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 November 2018, 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
✓ Collect and document measures of success each year.
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.

**Draft Transportation Improvement Program**

PUBLIC COMMENT: MAY 8 - JUNE 8, 2020

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 in DeSoto, Glades, Hendry, Hardee, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties.

The draft TIP will close and all input has been considered, the draft TIP will be presented for final adoption to the HRTPO Board on June 17, 2020, after seven (7) days public notice.

PUBLIC COMMENT: MAY 8 - JUNE 8, 2020

**Ways to Comment:**

- Call (863) 534-7130 x 134
- Mail to 555 East Church Street, Bartow, FL 33830
- Email msoderstrom@cfrpc.org
- View the plan online at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org,

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, disability, income, or family status. Persons who require special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act or persons who require translation services (free of charge) should contact: Marybeth Soderstrom, HRTPO Title VI Liaison, 863-534-7130, extension 134 (voice), or via Florida Relay Service (Fiscal Years 2020/21 - 2024/25)
# 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>07-17-19</td>
<td>1:30 pm</td>
<td>Multi-County LCB</td>
<td>Okeechobee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07-24-19</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Glades/Hendry LCB</td>
<td>Glades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-06-19</td>
<td>11 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-21-19</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-29-19</td>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09-18-19</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-16-19</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-23-19</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Glades/Hendry LCB</td>
<td>Hendry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-24-19</td>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-30-19</td>
<td>12 pm</td>
<td>Multi-County LCB</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-06-19</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-15-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-15-20</td>
<td>1:30 pm</td>
<td>Multi-County LCB</td>
<td>DeSoto</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-22-20</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Glades/Hendry LCB</td>
<td>Glades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01-23-20</td>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02-19-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-18-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03-26-20</td>
<td>2:30 pm</td>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-15-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-15-20</td>
<td>1:30 pm</td>
<td>Multi-County LCB</td>
<td>Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04-22-20</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Glades/Hendry LCB</td>
<td>Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-20-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Highlands/Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05-28-20</td>
<td>2 pm</td>
<td>CAC</td>
<td>Highlands/Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-17-20</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Board</td>
<td>Highlands/Teleconference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06-24-20</td>
<td>10:30 am</td>
<td>Glades/Hendry LCB</td>
<td>Hendry/Teleconference</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TAC - Technical Advisory Committee  CAC - Citizens Advisory Committee  LCB - Local Coordinating Board

# 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>09-20-19</td>
<td>8:30 am</td>
<td>Heartland 2060 Summit</td>
<td>Polk</td>
<td>133</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-30-19</td>
<td>9 am</td>
<td>Heartland Mobility Forum</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-13-19</td>
<td>9 am</td>
<td>Heartland 2060 Summit</td>
<td>Highlands</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-21-10</td>
<td>10 am</td>
<td>Project Priority Workshop</td>
<td>Hardee</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>No</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>Amendment to the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for Fiscal Years 2018/19 – 2019/20</td>
<td>October 28, 2019</td>
<td>November 4, 2019</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unified Planning Work Program for Fiscal Years 2020/21 – 2021/22</td>
<td>March 6, 2020</td>
<td>April 6, 2020</td>
<td>0*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2020/21-2024/25 Transportation Improvement Program</td>
<td>May 8, 2020</td>
<td>June 8, 2020</td>
<td>20*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2019/20-2023/24 Transportation Improvement Program Amendments</td>
<td>August 6, 2019</td>
<td>July 30, 2019</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 18, 2019</td>
<td>September 4, 2019</td>
<td>September 11, 2019</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 19, 2020</td>
<td>February 12, 2020</td>
<td>February 18, 2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15, 2020</td>
<td>April 7, 2020</td>
<td>April 14, 2020</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*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>Lake Okeechobee News</td>
<td>Joint meeting airs public transit's future</td>
<td>October 10, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highlands News-Sun</td>
<td>HRTPO to FDOT: Four-lane all of SR 70</td>
<td>November 9, 2019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake Okeechobee News</td>
<td>Good Wheels exits, MV Transportation takes over</td>
<td>February 24, 2020</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INVOLVE

Involving 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.

HOW WE INVOLVED THE PUBLIC

- Maintained active, standing committees such as the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) and Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), as well as the Glades/Hendry and Multi-County Local Coordinating Boards so residents have an opportunity to participate in the continuous transportation planning process.
- 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 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.
**HRTPO Board**

**Elected Officials**

**DeSoto County**
Commissioner Elton Langford
Commissioner Buddy Mansfield, Alternate

**Glades County**
Commissioner Tim Stanley

**Hardee County**
Commissioner Colon Lambert
Commissioner Noey Flores, Alternate

**Hendry County**
Commissioner Mitchell Wills
Commissioner Michael Swindle, Alternate

**Okeechobee County**
Commissioner Terry Burroughs
Commissioner Kelly Owens, Alternate

**Highlands County (Unincorporated) & the City of Lake Placid**
Commissioner James Brooks
Commissioner Don Elwell
Commissioner Ron Handley
Commissioner R. Greg Harris
Commissioner Arlene Tuck

**The City of Avon Park**
Mayor Garrett Anderson
Councilmember Maria Sutherland, Alternate

**The City of Sebring**
Councilmember Curt Ivy
Clerk Kathy Haley, Alternate

**Agency Representatives**

- Florida Department of Transportation (Non-Voting)
  FDOT District One Secretary, L.K. Nandam

---

**Citizen Advisory Committee**

**Primary Voting Members**

**DeSoto County**
Debbie Wertz

**Glades County**
Phillip Kelly

**Hardee County**
Katrina Blandin
Donna Doubleday

**Hendry County**
Keitha Daniels

**Highlands County**
Ray Royce
Kristie Vazquez

**Okeechobee County**
Michelle Sanders
Leah Suarez

**City of Sebring**
Bruce Behrens

**City of Avon Park**
George Karos

**Florida Department of Transportation**
Lori Carlton, Exofficio

---

**Technical Advisory Committee**

**Primary Voting Members**

- **Central Florida Regional Planning Council**
  Jennifer Codo-Salisbury

- **City of Arcadia**
  Terry Stewart

- **City of Avon Park**
  Robert Trevino

- **City of Clewiston**
  Randy Martin

- **City of LaBelle**
  Gary Hull

- **City of Moore Haven**
  David Miller

- **City of Okeechobee**
  David Allen

- **City of Sebring**
  Ken Fields

- **City of Wauchula**
  Kyle Long

- **DeSoto County**
  June Fisher

- **Glades County**
  Bob Jones

- **Hardee County**
  Randall Lanier
  Todd Miller

- **Hendry County**
  Margaret Embridge
  Shane Parker

- **Highlands County**
  Melony Culpepper
  Clinton Howerton, Jr.

- **Okeechobee County**
  Stef Matthes
  Louis Johnson

- **School Board Representative**
  Nicole Havee

- **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
DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties

Elected Officials
DeSoto County
Commissioner Terry Hill
Hardee County
Commissioner Noey Flores, Vice Chair
Highlands County
Commissioner Don Elwell, Chair
Okeechobee County
Commissioner Bryant Culpepper

Citizen Members
Disabled Representative
Aric Robison
Elderly Representative
Jessie Alford
Citizen Advocate
Ingra Gardner
Gerald Cruz Camacho, Alternate
Citizen Advocate User Representative
Patty Bond
Private Transportation Industry Representative
Robert Layne, Positive Medical Transport
Madelon Mansfield, JJ Medical Transport, Alternate
Medical Community Representative
Elizabeth Lind
Audra Wheatley, Alternate
Penny Pringle, Alternate

Agency Representatives
Florida Department of Transportation Representative
Charlene Ross
Michelle Peronto, Alternate
Department of Children and Families
Sheilea Watkins
Michael Day, Alternate
Public Education Community
Robert Smith
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or Division of Blind Services, representing the Department of Education
Bruce Emmerton
Leigh Ann Bellamy, Alternate
Laurel White, Alternate
Christina Martin, Alternate
Veterans Services
Larry Kirsch
Sarah Carter, Alternate
Agency for Health Care Administration
Signe Jacobson
Glenda Gonzalez, Alternate
Children at Risk Representative
Wendy Amos
Erin Linhardt, Alternate
Tonya Akwetey, Alternate
Charlene Edwards, Alternate
Department of Elder Affairs
Joan Cecil
Dalia Dillion, Alternate
Zeka Barbosa, Alternate
Shelby Yevington, Alternate
Frances Hazel, Alternate
Nancy Yarnald, Alternate

CareerSource Board
Ann Martin
Lenora White, Alternate

Agency for Persons with Disabilities
Donna Fain
Mollie Brown-Ferrier, Alternate
Mary Edwards, Alternate
Milory Senat, Alternate

Community Transportation Coordinator (Non-Voting)
Kelly Kirk-Brooks, MV Transportation

Glades and Hendry Counties

Elected Officials
Glades County
Commissioner Donna Storter-Long, Chair
Tim Stanley, Alternate
Hendry County
Commissioner Emma Byrd, Vice Chair

Citizen Members
Disabled Representative
Lisa Sands
Elderly Representative
Mary Bartoshuk
Citizen Advocate
Kristina Rodriguez
Bill Iffland, Alternate
Medical Community Representative
Nancy Acevedo
Mana Rickter, Alternate

Agency Representatives
Florida Department of Transportation Representative
Kelley Fernandez
Michelle Peronto, Alternate
Department of Children and Families
Aaron Stitt
Charlene Blum, Alternate
Public Education Community
Jim Brickel
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, or Division of Blind Services, representing the Department of Education
Fareedah Laney

Agency for Health Care Administration
Singe Jacobson
Lonnie Thompson, Alternate

Children at Risk Representative
Edwin Melendez
Vanessa Fischel, Alternate

Department of Elder Affairs
Shelby Yevington
Linda Howard, Alternate
Sarah Richards, Alternate

CareerSource Board
Rebecca Meeler
Suseth Cunningham, Alternate
Community Action Agency
Fred Richards
Barbara Ramos, Alternate
Veterans Service Office
Bob Jones
Community Transportation Coordinator (Non-Voting)
Kelly Kirk-Brooks, MV Transportation
**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.
Top 5 Visited Web Pages
1. Transportation Improvement Program
2. Transportation Disadvantaged
3. 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan
4. Plans and Program
5. Boards and Committees
Join us: facebook.com/heartlandregionaltpo
HOW WE MEASURE SUCCESS

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

HOW WE IMPROVE THE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

» 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
» Reevaluate annual survey tool and enhance collection of demographic information for participants
» Evaluate changing circumstances and adapt project schedules, outreach methods, and meeting formats to ensure safety of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic
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 less than one month. Twenty-eight individuals completed the survey, and 100% of respondents indicated they were familiar with the HRTPO and its mission and 93% indicated they had participated in the transportation planning process in the past year.

» 89% strongly agree, somewhat agree, or were neutral that overall, they are satisfied with communication efforts of the HRTPO.
» 93% strongly agree, somewhat agree, or were neutral that they are satisfied with the information provided by the Lake Okeechobee Gulf of Mexico Heartland Regional TPO

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no critical issues</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for more sidewalks and bike lanes</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation funding</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus service/public transportation options</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need for more roads</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Traffic congestion</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Comments:
» We need to continue to upgrade the rural area transportation grid in order to supply food and fiber.
» The “grading system” for projects definitely needs to be re-evaluated with public input.
» A text or phone call to remind me of a meeting would help.
» Invest in better data since the 2020 census will likely underestimate the areas population and growth potential.

Respondent Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18 and under</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-34</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-54</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55 and older</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial or Ethnic Group(s)</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African-American (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>3.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islanders</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian (non-Hispanic)</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle Eastern or North African</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey Participation by Zip Code