



## **2024 Public Participation Plan (PPP)**

**Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council  
(HOCTC)**

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## Introduction

### What is the HOCTC?

The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Herkimer and Oneida Counties. The United States Department of Transportation requires that every metropolitan area of over 50,000 people maintain a Metropolitan Planning Organization to ensure the disbursement of federal transportation funds is done following planning procedures. HOCTC shares responsibility with the state to develop cooperative transportation plans and programs for the two-county area. HOCTC also provides a forum for the identification of transportation needs by area residents and organizations.

### What is a Public Participation Plan?

Federal legislation requires Metropolitan Planning Organizations to develop and use a documented participation plan that defines a process for interested parties to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) has evolved since it was initially adopted by the HOCTC MPO in 1994. The July 6, 2012, passage of the federal transportation legislation, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Act (MAP-21), continued and expanded the requirement for public participation in the transportation planning process for MPOs. MAP-21 required MPOs to develop and utilize a proactive public participation process that was developed “in consultation with all interested parties and shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies, and desired outcomes [of the MPO transportation planning process].”

This PPP outlines the process to ensure ongoing public involvement opportunities in the development and review of MPO transportation planning documents, plans, programs, and projects, and for the completion, adoption, and implementation of these documents. Federal funding for transportation projects and planning continues under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law which was signed into law by President Biden on November 15, 2021. The purpose of this PPP is to ensure that the HOCTC public involvement process is carried out according to all current federal guidelines and to ensure equal opportunity for the involvement of all persons within the transportation planning process.

## Public Participation Plan Goals and Objectives

The goal of the HOCTC PPP is to involve all parties of the community in the transportation planning process. Furthermore, it ensures that the public has an equal opportunity to provide input and express their opinions on current transportation issues affecting Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

### Goals & Objectives

1. **Educate:** Inform the public about the county transportation planning process along with studies and plans. The more individuals understand the transportation planning process the more it can lead to active involvement and support.
  - Objective: Make information about the HOCTC planning process available and accessible to all interested parties.
2. **Outreach:** Consulting with stakeholders and individuals who are local experts in what they do provides HOCTC with feedback to incorporate into our plans and studies. Outreach is an effective way to improve the work of HOCTC and to carry these improvements to future plans or studies.
  - Objective: Establish and maintain close coordination with stakeholders that represent the multifaceted needs of the community and the expertise required for a well-informed planning process.
3. **Engagement:** Provide diverse and accessible opportunities for the public to provide meaningful input throughout the planning process, particularly for traditionally underrepresented communities or populations. Reducing the barriers to public engagement and providing diverse perspectives helps HOCTC have a holistic approach to transportation.
  - Objective: Provide reasonable opportunities for interested parties, including minorities, elderly, low-income people, and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) populations to obtain knowledge of various HOCTC plans by providing information encouraging their involvement/comment, and increasing their awareness of the transportation program.
4. **Connections:** Build relationships with the public and stakeholders and create consensus between both parties. Building connections with the community allows HOCTC plans and studies to reflect the community's and stakeholders' vision and priorities.
  - Objective: Ensure that all decisions made in the HOCTC transportation planning process and programs are documented clearly and in consultation with all interested parties involved, and that such processes adapt and reflect the vision of the community.

## HOCTC Organizational Structure

Created in 1963, under federal legislation, The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Transportation Council (HOCTC) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for regional transportation planning in the Utica urbanized area as well as the remainder of the area encompassed in Oneida and Herkimer Counties. The Herkimer-Oneida Counties Governmental Policy and Liaison Committee (GP&L) is the policy board of HOCTC. HOCTC is designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process and directs the regional transportation planning process as it relates to the use of federal funds. The transportation planning process is carried out by HOCTC staff and in consultation with the Transportation Planning Committee (TPC), an advisory committee of the GP&L. Recognizing that the public has a substantial interest in the planning of regional transportation policies and programs, the GP&L, TPC, and HOCTC have, and will continue to strongly encourage public participation in the planning process.

### ***Governmental Policy and Liaison Committee (GP&L)***

The GP&L committee governs the MPO for Herkimer and Oneida Counties and directs the regional transportation planning process as it relates to the use of federal transportation funds. HOCTC staff the GP&L and carry out the transportation planning process, working cooperatively with local, state, and federal agencies to conduct transportation planning activities in Herkimer and Oneida Counties. The GP&L has final approval and authority on all major transportation decisions, policies, and programs developed by the HOCTC. The GP&L is composed primarily of locally elected and appointed officials who represent the interests of the citizens of Herkimer and Oneida Counties, officials from the State of New York, transit providers, social services agencies, and other transportation stakeholders. All scheduled committee meetings are open to the public.

### ***Transportation Planning Committee (TPC)***

The TPC is a subcommittee of the GP&L committee, tasked with reviewing work program tasks and studies, addressing developing transportation issues, and providing technical recommendations to the GP&L. The TPC membership represents the cities of Utica and Rome, Herkimer and Oneida counties, and transportation agencies and providers within the MPA.

### ***Sub- and Advisory Committees***

As needed, sub- and advisory committees will be formed by HOCTC to address various priorities, topics, and projects as they relate to the work program of HOCTC. When formed the committees will report to the HOCTC Director, the GP&L, or the TPC. These committees will provide input only with no approval or authority capacity.

### ***Meetings of the GP&L, TPC, Sub- and Advisory Committees***

The GP&L and TPC are required to meet regularly to carry out the business of the MPO. Subcommittees and advisory committees are convened on an as-needed basis, when convened they will report activity to the Transportation Planning Committee. As such, meetings of MPO committees must include an opportunity for public involvement and comment on transportation

studies, plans, and programs. The general procedures for public participation opportunities at meetings are noted below. Additional procedures may be required as they specifically relate to planning documents, transportation programs, policy development, transportation studies or plans, or funding sources.

- General announcements for public involvement, public-involvement participants, and the media will be sent a notice at least ten (10) days in advance of all meetings.
- Meetings will be held in facilities that are accessible to persons with disabilities, and at locations accessible by public transportation.
- The public will be provided an opportunity to comment on issues relevant to the meeting agenda.
- TPC meetings will be scheduled at a minimum of one (1) week, and not more than three (3) weeks before GP&L meetings.
- Meeting notices, materials, and minutes will be available at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).
- These guidelines shall apply to any subcommittee or working group of either the TPC or the GP&L.

#### Electronic Meetings for Committees

##### *GP&L/TPC*

The GP&L and TPC will hold electronic/virtual meetings in lieu of in-person meetings only for extraordinary reasons:

- Public health and safety related to an infectious disease outbreak; or
- Civil unrest or armed conflict; or
- A natural disaster or extreme weather event; or
- Other emergency events as declared by a government-issued Executive Order.

The HOCTC Director, in consultation with the Chair of the relevant committee, shall have the discretion to either postpone an in-person meeting or if not practical, call for the meeting to be held electronically/virtually.

These meetings will be held via an electronic medium deemed appropriate by the HOCTC Director. Electronic/virtual meetings shall follow the same public notification and comment process as regular in-person meetings outlined in the Meetings of the GP&L, TPC, Sub- and Advisory Committees section. The virtual meeting access link and all other necessary information required for accessing the virtual meeting shall be included within the agenda. The electronic/virtual meetings shall utilize the same procedure as regular in-person meetings with regard to the agenda, the recording of minutes, public comment, actions of the voting membership, and parliamentary procedure in accordance with the latest edition of Robert's Rules of Order §9 – Types of Meetings.

### *Sub- and Advisory Committees*

Sub- and Advisory committees may meet electronically to facilitate the progression of topic-specific items. Electronic meetings shall be utilized if notice to do so is provided to the HOCTC Director, there is at least 48-hour notice to the members, and a summary of the meeting is provided to the HOCTC Director. This allowance is provided as no official action of the HOCTC MPO is being taken.

### *Involving the Public*

It is HOCTC's goal to ensure that the transportation planning process is open, transparent, and accessible to the community, and attentive to the community's needs and concerns. HOCTC strives for broad public input, yet it is recognized that most public comments and input come at the project and program level. It is an ongoing, interactive, and evolving process to include the public in transportation planning.

As required in the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (23 CFR 450.316), public involvement processes shall be proactive and provide complete information, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement. HOCTC complies with the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law requirement of a PPP that is developed by the MPO in consultation with all interested parties and "defines a process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, public ports, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program), representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process."

Throughout the MPO process, there are numerous opportunities for public involvement, which include:

- Development of the Long-Range Transportation Plan
- Development of the Unified Planning Work Program
- Identifications, prioritizations, and selections of plans, studies, or projects
- Development of the Transportation Improvement Program
- Project design and environmental review
- Regular meetings of committees

This is in addition to the other opportunities the public has for involvement in the transportation planning process at the local, state, and federal levels of government. Furthermore, the public transportation operators within Herkimer and Oneida Counties also provide for public involvement. Public requests and inquiries are consistently treated as a high priority.

## Agency Coordination

Coordination on public involvement and consultation processes with federal, state, and local agencies is an important part of the transportation planning process to reach a larger audience, minimize costs, limit redundancies, and give due consideration to other related planning activities in the MPA region. This includes both federally mandated planning products and planning studies and activities of statewide significance. HOCTC will actively seek to integrate the public planning process with public involvement activities undertaken as part of the statewide transportation planning process. HOCTC will pursue improvements to integration with statewide activities through its participation in the New York State Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (NYSAMPO).

## Environmental Agency Coordination

HOCTC consults with federal, state, and local agencies responsible for land use management, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, and historic preservation in developing transportation plans. Other consultation activities involve, as appropriate, identifying the appropriate responsible agencies and developing partnerships, encouraging participation in the development of major planning products, and facilitating discussions on potential environmental mitigation activities. HOCTC staff works closely with the Oneida County Planning and GIS Departments to coordinate with federal, state, and local agencies to maintain relevant inventories and resource maps for Herkimer and Oneida Counties.

## Public Participation Toolbox

HOCTC utilizes a variety of public engagement tools to ensure that the transportation planning process is open, transparent, and accessible to the community. These tools are consistently updated to reflect national best practices and advancements in public engagement technologies and are deployed in a manner to ensure that underserved communities have equal opportunities to participate.

HOCTC Complies with the Americans with Disabilities Act and federal Limited English Proficiency guidelines. Accommodations pertaining to interpretive (hearing impaired) services and/or translation services can be made available upon request by contacting HOCTC staff via email or phone. Furthermore, HOCTC seeks to accommodate all individuals with visual impairments by ensuring all publications utilize visually accessible font sizes and color matrices. Additional requests for accommodations, which can be made by contacting HOCTC via phone or email, will be reviewed case-by-case and will be accommodated to the greatest extent possible.

## Public Engagement Notification Tools

### Legal Notice of Meetings

In certain cases, a legal notice is required for a HOCTC-sponsored meeting, project, or program dependent on the federal program and fund source. For such instances that require a legal notice prior to action being taken on a particular item, a legal notice shall be placed in the official



newspaper of Oneida County and Herkimer County for ten (10) days prior to the meeting. The legal notice shall contain information regarding the action to be taken, the opportunity for public comment, the location of additional information, and details regarding the meeting. All Legal Notices of public meetings and workshops will be simultaneously published at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).

#### Media Notification

HOCTC will maintain a news media list to be contacted via Press Releases to announce, promote, and publicize all meetings, as appropriate. Media notification for public involvement is at a minimum of ten (10) days prior to a scheduled public involvement activity and includes meeting information including, date, time, location, and description of the activity. Forms of notified media include but are not limited to TV or radio outlets.

#### Mailed Information

In cases where a delineated project area or program exists, HOCTC will identify all physical addresses within that specific area. HOCTC may utilize identified physical addresses to send flyers, place door hangers, public meeting notification cards, surveys, and other information that will inform the public about an anticipated or ongoing project in their community. The information provided on the mailed materials may include details regarding upcoming public meeting times, dates, and scope of the meeting. The information may also identify alternative opportunities for public feedback and provide contact information for questions about the project.

#### Public Meetings and Public Workshops

HOCTC ensures all meetings are open to the public, held at convenient times and locations, and accessible to elderly, low-income, and minority individuals. Public meetings hosted by HOCTC are located in ADA-accessible buildings with public transit access not exceeding  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the site. Public meeting locations in communities where public transit is not readily available will be provided with a virtual/hybrid option and hosted at sites deemed geographically central to the community. As needed, HOCTC conducts Transportation Planning Committee (TPC) meetings, Governmental Policy and Liaison (GP&L) meetings, and advisory committee meetings. Other public meetings, public hearings, and public workshops are project-driven and are held, as necessary, to facilitate public involvement and participation in the transportation planning process. HOCTC, when planning for public meetings, will consider all appropriate groups of interested parties as defined by the BIL. All notices of public meetings and workshops will be available at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).

#### Community Event Tabling

HOCTC will seek to meet communities where they are at by facilitating community tabling at locations that have a high frequency of visitors and interactions throughout the year. These locations typically host events such as farmers markets, community fairs and festivals, or other

events hosted by private or non-profit organizations. Whenever possible, HOCTC will host community tabling events in locations at or near active study areas and in spaces where historically underrepresented populations reside or frequent to ensure that an equitable planning process is undertaken. When selecting community tabling event locations, HOCTC staff will refer to the HOCTC Environmental Justice Analysis to identify areas where public engagement will have the greatest and most equitable impact.

#### Field Visits and Walk Audits

HOCTC will utilize field visits and/or walk audits to get a full understanding of the project area when applicable. Using this tool allows HOCTC to employ a 'boots on the ground' methodology to place them in the environment where the planning work is concentrated. This perspective provides first-hand knowledge and supports a comprehensive planning process. It supports enhanced community interaction when working with the local stakeholders who have insights within or around the project area. This feedback provides the HOCTC staff with the necessary information to make informed recommendations that address the community's concerns.

#### Internet/Online/Website/Digital Publication

HOCTC maintains a website that serves as an online tool to educate the public regarding HOCTC's functions and the role it plays in local transportation planning initiatives. HOCTC will continue to update its website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) no less than quarterly to provide the public with timely information on the status of ongoing projects, completed projects, upcoming projects, and pertinent meeting materials, including meeting minutes. The website information includes general MPO background and contact information; transportation planning process documents (such as the TIP, UPWP, and LRTP), current transportation studies, ongoing project information, and other public-facing documents as it relates to MPO activities. The HOCTC website provides links to other local, regional, and state transportation plans, required transportation planning documents, and other data sources in some circumstances, HOCTC may create and maintain a separate website dedicated to providing updates and visual graphics for specific projects or programs. The HOCTC.org website will provide a direct link to these sites.

#### Visualization Techniques

Visualization can provide the public and decision-makers with a clear idea of the proposed policies, plans, projects, and the impacts on the human and natural environment. The new technology has made it possible to communicate what projects may look like when implemented and helps to make complex technical information more clearly understood. Examples of visualization techniques include sketches, drawings, artist renderings, physical models and maps, simulated photos, videos, computer-modeled images, interactive GIS dashboards, GIS-based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation, and animated simulations. HOCTC will continue to

use and explore new visualization techniques, as appropriate, to best convey information to the public.

### Surveys

Surveys are utilized to collect feedback from the public to guide the planning process. Surveys can help identify areas of concern, community-sourced recommendations, and collect general commentary. HOCTC utilizes surveys to collect internal tracking information, such as demographic information, to ensure that feedback is being collected equitably and strategically to help guide public engagement strategies at later stages of the planning process. Surveys utilize plain language for open-ended or multiple-choice questions, interactive mapping, and other visually intense formats to collect answers from respondents. HOCTC predominantly collects survey data using a virtual format, but also always offers all virtual surveys in a paper format to the public upon request and at public meetings or workshops.

### Contact List/ Email Blasts

HOCTC maintains a central contact list of public involvement participants, elected officials, interested agencies, and advisory groups. The list is used to provide information and opportunities for public input on activities related to the transportation planning process and studies. HOCTC will revise the contact list, on an as-needed basis, to maintain compliance with BIL. Contact lists are also developed on a project-specific basis to ensure that pertinent information is reaching the correct audience.

### Direct Contact with HOCTC

The HOCTC office is located in downtown Utica. The facility is ADA-accessible. Staff members are available in person, via phone, email, or through virtual meetings to discuss issues and concerns with members of the public.

#### *HOCTC Office location:*

Boehlert Center at Union Station  
321 Main Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Utica, NY 13501

#### *HOCTC Remote Contact Information:*

*Email:* [transplan@ocgov.net](mailto:transplan@ocgov.net)

*Phone:* 315.798.5710

*Website:* [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)

For assistance submitting written public comment, call HOCTC staff at (315) 798-5710.

## Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism

In the instances that HOCTC receives a complaint, conflict, or dispute regarding any policy document, planning document, procedural policy, or environmental justice element, at any stage of the transportation planning process, the following guidelines and/or process shall be adhered to.

### Informal Dispute Resolution Guidelines:

1. All issues raised are to be seriously considered.
2. Prioritize issues raised, noting frames of references and a clear understanding of content.
3. Document discussions and clarify positions.
4. Set and adhere to timeframes and/or deadlines and escalate as necessary.

### Formal Dispute Resolution Process:

1. All disputes should be heard and documented at the staff level. Any supporting documentation should include minutes, letters, dates of event occurrences, inquiries, and any other related material.
2. Disputes should be resolved within a short amount of time, usually a two-week timeframe.

If no resolution is found by the allotted time, the process shall continue to escalate to the next appropriate level until the dispute is resolved. At each escalation level, the appropriate executives from each associated agency shall convene to discuss and resolve the issues. This may include staff from HOCTC, Oneida County Department of Planning, NYSDOT Region 2, NYSDOT Main Office, FTA, FHWA, EPA, DEC, and/or other project-related agencies. Escalation should be raised until a resolution is found. Escalation shall be determined by the agreement of the HOCTC Director and the Region 2 Regional Planning and Program Manager. Notification of any action that requires utilization of the Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism shall be made in writing via mail, or e-mail by the HOCTC Director, to the Chairman of both the Governmental Policy and Liaison Committee and Transportation Planning Committee and be accessible at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).

## Emergency Provision for Public Involvement

Due to the unknown and unexpected nature of an emergency event, HOCTC will rely heavily on local, state, and Federal guidelines to ensure the safety of all staff while providing the continuation of a transparent and open planning process to the maximum extent possible.

During an emergency event, HOCTC will be flexible in meeting public participation plan requirements. The HOCTC Director or designee will determine what constitutes an “adequate public notice” under the circumstances should a regularly scheduled meeting need to be held in an alternative format, location, an emergency meeting need to be scheduled, or canceled. If access to the normal notification procedures through regional newspapers is not possible, HOCTC

staff will use other notification sources such as television, radio, social media, telephone, and/or posting notices at public locations.

## Focus Populations

The HOCTC Environmental Justice Analysis identified various focus populations that have been traditionally excluded from transportation decision-making and historically harmed as a result of those decisions. The chart below outlines the barriers of these focus populations and strategies HOCTC will implement to involve them in the planning process.

Selected Population	Barriers to Involvement	Outreach Strategies
<i>Low-Income Households</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have limited access to the internet</li> <li>• May have limited transportation</li> <li>• May be unavailable to attend meetings due to non-traditional work hours</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host community tabling events within densely low-income communities</li> <li>• Host in-person events at various times</li> <li>• Collaborate with human service providers to offer additional services such as transportation assistance or other benefits</li> </ul>
<i>Persons with a Disability</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Often have trouble physically accessing meeting sites</li> <li>• May have limited accessible transportation options</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that mailable paper copies of all surveys and presentations are available</li> <li>• Hold in-person events at locations that have reasonable accommodations</li> </ul>
<i>Minority Populations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May not trust government entities</li> <li>• HOCTC staff may not represent these communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host community tabling events within underrepresented community spaces</li> <li>• Develop partnerships with community-based organizations that reflect underrepresented communities</li> <li>• Host in-person events at non-governmental institutions (churches, libraries, etc.)</li> </ul>

<i>Elderly (Age 65+)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have difficulty with mobility</li> <li>• May not understand or lack comfort using technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that mailable paper copies of all surveys and presentations are available</li> <li>• Hold in-person events at locations that have reasonable accommodations</li> </ul>
<i>Rural Populations</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May have limited access to the internet</li> <li>• May have longer distance to travel to attend in-person events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Host community tabling events and public meetings in accessible rural community spaces</li> <li>• Advertise virtual events at rural libraries or other organizations where reliable access to the internet is available</li> <li>• Partner with community-based organizations to provide access to information</li> <li>• Ensure that mailable paper copies of all surveys and presentations are available</li> </ul>
<i>Limited-English Proficiency (LEP) Population</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Materials are often written in technical language</li> <li>• May have limited access to the internet</li> <li>• May not know the process for accessing translation services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where possible, incorporate visualizations in lieu of verbiage</li> <li>• Use plain language for all outreach materials</li> <li>• Offer directions for translation services in languages that reflect the community</li> </ul>

## Required Transportation Planning Documents

Current federal regulations stipulate that HOCTC shall produce four core documents that guide the goals and initiatives of the MPO. HOCTC is responsible for maintaining the regional Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP) (a 20-year vision of future transportation needs and improvements), and the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) (a four-year program that outlines the capital projects for federal transportation funds in alignment with the NYS TIP Capital Plan). HOCTC also is responsible for the preparation of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which identifies the annual transportation planning activities that are undertaken by the MPO in support of the goals, objectives, and actions established in the long-range transportation plan. Lastly, HOCTC is required to develop a Public Participation Plan to detail the process for providing individuals, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, and several other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the metropolitan transportation planning process.

Outside the required work products, the MPO undertakes other transportation planning work efforts that address both the short and long-term issues facing the county and region. These work efforts can include studies, analyses, programs, technical assistance, and policy development. There is no prescribed public review period or update cycle for these planning initiatives, but they do offer the opportunity to develop a unique public participation strategy that best meets the goals and target audience of the activity. When appropriate, a specific schedule and plan for public participation will be developed for these work efforts independently. HOCTC will direct staff and consultants to the PPP and Public Participation Toolbox to ensure all planning activities, programs, studies, and plans are undertaken using a consistent public participation template and similar strategies are deployed.

### Long-Range Transportation Plan (LRTP)

The LRTP is a twenty (20) year comprehensive framework for transportation planning in Herkimer and Oneida Counties, based on the anticipated transportation needs and recommendations to address current issues and future demand. The federal metropolitan planning rule (23 CFR Part 450.324) specifies twelve (12) planning requirements to be included in the metropolitan transportation plan. The LRTP is also federally required to be updated at least every five (5) years. The goal of HOCTC is to solicit early and continuous involvement from all interested parties in the community, including minorities, the elderly, and low-income people to ensure that the public has equal opportunity to provide input on transportation issues and vision. The specific process for public participation is outlined below:

- The LRTP planning process is carried out simultaneously in the virtual and paper-based/in-person environment through the utilization of the website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) and using a combination of in-person and virtual/hybrid notification and public engagement tools in the Public Participation Toolbox.
- LRTP development starts internally with the establishment of a timeline, tasks, and milestones to be accomplished.

- The document update process will be made available to the public via the HOCTC ([www.hoctc.org](http://www.hoctc.org)) or a direct link to a dedicated LRTP website.
- Technical Advisory Committee meetings allow for coordination and cooperation with interested and involved agencies in the transportation network.
- Public input meetings are to be held prior to draft plan development to share the plan, study, or project with and develop comments from the public. At a minimum, there will be one (1) meeting in each county, at times logical to encourage public input.
- Upon release of the LRTP draft, the document is subject to public review and a comment period of at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the adoption of the plan.
- The public review period will be formally announced in the form of a legal notice and media notification will be provided, and the LRTP draft will be available, in hard copy, at two public locations in each county, at the HOCTC office, and will be mailed to anyone requesting a copy via phone or email. The draft LRTP will be available electronically on [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).
- Stakeholders, interested, and involved agencies will receive written notification that the document is available for review.
- At least one public hearing will be held at a public location during the thirty (30) day public review period. The date, time, and location of the public hearing will be published within the content of the legal notice announcing the public review period.
- All comments received throughout the process are recorded within the appendix of the LRTP. These comments are provided, in summary, to the TPC and GP&L when the LRTP is presented to them.
- If there are substantial changes from the draft LRTP, a new public review period will be initiated and will utilize the same public process outlined above.
- The final LRTP is presented to the GP&L for approval.
- Upon approval by the GP&L, the final LRTP is transmitted to the appropriate state and federal agencies for acceptance.
- Amendments made to the LRTP will be subject to a minimum thirty (30) day public comment period so long as the horizon year does not change. Agencies and the public will be able to make comments during the public comment period via email, postal mail, and telephone.

### Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The TIP is a capital program of prioritized federally funded transportation improvement projects to be implemented within the two-county planning area. The TIP is the capital program that is developed from and consistent with the priorities of the LRTP. It is a four-year program, which is required to be updated every two (2) years and can be amended in the interim by GP&L committee resolution. The TIP follows two separate processes for public participation opportunities, dependent on whether the action is the creation of a new TIP or an amendment to the existing TIP. General requirements are outlined herein; specific requirements are within the TIP document.

- The TIP planning process is carried out simultaneously in the virtual and paper-based/in-person environment through the utilization of the website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) and using a



combination of in-person and virtual/hybrid notification and public engagement tools in the Public Participation Toolbox.

- Public-involvement participants are notified via public notice at a minimum of thirty (30) days prior to the TPC meeting for their input on the TIP.
- The HOCTC Director meets with the TPC and GP&L to inform them the TIP process is beginning, thus soliciting new projects and issuing a request for projects from all MPO members.
- After the project identification meeting, a draft TIP is prepared. The public and media are notified of the review period. The draft TIP will be available, in hard copy, at the HOCTC office and will be mailed to anyone requesting a copy via phone or email. The draft TIP can be obtained electronically online at [www.hoctc.org](http://www.hoctc.org).
- Comments received on the draft TIP are reviewed by the TPC. If there are substantial changes to the draft TIP, a new review period is initiated.
- Following review by the TPC, the draft TIP is submitted to the GP&L for approval.
- After approval, the final TIP is sent to NYSDOT for review and inclusion in the NYS STIP. Once included, NYSDOT then sends the final TIP to the FTA and FHWA.
- When amendments to the TIP are required, the public is notified via a legal notice and relevant documents are made available. There is a two-week review period preceding formal action by the GP&L for TIP Amendments.
- All public comments received throughout the review process are recorded within the appendix of the TIP. These comments are provided, in summary, to be reviewed by the TPC and forwarded to the GP&L to develop the final TIP.

### Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

The UPWP is the annual work program for HOCTC that directs staff work and utilization of the allocated federal transportation funding. The UPWP is developed through ongoing involvement with the public, and the joint efforts of the committees and staff. Public participation opportunities are incorporated into the development of the UPWP as outlined below:

- The UPWP planning process is carried out simultaneously in the virtual and paper-based/in-person environment through the utilization of the website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) and using a combination of in-person and virtual/hybrid notification and public engagement tools in the Public Participation Toolbox.
- Development of the UPWP begins by soliciting input for new studies, tasks, plans, or projects from the members of the TPC and the GP&L.
- This input is combined with the continuing activities from the previous UPWP and in consultation with the NYSDOT, FTA, and FHWA.
- The draft UPWP requires a thirty (30) day review period and is initiated with a legal notice. The public, stakeholders, agencies, and the media are notified of the review period. The draft UPWP can be obtained electronically online at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org) and will be available, in hard copy, at the HOCTC office and will be mailed to anyone requesting a copy via phone or email.
- The TPC is provided the draft UPWP for review and comment, after which it is presented to the GP&L for final review.

- The UPWP is reviewed, discussed, and adopted by the GP&L. After adoption the UPWP is sent to NYSDOT for processing and submission to the FHWA and the FTA.

### Environmental Justice (EJ) Analysis

The following requirements and procedures for public participation will apply to the development and all updates to the EJ Analysis.

- The EJ planning process is a means to improve the transportation decision-making process.
- The EJ planning process is carried out simultaneously in the virtual and paper-based/in-person environment through the utilization of the website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) and using a combination of in-person and virtual/hybrid notification and public engagement tools in the Public Participation Toolbox.
- EJ Analysis development starts internally with the establishment of a timeline, tasks, and an internal review of the current socio-demographic data and ensures Title VI compliance and vulnerable populations are included in the planning process.
- The draft EJ Analysis is released for a thirty (30) day public review period which is initiated with a legal notice. The public, stakeholders, agencies, and the media are notified of the review period. The draft EJ Analysis can be obtained electronically online at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org) and will be available, in hard copy, at the HOCTC office and will be mailed to anyone requesting a copy via phone or email.
- During the development of the EJ Analysis, outreach efforts will include in-person public events, a survey (both digital and paper), and interagency engagement.
- The TPC is provided the draft EJ Analysis for review and comment, after which it is presented to the GP&L for final review.
- The EJ Analysis is reviewed, discussed, and adopted by the GP&L.
- The approved PPP will be forwarded to NYSDOT, FHWA, and the FTA.

### Public Participation Plan (PPP)

The following requirements and procedures for public participation will apply to the development and all updates to the HOCTC PPP.

- The PPP planning process is carried out simultaneously in the virtual and paper-based/in-person environment through the utilization of the website ([www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org)) and using a combination of in-person and virtual/hybrid notification and public engagement tools in the Public Participation Toolbox.
- According to federal regulations, MPOs are required to have a minimum public comment period of forty-five (45) days prior to GP&L action and adoption of the PPP.
- The public comment period will commence with the publishing of a legal notice in the official newspaper of Herkimer and Oneida County and via a notice on the HOCTC website.
- The draft PPP will be available, in hard copy, at the HOCTC office, and will be mailed to anyone requesting a copy via phone or email. The draft PPP can be obtained online at [www.HOCTC.org](http://www.HOCTC.org).

- Any comments received during the public review are included in the draft PPP.
- The PPP and any subsequent revisions must be approved by the GP&L Committee.
- The approved PPP will be forwarded to NYSDOT, FHWA, and the FTA, as required by law (23 CFR 450.316) BIL.

HOCTC will continue to provide opportunities for public involvement in planning activities. Depending on the availability of resources, the procedures identified in the PPP may be delayed or replaced with newer and more inclusive public engagement tools. HOCTC will document any outreach activities identified in the PPP to provide strategies, if needed, to ensure sufficient and appropriate outreach is maintained. HOCTC will commit to reviewing the PPP every other year post-adoption, at minimum, to ensure that the document remains current with all HOCTCs required documents and current federal regulations.

## Evaluation and Updates

HOCTC seeks to establish annual measurable outcomes related to its outreach and public engagement efforts. Creating measurable outcomes provides insights on how public engagement efforts can be improved, where new strategies need to be implemented to reach focus populations, and in determining what strategies are succeeding. Measurable outcomes that will be monitored by HOCTC will include the following:

- Survey response rates by select demographic groupings
- Number of participants at in-person events
- Number of participants at virtual events
- Number of annual visitors to the HOCTC website

Based on the size and the scope of a specific transportation plan, additional/fewer metrics may be captured and included in the respective final plan report.

## Appendix A: Federal and State Regulations

## Federal and State Regulations Governing the Public Participation Plan

Transportation planning is a comprehensive and complex process that requires careful planning and decision-making, inclusive of all modes of transportation. Therefore, engaging the public early and in all applicable stages of the transportation planning process is critical to the success of any transportation project, plan, or document. This process ensures the public has meaningful opportunities to participate in the decision-making during the transportation planning process. Federal and State regulations and statutes pertaining to the public involvement processes and procedures provide the framework for the HOCTC PPP.

### 1. **Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (23 CFR 450.316)**

The current federal transportation legislation, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), details PPP requirements as it pertains to reasonable opportunities for community outreach and engagement, standards for disseminating public information, and ensuring the public participation process is equitable. The requirements of the law are stated in the Code of Federal Regulations under the MPO interested parties, participation, and consultation section. Among other items, MPOs are required to undertake the following:

- Provide adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review
- Employ visualization techniques for all MPO plans
- Make public information accessible utilizing electronically accessible formats
- Seek out and consider those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems
- Hold public meetings at convenient and accessible times and locations
- Demonstrate explicit consideration and response to public input received

### 2. **Executive Order 13166 (Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP))**

This 2000 regulation directs each Federal agency to examine the services it provides and develop and implement a system by which LEP persons can meaningfully access those services. Federal agencies were further instructed to publish guidance and technical assistance to recipients of federal funds as to how they can ensure meaningful access to their programs and activities by LEP persons.

### 3. **Executive Order 12898 (Environmental Justice)**

Enacted in 1994, the executive mandate focuses on the environmental and health conditions of minority and low-income communities. It directs each Federal agency to review its procedures and make Environmental Justice part of its policies and activities by identifying and addressing any disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of all programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.

4. **Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (Section 202-Discrimination)**

This law states that no qualified individual with a disability shall, for the reason of such disability, be excluded from participation in or be denied the benefits of the services, programs, or activities of a public entity, or be subjected to discrimination by such entity.

5. **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Section 601)**

This provision prohibits discrimination based on race, color, or national origin in programs and activities receiving Federal financial assistance. Specifically, Title VI provides that "no person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance" (42 U.S.C. Section 2000d).

6. **Executive Order 13175**

Consultation and Coordination with Tribal Governments Executive Order 13175 states that "in formulating or implementing policies that have tribal implications, agencies shall establish regular and meaningful consultation and collaboration with tribal officials to reduce the imposition of unfunded mandates upon Indian tribes."

There are Oneida Indian Nation tribal lands identified within the HOCTC MPA planning area. If a HOCTC's study or activity programming affects tribal land, HOCTC will seek to include tribal leaders as a stakeholder in the transportation planning process.

7. **New York State Open Meetings Law (NYS Public Officers Law, Article 7)**

This law outlines mandatory procedures on how public meetings are to be conducted. It states that public business is to be performed in an open and public manner and that the citizens of New York State be fully aware of and able to observe the performance of public officials and attend and listen to the deliberations and decisions that form the making of public policy.