LIST OF CONTENTS

MAPO Public Participation Plan ........................................ 2-1
Stakeholder Guidance .................................................... 2-1
Public Engagement Activities ......................................... 2-2
PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

Public participation and agency coordination were important elements in identifying issues and needs, developing alternatives, and building support for the Plan recommendations. Transportation projects are major public investments that impact and serve residents of the greater MAPO planning area and those traveling through the region. In order to build consensus, a number of public engagement tools were used to engage the community during the planning process. These included a series of public open houses and online media outlets to engage stakeholders and citizens in the Plan development process. This chapter describes the key stakeholders, public involvement process, specific engagement activities, and feedback received.

MAPO PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

Adopted in June 2014, the Public Participation Plan and Staff Guide for the MAPO’s Transportation Plans and Programs serves to guide all of the MAPO’s public involvement processes.

Adherence to the MAPO Public Participation Plan, as part of the Long Range Transportation Plan development process, ensured compliance with the federal 3-C (continuous, cooperative and coordinated) transportation planning procedures and satisfied federal regulations as outlined in 23 USC 134 and 23 CFR 450.

STAKEHOLDER GUIDANCE

Technical Advisory Committee

The MAPO Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) was used to provide technical direction for the Plan. The TAC is comprised of all MAPO member agencies. Meetings with this group are held the third Thursday of every month or on an as-needed basis; seven meetings were held to coordinate the Plan’s development. These meetings were used to solicit feedback and guidance on preliminary findings, proposed priorities, and draft recommendations, as identified during the planning process. In-depth contributions by TAC members aided in the decision-making process for the MAPO planning area.

Policy Board

The MAPO Policy Board was used to review, evaluate, comment upon, make recommendations, and ultimately adopt the required plans and programs such that federal and state funding eligibility is maintained for the metropolitan area. Meetings with the Policy Board were used to gain feedback and guidance on policies and draft recommendations specific to the Long Range Transportation Plan, as identified during the planning process. Meetings were held on an as-needed basis, which resulted in four meetings being held.
MnDOT and FHWA Coordination Meetings
Meetings with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) staff were convened to ensure compliance with policies and standards. These meetings were also used to gain input from management staff on the preliminary findings, proposed priorities, and draft recommendations, as identified during the planning process. Agreement on financial forecasting assumptions was achieved during these meetings so that all assumptions had early buy-in and direction from those that review the Plan for approval. Two meetings were held at key milestones.

One-on-One Local Agency Meetings
Throughout the planning process, one-on-one local agency meetings were held with stakeholders and partnering agencies. The purpose of the one-on-one meetings was to establish a clear understanding of community issues and opportunities related to the transportation system and to discuss key elements of the Plan as they related to each respective agency. This input was supplemented with comments received from the general public and ongoing TAC meetings.

Regional Public Agency Meeting
In order to gain the support of regional public agencies throughout the MAPO planning area, numerous agencies were invited to attend an open forum information and feedback meeting on the Plan’s recommendations and the range of alternatives. The intent was to provide an opportunity for these regional resource agencies to provide feedback and answer any questions. No major questions arose during this open forum. The agencies contacted and letters sent are provided in Appendix 2-A.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES
Public Open Houses
Three public open house meetings were held during the planning process. These meetings were conducted to provide the public and key stakeholders information on the Transportation Plan and to seek input regarding issues and needs, goals/objectives/performance measures, range of project alternatives, and Plan outcomes. Display boards, presentations, surveys, comment forms, and engagement activities were used to actively involve the public at these meetings. Importantly, the open house format offered an informal venue for citizens, agency staff, and community leaders to ask questions and share their thoughts on the Plan findings and recommendations.

The first public open house meeting was held early in the planning process. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the MAPO’s Long Range Transportation Plan process and provide an early input opportunity for the public to identify
transportation issues. A variety of display boards and maps were presented to help facilitate discussions. Initial data collection activities and analysis results were presented to provide context regarding current condition understanding. Input was solicited from attendees in the form of an electronic facilitation survey. Questions on the survey were pertinent to issues surrounding the MAPO area. The survey was administered interactively with a graphic presentation, and participants responded anonymously using an electronic device. Following completing of each question, responses were automatically tallied and shared with the group in real time.

![Survey Results](image)

Results of the interactive survey are provided in Appendix 2-B.

The second public open house was conducted at about the halfway point of the study process to share proposed goals and objectives and a preliminary listing of the potential range of alternatives, based on future system assessment and public input received during the first open house and online comments. An interactive ranking exercise was conducted to gauge the community’s response to the range of alternatives and their preference for improvement projects. This was accomplished with a “dot exercise” whereby participants placed color-coded dots on the range of alternatives matrices to indicate their preference for time horizon investment.
Results of the interactive dot exercise are provided in Appendix 2-C.

The third and final public open house was held near the end of the planning process to present the Draft Plan to the community and seek feedback. Comments received were incorporated where appropriate and are provided in Appendix 2-E. All public meeting notifications were coordinated by the MAPO and conformed to the documented Public Participation Plan.

**Project Website**

A project website was established to communicate the project schedule, opportunities for public involvement, provide meeting materials, highlight project milestones, and present study products. The website also provided an additional resource for citizens, agency staff, and community leaders so they could monitor ongoing progress throughout the planning process.

**MindMixer/MySidewalk**

A targeted, enhanced, and interactive citizen engagement website (MindMixer/MySidewalk) was established to provide even greater opportunities to encourage public involvement, seek feedback/share ideas, discuss project activity, and supply additional survey of community interests.

Various discussion topics were offered through this site, especially during interim times between public open house meetings. This offered the public another chance to engage MAPO staff and the Plan development team by offering additional input. Engagement topics and their responses are provided in Appendix 2-F.
Social Media

Social media outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter, were also used to reach the public. These resources provided opportunities for stakeholders and citizens to stay more engaged with the project and provide additional input throughout the planning process. The social media outlets were meant to share information and direct participants to the project website and public open house meetings.
Environmental Justice

Each of the tools noted above were utilized in order to engage citizens throughout the community. Additional public outreach efforts took place in order to encourage traditionally underrepresented populations to participate in the LRTP planning process, including the following:

- Mankato Free Press meeting notices
- Mankato Free Press paid advertisements
- Minnesota State University Reporter paid advertisements
- Direct mailings to property owners along three identified key corridors
- MAPO website and Facebook pages promoting meeting information
- Meeting flyers posted at transit facilities and the Intergovernmental Center
- Press releases sent from the City of Mankato
- Emails sent to individuals and organizations on MAPO’s interested parties list,
- Mankato Free Press interviews and news stories
- Booth display at Envision 2020 event hosted by Greater Mankato Growth
- Direct mailings to targeted housing developments (e.g., high-rise apartments downtown City of Mankato)
- The use of online tools to gather feedback (e.g., MAPO2045 Mindmixer)
- Radio (KTOE) and television interviews (KEYC)

The tools noted above, along with additional public engagement activities and opportunities could continue to be utilized over the next five years, depending on the availability of staff and resources.