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Public Participation Plan

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HRTPO
Heartland Regional
Transportation Planning Organization



heartlandregionaltpo.org

(863) 534-7130

Approved: March 15, 2023

How to get involved



CALL US @ (863) 534-7130

8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Monday through Friday
Se habla español
Dial 711 for the Florida Relay Service (TTY)



WRITE TO US

Heartland Regional Transportation
Planning Organization (HRTPO)
555 E. Church Street
Bartow, FL 33830



EMAIL US

General Inquiries:
info@heartlandregionaltpo.org
Public Involvement, Media, Title IV:
msoderstrom@cfrpc.org



VISIT OUR WEBSITE

www.HeartlandRegionalTPO.org



COME TO AN EVENT

The HRTPO participates in events throughout the region and hosts workshops for citizens to learn about projects where they work and live. Visit the HRTPO website at heartlandregionaltpo.org to learn more.



PARTICIPATE IN PERSON

Make a public comment at a HRTPO board or committee meeting. Find our calendar of events at heartlandregionaltpo.org



VOLUNTEER

To serve as a representative on a HRTPO committee contact info@heartlandregionaltpo.org or call (863) 534-7130 for more information



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The preparation of this report has been financed in part through grant(s) from the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, US Department of Transportation, under the State Planning and Research Program, Section 505 [or Metropolitan Planning Program, Section 104(f)] of Title 23, US Code in cooperation with the Florida Department of Transportation, the urbanized area of Highlands County including the cities of Sebring and Avon Park; and the counties of DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee. The contents of this report do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the US Department of Transportation.

This plan may be revised without formal TPO action or public comment period to update information such as contact information, addresses or locations, and scribal errors.

Introduction

The Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization is the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties.

Transportation planning organizations were created by law to review and administer all policies and procedures applicable for state and federal transportation funding. The Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO) was established to provide transportation planning services for the six counties of the Heartland region including the urbanized area of Sebring-Avon Park.

The responsibility of the HRTPO is to manage a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process that results in the development of transportation plans and programs. The HRTPO provides a forum for cooperative decision making by officials of the affected governmental entities with input from citizens and constituency groups.

Public participation is a key component of transportation planning and one of the core functions of the HRTPO. Meaningful and effective public involvement brings a diverse set of views into the discussion and improves decision making by generating ideas for how the transportation system may be improved.

The Public Participation Plan (PPP) provides guidelines used by the HRTPO to inform and gather input from residents, communities, and interest groups throughout the six counties in order to expand the information available for planning.



HRTPO Full and Fair Participation

Public participation is solicited without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, religion or family status. Persons requiring accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) or language translation, free of charge should contact Marybeth Soderstrom, HRTPO Title VI Liaison, 863-534-7130 (voice), or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by emailing msoderstrom@cfrpc.org at least three days prior to the event. The HRTPO strives to ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected individuals, groups and communities in the transportation decision-making process.

Our Commitment to You

- Early and continuous public involvement
- Inclusionary practices in activities and notification
- Consideration of the needs of the traditionally under-served
- Collaboration with other agencies, local governments, private sector transportation entities, and non-TPO officials
- Convenient meeting times and locations
- Reasonable access to information
- Timely notice of public involvement activities, including appropriate review and comment periods
- Acknowledgment and consideration of public comments



Background and Purpose

What is a Transportation Planning Organization?

A Transportation Planning Organization, or TPO, is the organization designated by law with the responsibility for developing transportation plans and programs for urbanized areas of 50,000 or more in population. TPOs are established by agreement of the Governor and units of local government which together represent 75 percent of the affected population of an urbanized area.

The HRTPO coordinates transportation plans for the Heartland region including:

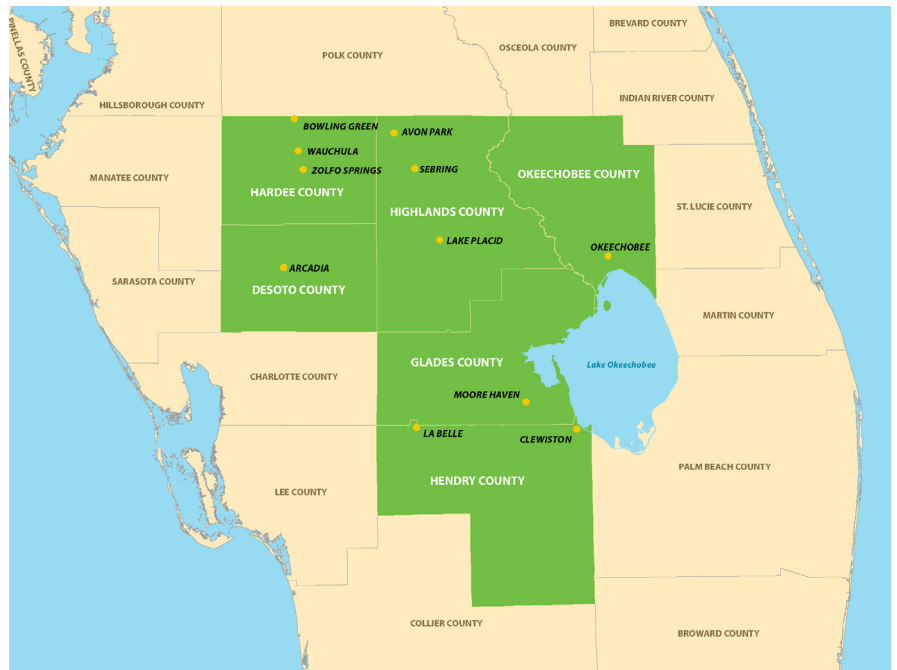


- **Six counties and 11 cities and towns**
- **The Sebring Airport Authority**
- **Federally managed lands** including the Avon Park Air Force Range
- **Native American Tribal Governments** partially located within the Heartland region: Big Cypress Indian Reservation, Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation

DeSoto	City of Arcadia
Glades	City of Moore Haven
Hardee	Town of Bowling Green, City of Wauchula, Town of Zolfo Springs
Hendry	City of Clewiston, City of LaBelle
Highlands	City of Avon Park, City of Sebring, Town of Lake Placid
Okeechobee	City of Okeechobee

What if I want to participate?

Public participation is an important part of the transportation planning process. Turn to the chart on page three to see all the ways you can get involved. The rest of this document provides details about the plan for public participation to be followed by the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization (HRTPO). If you have questions or comments about the HRTPO Public Participation Plan, please visit our website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org or contact Marybeth Soderstrom at (863) 534-7130 or msoderstrom@cfrpc.org.



Requirements for Public Participation

Regional transportation planning is guided by laws, rules, and policies set forth at the federal and state level. Both federal and state laws require public participation in the planning process. Transportation planning activities must also consider other laws and regulations including, but not limited to, the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, Civil Rights Act, and Americans with Disabilities (ADA) Act .

Federal Requirements

The emphasis on public involvement/public participation has grown in importance as federal transportation laws and rules have changed. Transportation Planning Organizations develop Public Participation Plans in consultation with a variety of interested parties. Public meetings must be held at convenient times and accessible locations and use electronic methods and visualization techniques to provide information to the public. See Appendix A.

- These regulations are found in 23 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 450.212 and 450.316 to guide the development of statewide, local and metropolitan transportation plans and programs. These regulations also include the following:
 - Early and continuous public involvement opportunities throughout the planning and programming process;
 - Timely information to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private sector transportation entities and other interested parties, including segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
 - Reasonable access to information;
 - Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and ample time for public review and comment at key decision points;
 - Explicit consideration and response to public comment;
 - Consideration of the needs of the traditionally underserved, including low-income and minority citizens;
 - Periodic review of public involvement efforts by the Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) to ensure full and open access to all;
 - Review of public involvement procedures by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) when necessary; and
 - Coordination of TPO public involvement processes with statewide efforts whenever possible.
- The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA) established a national policy for the protection of the environment. NEPA requires the consideration of potential impacts on social and natural resources during transportation decision-making.
- In addition, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires reasonable efforts be made to accommodate citizens with disabilities who wish to attend public meetings.

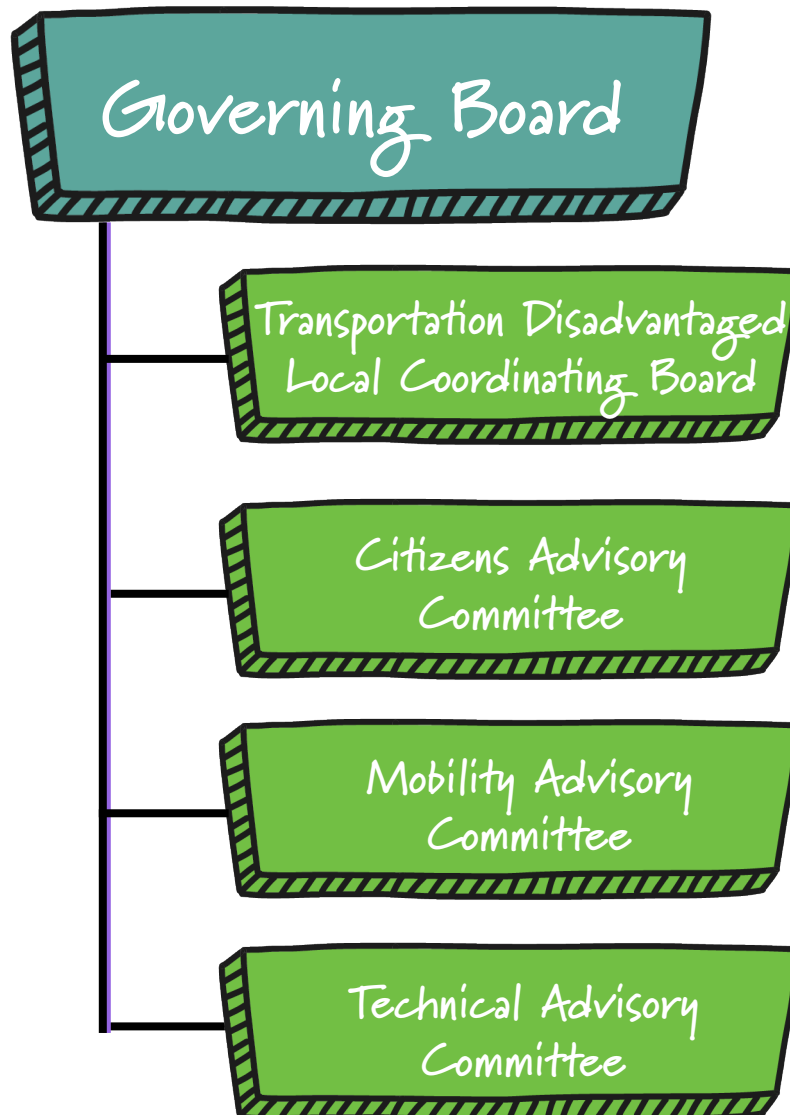
State Requirements

- Chapter 339.155, Florida Statutes (F.S.) addresses public involvement in transportation planning. It requires that citizens, public agencies and other known interested parties be given the opportunity to comment on the long-range component of the Florida Transportation Plan (FTP) and before substantive revisions to the Plan. It also requires hearings during the development of major transportation improvements.
- Chapter 339.175, F.S. requires public involvement in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).
- Chapter 286, F.S., commonly known as “The Sunshine Law”, addresses public access to governmental proceedings at the state and local level. The Sunshine Law requires that meetings of boards or commissions be open to the public, reasonable notice of such meetings be given, and minutes taken and made available to the public in a timely manner.

Our Organization

The TPO is a legislative body with the power to develop and adopt plans, manage priorities for improvements to the transportation system, and program and administer federal and state planning grants

The HRTPO is managed by a governing board of elected officials representing local jurisdictions. The board is supported by three advisory committees and the two transportation disadvantaged boards in the region. Each fulfills an important role in the transportation planning process within Heartland region. Public notifications are made for all regular and special business meetings of the board and committees. All meetings are conducted in an open public forum with an opportunity for public comment. To engage the broadest input of all citizens, at least one public meeting or workshop will be held in each county each year.



Governing Board

The HRTPO is the primary agency responsible for transportation planning in DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee Counties. The HRTPO Board consists of 12 voting members representing eight local governments and one non-voting adviser from the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

County	County Population 2010	% of Total Regional Population	Number of Members	Weight Per Voting Member
DeSoto	34,862	13.76%	1.0	13.76%
Glades	12,884	5.08%	1.0	5.08%
Hardee	27,731	10.94%	1.0	10.94%
Hendry	39,140	15.45%	1.0	15.45%
Okeechobee	39,996	15.78%	1.0	15.78%
Highlands (Unincorporated) + Lake Placid	79,459	31.36%	5.0	6.27%
Avon Park	8,836	3.49%	1.0	3.49%
Sebring	10,491	4.14%	1.0	4.14%
FDOT	N/A	N/A	1.0	Non-voting
Sub Total:	253,399	100.00%	12.00	100.0%

Source: US Census Population 2010



The HRTPO Board is ultimately responsible for implementing transportation plans in the six-county area

Meetings

The HRTPO Board meets at least quarterly to discuss issues and make informed decisions about future transportation projects, initiatives and improvements – providing leadership for a continuous, cooperative and comprehensive transportation planning process.

Meetings are at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members, typically on the third Wednesday of March, June, September, and the first Wednesday in December. At the last scheduled meeting in a calendar year, a regular meeting schedule for the next calendar year will be adopted by the HRTPO Board. Other meetings may be scheduled by the Chair at the request of HRTPO staff. Notice of such meetings will be given to members at least seven (7) days in advance. Special meetings may be called by the Chair with a minimum of three (3) calendar days' notice indicating the reason for the meeting and notifying all members of the HRTPO Board. In the event of an emergency meeting reasonable public notice will be given for amendments and will not be bound by the timeframes outlined on page 3.2.

For the most up-to-date meeting information, visit the website calendar on www.heartlandregionaltpo.org. Meeting agenda for the TPO Board and its committee meetings will be posted on the HRTPO's website at least seven (7) days in advance of a meeting.

Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards

As the designated planning agency for the region, the HRTPO provides staff support to the transportation disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards (LCBs) in the region. These board coordinate transportation needs of the disadvantaged in our community, including individuals with physical and economic challenges and senior citizens facing mobility issues. The transportation disadvantaged local coordinating boards assists the HRTPO in identifying local service needs and provides information, advice, and direction to the Community Transportation Coordinator (CTC) (Chapter 427 F.S) on the coordination of transportation services to be provided to the transportation disadvantaged.

Meetings

The LCBs will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting member. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings, posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org and distributed to local media outlets. These meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for interested parties to hear and discuss transportation issues.



Multi-County LCB

DeSoto, Hardee, Highlands, & Okeechobee
Typically meets the third Wednesday of January, April, July, and October

Community Transportation Coordinator: MTM Transit

Glades/Hendry LCB

Typically meets the fourth Wednesday of January, April, July, and October

Community Transportation Coordinator: Hendry County

Local Coordinating Board Membership

An elected official who will serve as chair (in areas where there is a multi-county system an elected official from each county will serve)

A representative from each of the following: Florida Department of Transportation, Florida Department of Children and Family Services, Public Education community, Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation or Division of Blind Services, Local Veterans Service Office, Florida Association for Community Action, local Mass Transit or Public Transit System, Florida Department of Elderly Affairs, Florida Agency for Health Care Administration, local Workforce Board

A person over sixty years of age representing the elderly

A person with a disability representing the disabled in the service area

Two citizen advocates representatives in the service area; one who must be a person who uses the transportation service(s) as their primary means of transportation

A local representative for children at risk

A representative of the local medical community

Each LCB operates under its own adopted Bylaws and elects its own officers. All other members are chosen from a cross-section of the community and can either request to serve on the board through an application process or can be recommended by community civic and social organizations. Contact the HRTPO for an application.

Committees

Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

The Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) consists of representatives from professional associations, neighborhood associations, civic and community organizations, and the private sector knowledgeable with the transportation needs of individuals with disabilities, minority groups, the business community, and geographic areas of the region. The CAC provides an avenue for obtaining public input for deliberations and recommendations on transportation issues. The CAC assists in identifying the needs of the public and ways to extent outreach opportunities. Comments received from the CAC members and non-members are treated equally.

A broad cross section of the six-county region, the Citizens Advisory Committee is a collective of volunteers that provide input on HRTPO work products and plans.

Every two years, the HRTPO will recruit membership for the CAC. Once members are appointed by the HRTPO, the committee will meet quarterly to learn from local subject matter experts on how transportation decisions are made, how projects are funded, how equity considerations affect decision-making, and become familiar with the multi-modal transportation infrastructure within the Heartland region.

Membership of the CAC includes two citizens from each member county, and one member each from the cities of Avon Park and Sebring totaling 14 members. The CAC operates under its own adopted Bylaws and elects its own officers.

CAC members are selected based upon an application submitted to the HRTPO. Application forms are available at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org or by contacting the HRTPO at info@heartlandregionaltpo.org. Applications must be reviewed and approved by the county or city TPO member government which the applicant will represent. Completed applications will be placed on the HRTPO agenda for consideration to fill vacancies.

CAC Meetings

The CAC will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members, typically in February, May, August, and November. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings, posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org and distributed to local media outlets. These meetings are open to the public and provide an opportunity for interested parties to hear and discuss transportation issues.

Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC)

The HRTPO established the Mobility Advisory Committee (MAC) on April 19, 2017 to serve initially as the steering committee to help guide and direct the Transit Development Plan (TDP) for Highlands County. The MAC member was then expanded to assist in the development of the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan. In the future, the MAC membership will assist in developing and guiding multimodal input including bicycle, pedestrian, trails, transit and other mobility modes.

The Mobility Advisory Committee assisted in the development of the Highlands Transit Plan and the Heartland Rural Mobility Plan

Meetings

The committee will meet as needed, at a time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings and notice will be posted on the HRTPO website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org.

Technical Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is made up of engineers, planners or other staff of local governments and agencies which review HRTPO work products and plans before they are presented to the Board. The TAC operates under its own adopted Bylaws and elects its own officers. The TAC includes up to 26 members.

The HRTPO Board's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is composed of technically qualified representatives of agencies responsible for maintaining, controlling, developing and improving the transportation system within the Heartland region, including the Cities of Sebring and Avon Park, the six counties, the Sebring Airport Authority, the Central Florida Regional Planning Council and the Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council. Other municipalities within the six counties will be invited to participate, including those operating municipal airports and local school board officials. Committee duties include coordination of transportation plans and programs arising from the review of all transportation technical studies and reports.

The TAC will be represented with the following membership through staff assignment by the local government or agency:

Two staff members of each HRTPO County	DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee	12 Members
One staff member each from the cities	Avon Park, Sebring	Two (2) Members
One staff member from the following municipalities	Arcadia, Clewiston, Lake Placid, LaBelle, Moore Haven, Okeechobee City, Wauchula	Seven (7) Members
One staff member from the following agencies or authorities	Sebring Airport Authority Central Florida Regional Planning Council Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council	Three (3) Members
One staff member representing public schools in the Heartland Region		One (1) Member
One staff ex-officio member from Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)		One (1) Non-voting Member

TAC Meetings

The committee will meet at least quarterly at a date, time and place acceptable to a majority of the voting members, typically on the third Wednesday of February, May, August, and November. Public Notice will be given seven days in advance of all meetings and notice will be posted on the HRTPO website at heartlandregionaltpo.org.



The Technical Advisory Committee presented a certificate of appreciation to Arcadia City Administrator Terry Stewart, who served as chair of the TAC from its formational meeting in 2015 through 2017.



The HRTPO is responsible for four core documents in order to be certified by the federal government as eligible to program and receive federal transportation funds. Public participation requirements prescribed by the federal government vary by document, but all of these plans and programs are completed through an open process that allows for public review and feedback throughout various stages of plan development. Final products and reports are adopted after careful consideration of community comment. HRTPO plans may be revised without formal TPO action or public comment period to update information such as contact information, addresses or locations, and scribal errors. Other administrative changes may be made by HRTPO staff as authorized by the Board.

As these documents are developed, they are made available on the HRTPO website and copies are provided to each HRTPO member government

<p>Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Details comprehensive plan for transportation modes ➤ Includes long and short range goals and strategies ➤ Identifies funding sources and estimates costs ➤ Provides framework for choosing transportation projects ➤ Includes local government projects 	<p>Adopted: Every five years Amended: As needed Public Comment: 30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous during the plan development of the LRTP.</p>
<p>Required by: 23 USC 134, 49 USC 5303, 23 CFR 450.322, and Section 339.175, FS</p>		
<p>Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Identifies HRTPO priority projects ➤ Provides 5-year implementation schedule ➤ Allocates state and federal funds for capital projects ➤ Becomes part of the Statewide TIP (STIP) 	<p>Adopted: Every year Amended: As needed Public Comment: 30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous during the development of the TIP.</p>
<p>Required by: 23 CFR 450.324, Section 339.175, FS, Section 163.3161et seq., FS, 23 CFR 450.324, Section 339.175, FS</p>		
<p>Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Summarizes planning tasks to be completed by the HRTPO ➤ Defines work products and timeline for major activities ➤ Proposes budget using federal and other funds for planning ➤ Estimates cost for each task 	<p>Adopted: Every two years Amended: As needed Public Comment: 30 days prior to adoption, seven (7) days prior to amendment, and continuous during the development of the UPWP.</p>
<p>Required by: 23 CFR 450.308, 23 USC 134 & 135, Chapter 339.175 (9) FS</p>		
<p>Public Participation Plan (PPP)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Outlines organizational structure and work products ➤ Describes HRTPO public communication tools ➤ Prescribes public comment periods ➤ Offers opportunities for public involvement 	<p>Adopted: Every three years Amended: As needed Public Comment: 45 days prior to adoption with seven day notice for public meeting and seven (7) days prior to amendment, continuous during the development of the PPP.</p>
<p>Required by: 23 USC134(i)(5)(B), 23 CFR 450.316(a), 23 CFR 450.316(a)(1) and (2)</p>		

Summary of Public Participation Procedures

The HRTPO follows agency organization and operation policies that provide specific guidelines for public records and public access.

Public Opportunities For Participation		Schedule	Public Comment Period	Public Notice	Public Access
Open Meetings					
Governing Board	HRTPO	Meets at least 4x/yr	At every meeting	7 days public notice	Summary of advance public comments provided in writing, opportunity for additional public comment at all meetings and prior to adoption of plans
Local Coordinating Boards		Meets at least 4x/yr	At every meeting	7 days public notice	
Committees	Citizen Advisory Technical Advisory	Meets at least 4x/yr	At every meeting	7 days public notice	
	Mobility Advisory	Meets as necessary	At every meeting	7 days public notice	
Plan and Program Adoption					
Long Range Transportation Plan	L RTP	Every five years	30 days	37 days public notice	Posted on HRTPO website with public notice, hard copies available, advance comments documented for review, opportunity for comment at all meetings prior to adoption
Transportation Improvement Program	TIP	Every year	30 days	37 days public notice	
Unified Planning Work Program	UPWP	Every two years	30 days	37 days public notice	
Public Participation Plan	PPP	Every three years	45 days	52 days public notice	
Amendments to Adopted Plans and Programs					
Long Range Transportation Plan	L RTP	As needed	7 days	7 days public notice	Posted on HRTPO website with public notice, hard copies available, opportunity for comment at all meetings prior to adoption
Transportation Improvement Program	TIP	As needed	7 days	7 days public notice	
	<i>The HRTPO has approved staff to make administrative amendments to the TIP in order to maintain consistency between the adopted Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the FDOT Tentative Work Program. If an administrative amendment is made, the amendment would be presented to the HRTPO Board as an informational item at the next regularly scheduled HRTPO Board meeting.</i>				
Unified Planning Work Program	UPWP	As needed	7 days	7 days public notice	
Public Participation Plan	PPP	As needed	7 days	7 days public notice	

In the event of an emergency meeting, reasonable public notice will be given for amendments and will not be bound by the timeframes outlined above.

Stakeholders in the Transportation Planning Process

Public involvement activities must be accessible to anyone who has an interest in transportation, regardless of race, age, income level, language or disability.

As different involvement techniques may be required to ensure inclusion, it is important for the HRTPO to gain an understanding of all the populations that work, live, and play in the area, so that communications methods can be tailored to their needs and preferences. Making sure that all interested members of the public are provided the opportunity to have input into our projects also helps the HRTPO comply with federal nondiscrimination regulations, including Title VI and environmental justice.

In addition to legal requirements, the more that is known about the study area population, the more effective the public involvement will be. The HRTPO will complete a Community Characteristics Inventory to further identify opportunities to provide meaningful public involvement opportunities to all populations in the Heartland.

Traditionally Underserved Populations

HRTPO staff will make specific efforts to engage communities that traditionally have not been participants in the governmental planning processes. Traditional non-participants tend to include persons who are low-income, minority, elderly or youth, individuals with disabilities, have no vehicles, and/or have low levels of literacy or have limited English proficiency. Staff will identify opportunities and strategies that will provide these communities greater access to the transportation planning process. Communities will be identified that require more extensive public participation outreach efforts through the census and local data available, and relationships with key leaders and organizations within the communities.

Accommodations will be made to ensure all populations are given the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process when available.

Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan

The HRTPO adopted a Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plan on February 22, 2018 that identifies the Limited English Proficient populations in our service area and provides guidelines for TPO staff to help ensure that information and services are accessible to LEP persons. View the plan on our website at www.heartlandregionaltpo.org. Translation services will be made available for all HRTPO meetings and documents as requested.



Native American Tribal Governments

The HRTPO will offer the Native American Tribal Governments located in the region the opportunity to participate in all HRTPO public participation activities and will formally notice the tribes of any products or significant processes of the TPO via registered US mail.

The HRTPO area includes:

- Big Cypress Indian Reservation
- Brighton Seminole Indian Reservation

Accommodations may include:

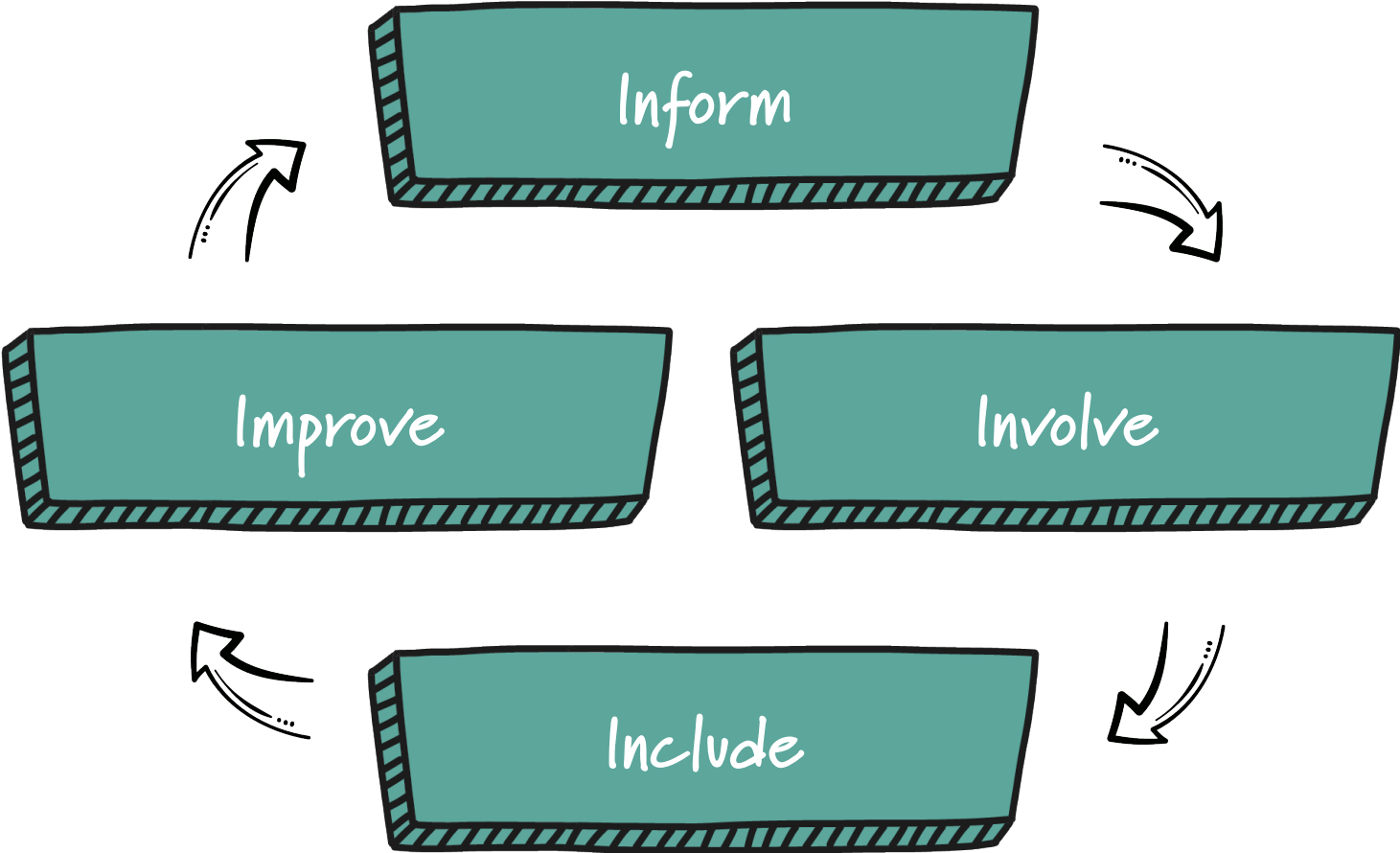
Accommodations may be made to ensure all populations are given the opportunity to participate in the transportation planning process when available. Below is a chart that is used by HRTPO staff to help determine examples of accommodations that may be helpful to ensure full and fair participation.

	Seniors	Youth	Hearing Impaired	Sight Impaired	Physically Challenged	No High School	Low Income	Non-English Speakers	Transit Disadvantaged	Shift Worker
Provide extended or special meeting hours	X	X							X	X
Plan a special meeting in a convenient location	X	X		X	X		X		X	X
Incorporate games or similar activities		X				X				
Provide written materials			X							
Provide American Sign Language interpreters			X							
Use plain language guidance	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Post meeting notices and project information in convenient locations						X	X		X	
Contact via telephone				X	X					
Ensure meeting location meets ADA requirements	X		X	X	X				X	
Place display materials at an accessible level during meetings	X				X					
Provide verbal assistance to convey the written information displayed at meetings				X		X				
Provide translated materials in languages other than English								X		
Ensure bilingual staff is available at public meetings as requested								X		

Goals

Public Participation Goals, Strategies, Measurements, and Success

Public participation is an on-going activity. The HRTPO has a variety of approaches for communicating and consulting with the public and is continually working to improve its outreach. These are the primary tools used to interact with stakeholders and the community. On an annual basis, public participation activities will be evaluated and compiled into a report and will be made available for review by the HRTPO Board, committees, and general public.



Goal 1: Informing the Public

Encourage the participation of all stakeholders regardless of race, ethnicity, age, disability, income, or primary language by employing a mix of tools to reach the broadest audience possible.

Strategies

Provide adequate notice of all meetings to HRTPO members, committee members, and interested parties by mail or email at least 7 days in advance including provisions for interested persons to respond in writing, by phone or by e-mail.

Disseminate announcements of meetings and activities, opportunities for public participation, and the availability of documents for public review.

Post meeting agendas on web page at least 7 days in advance.

Distribute summary of HRTPO Board meetings including presentations, actions taken, and documents developed to the agency's mailing list.

Include in public notices posted by the HRTPO that upon request and adequate notice, assistance will be provided to the hearing and visually impaired, those with limited English proficiency, the transportation disadvantaged, and others requiring special assistance.

Maintain an agency's mailing list of all interested parties.

Host at least one meeting or opportunity in each county annually.

Provide translators at public meetings in areas where a high proportion of the affected population comprises non-English speakers or when requested.

Ensure 100% of board and committee meetings are accessible to persons with disabilities.

Goal 2: Involving the Public

Provide early and ongoing opportunities for stakeholders to ask questions, raise issues, or share concerns.

Strategies

Maintain active, standing committees such as the TAC, CAC, and LCBs so residents have an opportunity to participate in the continuous transportation planning process.

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

Allocate time for public input on each committee's agenda.

Make comment forms available to solicit input in writing at public meetings or online.

Goal 3: Including the Public

Ensure that public feedback is considered in the decision-making process

Strategies

Document comments received and agency response as part of each major document developed.

Maintain a website that provides current information about the HRTPO activities, members, meetings, and contacts. The website will allow visitors to get to know the regional projects with visual tools and a Frequently Asked Questions section and provide links to other websites of interest.

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

Participate in community outreach events, providing additional opportunities to include traditionally underserved communities.

As HRTPO plans and programs are developed, distribute copies to public libraries and public facilities in the region.

Speak at local civic group meetings, schools, leadership courses, and conferences about transportation planning as requested.

Goal 4: Improving Public Participation Process

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

Strategies

Look for opportunities to add and create strategies that will reach greater numbers and more diverse populations.

Continue expansion of regional inter-TPO coordination of public participation activities, particularly when projects may directly impact residents from adjacent counties.

A Public Involvement Report will be developed annually that tracks progress of public participation including meetings, direct participant outreach efforts, comments received, efforts to include Traditionally Underserved and Limited English populations, and feedback from participants in the transportation planning process.

Information on the demographic characteristics of persons who attend transportation-related meetings, are members of established committees, or otherwise participate in the transportation decision making process will be tracked annually including race, ethnicity or national origin, age, gender, income, education, and occupation. A crucial piece of information is the participant's address or ZIP code.

Public Participation Targets

Targets
Participant demographics mirror regional demographics
Participants location is geographically distributed
Responses to online or in-person engagement events or public comment periods
Clarity of informational resources, including visualization/interactivity/printed documents/videos
Partnerships and coordination with partner agencies, nonprofit organizations and other outreach organizations



Appendix A: Relevant State Statutes and Federal Regulations

Safe, Accountable, Flexible, and Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005

- Previously the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 required states and TPOs to involve the public to a much greater extent in transportation decision-making than under previous law. When ISTEA expired in 1998, it was replaced by the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) which continued to put a strong emphasis on public participation.

Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century Act (MAP21)

- MAP-21 was enacted in 2012, and carries forward all of the advancements in public participation from the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation.
- MAP-21 continues to support previous federal public participation guidelines and adds new requirements, including the development of a Public Participation Plan by TPOs in consultation with interested parties; the addition of bicycle and pedestrian facilities users and the disabled as interested parties; public meetings to be held at convenient times and accessible locations; and the use of electronic methods and visualization techniques to provide information to the public. With MAP-21, public participation remains a hallmark of the transportation planning process.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)

- Title II of this Act, 42 United States Code (USC) Sections 12131-12134, prohibits the exclusion of persons with disabilities from participation in services, programs, or activities of a public entity. This is the basis for the Department of Transportation's standard language (see Part 1, Chapter 11, Section 11-2.4 of the Project Development and Environment [PD&E] Manual) regarding accommodating persons with disabilities for such issues as hearing or visual impairment.
- Title III of this Act, 42 USC Sections 12181-12189, requires public accommodations to provide equivalent access to individuals with disabilities. This is important for public involvement activities, as the locations of public meetings, workshops, and hearings should be accessible.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Other Nondiscrimination Laws

- Title VI, 42 USC Sections 2000d-2000d-1, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on race, color, or national origin. Since public funds are comprised of contributions from taxpayers of all races, colors, and national origins, fairness requires that federal activities receiving such funds be conducted in a manner that discourages racial discrimination.
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 USC Sections 6101-6107, prohibits federally assisted programs from discrimination based on age.

Executive Order 12898, Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations

- Directs federal agencies to identify and address any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of their actions on minority and low-income populations.
- Requires each agency to develop a strategy for evaluating environmental justice.
- Promotes access by minority and low-income communities to public information and public participation.

Executive Order 13166, Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency

- Requires agencies to develop plans so that people for whom English is not their native language or who have a limited ability to read, speak, write, or understand English can have meaningful access to the services provided.
- Requires recipients of federal funding to also provide meaningful access.
- Factors for determining when meaningful access is necessary include:
 - Number or proportion of limited English proficiency (LEP) persons in the affected area,
 - Frequency of contact with LEP persons,
 - Importance of the service provided to LEP persons, and resources available.
 - What methods of communication constitute meaningful access?
 - Translation of vital documents into languages other than English
 - Oral interpretation through translators or other interpretive services
- These services must be provided free of cost to the recipient

Florida Statute 286.011 Public Meetings and Records

- The Florida Sunshine Law mandates that meetings of the HRTPO and its committees, workshops, and programs are open to the public.
- All public records of the HRTPO are open for inspection and examination at the office of the Heartland Regional Transportation Planning Organization, 555 East Church Street, Bartow, FL 33830 on regular business days between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m.

Executive Order 07-01, Section 2 - Plain Language Initiative

- The purpose of this initiative is to ensure that announcements, publications, and other documents provided by state agencies contain “clear and concise” information. Specific requirements include: Use of common language instead of technical jargon, Providing only the pertinent information in an organized manner, Use of short sentences and active voice, and Layout and design that are user friendly.

Section 120.525, FS, Administrative Procedures Act

- Requires notice of public meetings, hearings, and workshops by publication in the Florida Administrative Register (FAR) and on the agency’s website, no less than seven (7) days prior to the event. Includes the general subject matter to be considered.
- Requires an agenda (containing the items to be considered in order of presentation) to be prepared and published on the agency’s website.

Section 286.011, FS, Public Business (Government in the Sunshine)

- Declares all meetings of any board or commission of any state, county, municipal, or political subdivision, agency, or authority to be public meetings that are open to the public at all times.
- Requires reasonable notice of all such meetings.
- Requires minutes of any such meeting to be available for public inspection.
- Prohibits public meetings from being held at a facility or location that discriminates on the basis of sex, age, race, creed, color, origin, or economic status or that otherwise restricts public access.
- Establishes penalties for violation of these provisions and exceptions for specific situations.

Section 286.29, FS, Public Business (Green Lodging)

- Requires state agencies to contract for meeting and conference space only with hotels or conference facilities that have been designated as Green Lodging facilities by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).

Section 335.199, FS, State Highway System (Access Modification)

- Requires notification of all affected property owners, municipalities, and counties at least 180 days prior to design finalization of any project on the State Highway System that modifies or otherwise affects access to the facility. Requires at least one public hearing in the jurisdiction where the project is located.

Jessica Lunsford Act

- Codified in Title XLVIII K-20 Education Code, Chapter 1012 Personnel, §1012.465-1012.468, this law requires background checks of any person entering school grounds when children are present. As a result of this, FDOT adopted a policy that K-12 educational facilities should not be used for public meetings and hearings. There is a provision for exceptions.

Appendix B: Acronyms and Abbreviations

For your information, these are some of the acronyms the TPO works with on a daily basis.

AARP	American Association of Retired Persons
AASHTO	American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials
ACES	Autonomous, Connected, Electric, & Shared Vehicles
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AER	Annual Expenditure Report
AHCA	Agency for Health Care Administration
AMPO	Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations
APR	Annual Performance Report
ARRA	American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009
ATMS	Automatic Traffic Management System
BCC	Board of County Commissioners
BEBR	Bureau of Economic and Business Research
BPAC	Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Committee
BMS	Bridge Management System
BUILD	Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development
CAC	Citizens Advisory Committee
CAMP	Corridor Access Management Plan
CAP	Commuter Assistance Program
CDMS	Crash Data Management System
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
CFASPP	Continuing Florida Aviation System Planning Process
CFRPC	Central Florida Regional Planning Council
CIA	Community Impact Assessment
CIP	Capital Improvements Program
CMP	Congestion Management Process
CMS	Congestion Management System
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
CRA	Community Redevelopment Agency
CST	Construction
CTC	Community Transportation Coordinator
CTD	Florida Commission for the Transportation Disadvantaged
CTPP	Census Transportation Planning Package
CTST	Community Traffic Safety Team
CUTR	University of South Florida Center for Urban Transportation Research
CUTS	Coordinated Urban Transportation Studies
DBE	Disadvantaged Business Enterprise
DOEA	Department of Elder Affairs
DOPA	Designated Official Planning Agency
DRI	Development of Regional Impact
E+C	Existing plus committed network (used in modeling)
EAR	Comprehensive Plan Evaluation and Appraisal Report
EJ	Environmental Justice
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
ETAT	Environmental Technical Advisory Team
ETDM	Efficient Transportation Decision Making
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FAC	Florida Administrative Code

FACTS	Florida Association of Coordinated Transportation Systems
FDOT	Florida Department of Transportation
FAP	Federal Aid Program
FAST Act	Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FM	Financial Management
FREDI	Florida Rural Economic Development Initiative
FHREDI	Florida's Heartland Regional Economic Development Initiative
FSUTMS	Florida Standard Urban Transportation Model Structure
FS	Florida Statutes
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
FTP	Florida Transportation Plan
FY	Fiscal Year
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPC	General Planning Consultant
HOA	Home Owners Association
HP&R/D	Highway Planning and Research/Department, also known as state "D" funds
ICAR	Intergovernmental Coordination and Review
ICE	Intersection Control Evaluation
IMS	Intermodal Management System
ISTEA	Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act
IT	Information Technology
ITS	Intelligent Transportation System
JPA	Joint Participation Agreement
LCB	Local Coordinating Board
LEP	Limited English Proficiency
LOS	Level of Service
L RTP	Long Range Transportation Plan
MAC	Mobility Advisory Committee
MAP-21	Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
MPOAC	Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council
NARC	National Association of Regional Councils
NADO	National Association of Development Organizations
NHS	National Highway System
MSTU	Municipal Service Tax Unit
NPS	National Park Service
PD&E	Project Development and Environment Study
PE	Preliminary Engineering (Design)
PEA	Planning Emphasis Area
PM2	Performance Measures 2: Bridge and Pavement
PM3	Performance Measures 3: System Performance
PPP	Public Participation Plan
PIP	Public Involvement Plan
PL	FHWA Transportation Planning Funds
PMS	Pavement Management System
RAO	Rural Area of Opportunity
RFLI	Request for Letters of Interest
RPC	Regional Planning Council

RSF	Regionally Significant Facility
RTCA	Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
R/W or ROW	Right of Way
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for users.
SIS	Strategic Intermodal System
RPO America	Rural Planning Organizations of American
SMS	Safety Management System
SPR	State Planning and Research
STIP	State Transportation Improvement Program
SWFRPC	Southwest Florida Regional Planning Council
SWFTI	Southwest Florida Transportation Initiative
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TAM	Transit Asset Management
TAP	Transportation Alternatives Program
TAZ	Traffic Analysis Zone
TD	Transportation Disadvantaged
TDM	Travel Demand Management
TDP	Transit Development Plan
TDSP	Transportation Disadvantaged Service Plan
T/E	Trip and Equipment
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century
TIGER	Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery
TIM	Traffic Incident Management
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TMA	Transportation Management Area
TOP	Transportation Outreach Program
TPO	Transportation Planning Organization
TRB	Transportation Research Board
TRIP	Transportation Regional Incentive Program
TSM	Transportation System Management
TTF	Transit Task Force
UPWP	Unified Planning Work Program
USC	United States Code
USDOT	United States Department of Transportation
UA	Urbanized Area
YOE	Year of Expenditure

Appendix C: HRTPO Response to Agency and Public Comments

The comment period for the Draft Public Participation Plan began on September 4, 2018, and comments were accepted through October 19, 2018. The PPP was reviewed and recommended for adoption by the Technical Advisory Committee at their meeting on October 17, 2018, and by the Citizens Advisory Committee at their meeting on October 25, 2018.

After the comment period closed and all input had been considered, the draft plan was presented for final adoption to the HRTPO Board at their meeting on November 28, 2018, with at least seven (7) days public notice.

Agency/ Public	Comment	TPO Response	PPP Page
Highlands County Citizen	I am an interested citizen in the effort and have reviewed the current document and it is my view that it is very effective in presenting the current status of its efforts. Thanks for keeping me on the public comment list.	Thank you for your review and comment.	
Federal Highway Administration <i>(These comments were received verbally during a review of the HRTPO's Title VI program)</i>	Suggestion to add the typical days and months that the HRTPO Board and Committees meet	The typical meeting day and month were added for each of the committees as well as the HRTPO Board.	2.2 2.3 2.4 2.5
	Suggestion to add clarifying language to chart on page 4.2.	Clarifying language was added on page 4.2 to describe that accommodations listed are examples of general guidelines for staff.	4.2



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