

# **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN**

**Thurston Regional  
Planning Council**

**April 2019**

# PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

## Introduction

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

Thurston Regional Planning Council is a public agency governed by a council comprised of elected officials from jurisdictions and organizations in the Thurston region. The agency - as well as the Council - are both often referred to as “TRPC.” To distinguish between the two, this Plan uses the term “Agency” when referring to the organization, and the term “Council” when referring to the appointed and jurisdictional members of TRPC.

Through its Public Participation Plan (Plan), the Agency intends to provide opportunity for appropriate broad-based, early, continuous, and meaningful public participation in all planning, programs, and projects. Further, the Agency 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, the Agency may incorporate details of routine procedures into general agency policy documents. Certain major planning efforts, programs, or projects may include public participation plans specific to that effort. This Plan applies the term “major” 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, the Agency may choose not to apply these public procedures. If there is a question as to whether the Plan should be followed, the Agency shall follow it to ensure appropriate public notification and participation.

The Agency will reassess the Plan as necessary to determine if the Agency is meeting the public’s needs for information and access 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

The Agency shall provide the public with timely notice and reasonable access to meetings. The Agency shall:

- Make all regular meetings of the Council, Transportation Policy Board (TPB) and any Council or TPB subcommittee meetings open to the public, except as allowed under the state Open Public Meetings Act. Special meetings such as project stakeholder meetings, forums, workshops, and open houses shall also be open to the public.
- Hold all regular, subcommittee, and special meetings at venues that are accessible to persons with disabilities. The Agency will make reasonable effort to select venues that are accessible to people who rely on public transportation.

- Make reasonable effort to hold special meetings, workshops, and other outreach in local communities and rural areas and at different times of day to allow more opportunity for attendance by all members of the community.
- Make reasonable effort to accommodate persons with special needs. Individuals needing special accommodation to participate in meetings should contact the Agency three (3) days prior to the scheduled meeting.
- Provide public and meeting participants notification of all regular meetings of the Council and TPB at least five (5) days in advance of the meeting. Each agenda shall also include the date of the next scheduled meeting. In the case of subcommittee and special meetings, the agency will make reasonable effort to provide at least five- (5) days advance notice, with minimum notification no less than twenty-four (24) hours.<sup>1</sup> The Agency will also post notice on the Agency website.
- Provide notification of all Council, TPB, and Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings to members and alternates, other meeting participants, local news media, and anyone requesting notification.
- Provide meeting notice using mail and or/electronic means and post notice on the TRPC website. Notice shall include the time, date, and location of the meeting.
- Provide notification of Agency special meetings to TRPC and TPB members and alternates, meeting participants, local news media, and other interested parties. In certain circumstances, the Agency may provide notice in the form of a press release or paid legal notice or advertisement, or may use non-traditional methods to reach certain segments of the community.

The Agency shall provide the public with timely notice and reasonable access to information. The Agency shall:

- Make plans and documents available for public review at the Agency office. In certain circumstances, the Agency may also distribute copies of documents and plans to public libraries and other public venues for review. When feasible, the Agency will post plans and documents on the Agency website.
- Make most publications available free of charge. When appropriate, the Agency may assess a charge to cover the cost of production and mailing.
- Provide reasonable access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and programs.
- Upon request, and within a reasonable timeframe, make reasonable effort to provide plans and documents in alternative formats and languages.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 42.30.077 requires such notice for special meetings, but not for subcommittee meetings unless a quorum of the full Council is present or the Council has given de facto decision-making authority to the subcommittee.

## **Public Outreach**

The Agency 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. The Agency 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. Reasonable 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.
- 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 Geographic Information System (GIS), GIS based scenario planning tools, photo manipulation, and computer simulation.
- 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 initiatives 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.
- Develop and maintain a list of organizations and interested or potentially interested persons to disseminate information about regional activities.
- Seek new methods and technologies to enlist in informing and engaging the public regarding all agency plans, projects, and programs.

## **Public Input**

### **General**

The Agency and the Council value two-way conversations with the public it serves. Explicit consideration of public input and response to public input shall be an integral element of the Agency’s decision-making processes. The Agency shall:

- Provide a public comment period during each meeting of the Council and TPB. The Chair may limit the duration of comments or provide alternative options for public comment in certain circumstances.
- When appropriate, 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, utilize surveys to assess either widespread or selected public opinion.

In soliciting public comment, the Agency shall:

- Notify the public when the Agency is soliciting public comment. Notification will occur through means such as posting on the agency website, email distribution to interested parties, and in some circumstances may include public and legal notices.
- Offer different avenues for public comment – written, oral, formal, informal, electronic, and other means suitable to the project and the community involved.
- In accordance with the State’s records retention requirements, maintain written and oral comments in Agency files. In certain circumstances, the comments may be incorporated into plans, programs or studies, either in total or in summary.
- Ensure that meeting agendas, notices, and other materials specify when and how the public may comment.

### **Transportation**

State and Federal guidelines require special public participation for certain plans and programs. In addition to the items listed in the General section, the following apply. The Agency shall:

- Provide a minimum fourteen (14) day public comment period for the Regional Transportation Plan, the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, amendments to those documents, and federal transportation funding opportunities.
- When significant written and oral comments are received on the draft Regional Transportation Plan and Regional Transportation Improvement Program, include a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments as part of the final documents.<sup>2</sup>
- If the final Regional Transportation Plan or Regional Transportation Improvement Program differs significantly from the version that was made available for public comment, and raises new material issues that interested parties could not reasonable have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, provide additional opportunities for public comment.<sup>2</sup>

### **Public Participation Plan Review and Updates**

- The Agency and Council shall periodically review the Plan to determine its effectiveness, striving for full and open access to all.
- The Agency and Council shall provide a minimum public comment period of forty-five (45) days before the Council adopts the revised Plan.<sup>2</sup>

### **Compliance with Applicable State and Federal Laws**

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

- Open Public Meetings Act {RCW 42.30}

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<sup>2</sup> 23 C.F.R. 450.316

- State Environmental Policy Act {RCW 43.21C}
- State Growth Management Act {RCW 36.70A}
- Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 {P.L. 101-336}
- Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act {23 C.F.R. 450; 23 U.S.C. 134; 49 U.S.C. 5303}
- 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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