

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

**Thurston Regional
Planning Council**

Adopted April 4, 2008

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

The mission of the Thurston Regional Planning Council - to *Provide visionary leadership on regional plans, policies and issues* - cannot be achieved without public interaction.

Through its Public Participation Plan (Plan), the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) intends to provide opportunity for appropriate broad-based, early, continuous, and meaningful public participation in all planning, programs, and projects. Further, TRPC intends to encourage an on-going forum for the discussion of regional issues, striving for an open exchange of information and ideas. The Plan calls for a broad range of public information and participation opportunities, supplying complete information, timely public notice and full access to key decisions.

The Plan provides a broad overview of basic public participation policy. As deemed necessary, TRPC will incorporate details of routine procedures into the *TRPC Policies and Procedures Manual*. Certain major planning efforts, programs, or projects may include public participation plans specific to that effort. The term “major” is to be applied loosely. If a proposed action or decision is clearly a normal-course-of-business activity that does not significantly affect the public or alter public policy, it may not be necessary to apply these public procedures. If there is a question as to whether the Plan should be followed, TRPC shall follow it to ensure appropriate public notification and participation.

The Plan will be reassessed as necessary to determine if the public’s needs for information and access are being met or to comply with changing regulatory requirements.

Failure to exactly comply with all Plan elements shall not constitute a failure of public process, nor render any actions or decisions invalid.

Public Access

TRPC will provide the public with timely notice and reasonable access to meetings and information.

- All regular meetings of the Thurston Regional Planning Council, Transportation Policy Board and any subcommittee shall be open to the public, except as allowed under the state Open Public Meetings Act. Special meetings such as public hearings, forums, workshops and open houses shall also be open to the public.
- The Thurston Regional Planning Council shall hold all regular and special meetings at venues that are accessible to persons with disabilities. Every effort will be made to select venues that are accessible to people who rely on public transportation.
- TRPC shall make every effort to hold special meetings, workshops and other outreach efforts in local communities and rural areas and at different times of day to allow more opportunity for attendance by all members of the community.
- The Thurston Regional Planning Council shall make every effort to accommodate persons with special needs. Individuals needing special accommodation to participate in meetings should contact TRPC three days prior to the scheduled meeting.

- Public notification of all regular meetings of the Thurston Regional Planning Council, Transportation Policy Board and subcommittees shall be made at least 10 days in advance of the meeting. Each agenda shall also include the date of the next scheduled meeting. In the case of special meetings, every attempt will be made to provide at least 10 days advance notice. Meeting notices will also be posted on TRPC's website.
- Notification of all regular and special meetings will be provided to TRPC membership, meeting participants, local news media, and anyone requesting notification. Notification will be made via mail and or/electronic means and posted on the TRPC website and shall include the time, date and location of the meeting. In certain circumstances, notice may also take the form of a press release, paid legal notice or advertisement, or may use non-traditional methods to reach certain segments of the community.
- All TRPC plans and documents shall be made available for public review at the TRPC office. In certain circumstances, copies of documents and plans will also be distributed to public libraries and other public venues for review. When feasible, plans and documents will be posted on the TRPC website.
- Most publications will be made available free of charge. When appropriate, a charge may be assessed to cover the cost of production and mailing.
- TRPC will provide reasonable access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and programs.
- Upon request, and within a reasonable timeframe, TRPC will make every effort to make plans and documents available in alternative formats and languages.

Public Outreach

TRPC shall create opportunities for all segments of the community to learn about and engage in issues under consideration by the Council, particularly those that may be directly impacted by the outcomes of specific recommendations and decisions.

- TRPC shall inform and educate the public about regional issues using a variety of means, including, but not limited to: regular and special meetings, workshops, printed materials, exhibits, open houses, electronic communication, and town hall meetings. Efforts will be made to “take the information to the people” by traveling to different parts of the region with issues of regional interest and including the information as part of other general or special interest gatherings.
- TRPC shall use visualization techniques to aid the public in understanding plans, projects or programs. These may include sketches, drawings, artist renderings, physical models and maps, simulated photos, videos, computer modeled images, interactive GIS systems, GIS based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation and computer simulation.
- The Thurston Regional Planning Council shall identify ways to reach out to certain underrepresented members of the community, who may because of income, location, language or other barriers have been unable to fully participate in the process. Outreach efforts may enlist the assistance of civil, social service, faith-based, or political entities to better understand the community and may result in production of special materials.
- TRPC shall develop and maintain a list of civic, advocacy, service and other organizations and interested or potentially interested persons to disseminate information about regional activities.
- Special efforts shall be made to include members of potentially underserved groups, including minority and low-income populations.
- TRPC will seek new methods and technologies to enlist in informing and engaging the public regarding all agency plans, projects and programs.
- The Public Participation Plan shall be reviewed periodically to determine its effectiveness assuring full and open access to all.

Public Input

TRPC values a two-way conversation with the public it serves. Explicit consideration of public input and response to public input shall be an integral element of TRPC’s decision-making processes.

- A public comment period shall be provided during each regular meeting of the Thurston Regional Planning Council and Transportation Policy Board. The Chair may limit the

duration of comments or provide alternative options for public comment in certain circumstances.

- On a regular basis, TRPC shall convene gatherings of community members in a variety of formats and venues to provide the opportunity for the public to express comments, suggestions, concerns and ideas on regional issues.
- As needed, TRPC will utilize surveys to assess either widespread or selected public opinion.
- The Thurston Regional Planning Council shall offer different avenues for public comment – written, oral, formal, informal, electronic and other means suitable to the project and the community involved.
- Certain plans and programs require an extended review period, to allow for the submittal of written comment. For projects with such extended review, TRPC shall provide ample notice and opportunity for review and written comment.
- Written and oral comments will be maintained in TRPC’s files. In certain circumstances, the comments may be incorporated into plans, programs or studies, either in total or in summary.

In addition to the procedures outlined in the Plan, TRPC will comply with all applicable state and federal laws, including but not limited to:

- Open Public Meetings Act {RCW 42.30}
- State Environmental Policy Act {RCW 43.21C}
- State Growth Management Act {RCW 36.70A}
- Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990 {P.L. 101-336}
- Federal Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA21) {P.L. 105-178}
- The Civil Rights Act of 1964 {42 U.S.C 2000d}
- Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 {23 U.S.C. 324}
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504 {29 U.S.C. 790}
- Age Discrimination Act of 1975 {42 U.S.C. 6101}
- Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 {P.L. 100-209}
- Executive Order 12898 – 59 Fed. Reg. 7629 (1994) – (Environmental Justice)

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