Public participation is integral to good transportation policies, programs and projects. Without meaningful public involvement, there is a risk of making poor decisions or decisions that have unintended negative consequences. More than an agency requirement and more than a means of fulfilling a statutory obligation, meaningful public participation is central to good decision-making. The HRTPO is responsible for actively involving all affected parties in an open, cooperative and collaborative process that provides meaningful opportunities to influence transportation decisions.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP), adopted in August 2015, describes the HRTPO’s strategies and techniques to inform and engage the public in transportation planning issues with the purpose of maximizing participation and effectiveness. This report measures the effectiveness of the HRTPO’s public participation plan.
Public Participation Goals

**INFORM**
Inform the public, to the maximum extent possible with available resources, of opportunities to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**
- At least one meeting or opportunity is located in each county annually.
- Translators are available at public meetings in areas where a high proportion of the affected population comprises non-English speakers or when requested.
- 100% of board and committee meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities.

**INVOLVE**
Involve the public early and often in the transportation planning process.

**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**
- 100% of HRTPO meetings have comment cards available.
- 100% of HRTPO committee meetings will have time for public input on the agenda.
- Responses to public inquiries are made within 3 working days of the day of receipt.
- Responses to media inquiries are made within 1 working day of the date of receipt.

**INCLUDE**
Reach out to the geographical, organizational and demographic communities that compose the TPO planning area to increase the opportunity to participate in developing transportation plans and services.

**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**
- Interested governments, organizations, user groups, and individuals will have the opportunity to share their level of satisfaction on the HRTPO public participation process.
- Specific efforts will be made to include traditionally underserved populations in 100% of the region’s counties.
- Placement of HRTPO materials at 100% of public libraries in the region.

**IMPROVE**
Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation processes.

**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**
- A base-line of results will be established so that future outcomes may be evaluated with a regional perspective.
INFORM

Inform the public, to the maximum extent possible with available resources, of opportunities to participate in the transportation decision-making process.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

- At least one meeting or opportunity is located in each county annually.
- Translators are available at public meetings in areas where a high proportion of the affected population comprises non-English speakers or when requested.
- 100% of board and committee meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities.

HOW WE INFORMED THE PUBLIC

- Provided adequate notice of all meetings to HRTPO members, committee members, and interested parties by mail/e-mail at least 7 days in advance.
- Disseminated press releases announcing meetings and activities, opportunities for public participation, and the availability of documents for public review.
- Posted meeting agendas on web page at least 7 days in advance of event.
- Included details in meeting announcements for interested persons to respond in writing, by phone or by e-mail.
- Provided assistance, upon request and adequate notice, to the hearing and visually impaired, those with limited English proficiency, the transportation disadvantaged, or others requiring special assistance at HRTPO meetings and events.
- Maintained a mailing list of all interested parties and their preferred contact method including US mail, e-mail, SMS text messaging, or phone.
### Board and Committee Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>08-16-17</td>
<td>10 am TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-22-17</td>
<td>10 am MAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-24-17</td>
<td>2 pm CAC</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-04-17</td>
<td>10am Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-18-17</td>
<td>10 am TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-26-17</td>
<td>10 am CAC</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-01-17</td>
<td>10 am Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-17-18</td>
<td>10 am TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-25-18</td>
<td>2 pm CAC</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-21-18</td>
<td>9 am Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-21-18</td>
<td>10am TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-29-18</td>
<td>2 pm CAC</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-18-18</td>
<td>9 am Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-18-18</td>
<td>11:30 am MAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-16-18</td>
<td>10 am TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-24-18</td>
<td>2 pm CAC</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-20-18</td>
<td>9 am Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-27-18</td>
<td>10 am MAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* TAC - Technical Advisory Committee  
* CAC - Citizens Advisory Committee  
* MAC - Mobility Advisory Committee

### Other Public Meetings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE &amp; TIME</th>
<th>PURPOSE</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS</th>
<th>TRANSLATION AVAILABLE</th>
<th>TRANSLATION REQUESTED?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07-18-17</td>
<td>2 pm Highlands Transit Plan Service Options Workshop</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15-17</td>
<td>2 - 5 pm Heartland Regional Transportation Disadvantaged Summit</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-06-17</td>
<td>10 am Project Applications and Priorities Workshop</td>
<td>Hardee</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-29-18</td>
<td>1 pm CAC New Member Orientation</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-22-18</td>
<td>1 - 3 pm Office Hours (TIP)</td>
<td>Glades</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-22-18</td>
<td>4 - 6 pm Office Hours (TIP)</td>
<td>Okeechobee</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-24-18</td>
<td>9:30 - 11:30 am Office Hours (TIP)</td>
<td>Hardee</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-30-18</td>
<td>2 - 4 pm Office Hours (TIP)</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Public Comment Periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DOCUMENT</th>
<th>FROM</th>
<th>TO</th>
<th>COMMENTS RECEIVED*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transit Development Plan for Highlands County</td>
<td>August 8, 2017</td>
<td>September 6, 2017</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Planning Work Program for Fiscal Years 2018/19 – 2019/20</td>
<td>March 12, 2018</td>
<td>April 10, 2018</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2040 Long Range Transportation Plan Amendment</td>
<td>April 11, 2018</td>
<td>April 17, 2018</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018/19-2022/23 Transportation Improvement Program</td>
<td>May 8, 2018</td>
<td>June 7, 2018</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2017/18-2021/22 Transportation Improvement Program Amendments   |                |                |                    |
| Roll-Forward                                                   | August 31, 2017| September 6, 2017 | 0          |
| November 1, 2017                                              | October 17, 2017| October 23, 2017 | 0          |
| February 21, 2018                                             | January 24, 2018| January 30, 2018 | 0          |
| April 17, 2018                                                | April 11, 2018| April 17, 2018 | 0          |

*Number of comments received does not include comments received from the Florida Department of Transportation or the Federal Highway Administration.

Media Coverage

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PUBLICATION/OUTLET</th>
<th>TITLE</th>
<th>DATE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Planners present public transit options</td>
<td>July 25, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Options for public transit move forward</td>
<td>August 23, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Could public transit transportation be coming?</td>
<td>August 28, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Still time to weigh in on the plan</td>
<td>August 30, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>HRTPO wants comments</td>
<td>September 2, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>HRTPO meeting set for Wednesday, Oct. 4</td>
<td>September 28, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>TPO upgrades pedestrian safety</td>
<td>November 3, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Rating the standards</td>
<td>November 7, 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>Planners gather wreck stats on U.S. 27</td>
<td>March 2, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News Sun</td>
<td>TPO weighs in on U.S. 27</td>
<td>March 2, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview on WOKC</td>
<td>Creating a Four-County Service Area for the Transportation Disadvantaged Program</td>
<td>April 12, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glades County Democrat</td>
<td>HRTPO Office Hours</td>
<td>May 16, 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Okeechobee News</td>
<td>HRTPO Office Hours</td>
<td>May 18, 2018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Involve the public early and often in the transportation planning process.

**HOW WE INVOLVED THE PUBLIC**

» Maintained active, standing committees such as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) so residents have an opportunity to participate in the continuous transportation planning process.

» Convened the Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC) for the Highlands Transit Plan and the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan

» Designed a community engagement strategy that incorporates a complementary mix of smaller, community-based forums, large-scale public forums and online opportunities for engagement.

» Informed HRTPO members of recommendations from the MAC, TAC, and CAC and informed HRTPO members of trends indicated from other contacts with the public.

» Allocated time for public input on each committee's agenda.

» Responded to citizen, agency and media queries on all HRTPO related topics and plans, providing interim responses while questions are being researched.

» Provided comment forms to solicit input in writing at public meetings or online.

**HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS**

» 100% of HRTPO meetings have comment cards available.

» 100% of HRTPO committee meetings will have time for public input on the agenda.

» Responses to public inquiries are made within 3 working days of the day of receipt.

» Responses to media inquiries are made within 1 working day of the date of receipt.
Technical Advisory Committee

Voting Members
Central Florida Regional Planning Council
Jennifer Codo-Salisbury

City of Arcadia
Terry Stewart

City of Avon Park
Donald Gordon

City of Clewiston
Al Perry

City of LaBelle
Michael Boyle

City of Moore Haven
Vacant

City of Okeechobee
David Allen

Glades County
Ingra Williams
Paul Carlisle

Kanatza County
Donna Doubleday, CareerSource Heartland

Hendry County
Margaret Emblidge
Shane Parker

Highlands County
Melony Culpepper
Clinton Howerton

Heartland Rural Mobility Plan
Bruce Behrens, CAC Member
Ermelinda Centeno, Central Florida Health Care
Charkes Chapman, Hendry County
Melony Culpepper, TAC Member
Kelly Kirk-Brooks, MV Transportation
Alan Mandel, Good Wheels
Ann Martin, CareerSource Heartland
Erin Moore, Shared Services of Okeechobee
Tara Poulton, DeSoto County
Gary Ritter, City of Okeechobee
Kristina Rodriguez, Hope Connections

Citizen Advisory Committee

Voting Members
DeSoto County
Andrew Neuhofer, Florida Farm Bureau Federation
Pamela Crain, Florida Department of Health

Glades County
Jodi Walborn, All Children’s Hospital

Hardee County
Ermelinda Centeno, Central Florida Health Care
Donna Doubleday, CareerSource Heartland

Hendry County
Vacant

Highlands County
Ray Royce, Highlands County Citrus Growers Assoc.
Kristie Vazquez, Sebring CRA

Okeechobee County
Michelle Sanders, Okeechobee School Board
Leah Suarez, Our Village Okeechobee

City of Sebring
Bruce Behrens, Retired

City of Avon Park
Tara Jefferies, South Florida State College

Mobility Advisory Committee

Highlands Transit Plan
Rhonda Beckman, Ridge Area ARC
Bruce Behrens, CAC Member
Ermelinda Centeno, Central Florida Health Care
Melony Culpepper, TAC Member
Robin Hinote, Local Business Owner
Kelly Kirk-Brooks, MV Transportation
Robert Long, LCB Member
Ann Martin, CareerSource Heartland
Emily Swenson, Student, SFSC

Okeechobee County
John Howle
William Royce
Sebring Airport Authority
Mike Willingham

Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
Margaret Wuerstle

Town of Lake Placid
Joe Barber

Non-Voting Member
Florida Department of Transportation
Lori Carlton
HOW WE INCLUDED THE PUBLIC

» Ongoing improvements to the website to provide current information about the HRTPO activities, members, meetings, and contacts and the addition of a Resources section including information on public transportation, freight, the Transportation Disadvantaged program, and speakers bureau.

» Engaged in online social platforms as a communication tool to inform and include the general public, partner governments, community organizations, and traditionally underserved communities and direct traffic to the HRTPO website.

» Distributed copies of draft plans and programs to public libraries and public facilities in the region.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

☑ Interested governments, organizations, user groups, and individuals will have the opportunity to share their level of satisfaction on the HRTPO public participation process.

☑ Specific efforts will be made to include traditionally underserved populations in 100% of the region’s counties.

☑ Placement of HRTPO materials at 100% of public libraries in the region.
heartlandregionaltpo.org

Top 5 Viewed Documents
1. Meeting Agendas
2. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan
3. Public Participation Plan
4. Unified Planning Work Program
5. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan - Transportation Modeling Technical Support Document

Top 5 Visited Web Pages
1. Home
2. Plans and Program
3. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan
4. About
5. Events
» 12,553 reaches
» 1,086 engaged users
» 157 page likes
HOW WE IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

» Develop a Community Characteristics Inventory
» Refresh website as dynamic content is available
» Continue to execute the recommendations of the adopted Limited English Proficiency Plan
» Enhance use of Facebook and explore other online communication tools
» Continue to work with local governments and community partners to advertise committee openings to fill any vacancies on the established committees
» Displays at local libraries
» Coordinate with local governments to provide an annual update of HRTPO activities to each county commission
» Reevaluate annual survey tool and enhance collection of demographic information for participants

IMPROVE
Continually identify and implement ways to improve the public participation processes.

HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS
✓ A base-line of results will be established so that future outcomes may be evaluated with a regional perspective.
Survey Results

A survey requesting feedback on HRTPO communication efforts, priorities, demographic information, and an opportunity for open comment was sent to all members of the organization’s email mailing list, shared on the HRTPO Facebook page, and posted to the www.heartlandregionaltpo.org for a one-month period. Twenty-seven individuals completed the survey, and 100% of respondents indicated they were familiar with the HRTPO and its mission and/or had participated in the transportation planning process in the past year.

**What do you consider the most critical transportation issues in your community?**

- **There are No Critical Issues** 4%
- **Need for more Sidewalks/Bikelanes** 4%
- **Transportation Funding** 30%
- **Bus Services/Public Transportation Options** 22%
- **Safety** 33%
- **Need for More Roads** 0%
- **Traffic Congestion** 7%

» 100% strongly agree or somewhat agree that overall, they are satisfied with communication efforts of the HRTPO.
» 100% strongly agree or somewhat agree that they are satisfied with the information provided by the HRTPO on public notices, flyers, newsletters, and presentations.
» 100% strongly agree, somewhat agree, or were neutral that the HRTPO provides for persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services.

**Survey Comments:**
- Safety improvements to SR 70 should be a priority
- We need to look at the Heartland Parkway and the Heartland Coast to Coast roadways again.
- Traffic congestion, safety, transportation funding, and need for more sidewalks and bike lanes, as well as the need for additional traffic corridor lanes/roads are all important.

**Respondent Demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial or Ethnic Group(s)</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>81.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino or Hispanic</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native American or Aleut</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-34</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and older</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Survey Participation by Zip Code**

- DeSoto
- Highlands
- Hendry
- Glades
- Okeechobee
- Hardee