


# Public Involvement Report 2017-2018



**HRTPO**  
**Heartland Regional**  
**Transportation Planning Organization**





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

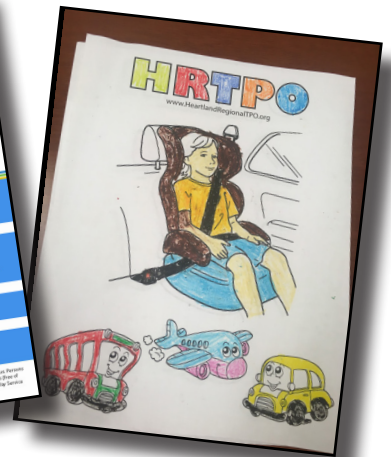
- ✓ A base-line of results will be established so that future outcomes may be evaluated with a regional perspective.

# INFORM

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## 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

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



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

## Other Public Meetings

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



## Public Comment Periods

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

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

# INVOLVE

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## HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

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

# Technical Advisory Committee

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## 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

### City of Sebring

Ken Fields

### City of Wauchula

Kyle Long

### DeSoto County

Mike Clover

Earl Hahn

### Glades County

Ingra Williams

Paul Carlisle

### Hardee County

Todd Miller

Willie Nabong

### Hendry County

Margaret Emblidge

Shane Parker

### Highlands County

Melony Culpepper

Clinton Howerton

### 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

# Citizen Advisory Committee

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## 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

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### 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

### 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



# 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.



## 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.



**HRTPO**  
Heartland Regional  
Transportation Planning Organization

About News Events Board & Committees Plans Resources Contact

**Citizens Advisory Committee**  
Fill out an application now to join!

The Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) coordinates transportation plans for the Heartland Region including the six counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee and the urbanized area of Highlands County including the cities of Sebring and Avon Park.

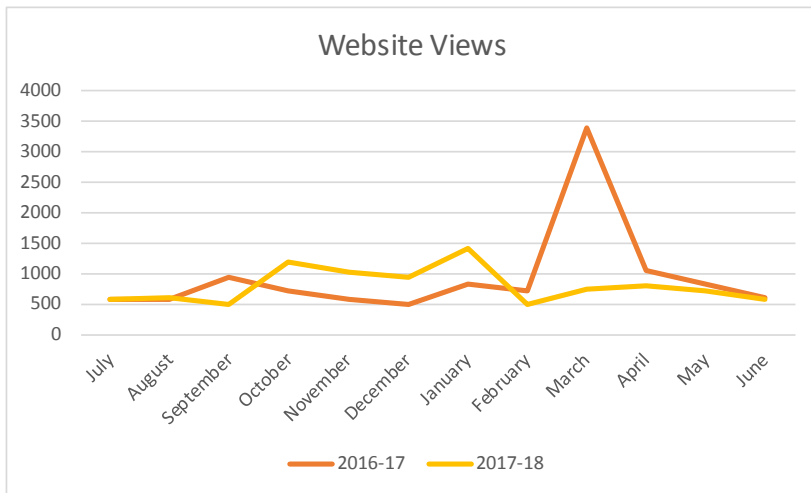
**Latest News**

**Highlights from the June 20, 2018 HRTPO Meeting**  
July 26, 2018  
Highlights from the June 20, 2018 HRTPO Meeting Sebring, FL Below are highlights from the June 2018 HRTPO Governing Board Meeting. To view the full agenda and all meeting materials ...[Read More »](#)

**Contact the HRTPO**

- [info@heartlandregionaltpo.org](mailto:info@heartlandregionaltpo.org)
- 863-534-7130
- 555 E Church St, Bartow, FL 33830
- [Media Contact](#)
- [Follow HRTPO on Facebook](#)

[Public Comment Period Open: Draft Transportation Improvement](#)



## Top 5 Visited Web Pages

1. Home
2. Plans and Program
3. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan
4. About
5. Events

## 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

### General Contact Information

- [info@heartlandregionaltpo.org](mailto:info@heartlandregionaltpo.org)
- 863-534-7130
- 555 East Church Street, Bartow, FL 33830
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- [Media Contact](#)
- [Staff Contact Information](#)



» 12,553 reaches  
» 1,086 engaged users  
» 157 page likes

**Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization**  
Published by Marybeth Soderstrom [?] · May 10 ·

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) outlines the roadways, bridges, transit, aviation, rail, trail/bicycle/pedestrian facilities, and landscaping projects that are scheduled and funded for the next five years through 2023 in DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties.

Join us for upcoming HRTPO Office Hours around the region:

<b>May 22, 2018</b>
1 pm - 3 pm Glades County Library in Moore Haven, FL
4 pm - 6 pm Okeechobee County Library in Okeechobee, FL
<b>May 24, 2018</b>
9:30 am - 1:30 pm Hardee County Library in Wauchula, FL
<b>May 30, 2018</b>
2pm - 4pm Florida B. Thomas Library in Clewiston, FL

HEARTLANDREGIONALTPO.ORG  
**Public Comment Period Open: Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for HRTPO – HRTPO**

**Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization**  
Published by Marybeth Soderstrom [?] · March 26 ·

We are seeking comments from the public on the draft Unified Planning Work Program through April 10. The document outlines the planning tasks that the HRTPO will complete for the next two years and proposes a budget for the state and federal planning funds for the region.

**Unified Planning Work Program**

**Fiscal Years 2018/19-2019/20**  
July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2020

HEARTLANDREGIONALTPO.ORG  
**Public Comment Period Open: Draft Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for HRTPO – HRTPO**

Join us:  
**facebook.com/  
heartlandregionaltpo**

# 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.

**COMMENT CARD**

Comment: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Please submit your comments today or mail this card to:  
HRTPO 555 East Church Street, Bartow, FL 33830

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**HRTPO**  
Heartland Regional  
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Please add me to the mailing list

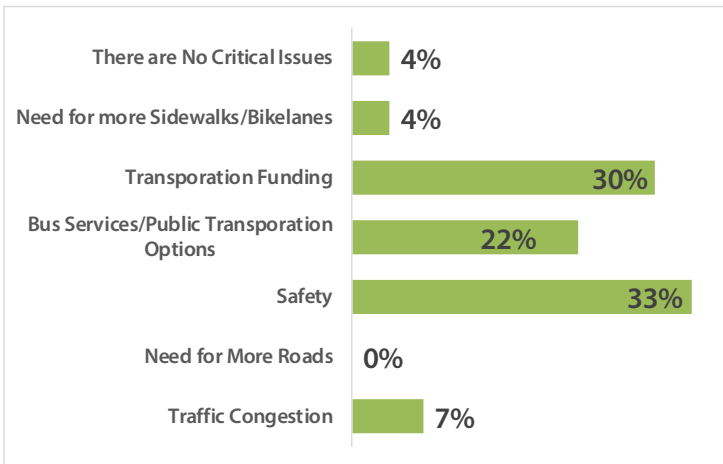
## HOW WE IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

- » 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

# 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](http://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?

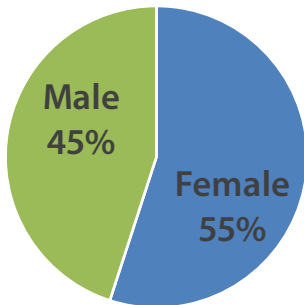


- » **100%** strongly agree or somewhat agree that overall, they are satisfied with communication efforts of the HRTPO.
- » **100%** strongly agree or somewhat agree that they are satisfied with the information provided by the HRTPO on public notices, flyers, newsletters, and presentations.
- » **100%** 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



## Age Group

18 and under	0%
19-34	14.8%
35-54	37%
55 and older	48%

## Racial or Ethnic Group(s)

African-American (non-Hispanic)	0%
Asian/Pacific Islanders	0%
Caucasian (non-Hispanic)	81.5%
Latino or Hispanic	14.8%
Native American or Aleut	0%
Other	3.7%

## Survey Participation by Zip Code

