

# Appendix F

## Public Involvement

*“... 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.”*

This excerpt from *Thurston Regional Planning Council’s Public Participation Plan* clearly defines the region’s belief in the importance of public involvement.

### Organization

Thurston Regional Planning Council’s (TRPC) transportation planning outreach efforts span the past decade, resulting from a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive planning process. We’ve been building the next long range transportation plan since we adopted the last one.

TRPC sought comment specific to the issues and content of this Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update.

Appendix F combines and summarizes this feedback, organized in the following sections:

- The Last Decade – Public involvement in regional transportation planning and projects.
- Tools – TRPC’s outreach expertise has grown with mastery of several new tools.
- Public Engagement Strategy for Updating the RTP – Outreach efforts specific to the RTP.
- Draft RTP Review Activities – Public involvement during the formal public comment period.
- Public Transportation Priorities Survey and Investment Calculator Report – Detailed information.

## The Last Decade

TRPC led and supported public engagement through an extensive array of transportation planning efforts in the region. The input gathered through these connections has shaped the community and the content of the RTP. Highlights include:

**Vision Reality Task Force** identified disconnects between the vision for regional growth and marketplace realities. One key disconnect is the increasing share of workers commuting out of and into the region, relative to those who live and work in the region. Policy makers especially engaged commercial and residential developers, realtors, the finance industry, and market analysts to understand the disconnects and how/if we might counter these trends.

**Passenger Rail Workgroup** laid the groundwork for discussions with Sound Transit about potential rail options and what steps the region needed to consider for future service.

The **Bicycle Advisory Committee and the Trails Advisory Committee** shaped development of the Regional Trails Plan, which guides expansion of our Class I trail network. Representatives from community interests and government continue working together today to promote the use of the growing trail system.

**Human Services Transportation Forum** convened social service providers from throughout the region to guide the regional Coordinated Public Transit & Human Services Plan, prioritize local projects, and to collaborate

on more efficient and effective ways to provide transportation services to their clients.

**Sustainable Thurston Task Force** reached out extensively throughout the region in developing *Creating Places, Preserving Spaces – A Sustainable Development Plan for the Thurston Region*. This effort touched on the visions, basic needs, and interests of people throughout the region, with topics like economic development, health and human services, local food systems, housing, public safety, school transportation, water, and energy. We conducted a general outreach survey of 1,200 people and an on-line self-select survey with the same questions. Nearly 200 people representing over 100 organizations joined panels to develop a series of white papers on the topic areas.

The Basic Needs Survey was a component of the Sustainable Thurston Plan and reached a demographic that does not traditionally participate in planning processes. The survey was distributed by TRPC partners including the Thurston County Housing Authority, Community Action Council, Family Support Center, and Thurston County Food Bank, and was available in both Spanish and English.

**Urban Corridors Task Force** focused on ways to provide transportation service more efficiently and conveniently along primary arterials and bus routes. A key finding in this effort was to encourage denser land use (residential and commercial development and infill) within one-quarter mile of these primary routes. Like the Vision Reality Task Force before it, the Urban Corridors Task Force engaged property developers, realtors, the finance industry, and market analysts in the conversation.

## Importance of Transportation Choices to Disadvantaged Populations for Access to Jobs, Goods, and Services

The Basic Needs survey highlighted the necessity of transportation options, especially transit, for people of low income to meet their daily needs. Thurston County’s urban centers and corridors, where transit already exists and is frequent enough to be convenient, and where there is already a high concentration of jobs, goods, and services, represents the best area for residents without access to a car to locate. For some it’s not about choice, it’s a necessity.

Over 1,000 surveys were received. Of those surveyed:

**72%** have an annual household income under \$15,000. Only 6 percent of households countywide fall into that income category. Median household income in 2012 was \$60,600.

**88%** sometimes, often, or always do not have enough money to buy food.

**79%** sometimes, often, or always had trouble paying their housing or transportation costs.

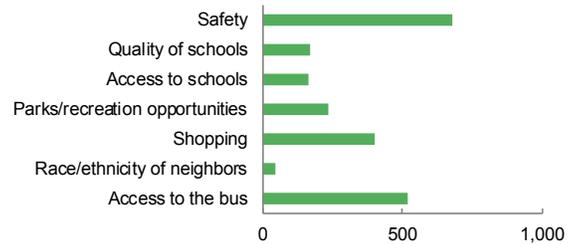
**53%** cannot afford to heat their homes sufficiently in the winter.

**82%** identified their race as white, which is identical to the county average.

See a full summary of survey results [www.sustainablethurston.org](http://www.sustainablethurston.org).

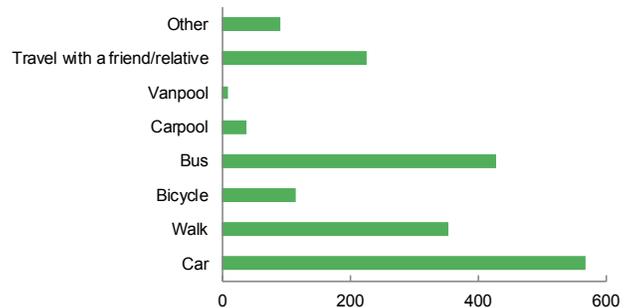
More than half (52%) said that access to transit was in their top three selections as a neighborhood feature when deciding where to live. The only factor that rated higher was safety.

**Top Three Neighborhood Features when Deciding Where to Live**



Around 36% rode the bus always or often and around 43% used the bus to travel to work, shopping, etc. Compare that to 2% of Thurston County’s population. One of the reasons is that 39% didn’t own a car.

**What ways do you travel to work, grocery shopping, etc. (Select any that apply)**



**Regional Commute Trip Reduction (CTR) Program** is administered by TRPC on behalf of Thurston County, Lacey, Olympia, and Tumwater – jurisdictions affected by the state CTR law. TRPC supports employer programs with training, promotions, printed and online resources, and surveying. Building strong relationships with Employee Transportation Coordinators has expanded TRPC’s ability to reach out with other survey materials – for Sustainable Thurston and the RTP survey – to access thousands of workers in Thurston County that otherwise would be difficult and expensive to contact.

**Household Travel Survey** was conducted by TRPC, in 2012/2013. Participation was high and helped to better understand changes in travel patterns as well as provide assistance in calibrating the regional model.

**Intercity Transit Market Segmentation and User Surveys** included questions specific to regional issues as part of Intercity Transit’s efforts. Intercity Transit’s project included online surveys for major employers, on-board surveys for fixed route, dial-a-lift, and vanpool passengers, and a randomized residential survey.

**Walk N Roll** program began as a demonstration project to introduce more active transportation into schools. An overwhelming success, this program continues to grow. It created new avenues of public involvement with principals, teachers, students, parents, and school bus service managers. The Walk N Roll program built on public involvement activities

including two forums – *Active by Design* and *Why Can’t Kids Walk & Bike to School?* – and outreach to prepare the *Healthy Kids – Safe Streets Action Plan*.

**Rural & Tribal Transportation Program (RT)** aims to fill a gap in bus service in southern and eastern Thurston County, outside the Intercity Transit service area. TRPC gains valuable information on the transportation needs and issues of the region’s more rural population who use this service. It’s also a great way to reach more rural communities about transportation issues that impact them.

Several planning and project efforts led or supported by TRPC have **greatly increased public involvement of south and east county residents**, such as the Sustainable Thurston Plan, the Main Street 507 Study, and the South Thurston Economic Development Initiative (STEDI).

**South Sound Military & Communities Partnership** brought local, regional, state, and federal interests together to address I-5 congestion from Lacey to Lakewood. This collective, collaborative planning effort has shaped TRPC’s I-5 planning efforts with a broader perspective from involvement of new interests in the region.

## Tools

TRPC continues to use traditional outreach tools in our mix of public involvement activities. Workshops and public meetings are still effective ways of reaching people about certain

topics. Press releases and mailings help raise awareness about issues. Posting legal ads in the newspaper and on our website still forms the basis of formal outreach.

TRPC mastered the use of various new public involvement tools over the last decade, successfully reaching and gaining feedback from the public using an assortment of resources. This diverse collection of instruments – including Internet and social medial tools – are needed to reach diverse sections of the population.

- Online and paper surveys – prepare, conduct, tabulate, and assess.
- Printed materials – banners, flyers, pamphlets, guides, postcards, bookmarks, posters, infographics, maps.
- Traditional media – press releases, data, interviews, advertisements, radio spots, editorial boards.
- Social media – articles, Facebook, Twitter.
- Tables at local events, and presentations at service clubs, social service, and health events.
- Visual media – photography, video interviews, video production, video spots on local television.
- Online resources
  - TRPC website.
  - Here-to-There website (traveler information).
  - Commute Trip Reduction website (support for CTR program).
- E-newsletters and e-mail outreach.

- Direct mail to full county and targeted groups and geographies.
- MindMixer – a web service for civic engagement.
- OpenComment – an online tool for RTP comments.
- Games.
- Outreach through partner resources, such as utility bill inserts.
- Targeted outreach to youth and students through school assemblies, presentations and classroom activities in K-12 and university levels, and participation with initiatives such as the United Way Youth Voices program.

In using these tools, TRPC maintains its commitment to those who may have physical, language, or transportation challenges. Materials – printed and online – can be translated to other languages, enlarged, read by verbal translators, or interpreted. Community meetings are held out in the communities, usually in the evening or on weekends, when more people are able to attend. Meetings in urban areas are held in locations convenient to transit use. TRPC provides special accommodation as needed or requested.

Through the agency's varied outreach activities, TRPC compiled large databases of people interested in regional issues and willing to participate in future surveys, meetings, focus groups, and other activities.

# Public Engagement Strategy for Updating the RTP

For this long range plan update, TRPC prepared the following multi-prong strategy to provide and receive information from the public on regional transportation issues.

## Public Engagement Strategy – TRPC RTP Update

The mission of the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) - to provide visionary leadership on regional plans, policies and issues - cannot be achieved without public interaction. TRPC is updating the long range regional transportation plan (RTP) and intends to provide opportunity for appropriate broad-based, early, continuous, and meaningful public participation in this planning process. The approach is described in this public engagement strategy.

### Aim:

- Engage a range of stakeholders during the plan update.
- Make the issues, plan, and process easy to understand, and meaningful involvement easy to do.

### Process:

- **Ideas:** Explore major topics that could shape the RTP.
- **Priorities:** Focus the region's transportation future.
- **Strategy:** Define how to achieve the priorities.
- **Adopt:** Formalize the Council's commitment.
- **Carry Out:** Implement the regional work program.

### Stakeholders:

- **General Public:** People who regularly travel in the region, especially those who live, work, and/or go to school here.
- **Special Interests:** Business, bicycling groups, freight interests, chambers, rotaries, etc.
- **Special Needs:** People whose access to transportation and/or the planning process may be limited due to age, income, language, or physical ability.
- **Contacts Databases:** TRPC program lists (e.g. Sustainability), and TRPC/Transportation Policy Board (TPB) member employees and program lists.
- **Boards, Councils, & Commissions:** Policy maker and advisory bodies from TRPC/TPB member organizations.
- **Agency Staff:** Planning and Public Works staff from TRPC/TPB member organizations.

- **Regulators:** Federal and state regulators.

### Elements:

**Discovery:** Experts and examples expand and shape our understanding of issues.

- TPB explores topics during the Ideas phase.
- TPB identified topics – demographics, Commute Trip Reduction, energy and environment, economic development, rail, safety, technology and efficiency, etc.

**Informational Materials:** Easy-to-understand high level materials, supplemented with more detailed information.

- Document discovery findings and provide additional information.
- Infographics, resource sheets, audio clips ... produced by TRPC.
- Articles, videos, web links ... from other sources.

**Website:** User-friendly resource to get more informed and involved.

- Collect information for ready access.
- Public involvement portal.
- Where the plan resides.
- Lasting resource to use during and after the update.

**Media:** Spotlight connections between regional planning issues and everyday life. Be effective and inexpensive.

- Traditional media – send information to local print and radio.
- Social media – post information on Facebook and other media.
- Other resources – contact lists, TRPC members as employers ...

**Discussions:** Ask stakeholders about priorities, strategies, and approaches.

- Council and Policy Board members engage their boards, councils, and commissions.
- TRPC staff meets with stakeholders to discuss what's important to them and how the RTP can address those things.
- Interactive investment based tool gathering input on vision and priorities.
- Technical Review: Get feedback on RTP elements during the update process.
- Consult agency staff and regulators periodically to identify issues and garner recommendations.

**Formal Comment:** Solicit input on the plan and meet regulatory requirements.

- Release a draft RTP.
- Present key elements to boards, councils, and commissions.

## Implementation of the Public Engagement Strategy

**Website** – TRPC prepared a user-friendly website as a home for the updated plan and a resource for information on a variety of transportation topics. The website concept is based on 1) easy access, 2) use of various media, and 3) the ability to drill down to more detailed information when wanted. It includes:

- **Topics** – explaining transportation issues, like active transportation, or changing demographics and transportation. Each topic is explained with infographics, video, topical news articles, and finally an in-depth section with research, plans, and reports. TRPC will continue to add topics and content, as this is now a continuing resource for policy makers and the public.
- **Get Involved** – encouraging visitors to the page to become engaged in the regional transportation planning process.
- **1 Day a Week** – a challenge to change up travel patterns – and move away from solo driving – just one day a week. This could have a tremendous impact on transportation.
- **The RTP.**
- **My Transportation Investment** – a customized program allowing the user to compare their priorities and pocketbooks when it comes to our future transportation choices.

**Discussions** – The TPB invited outside guests and staff to discuss a wide variety of topics – rail, airporter service, changing demographics, energy and the environment, commute trip reduction, Target Zero (state safety plan), automated and autonomous vehicles, and more.

**Media** – TRPC distributed press releases, provided short news articles for publication in local newsletters, posted information on Facebook, and replied to media queries.

**Information** – Infographics, video, reports, and information from other sources was assembled and published on TRPC’s RTP website, *What Moves You*. This information was also used to pique interest in the survey and investment calculator. It continues to be available in a user friendly form to support ongoing discussions about transportation.

**Survey and Investment Calculator** – In 2014, TRPC widely distributed a transportation priorities survey and investment calculator to gather information on public priorities.

The calculator encouraged people to experiment with balancing transportation investments in congestion relief, local travel options, and care and maintenance. [The calculator was available on TRPC’s website for people to explore the options.]

*Pretend you have \$500 to spend on making transportation better in Thurston County. Where should that money go? Is it enough? Use the investment calculator to explore the options.*

The survey could be completed online or on paper, in conjunction with or independent of the investment calculator. Most respondents used the investment calculator.

By combining the tools, TRPC was able to establish that the investment calculator was a useful and meaningful way to 1) help people appreciate challenges with transportation investments, and 2) weigh priorities in the context of proportional costs and limited funding.

**Technical Review** – TRPC’s Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) directly participated in developing the new regional transportation model, refining the regional Goals and Policies, defining projects for the 20 year horizon, and assessing transportation system conditions. In addition, TRPC conferred with regulatory agencies about the plan content to ensure compliance. Additional technical review will be sought during the formal comment period.

**Formal Comment** – The formal comment period extended from April 6 through May 9, 2016. That process is described in the next section, Draft Plan Review Activities, and detailed information about comments and responses is included later in this Appendix, in Detailed List of Draft Plan Comments & Responses.

## Investment Calculator

Users were allotted \$500 to spend on making transportation better in Thurston County.

- Where should that money go?
- Is it enough?

Respondents used an investment calculator to weigh various investment options relative to \$500. For example, \$20 would expand vanpooling, \$175 would add more sidewalks and crosswalks, and \$500 would widen I-5 to add HOV lanes.

**75%** said...

\$500 was not enough.



**86%** said...

the investment calculator helped them weigh priorities.



**56%** said...

they changed priorities to fit the \$500 budget.



# 2014 Thurston Transportation Priorities Survey



# 1,449

Survey Respondents

In 2014, TRPC widely distributed a transportation priorities survey and investment calculator to gather information on public priorities. The calculator allowed users to get a hands-on feel balancing transportation investment priorities and budget constraints. Here are the survey results.

## Top Priorities for Thurston County

### For Me...

- More Bike Lanes
- More Sidewalks/ Crosswalks
- More Trails
- More Pavement Repair & Maintenance

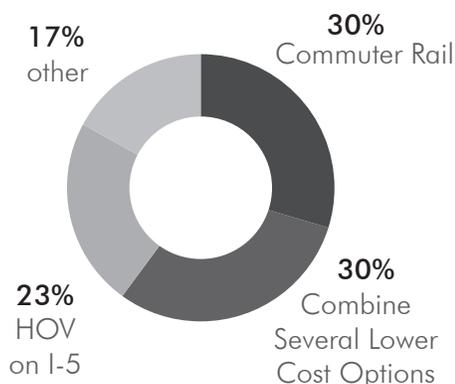
### For the Community...

- More Bus & Rail
- More Vanpooling
- Reduce Solo Travel
- More Park & Ride Lots
- Maintain Paratransit
- Maintain Rural Transit
- Bus Repair & Replacement

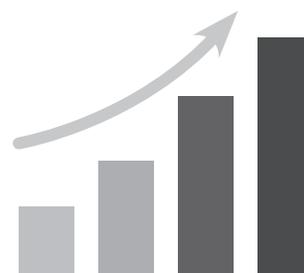
### For Commerce...

- Add I-5 High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) Lanes
- Charge Freeway User Fees
- More Technology on Freeways
- More Pavement Repair & Maintenance

## If you were to invest in just one big priority, what would it be?



## Long term priorities for transportation



1. Expand Travel Options
2. Maintain the System
3. Improve Mobility
4. Increase Efficiency
5. Boost Economic Vitality

# 2/3

support raising transportation taxes and fees for their important priorities but...

Respondents varied widely on their important priorities

Widen roads ... Don't widen roads  
 More bike lanes ... No bike lanes  
 Expand transit ... Limit transit  
 More rail ... No more rail

Many wanted greater efficiency in government spending before raising taxes or fees.

**In 10 years, how will your transportation needs change?**

**40%**

Will do more walking, bicycling, teleworking, riding the trail.

**51%**

Will do less driving.

**43%**

Will do the same amount of walking.

**30%**

Will do the same amount of driving, bus riding, carpooling/ vanpooling.

**40%**

Will NOT carpool/ vanpool, telework, ride the train.

**Why the change? Respondents offered a number of different reasons.**

- Retirement
- Changing Physical Ability
- Children Entering School
- Children Old Enough to Drive or Leaving Home
- More Future Transportation Options & Changing Technology
- Congestion
- Growth
- Employment Changes
- Location Changes
- Environmental Issues
- Increasing Costs

**Who responded to the survey?**



**Live ...**

2/3 live in Lacey, Olympia or Tumwater

**Work ...**

9/10 work in Lacey, Olympia or Tumwater

**Age ...**

1/2 were 35-54 & 1/3 were 55-64

**Gender ...**

more than 1/2 were women

**Ethnicity ...**

4/5 were Caucasian

**Household**

**Income ...**

1/2 earned \$50,000 to \$100,000 & 1/3 earned \$100,000 +

**Ethnicity ...**

- <1% Pacific Islander
- <1% Native American/Indian
- 1% Mexican American/Hispanic
- 1% Latino
- 86% Caucasian/White
- 2% African American/Black
- 2% Asian American
- 4% Two or More
- 3% Other

**Live...**

- 62% in Lacey, Olympia or Tumwater
- 25% in Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino or Unincorporated Thurston County
- 13% outside Thurston County (including JBLM)

**Work ...**

- 90% in Lacey, Olympia, or Tumwater
- 2% in Bucoda, Rainier, Tenino, or Unincorporated Thurston County
- 4% outside Thurston County (including JBLM)
- 3% retired
- <1% unemployed

**Age...**

- ranged from 18 to 75+ years
- 12% - 18-34
- 22% - 35-44
- 29% - 45-54
- 31% - 55-64
- 6% - over 65

**Gender...**

- 54% female
- 46% male
- <1% other

## Draft Plan Review Activities

### TRPC & TPB – Release of Draft Plan

TRPC and TPB reviewed the complete draft plan during their regularly scheduled meetings in March and April 2016. TPB recommended TRPC release the draft plan for public comment. TRPC acted on that recommendation during their regularly scheduled meeting in April 2016 and released the RTP. The public comment period extended from Wednesday, April 6 through Monday, May 9, 2016.

### Promotion during the Public Comment Period

Public comment on the draft RTP was sought in accordance with TRPC's *Public Participation Plan*.

The draft plan was advertised for public comment in *The Olympian* on April 6, 2016 and April 20, 2016. It was also advertised on TRPC's website, highlighted in the home page banner, and on the public notices page.

The public notice read:

*NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Thurston Regional Planning Council (TRPC) invites the public to comment on the draft What Moves You: 2040 Thurston Regional Transportation Plan. The plan identifies the regional long range vision for development of the transportation system in Thurston County.*

*The document is available free of charge online at <http://www.trpc.org/RTPdraft> or by request to TRPC at 2424 Heritage Court SW, Suite A, Olympia, WA 98502; (360) 956-7575. Written comments may be submitted to TRPC online, by mail, email to [info@trpc.org](mailto:info@trpc.org), or FAX to (360) 956-7815. Comments should be received by 5:00 p.m., Monday, May 9, 2016.*

*If you need special accommodations to participate in this process, please call us at (360) 956-7575 by 5:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 20, 2016. Ask for the ADA Coordinator. For TDD users, please use the state's toll-free relay service, at 711 or (800) 833-6384, and ask the operator to dial (360)956-7575. Arrangements can be made to review and comment in other languages.*

The public notice was also distributed by email or other means to regulatory agencies, surrounding planning, public works, and transit agencies, Tribes, community and special interest groups, local boards, councils, and commissions, through TRPC's email lists, and through our member jurisdictions.

In addition to public notice, the document was available online, and in paper form at TRPC's offices and Timberland Regional Library branches in Thurston County. Paper copies were also available, by request, to the public. TRPC made every effort to make plans and documents available in alternative formats and languages, upon request.

## Presentations during the Public Comment Period

TRPC staff presented the draft RTP to:

- Intercity Transit Authority.
- Intercity Transit Citizen Advisory Committee.
- Thurston County Planning and Public Works staff.
- Port of Olympia Commissioners.
- City of Olympia Planning Commission.
- Thurston Chamber – Business and Economic Development Committee.

## Regulatory Review during the Public Comment Period

TRPC requested review and guidance from:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA).
- Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) Tribal and Regional Coordination Office.

These agencies are responsible for the ultimate federal and state approval of TRPC's long range transportation plan.

## Response to Draft Plan Comments

TPB considered public comments and response during their May 2016 meeting. Staff prepared a table suggesting options for response. TPB finalized responses, directed staff regarding final changes to the draft RTP, and forwarded a recommendation to TRPC for RTP adoption.

## TRPC Adoption

TRPC considered the final draft RTP in June 2016. TRPC adopted *What Moves You: 2040 Thurston Regional Transportation Plan* on July 8, 2016.

## Post Adoption Approval

After TRPC adoption of the RTP, staff submitted copies to WSDOT, FHWA, and FTA as required by state and federal statute.

The document was also published on TRPC's website.

Because TRPC is an air quality maintenance area for PM10, federal agencies must make a formal determination on air quality conformity after RTP adoption. TRPC's air quality conformity finding is published in Appendix H. TRPC staff requested the required air quality conformity determination from FHWA and FTA. That conformity determination will be published with the final RTP.

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