (Figure A-18), while the remainder post sporadically or are unsure about posting frequency. A larger

number (n=16) report active monitoring of their social media pages, regardless of post schedules (Figure A-19). Active monitoring was defined by various respondents as continuous, hourly, and daily. Two MPOs mentioned that they engage in bidirectional communication on social media, and stress the need for continuous monitoring and immediate responses. As shown in Figure A-20, 86% (n=18) of MPOs using social media have a dedicated staff person to maintain this online presence, while the remainder (n=3) do not. This person could be a director, administrative assistant, public information officer, dedicated outreach coordinator, or a consultant, according to text responses.

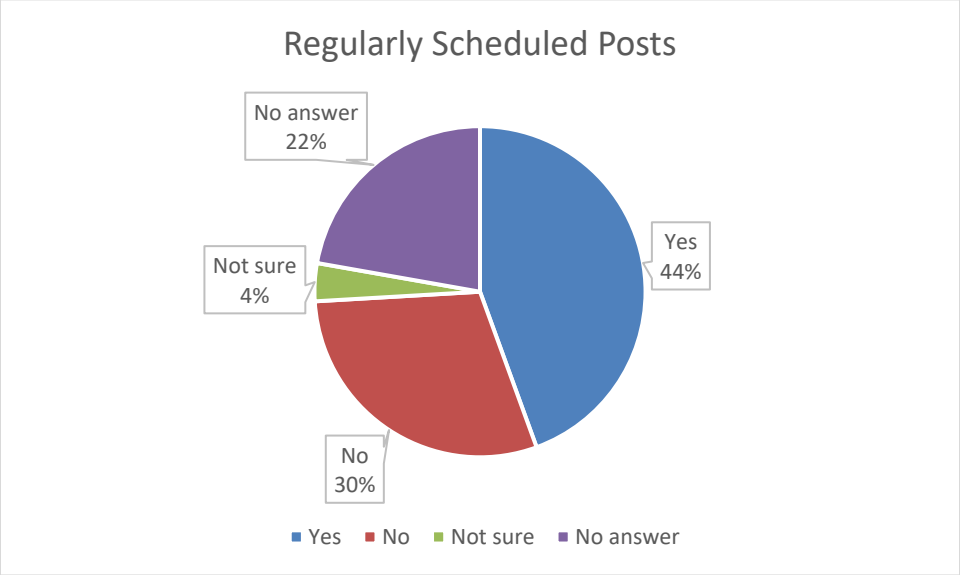

Figure A-18. Existence of regularly scheduled social media posts

When asked about active monitoring of social media, one MPO gave a thorough explanation of their strategy and goals for this public involvement technique: "Due to limited time, the greater focus is on creating posts rather than monitoring posts by others including partner agencies. Thus far, there has been only a single opportunity to invest a small amount in 'sponsored' (paid) posts which are crucial for an agency to build an online audience and to have social media followers actually view agency posts in their news feeds. We are working to find solutions to increase those opportunities. A good question would have been 'which platform do you find most effective?' My response would definitely be Twitter!"

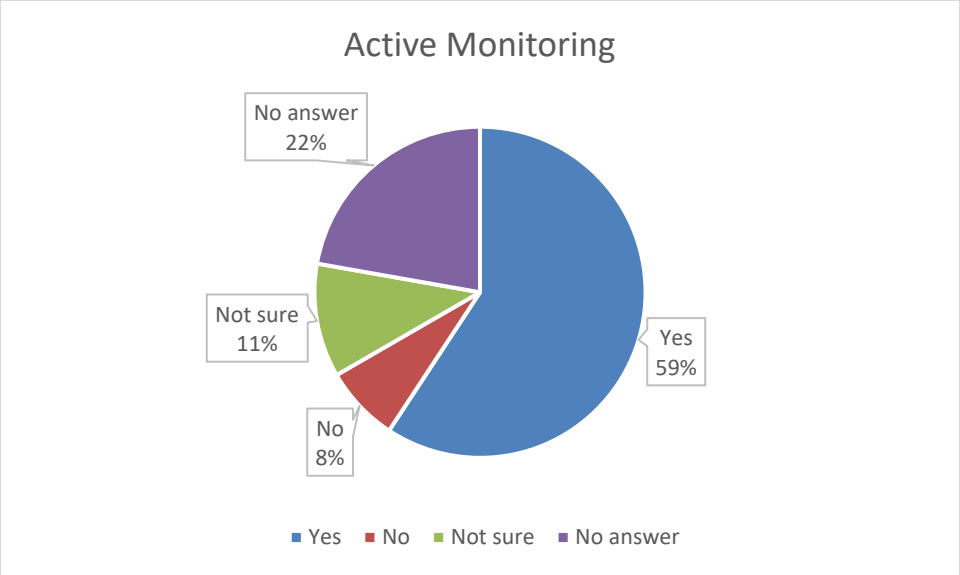

Figure A-19. Existence of active monitoring of social media pages

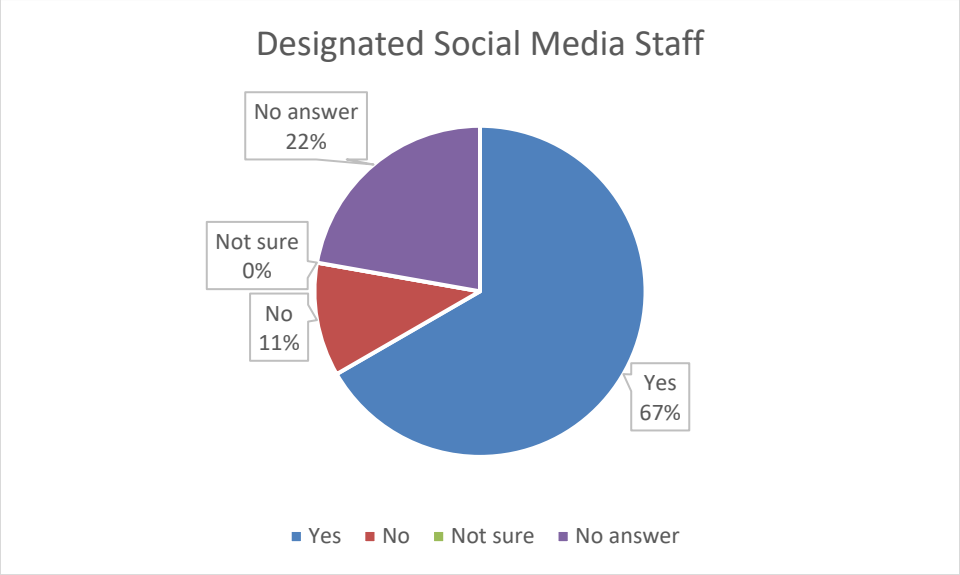

Figure A-20. Presence of designated social media staff

Regarding social media policy, fifteen of twenty-one MPOs had policy guidelines in place (Figure A-21), while three did not and three respondents were unsure. Social media policies range from requiring director approval to removing negative language, but a few organizations reported that these practices are new and under review for improvement. Policy guidelines specific to public involvement posting on social media exist at fourteen MPOs, as shown in Figure A-22, and focus on avoiding negativity and following Federal requirements.

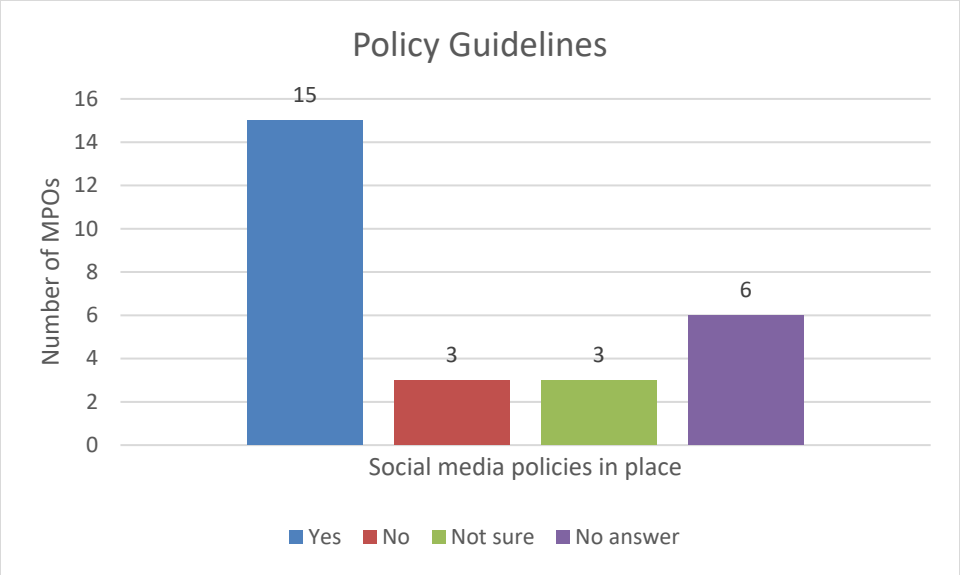

Figure A-21. Policy guidelines covering all social media use by MPOs

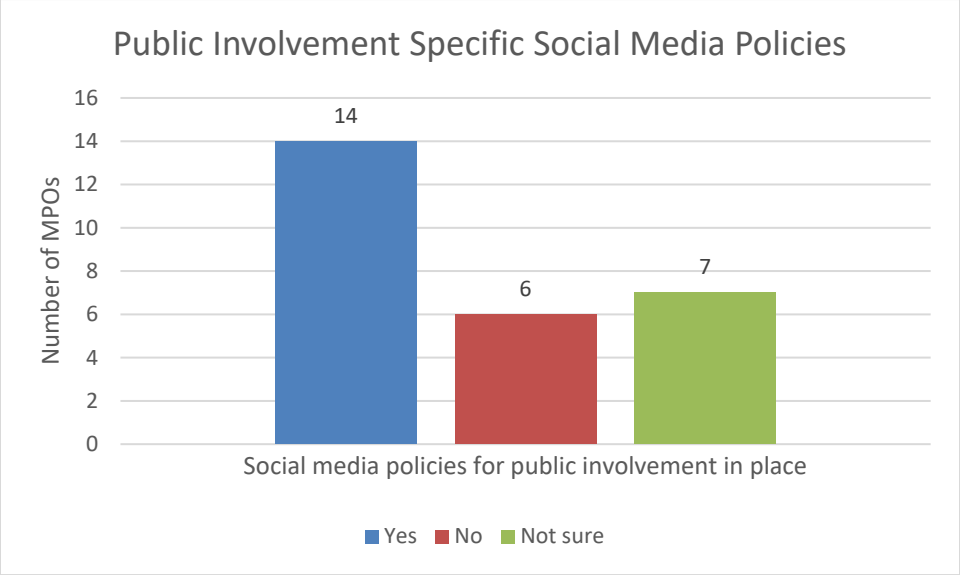

Figure A-22. Policy guidelines for social media specific to public involvement

Coordination and Communication

Overall, MPOs engage in multiple activities to coordinate public involvement with other planning agencies (Figure A-23). About half share contact lists in order to reach the same stakeholders. 62% share public comments across agencies, and 78% "piggyback" at other meetings to take advantage of existing public turnout. Most (85%) MPOs coordinate events and outreach, either with other MPOs or with different agencies. Three organizations noted that they share social media posts and event pages as well, but these were the three MPOs that also share staff.

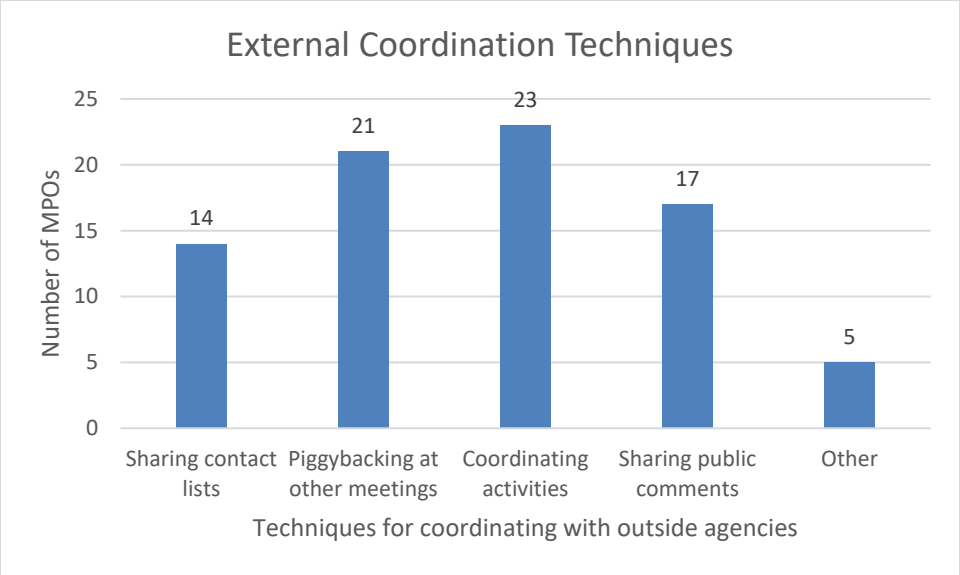

Figure A-23. Techniques used to coordinate with other agencies

Three-quarters of MPOs responding to the survey indicated that they communicate public involvement findings with agencies responsible for implementing transportation projects (Figure A-24). Only 7% (n=2) reported that these findings are not shared, though nearly 19% (n=5) were unsure about whether their MPO engaged in this type of communication. Among those who said they do share findings with implementing agencies, short-answer comments revealed a wide variety of methods; some use email or phone calls, others use face-to-face meetings, and at least one MPO has a system to share "analytics and other feedback." Types of information shared include public comment, meeting minutes, and survey results.

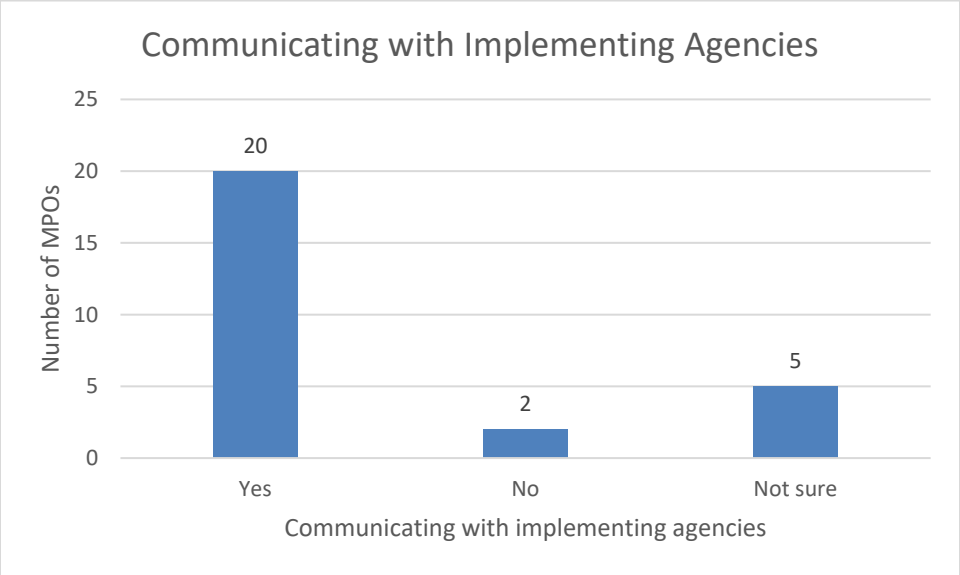

Figure A-24. Communication with agencies responsible for project implementation

MPOs also reported using multiple techniques when asked about methods for communicating with the public about how their feedback was used (Figure A-25). Two-thirds provided the public with written responses, about half used public meetings as a platform to respond, and one-third communicated through various media outlets. Of the eight MPOs selecting "Other" in response to this survey question, most described publishing public input online and in print, as well as using phone calls, email, and social media to respond to comments individually.

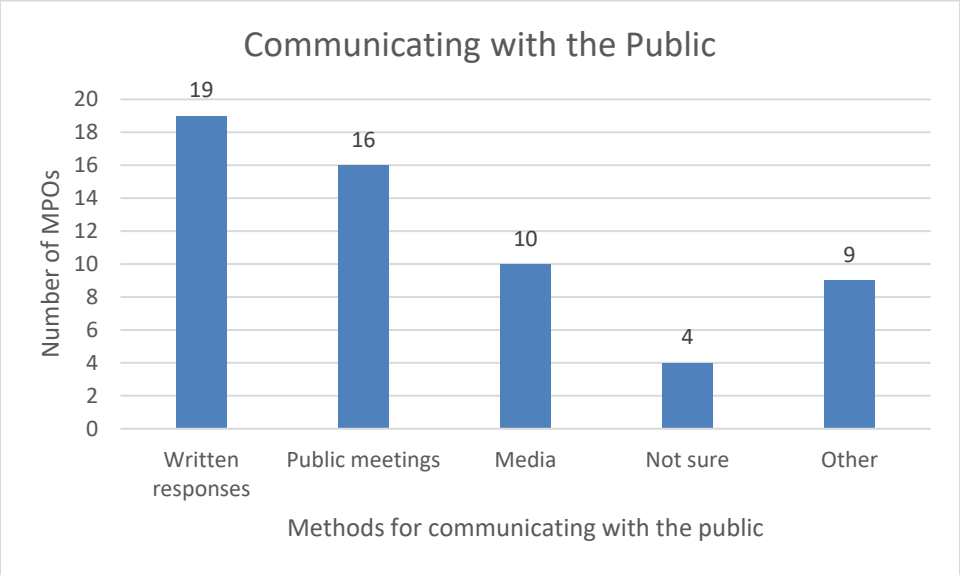

Figure A-25. Methods for communicating with the public about how their feedback was used

Improvements and Challenges

When asked about ways they could improve their public involvement, MPOs gave a wide variety of text-based answers. Some of these, which capture the diversity of responses, appear below:

- "better visual tools, more social media content, better understanding of the relationship of the planning activities that lead to project implementation.
- Get more younger people involved, they are going to have to live with the decisions we make.
- Re-write bylaws for better recruitment opportunities. Make committees more attractive to the public as a whole/easier to recruit for.
- Tough Question-but overall we need to improve the educational system in Florida, the locals vs. "snowbird" schism, reduce income equality (EJ related) and develop a more progressive and visionary state gov't emphasis (we are still as a State stuck in the 60's).
- We need to be able continuously recruit the help of our member municipalities and agencies to help get the word out.

- Allocate more financial resources and another full-time position to public involvement."

MPOs were also given a list of eight potential challenges to public involvement and asked to select as many as apply to their efforts. A total of seventy responses were provided by the twenty-seven MPOs, including seven text responses (Figure A-26). The top three challenges selected were poor attendance by the public (62%, n=17), lack of resources (55%, n=15), and the public becoming involved too late in the planning process (55%, n=15). Short-answer responses mentioned apathy and a general lack of interest, particularly from young people or when projects have a long-time horizon. Interest groups or other special interests were noted to be overrepresented, possibly to the detriment of the greater population served by the MPO. One organization noted that outreach materials tended to be overly specific or inadequate for explaining project prioritization, so people were unable to participate effectively.

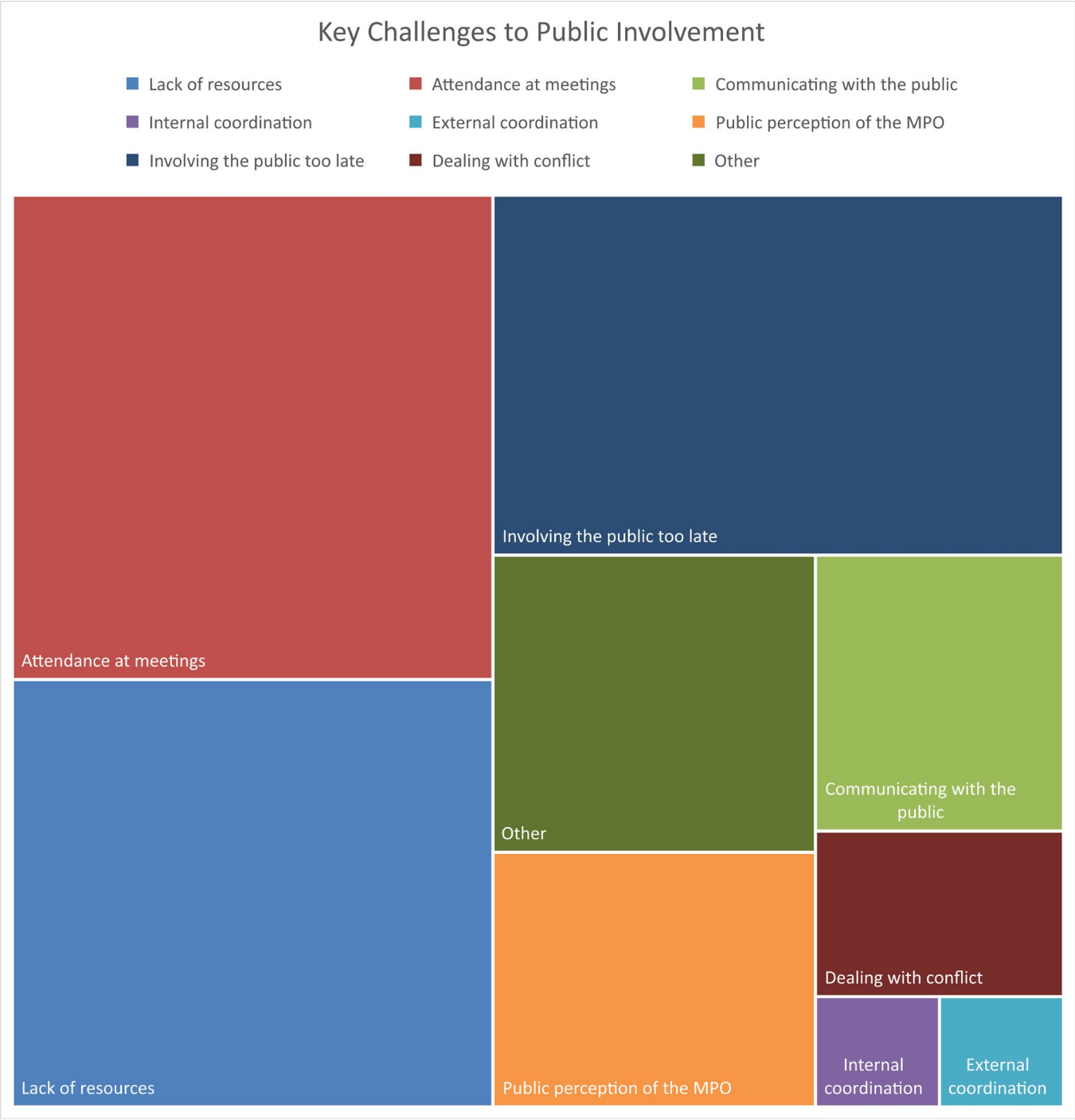

Figure A-26. Key challenges MPOs face when conducting public involvement activities.

Discussion

This survey covered eight key topics in the practice of public involvement across Florida's twenty-seven MPOs: resources, training, techniques, accommodation and outreach, performance measures, social media, coordination and communication, and challenges. Recurrent themes across these topics included constraints to public involvement, use of technology, and the effectiveness (or ineffectiveness) of traditional techniques like public meetings and newspaper advertisements.

Many of the findings from the 2006 study on the practices of public involvement in Florida recur in the answers provided by MPOs in 2018. There is an overall sense that the public does not understand transportation planning, especially as a long-range process, and that the public will not get interested in projects or plans if traditional methods of communication are the only available options. MPOs also expressed a desire to engage in non-traditional public involvement activities; some were able to do so, and others wished to do so in the future with more training and resources.

One finding from the previous study that was not replicated here was confusion over roles and responsibilities. While MPOs often have to be creative with staff and budget to accomplish their public involvement goals, very few responded that they do not have designated people and processes intended to undertake necessary activities, including communication with implementing agencies like FDOT. Another problem from the previous report which did not seem to exist for MPOs taking this survey was the need to identify how public input was being incorporated into plans and projects. Every organization responded that they communicate this through some combination of published reports, individual communications, and media. Many respondents had an overall positive tone towards their public involvement efforts, and clearly expressed its value in their organizations' missions.

In comparison to the first research task of this study, a national literature review of best practices, Florida MPOs are generally participating in at least two out of the four identified trends in successful public involvement (summarized in Table A - 4). The literature review noted that transportation planning agencies nationwide were engaging in innovative practices centered on these themes: diffusing responsibility to use resources more effectively, reaching underserved populations, measuring and evaluating their own performance, and using both high- and low-technology solutions to move beyond traditional techniques. In Florida, MPOs are focusing on populations not typically represented at public involvement activities, as well as using alternative techniques (such as going to community fairs, doing online surveys and text polling, and posting on social media). Most MPOs also have performance measures in place, but – as with many other agencies around the country – these measures remain at the level of

"outputs" rather than "outcomes." Several organizations reported on this survey that they do have outcome-based measures, but many also said that they are unaware of changes that may have been made because of these measurements. This may imply that the measures are either ineffective or improperly applied.

Table A - 4. Summary of Best Practices in Comparison to Florida MPO Practices

Public Involvement Best Practice	Generally Practiced by Florida MPOs
Shared responsibility (with other agencies, public)	No
Reaching underserved populations	Yes
Measuring performance	Yes, with varying sophistication
Using innovative techniques	Sometimes

Other techniques noted in the literature review include use of technology like GIS and interactive games, some of which are being used by Florida MPOs, and building networks of shared responsibility, which was not generally mentioned by survey respondents in this study. Organizations with small staffs and small populations tended to know how much was being devoted to their public involvement efforts, whereas larger ones were less likely to know, which suggests these smaller MPOs are sharing responsibility internally if not with the community. There is also an overall effort to use context-sensitive techniques, along with multiple modes of information sharing; this shows improvement in the quality of MPO's public involvement since the previous report.

Supplemental Information
MPO/TPO Population Estimates (2017)

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

Metropolitan/Transportation Planning Organization (MPO/TPO) Population Estimates

April 1, 2017

MPO ID No.	Metropolitan/Transportation Planning Organizations[1]	2010 Population	Population Change 2010 - 2017		2017 Population
			Numerical	Percent	
1	Space Coast TPO	543,376	31,824	5.9%	575,200
2	Charlotte County-Punta Gorda MPO	159,978	12,722	8.0%	172,700
3	Broward MPO	1,748,066	125,934	7.2%	1,874,000
4	Okaloosa-Walton TPO	214,967	22,233	10.3%	237,200
5	Gainesville MTPO	199,517	10,183	5.1%	209,700
6	Hernando/Citrus MPO	314,014	11,686	3.7%	325,700
7	Hillsborough MPO	1,229,226	150,074	12.2%	1,379,300
8	Indian River County MPO	138,028	10,972	7.9%	149,000
9	North Florida TPO	1,318,481	137,019	10.4%	1,455,500
10	Polk TPO	602,095	59,505	9.9%	661,600
11	Lee County MPO	618,754	79,746	12.9%	698,500
12	Martin MPO	146,318	6,682	4.6%	153,000
13	Miami-Dade TPO	2,496,457	246,643	9.9%	2,743,100
14	Collier MPO	321,520	35,980	11.2%	357,500
15	Ocala/Marion County TPO	331,303	17,997	5.4%	349,300
16	MetroPlan Orlando	1,837,359	268,941	14.6%	2,106,300
17	Bay County TPO	168,852	9,948	5.9%	178,800
18	Pasco County MPO	464,697	41,003	8.8%	505,700
19	Florida-Alabama TPO[2]	434,588	34,712	8.0%	469,300
20	Forward Pinellas	916,542	45,458	5.0%	962,000
21	Sarasota/Manatee MPO	702,281	73,719	10.5%	776,000
22	St. Lucie TPO	277,789	19,811	7.1%	297,600
23	Capital Region TPA	352,652	15,448	4.4%	368,100
24	River to Sea TPO	582,189	37,511	6.4%	619,700
25	Palm Beach TPA	1,320,134	93,966	7.1%	1,414,100
26	Lake-Sumter MPO	390,467	61,933	15.9%	452,400
27	Heartland Regional TPO	253,399	5,101	2.0%	258,500
Total M/TPO Population in Florida		**18,073,742**	**1,665,258**	**9.2%**	**19,739,000**
Total State Population		**18,801,332**	**1,682,768**	**9.0%**	**20,484,100**
Percent Population in M/TPO Areas		**96.1%**			**96.4%**

NOTES:

1 MPO boundaries are defined by FDOT and MPO/TPOs as of September 28, 2017.

2 The population for Baldwin County, AL used for this estimation is 212,000. This is based on trend analysis using the Census population estimates from 2010 to 2016. The final Total M/TPO population does not include the population of Baldwin County.

SOURCES:

Florida Department of Transportation, Forecasting and Trends Office
The U.S. Census Bureau
University of Florida, Bureau of Economic and Business Research

Forecasting and Trends Office http://www.fdot.gov/planning/demographic/ January 2018

Appendix B
2006 Study Conclusions and Summary of Suggestions

This appendix includes an excerpt from the 2006 study *Assessing the Practice of Public Involvement in Florida* (Kramer et al., 2006). The concluding text and suggestions serve as a reference point for the current study. The suggestions from the 2006 study are discussed in Chapter 4 of this report.

Performance Measures To Evaluate The Effectiveness of Public Involvement Activities In Florida

The literature and current practice review provided insight into the "state of the practice" of public involvement in Florida. It was clear from the review that FDOT and MPOs have made significant strides in their public involvement practices over the past several years and are committed to involving the public in a meaningful way. Most of those interviewed viewed public involvement as an integral part of their job, across the various functional units and Districts. There was evidence that methods other than formal meetings are being applied where needed to more effectively involve the public and to convey project information. It was also clear that there are several continuing challenges and training needs.

One continuing challenge was the difficulty of maintaining continuity in addressing public concerns as transportation projects move through the various planning and development phases to construction. Contributing to this challenge was the tendency for the public to change as projects progressed and for last minute requests for changes or "add-ons" as a project became more imminent. Other commonly identified challenges included inadequate public understanding of the transportation planning and development process (including construction), managing competing interests and difficult personalities, resource constraints, and inadequate intergovernmental coordination in public involvement.

Suggestions

- Maximize opportunities for one-on-one or small group dialogue.
- Create opportunities for staff to build relationships with the public and to provide education on transportation issues, both within and outside of project development.
- Provide opportunities other than public meetings for people to have input into project decision making.
- Look for ways to coordinate and communicate with other agencies on public involvement or outreach activities.
- Establish a process for passing project information on public concerns and comments from phase to phase.

- Increase communication between functional units within FDOT Districts on project development issues of importance to the public. Consider instituting regular cross-functional debriefing meetings and cross-functional area attendance at key project meetings.
- Consider a project management approach or a single point of contact for the public who has the necessary technical knowledge and would follow a project from planning or project development through to construction.
- Provide regular public involvement training and target the training, where appropriate, to specific topics of interest or concern and to specific functional units or responsibilities.
- Provide organized opportunities for FDOT Districts and MPO staff to share experiences, ideas and best practices in working with the public.
- Develop a systematic method, based on defined performance measures, for FDOT functional units and MPOs to evaluate the effectiveness of their public involvement process.
- Develop performance measures that focus on desired outcomes and that correspond with and advance the business plan of that functional unit.

Source: Assessing the Practice of Public Involvement in Florida, Kramer et al., 2006