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**Diversity and Value:  
Participatory Practices in  
Statewide Long-range Transportation Planning**

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**Diversity and Value:  
Participatory Practices in  
Statewide Long-range Transportation Planning**

**by**

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**Report**

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## **Dedication**

This report is dedicated to Nancy Rushefsky. Thank you for your love and patience and fabulous brain food.

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## **Abstract**

# **Diversity and Value: Participatory Practices in Statewide Long-range Transportation Planning**

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A review of participatory methods used by forty-nine of the fifty State Departments of Transportation during preparation of their most recently adopted statewide long-range transportation plan revealed the flexibility needed to design context-sensitive methods tailored to the specific planning situation. Four parameters are used to characterize methods used by the States: the planning purpose, participatory goal, timing, and the public scale. The report discusses five opportunities to optimize the participatory process that can broaden reach while maintaining a slim budget. These value-added strategies include taking the process to the public, taking stock of public knowledge and understanding, leveraging existing local relationships, using online techniques to supplement face-to-face contact, and integrating public input into the plan.

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## **1) Introduction**

By offering a diverse, context-specific assortment of participatory techniques and by incorporating cost-effective strategies that add value to the planning process, state departments of transportation (DOTs) can more effectively reach large, diverse, and dispersed constituencies. Relying on an evaluation of participatory methods described in adopted statewide long-range transportation plans (SLRTPs) from forty-nine of the fifty states, this report derives lesson learned that can be used to optimize public participation in future statewide long-range transportation planning.

### **A) OPPORTUNITY FOR EXCELLENCE**

Public involvement is part and parcel of statewide long-range transportation planning, required by both federal laws and the laws of many states. Federal rules simply require state agencies to inform the public of the planning process and afford the public the opportunity to review and comment on the SLRTP. So, why, then would any state go beyond this minimum standard? Indeed, state DOTs find public participation to be a greater obstacle in the SLRTP process than addressing insufficient transportation funding.<sup>1</sup> Today's transportation planners, however, understand that the planning process must be a worthwhile use of participants' time as well as a worthwhile expenditure of limited agency resources.<sup>2</sup>

State DOTs, who are responsible for transportation planning, have an obligation to taxpayers, the public, and users of the transportation system to craft a plan that reflects the vision of the state's citizens and the needs of the system's users. When this charge is met, the resulting plan becomes a relied-upon reference for future decision-making. An

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<sup>1</sup> Herr, "Opportunities Exist to Transition to Performance-Based Planning and Federal Oversight."

<sup>2</sup> McComas, "Trivial Pursuits."

authentic process builds relationships, earns community support, and enhances public trust.<sup>3</sup> And, a successful process can motivate participants to champion transportation investments that uphold the spirit of the plan that they helped shape.<sup>4</sup> Only then will the plan be both meaningful to the public and useful to the agency. These outcomes are unlikely to be realized if only the minimum standard in participation is met.

Moreover, agencies can and do strive for excellence in their field. Among its organizational goals, the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) strives to become a best-in-class state agency.<sup>5</sup> What this means to planners working on the SLRTP is a charge to be a leader within the industry.<sup>6</sup> With the current effort to update the SLRTP in Texas, TxDOT planners hope to start a dialogue with the people of Texas to elevate public understanding and awareness of transportation planning issues and challenges to motivate them to become invested in the future of the state's transportation development.<sup>7</sup>

## **B) PURPOSE AND STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT**

Public participation is more effective when tailored to a specific planning situation. Given the scope of statewide long-range planning, however, public participation cannot be economically customized to account for the individual needs and values of every citizen. Consequently, this report is intended to inspire transportation planners to design participatory processes with specific outcomes in mind. A conscientious approach can take participatory design a step further to broaden the reach and deepen the value of participation without overextending the budget.

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<sup>3</sup> O'Connor et al., "State of the Practice."

<sup>4</sup> Conkle, Dusza, and Braswell, Personal communication with the author.

<sup>5</sup> Texas Department of Transportation, "Mission, Goals and Values."

<sup>6</sup> Conkle, Dusza, and Braswell, Personal communication with the author.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In Chapter 2, this report provides an overview of participatory practice, with particular focus on transportation planning. This overview explores the underlying foundation for purposeful participatory design. Chapter 3 lays out the methods used for this report and then establishes a framework to characterize the participatory techniques used by state DOTs during statewide long-range transportation planning. The framework identifies four parameters essential to participatory design – consideration of the transportation planning purpose, the participatory goal, timing in the process, and the public scale.

Chapter 4 documents the broad range of participatory methods used by planners to involve the public during development of each state’s most recently adopted SLRTP, as of June 2013. Descriptions of each method are provided in Appendix B and include their applicability to specific transportation planning purposes, participatory goals, timing, and public scales. Together, Chapter 4 and Appendix B provide a menu of participatory methods that states can use to connect with the public to develop their SLRTPs, given specific process circumstances.

Then in Chapter 5, the report discusses five opportunities to optimize the participatory process in statewide transportation planning derived from the review of states’ practices. These value-added strategies include taking the process to the public, taking stock of public knowledge and understanding, leveraging existing local relationships, using online techniques to supplement face-to-face contact, and integrating public input into the plan. These value-added opportunities can broaden reach while maintaining a slim budget.

Thus, by using an assortment of methods tailored to specific purposes and by incorporating cost-effective ways to optimize participation, state DOTs can realize more

meaningful and effective public involvement in statewide long-range transportation planning.

## 2) **Background: Transportation and Participatory Planning**

### A) **STATEWIDE LONG-RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**

State and federal laws require the development of a statewide long-range transportation plan (SLRTP). This plan evaluates the existing multimodal transportation network and sets a path for the future system based on a collective vision. Plan contents vary from state to state and may establish policies toward achieving the end goal or may outline projects or corridors necessary to achieve the future vision. The transportation system subject to the plan accounts for all modes used to transport persons and freight and their interconnections, including air, rail, bus, auto, bike, pedestrian, and pipeline. The plan assesses the ability of the system to manage projected demand statewide, including maintenance of existing facilities, management strategies to optimize system efficiency, and the potential need for new components of the system. The plan must evaluate the transportation system in the context of land use and the environment and associated impacts. In addition, a fiscal analysis of projected transportation state and federal funding is often included, as well.<sup>8</sup>

Overall, state rules on the development of the SLRTP tend to mirror those of the federal government; however, there are a few differences. Federal law requires that the plan look at least 20 years in the future,<sup>9</sup> whereas states may opt to establish longer planning horizons for their SLRTP. For example, Texas Administrative Code requires a 24-year horizon;<sup>10</sup> Florida, on the other hand, chose to evaluate a 50-year horizon for its 2011 SLRTP.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the federal government does not specify the frequency by

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<sup>8</sup> Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, *The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff*.

<sup>9</sup> 23 CFR 450.214

<sup>10</sup> 43 TAC 16.54

<sup>11</sup> Florida Department of Transportation, “2060 Florida Transportation Plan: Horizon 2060.”

which the plan must be updated, only stating that it be updated “periodically”.<sup>12</sup> However, the State of Texas dictates that the plan be updated every four years<sup>13</sup> consistent with the timeframe for long-range transportation plans for metropolitan planning organizations in air quality non-attainment areas, some of which lie within the state’s boundary.

Involvement of the public is key to the development of a sound, well-received SLRTP. Both Texas state and federal rules describe the role of public participation in plan development. The code of federal regulations requires that the public be informed and allowed the opportunity to review and comment on the plan.<sup>14</sup> The level of participation required in Texas state rules is similar; however, the state goes beyond federal rules to specify the use of certain techniques – geographically dispersed public meetings and a statewide public hearing and the acceptance of written and emailed comments.<sup>15</sup>

## **B) PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Innes and Booher succinctly identify five purposes for conducting public participation, which form a good premise for this section of the report. First, public participation brings forward local knowledge, needs, and values for consideration in agency decision-making. Second, local inputs lead to better decisions. Third, participatory processes aim to achieve just processes. Fourth, public participation validates public decision-making. Fifth, public participation is required by law.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> 23 CFR 450.214

<sup>13</sup> 43 TAC 16.54

<sup>14</sup> 23 CFR 450.214

<sup>15</sup> 43 TAC 16.54

<sup>16</sup> Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation.”

**i) Theory**

Public participation theories abound, illustrating gradients of involvement or “power” in the process had by members of the public. Sherry Arnstein’s 1969 groundbreaking work on public participation sought to define citizen participation in the context of the construction of massive public works that displaced many thousands of predominantly low-income and minority persons; these citizens had no voice in the processes that deeply affected them. Arnstein called for citizen participation – which she defined as “the redistribution of power”. She advocated for these affected and disenfranchised individuals “to be deliberately included in [planning for their] future.”<sup>17</sup> Her Ladder of Citizen Participation ranged from manipulation on the part of the project sponsor to citizen control, the ultimate goal of participation within that context.<sup>18</sup> Table 1 adapts this spectrum and includes brief descriptions of each rung. Today, planners and public works developers take seriously the public’s need for information and involvement in decision-making. There remains, however, a disconnect between the level of participation desired by the public and what is achieved.

Table 1: Eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation, S. Arnstein

<b>Rung</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Participatory Level</b>	<b>Description</b>
8	Degrees of Citizen Power	Citizen Control	Citizen control ensures community members governance of policy and management without unwelcome outside interference.
7		Delegated Power	Here, citizens comprise a dominant faction to effect outcomes. Formal bargaining structures are key.
6		Partnership	Partnership occurs when members of the public and planning professionals jointly plan and make decisions through formal bodies that allow for negotiation and formal conflict resolution.
5	degrees of To ken	Placation	Placation gives citizens a more robust role in planning, while leaving project sponsors complete discretion to incorporate

<sup>17</sup> Arnstein, “A Ladder Of Citizen Participation.”

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

			citizen-derived planning outputs.
4		Consultation	Within this paradigm, public comment is requested during consultation, but consideration of comments is not guaranteed.
3		Informing	This level describes the “one-way flow of information – from officials to citizens – with no channel provided for feedback and no power for negotiation.”
2	Non-participation	Therapy	This type of activity (common in the 1960s) sought to reprogram community members toward agency-preferred social behaviors.
1		Manipulation	“In the name of citizen participation, people are placed on rubberstamp advisory committees or advisory boards for the express purpose of ‘educating’ them or engineering their support.”

Another widely used public participation scale is the simpler, more modern IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation published by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2).<sup>19</sup> This scale describes five gradations of public impact on decision-making processes, clearly representing the goal of each step, the role of the public, and examples of participatory techniques. The IAP2 spectrum is adapted in Table 2.

A brief comparison of Arnstein’s ladder and the IAP2 spectrum indicate a trend along each scale toward greater substantive contribution on the part of the public in decision-making. The lowest levels of each scale represent one-way top-down flows of information, evolving to two-way information flows without and with feedback loops. IAP2’s Collaborate level corresponds closely with Arnstein’s Partnership rung. Innes and Booher suggest that dialogic methods – those that occur at the Involve or Collaborate level for example – are more likely to result in mutual learning, mutual respect, and mutual satisfaction.<sup>20</sup> The top two rungs of the ladder equate to IAP2’s Empower level. As participation ascends the scale, the purpose of the public’s input transcends from “buy-in” of an agency product to a source of innovation and creativity; the process turns from culling ideas to building the capacity of the community to foster informed solutions

<sup>19</sup> International Association for Public Participation, “IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation.”

<sup>20</sup> Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation.”

to civic problems.<sup>21</sup> Whatever the level of participation an agency chooses, however, it is essential their message to the public be clear about how the products of public participation will be used in decision-making.<sup>22</sup>

Table 2: IAP2 spectrum of public participation

<b>Level</b>	<b>Participatory Goal</b>	<b>Promise to the Public</b>	<b>Example Techniques</b>
Empower	Public makes final decision.	“We will implement what you decide.”	Citizen juries Ballots Delegated decision
Collaborate	Public is partner in each decision in the process.	“We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.”	Citizen advisory committees Consensus-building Participatory decision-making
Involve	The public’s concerns and desires are reflected throughout the process.	“We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.”	Workshops Deliberative polling
Consult	The public provides feedback on agency products.	“We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.”	Public comment Focus groups Surveys Public meetings
Inform	The public is objectively informed during the process.	“We will keep you informed.”	Fact sheets Websites Open houses

Two studies use a participatory scale to provide useful comparisons between public and practitioner perceptions and desires. Between 2000 and 2007, Bailey, et al., surveyed public meeting participants and planners at professional conferences about their perceptions of the participatory process based on the Arnstein ladder. The results indicated that the public perceived participation to fall somewhere between informing

<sup>21</sup> Booher and Innes, “Living in the House of Our Predecessors.”

<sup>22</sup> Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes”; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Public Participation Process Planning”; Vigar, “Deliberation, Participation and Learning in the Development of Regional Strategies”; McComas, Besley, and Trumbo, “Why Citizens Do and Do Not Attend Public Meetings about Local Cancer Cluster Investigations.”

and consulting, while planning professionals felt the process fell between consulting and “placating”<sup>23</sup> (Arnstein considered placating to be the “level [at which] citizens begin to have some degree of influence though tokenism is still apparent”<sup>24</sup>). In contrast, citizens and professionals alike *desire* participatory processes that offer partnership in decision-making – much to the surprise of researchers.<sup>25</sup> Bailey and Grosshardt consider this to be an indication that the public appreciates the level of expertise required to create plans.<sup>26</sup> According to Arnstein, partnership is achieved when planning and decision-making is shared between members of the public and the planning professionals through formal bodies (e.g., committees) that allow for negotiation and formal resolution of conflicts between citizen and project sponsors.<sup>27</sup>

## ii) **Timing**

“Early and often” is a phrase frequently heard in relation to the public planning process. Certainly, the earlier the public is brought in to the planning process, the greater its potential influence can be on the outcome.<sup>28</sup> Planning processes that begin early allow planners and participants to learn together.<sup>29</sup> When begun at an early stage, participatory efforts can benefit from multilateral interactions between and among practitioners and members of the public.<sup>30</sup> If this level of interaction is introduced late in the process, planners may be reluctant to change decisions that were made earlier in the process.

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<sup>23</sup> Bailey et al., “Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy”; Bailey and Grossardt, “Toward Structured Public Involvement.”

<sup>24</sup> Arnstein, “A Ladder Of Citizen Participation.”

<sup>25</sup> Bailey et al., “Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy”; Bailey and Grossardt, “Toward Structured Public Involvement.”

<sup>26</sup> Bailey and Grossardt, “Toward Structured Public Involvement.”

<sup>27</sup> Arnstein, “A Ladder Of Citizen Participation.”

<sup>28</sup> Berner, Amos, and Morse, “What Constitutes Effective Citizen Participation in Local Government?”

<sup>29</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Public Participation Process Planning.”

<sup>30</sup> Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation.”

Public participation that is conducted late in the process leaves little room for influence on the decision, leaving the public disillusioned with the process and the sponsor.<sup>31</sup> Indeed, transportation planning is already a lengthy process, so late public participation can waste agency resources if substantial changes must be made late in the game.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, participation at late stages results in a reactive rather than proactive stance from the public, creating further challenges. For these reasons, the USDOT points out that public participation solely at the decision stage “does not provide opportunity for early and continuing involvement as described in Federal regulations.”<sup>33</sup>

### **iii) Performance measurement**

Good participatory practice includes evaluation of the effectiveness of public participation. As such, performance measures are an important component of conducting an iterative participatory process. Astute planners objectively evaluate whether individual participatory strategies are a worthwhile expenditure of time and resources – for both the agency and the public – and use that information to better design subsequent steps in the process. For example, performance measures may help practitioners understand whether prior steps in the process were inclusive or materials were transparent.

However, state DOTs report difficulty in measuring the effectiveness of their planning processes.<sup>34</sup> Researchers caution that simply counting the number of attendees at public meetings does not necessarily equate with *effective* participation.<sup>35</sup> Seeing that,

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<sup>31</sup> McComas, “Trivial Pursuits”; Berner, Amos, and Morse, “What Constitutes Effective Citizen Participation in Local Government?”; O’Connor et al., “State of the Practice.”

<sup>32</sup> O’Connor et al., “State of the Practice.”

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>34</sup> Herr, “Opportunities Exist to Transition to Performance-Based Planning and Federal Oversight.”

<sup>35</sup> Handley and Howell-Moroney, “Ordering Stakeholder Relationships and Citizen Participation”; McComas, “Trivial Pursuits.”

performance measures should focus on process outcomes. For example, planners can measure whether participants had an effect on the decision or the satisfaction participants had with the process,<sup>36</sup> perhaps using electronic polling or a brief form before wrapping up a meeting<sup>37</sup>, leaving an interactive website,<sup>38</sup> or concluding other forms of outreach. Of course, these mechanisms do not reach those who do not choose to participate.

In light of these challenges, several reports specifically discuss the merits of and possible tools for performance measurement in participatory processes. See Laurian and Shaw and Kramer, et al., for comprehensive assessments of performance measures associated with public participation in planning processes.

**iv) “Public” vs. “stakeholder”**

Stakeholders are individuals who are impacted by an action. Johnston describes stakeholders as affected parties and the public as interested parties.<sup>39</sup> All members of a jurisdiction are stakeholders in any long-range planning process, but especially so in long-range transportation planning. Transportation is an industry that affects all residents of an area in some way or other, directly (e.g., they drive a car) and indirectly (they receive a parcel in the mail), whether they are conscious of it or not. The difference between stakeholder and public is perhaps more pronounced in project planning where there is clearer definition of impacted individuals.<sup>40</sup>

The Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration define the public as “anyone who resides, has an interest in, or does business in a given

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<sup>36</sup> O’Connor et al., “State of the Practice.”

<sup>37</sup> Bailey and Grossardt, “Toward Structured Public Involvement.”

<sup>38</sup> Brabham, “Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning.”

<sup>39</sup> Johnston, “Community Engagement.”

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

area potentially affected by transportation decisions.”<sup>41</sup> In their definition, they include traditionally underserved individuals, such as low-income persons and the elderly. Additionally, they include transportation providers, such as transit agencies and trucking industry, as well as governmental agencies with a mandated role in the process.<sup>42</sup>

In light of these definitions, I differentiate between organized stakeholders and non-organized stakeholders in this report. Organized stakeholders include governmental agencies, industry groups, lobbies, and others who have the means and/or political sway to ensure that their voice is heard in the long-range planning process. These stakeholders may be involved in any of the participatory activities described in Chapters 2 and 3 and are often invited to special participatory events tailored to their interests; however, they are not the focus of this report. This report is focused on optimizing the participation of members of the public who are not necessarily represented by organized interests or special interest groups – those who may otherwise be underrepresented in the process. The public who are the focus of this report include traditionally underserved and transportation disadvantaged groups, but also working families of all socioeconomic levels, small business owners and commuters, teachers and retirees, soccer moms and students, and others who all have a stake in the development of our transportation system but who do not always have the time or interest to take part in planning for it.

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<sup>41</sup> Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration, *The Transportation Planning Process Key Issues: A Briefing Book for Transportation Decisionmakers, Officials, and Staff*.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

### **3) Methods**

Preparation of this report involved a review of all fifty state DOT's most recently adopted SLRTPs followed by examination of academic literature and federal transportation agency guidance. Participatory techniques were then characterized using basic criteria focused on transportation planning purpose, participatory goal, timing and public scale. These are further described below.

#### **A) RESEARCH**

As an initial step, the most recently adopted SLRTP was located on each state DOT's website. Table 3 lists the year of the latest adopted SLRTP, as of summer 2013. If a public involvement summary was not found online, agency representatives were contacted for further information and they usually provided the documents requested. One state provided a one-page summary of public involvement activities associated with its most recently adopted plan. However, one state referred the author to the website for the plan currently undergoing development. The review logged participatory methods specified in public involvement summaries included in the plan itself, appendices, or related documents. The review specifically avoided use of Public Involvement Plans that describe measures that the agency planned to conduct during development of the SLRTP, and instead focused on actions that the agency reported having actually completed. Because plans tend to include summaries of public involvement activities undertaken during plan development (rather than exhaustive details), the foregoing analysis may underrepresent actual activities implemented. Appendix 3 includes the list of all SLRTP documents evaluated for this report.

Table 3: Date of adoption for most recent SLRTP

<b>State</b>	<b>Date Adopted</b>		<b>State</b>	<b>Date Adopted</b>
Louisiana	2003		Maine	2010
Ohio	2004		New Hampshire	2010
Tennessee	2005		Oklahoma	2010
California	2006		South Dakota	2010
Kentucky	2006		Texas	2010
New Jersey	2006		Washington	2010
New York	2006		West Virginia	2010
Oregon	2006		Wyoming	2010
Arkansas	2007		Arizona	2011
Georgia	2007		Florida	2011
Missouri	2007		Hawaii	2011
Pennsylvania	2007		Mississippi	2011
Alabama	2008		Illinois	2012
Alaska	2008		Iowa	2012
Colorado	2008		Michigan	2012
Kansas	2008		Minnesota	2012
Montana	2008		Nebraska	2012
South Carolina	2008		North Carolina	2012
Connecticut	2009		North Dakota	2012
Maryland	2009		Rhode Island	2012
New Mexico	2009		Utah	2012
Vermont	2009		Indiana	2013
Wisconsin	2009		Nevada	2013
Delaware	2010		Virginia	2013
Idaho	2010		Massachusetts	underway

Further research for this report included review of relevant academic literature and federal agency guidance documents predominantly produced by U.S. Department of Transportation agencies. Key words searched for academic literature included (but were not necessarily limited to) public participation and transportation planning, public trust, and online participation, as well as stakeholder versus public participation.

## **B) WHAT? HOW? WHO? & WHEN? FRAMEWORK**

This section describes four questions that practitioners should ask when designing public participation for statewide long-range transportation plans. Public involvement in transportation planning is often dictated in contracts at the outset of a planning process rather than planned through an on-going, reflective basis.<sup>43</sup> Methods employed may repeat traditional practices, past positive experiences, and legal requirements for standard public meetings and hearings. In practice, practitioners may not have the opportunity to reflect on previous steps during the process. Therefore, thoughtful consideration from the outset about the specific needs of each step in the planning process and how the public can best contribute can lead to a more meaningful and effective process.<sup>44</sup>

Two resources are particularly helpful for assessing the applicability of particular tools. The first is the North Carolina DOT's Toolkit of participatory techniques. This web-based Toolkit includes a detailed spreadsheet of participatory techniques including public involvement goal based on the IAP2 spectrum, duration, type of project, target communities, and much more.<sup>45</sup> Some techniques included contain original content, while others reproduce information provided by the USDOT resource, described next. The second important online resource is the USDOT's Transportation Planning Capacity Building Planning Assistant Tool. The Planning Assistant takes planners through a questionnaire documenting the specifics of their particular planning process and then suggests a list of participatory techniques tailored to those specific planning needs.<sup>46</sup> This list corresponds with elements in the USDOT handbook "Public Involvement

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<sup>43</sup> Bailey et al., "Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy."

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Toolkit."

<sup>46</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, "Planning Assistant."

Techniques for Transportation-Decision-making”. Specific techniques are described along with advantages, disadvantages, costs, and other information.

In a manner consistent with academic literature and the two governmental resources mentioned above, this paper recognizes the importance of selecting participatory methods that are best suited to achieving particular planning goals.<sup>47</sup> In other words, participatory planning is context-specific, so it should ideally be designed through a case-by-case, reflective, and iterative process.<sup>48</sup> In the simplest of terms, considering the planning purpose of each step in the process, the participatory goal, timing, and the scale of the public that is appropriate for particular methods can set the stage for more meaningful public participation. While performance measures are considered an important tool for reflective practice, they are not included in the frame, due to the complexity and specificity needed to design meaningful measures. Therefore, four parameters – planning purpose, participatory goal, timing, and public scale – are used in this report to characterize the list of techniques employed by the states in the development of their SLRTPs in Chapter 2 and Appendix B. These parameters are listed below and detailed in subsequent paragraphs.

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<sup>47</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation”; Bailey et al., “Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy”; Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes.”

<sup>48</sup> Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes”; Willson, “Assessing Communicative Rationality as a Transportation Planning Paradigm.”

<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>
Educate the public	Inform	All interested parties	Pre-planning
Identify transportation goals/needs/values etc.	Consult	Representative sample	Early planning
Gather information	Involve	Select pool	Mid-process
Develop alternatives	Collaborate	Targeted demographic	Post-process
Analyze data	Empower		Decision phase
Prioritize options			
Influence, make, review decisions			

**i) What? Transportation planning purpose**

Because federal requirements are vague and the statewide long-range transportation planning process varies from state to state, a flexible structure is needed to characterize planning purposes. Breaking down transportation planning into its most basic components allows the practitioner to look at the task simply. Different phases of the process may include several transportation planning purposes. Moreover, different transportation planning purposes can best be satisfied using different participatory methods. For example, early on in the transportation planning process, the state DOT may wish to identify a future transportation vision. At this stage, the state’s planners may decide that it is necessary to educate the public, identify the community’s transportation needs and values, and gather information from the public. At a later stage in the planning process, practitioners may wish to generate ideas to develop alternative financing strategies. At this point, they may find it necessary to both educate the public and ask the public to provide innovative ideas to develop alternatives. Transportation planning purposes used in this analysis, include:

- (1) Educate the public
- (2) Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.

- (3) Gather information
- (4) Develop alternatives
- (5) Analyze data
- (6) Prioritize options
- (7) Influence, make, review decisions

**ii) How? Participatory level**

How agencies interact with the public is the next basic question. Agencies must decide what level of participation they are comfortable with when planning participatory strategies. The IAP2 spectrum of public participation will be used in this assessment because of its broad professional acceptance and applicability. (Note that it is presented here in reverse order than in Table 2, with the least interactive method at the top.)

- (1) Inform
- (2) Consult
- (3) Involve
- (4) Collaborate
- (5) Empower

For different transportation planning purposes, the level of participation may differ. Again, different participatory methods are appropriate for achieving different levels of participation. Using the above examples, in the process of forming a community vision, the state DOT may be comfortable with *informing* (to educate the public), *involving* (to identify the community's transportation needs and values), and consulting (to gather information from the public). To generate ideas to develop alternative financing strategies, the agency may be comfortable *consulting* (to educate the public through two-way communication to ensure public understanding of the

information provided) and *collaborating* (to have the public bring innovative ideas to the table to develop alternatives). It is essential, however, to be clear about the level of participation at each step to avoid confusion with the public.<sup>49</sup>

### **iii) Who? Public scale**

Additionally, it is important to identify who needs to be involved during the planning process. Working with a large population creates a significant challenge for planners, not just logistically, but particularly in trying to generate a unified vision, goals, or decisions, for example.<sup>50</sup> Smaller, focused subsets of individuals, such as selective advisory committees or focus groups, can complement and possibly pare down the vast collective input resulting from large group meetings.<sup>51</sup>

There are numerous guidance documents and research papers that address interaction with specific communities, such as minorities, transportation disadvantaged groups, or elected officials. It is good practice to complete an action-specific stakeholder analysis to understand who specifically needs to be involved in your particular process and to consider how best to involve them.<sup>52</sup> Such a stakeholder analysis likely begins after specific community information has been collected. However, this evaluation looks at the broader public scale necessitated by use of specific participatory techniques and transportation planning purposes.

Here, the public scale refers to the size and general composition of the population involved for each participatory technique and includes the following categories: (1) all interested parties (self-selected general public), (2) representative samples, (3) select

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<sup>49</sup> Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes.”

<sup>50</sup> Bailey et al., “Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy.”

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes”; Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook*.

pools of individuals, and (4) targeted demographics. Three of the four levels of the public scale are rooted, in part, in characterizations of representativeness presented by Robbins, et al.<sup>53</sup> Brief descriptions of each level of public scale are presented below.

(1) All interested parties (self-selecting general public) – This is the typical class of participants for large-scale participatory events. The input received from the self-selecting general public is not representative of the community’s preferences.<sup>54</sup> While the agency may broadcast information to the general public widely through media, participation or consumption of the information is limited to those who are aware and interested in the information, “but they are unlikely to understand the trade-offs facing the government.”<sup>55</sup> However, reaching out to the general population gives members of the public the opportunity to exercise a civic right, offers the greatest opportunity to inform the most people, and often meets transportation rule requirements.<sup>56</sup>

(2) Representative sample – To understand the actual preferences of the state’s citizens, a randomly selected, representative sample is necessary. Still, the structure of the tool (e.g., survey, focus group) determines its success in generating balanced, informed, valid results. Random selection should eliminate the bias inherent in other pools.<sup>57</sup>

(3) Select pool – How individuals are selected will determine the usefulness of this pool. Robbins, et al., cautions that select pools can contain either biased or balanced viewpoints among its representatives, depending on selection criteria. In neither case is the select pool representative of the population.<sup>58</sup> The benefit to such

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<sup>53</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.; O’Connor et al., “State of the Practice.”

<sup>55</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.; Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes.”

<sup>57</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

pools is the ability to have a smaller subset of the population dedicate time to understand the issues and participate more fully.<sup>59</sup>

(4) Targeted demographic – A targeted demographic is a subset of the public who is recognized as having a stake in the outcome but who would otherwise have no voice in the process due to a lack of organization or resources. Fashioning participation to include targeted demographics can contribute to a just and equitable process.<sup>60</sup> These groups are not intended to be representative or balanced.

To demonstrate the role of public scale in the assessment, we continue with the previous examples. In the process of forming a community vision, the state DOT may choose to broadcast information widely to the *general public* to inform and educate its citizens about the planning process; they may consult a *targeted demographic* within the population to gather information from transportation disadvantaged communities who may not otherwise participate; and they may involve *all interested citizens* again to identify the community’s transportation needs and values. To generate ideas to develop alternative financing strategies, the agency may consult and collaborate with a *select pool* of active citizens identified by local elected officials.

#### **iv) When? Timing**

The particular phase or timing within the process is an important consideration in participatory design. As mentioned above, participation should be early, continuous, and often. Thus, effective processes are characterized by methods that involve pre- and early planning, as well as planning throughout the process, offering the public numerous opportunities to participate at its own pace. Participatory phases occur in a continuum as

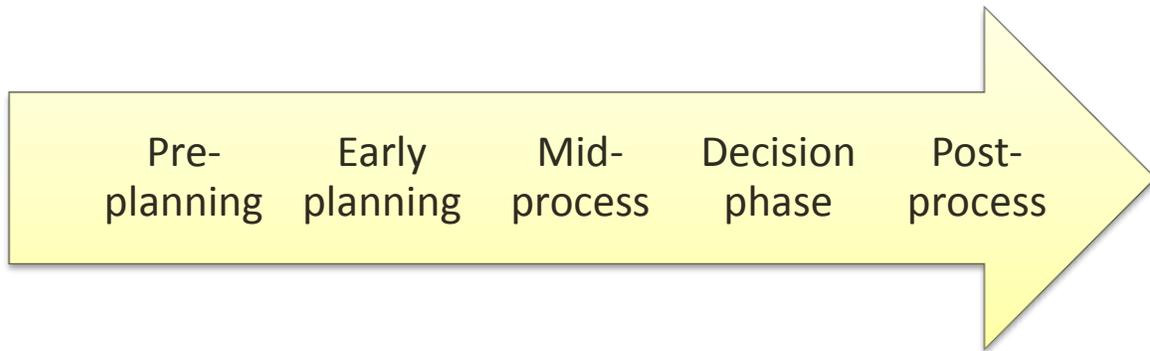
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<sup>59</sup> Bailey et al., “Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy”; Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>60</sup> Bryson et al., “Designing Public Participation Processes.”

shown in Figure 1. Using the above examples, the process of forming a community vision would occur during the *early planning* and *mid-process* phases. The process of generating ideas to develop alternative financing strategies would occur *mid-process*.

Figure 1: Timing continuum



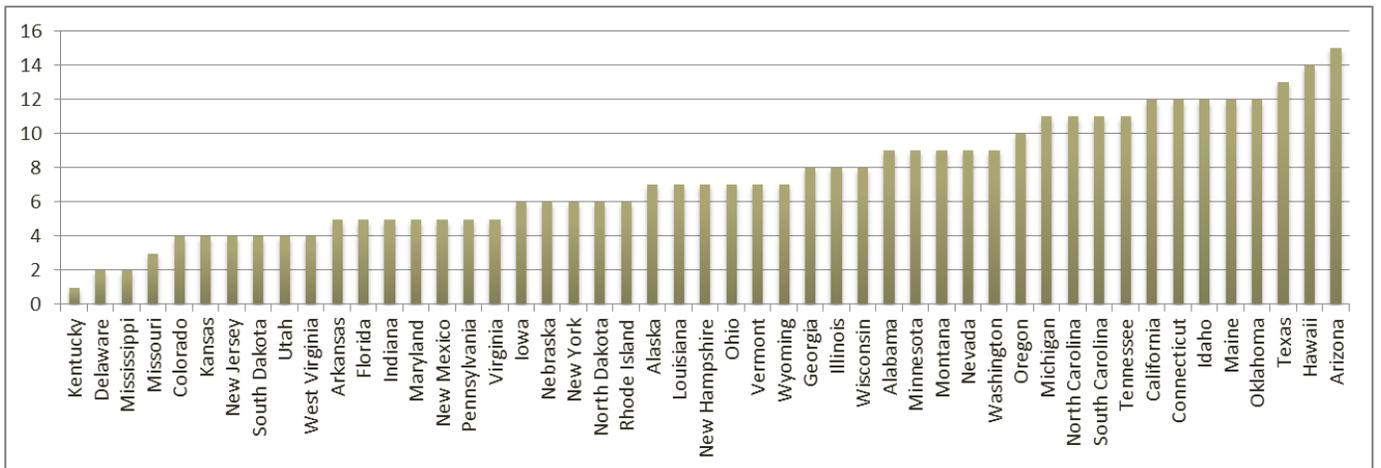
These four parameters – identification of the transportation planning purpose, the participatory goal, timing, and the public scale – will be used in the next chapter to assess the usefulness of the participatory techniques used by state DOTs to complete their most recently adopted SLRTP.

#### 4) Results: Overview of Methods Used Across the States

This chapter presents the results of the analysis of participatory methods reported by state DOTs in their most recently adopted SLRTPs. It provides an overview of states' participatory practice, including the transportation planning purpose, participatory goal, timing, and public scale for each. More detailed descriptions of techniques are provided in Appendix B. Together, this chapter and Appendix B can serve as a preliminary reference when designing a participatory process.

A total of 50 different techniques were identified in the review of SLRTPs. Most states used a combination of participatory methods, giving citizens more options and opportunities to be involved. For instance, between 2003 and summer 2013, all but one state reported using a combination of participatory techniques in their most recently adopted plan, with an average of 7 and a maximum of 15 techniques per state (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Number of techniques reported



The list of techniques was further refined in an effort to streamline the discussion and minimize redundancy. Consequently, like methods (e.g., questionnaires and surveys) were combined, and others were eliminated altogether including minor, supportive

techniques (e.g., advertising banner, logo) and completely external techniques (e.g., reliance on other agencies for outreach). This left 23 methods described below and in Appendix B. Table 4 presents the subsequent primary participatory methods against the What? How? Who? & When? framework. Prime examples of states that utilized particular techniques are also included in Table 4 for reference.

**A) WHAT? HOW? WHO? & WHEN FRAMEWORK**

**What?** Overall, Table 4 includes a dozen examples of flexible techniques that can be used to engage the public for multiple transportation planning purposes, namely educating the public, identifying transportation goals, gathering data, and prioritizing options. Among the most flexible techniques are focus groups, listening sessions/break-out groups, statewide symposia, and citizen advisory groups. Alternatively, eight other techniques are best suited solely toward public educational purposes due to their unidirectional flow of information. Examples of these include question and answer sessions, most web-based techniques, and newsletters. Another two techniques in the list (public hearings and public comment) are useful for the singular purpose of gathering input for decision-making.

**How?** Different participatory goals meet the needs of people with different levels of interest. Most techniques in Table 4 fall along the lower levels of the participatory spectrum, simply enabling practitioners to inform (one-way flow of information) or consult (limited two-way flow of information) with the public. Techniques at this end of the spectrum are essential for interacting with large numbers of dispersed citizens. These include surveys, interviews, standard public meetings, and secondary school curricula. Seven techniques have the potential to involve the public (e.g., focus groups, symposia), and three can be used to collaborate with the public (e.g., listening sessions), while one

(citizen advisory groups) has the potential to empower the public. Many of these methods can be adapted to provide more or less participation to achieve the level of participation with which the agency is most comfortable.

**Who?** Most of the techniques (18 out of 23) are useful for engaging self-selected, interested individuals among the general populace. Eleven techniques can be useful for engaging a targeted demographic in public participation. These include surveys, interviews, focus groups, and speakers' bureaus. However, only three techniques – surveys, focus groups, and citizen advisory groups – effectively employ random samples to achieve representative results, while just one – citizen advisory groups – often utilizes a select pool of individuals due to the extensive requirements on participants' time.

**When?** All techniques span multiple phases along the timing continuum. Ten techniques are temporally universal, allowing them to be adapted to any or all stages of the planning process. Eight are best when confined within the planning process (as opposed to before or after the process). Three techniques, however, are best when limited to the first half of the planning stage (focus groups, listening sessions, and interactive demonstrations), and one technique (the public hearing) is only appropriate in the late stages of the planning process.

Table 4: Menu of participatory methods

<b>Technique</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Survey/ questionnaire</b>	Transportation goals; data gathering; prioritization	Consult	Self-selected general population; representative population; targeted demographic	Pre-planning to post-process	Hawaii; Ohio; Delaware; North Carolina; Nebraska; Oregon; Tennessee; Washington
<b>Focus group</b>	Public education; transportation goals; data gathering; alternative development; prioritization	Inform; consult; involve	Representative population; targeted demographic	Pre-planning to mid-process	South Carolina; Arizona; New Jersey; Ohio; Pennsylvania; Maine
<b>Interview</b>	Transportation goals; data gathering	Consult	Targeted demographic	Pre-planning to post-process	South Carolina; Hawaii; Arizona
<b>Public meeting</b>	Public education; transportation goals; data gathering	Inform; consult	Self-selected general public	Early planning to decision phase	Michigan; Texas; Indiana; Georgia; Arkansas
<b>Listening session/ breakout session</b>	Transportation goals; data gathering; alternative development; data analysis; prioritization	Involve; collaborate	Self-selected general public	Early planning to mid-process	Washington; New Hampshire; Maine; Iowa; Georgia
<b>Ranking/ voting</b>	Transportation goals; alternative development; prioritization;	Consult; involve	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Early planning to decision phase	California; Florida; Hawaii; West Virginia; Colorado

Table 4: Menu of participatory methods (cont.)

<b>Technique</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Question and answer</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Pre-planning to post-process	Nevada; Tennessee
<b>Open house</b>	Public education; data gathering	Inform; consult	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Early planning to post-process	Rhode Island; Illinois; Texas; Idaho
<b>Public hearing</b>	Decision-making	Inform; consult	Self-selected general public	Mid-process to decision phase	Texas; Rhode Island; New York
<b>Statewide symposium</b>	Public education; transportation goals; data gathering; alternative development; prioritization; decision-making	Inform; involve	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Early planning to decision phase	Louisiana; New Hampshire; Kansas
<b>Speakers' bureau</b>	Public education	Inform	Targeted demographic	Pre-planning to post-process	Tennessee; Oregon
<b>Virtual open house</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public	Early planning to post-process	Virginia
<b>Statewide webinar</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Early planning to decision phase	Florida
<b>Review period</b>	Public education; decision-making	Inform; consult	Self-selected general public; targeted demographic	Early planning to decision phase	Maryland; Arizona; California

Table 4: Menu of participatory methods (cont.)

<b>Technique</b>	<b>What?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Examples</b>
<b>Public comment</b>	Decision-making	Consult	Self-selected general public	Pre-planning to post-process	Virginia
<b>Website</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public	Pre-planning to post-process	Minnesota; Nevada; Illinois; Oklahoma
<b>Social media</b>	Public education; transportation goals; data gathering; prioritization	Inform; consult; (involve); (collaborate)	Self-selected general public	Pre-planning to post-process	Idaho; Washington; Texas
<b>Video</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public	Early planning to post-process	Arizona; Maine; North Carolina
<b>Interactive map</b>	Public education; (data gathering)	Inform; (consult); (involve)	Self-selected general public	Pre-planning to post-process	Nevada; Utah
<b>Interactive visual demo</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public	Early planning to mid-process	New Jersey
<b>Factsheet/newsletter</b>	Public education	Inform	Self-selected general public	Early planning to post process	Arizona; Texas; North Carolina
<b>Secondary school curriculum</b>	Public education; transportation goals	Inform; consult	Targeted demographic	Pre-planning to post-process	New Jersey; Rhode Island
<b>Citizen advisory group</b>	Public education; transportation goals; data gathering; alternative development; data analysis; prioritization; decision-making	Involve; collaborate; empower	Select pool; random sample	Pre-planning to Post-process	New Mexico; Missouri; New Hampshire

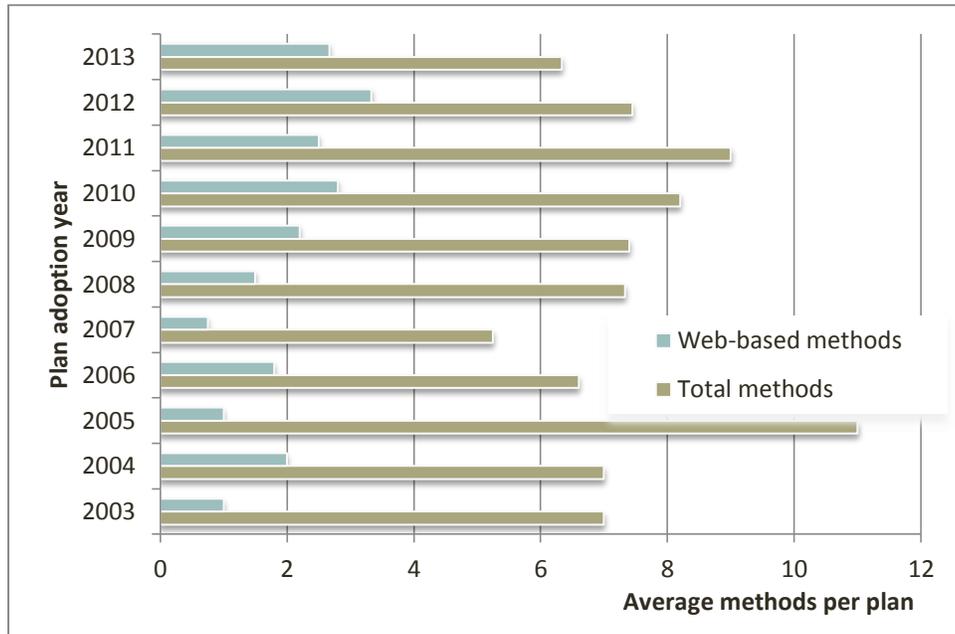
Note: Parentheses indicate the potential for higher level of participation.

## **B) FREQUENCY OF PARTICIPATORY TECHNIQUES**

Not surprisingly, traditional methods anchor the participatory process. Among the participatory activities most employed by the fifty states during development of their last adopted SLRTP, 33 reported creating a website or posting plan information on their agency website. Thirty-two states conducted a public meeting or hearing, and the same number conducted a survey or questionnaire. Twenty states distributed newsletters, factsheets, or brochures. While a handful of techniques are commonly used by most DOTs, these numbers indicate that traditional methods are by no means obligatory.

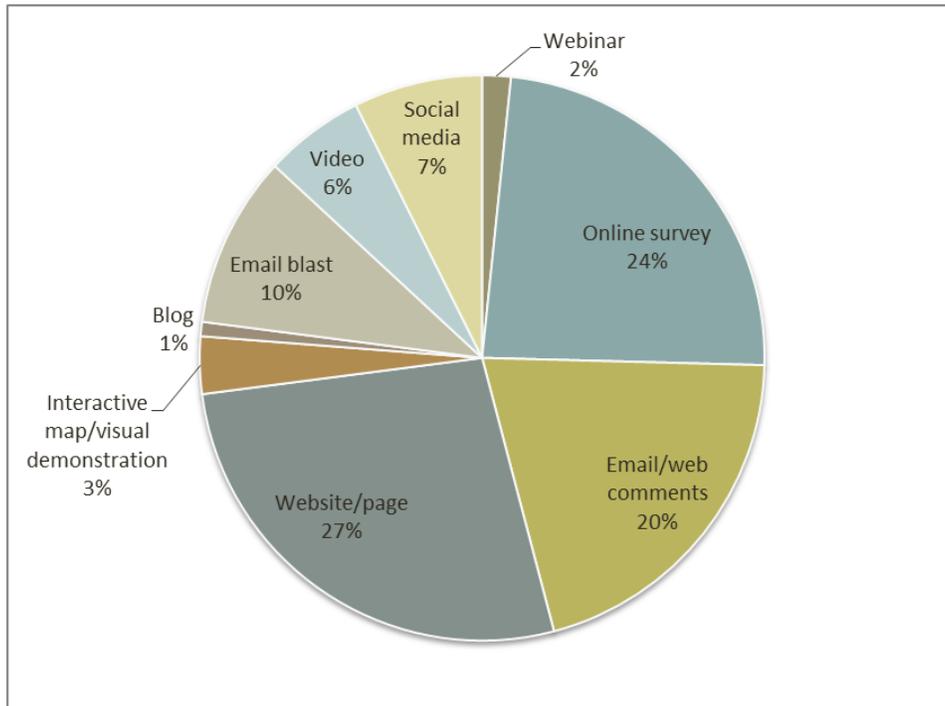
Further assessment of the data revealed no correlation or observed relationship between the reported total number of techniques used and the date of plan adoption (Figure 3), indicating that states are not using an increasing number of techniques in their plans over time. Nor was there an apparent pattern between the reported number of techniques used and the number of participants in public meetings and hearings, the number of comments received, the date of initiation, or the duration of the planning process. In fact, few states report the total numbers of participants or comments or the duration or initiation date of the process, making it impossible to draw any conclusions with this information.

Figure 3: Average number of methods used by adoption year



On the other hand, Figure 3 indicates that use of web-based techniques has increased perceptibly over the last decade. The average number of web-based tools used by each state is strongly positively correlated (0.8) with the date of plan adoption, growing from one to three web-based techniques per plan on average over the last decade. Web-based tools include email blasts, websites, and acceptance of emailed comments, as well as more sophisticated techniques like interactive maps and visual demonstrations and use of social media like Facebook and You Tube videos. Indeed, nearly three-quarters of web-based techniques reported in adopted SLRTPs include websites, online surveys, and acceptance of virtual comments. The distribution of these techniques is indicated in Figure 4.

Figure 4: Proportion of online methods reported



Yet, techniques, like listening sessions and citizen advisory groups, that elevate the level of face-to-face interaction between the public and planners remain uncommon. Such techniques include those that rank highly on the participatory spectrum (i.e., ones that involve, collaborate, or empower the public). While online interactive techniques are entering the market, no deliberative online methods are known to have been used in SLRTPs adopted to date. Techniques like these are intended to encourage dialogue among and between participants and practitioners and to foster greater public ownership in planning products.

Other uncommon methods include experimental methods, such as interactive maps and visual demonstrations, and elaborate events, like statewide symposia. Additionally, youth-centered techniques, such as secondary curricula, are also infrequent.

These methods may be more costly and time-intensive to produce. Thus, state DOTs must decide whether the benefits to the public process outweigh the additional expense.

Finally, as stewards of the public trust, DOTs in states that champion the planning process at the administrative level may find overall better support and resources available for their plans. Where prior statewide visioning processes are available, states can use them as a jumping off point for their SLRTPs. This carries over the momentum of those planning processes into transportation planning. In addition, seven states incorporated public involvement into statewide transportation policies, goals, or action items in their plans. In these instances, public involvement is rolled into the agency's goals of transparency and responsiveness to public values. In so doing, public participation is elevated in importance to the top levels of the organization.

#### **C) PAIRING TECHNIQUES**

Some methods tend to be matched consistently with other techniques. For example, while focus groups and interviews with members of the public were relatively infrequent, they were always used in tandem with surveys. This indicates an interest on the part of the practitioner to supplement quantitative data with in-depth qualitative data.

Another example is the use of public hearings. State DOTs employing public hearings tend to also utilize other non-deliberative, unidirectional techniques, such as public meetings, open houses, surveys, newsletters, and social media (which has yet to be used in a deliberative manner, despite its potential). This pattern may signify an affinity toward traditional participatory methods by DOTs using public hearings.

#### **D) SUMMARY OF TECHNIQUES**

These results indicate an increasing trend toward using more web-based techniques, while at the same time not increasing the overall number of techniques; this

indicates that online methods are replacing face-to-face techniques to a certain, so far, limited extent. While states are relying mostly on a handful of common online techniques (websites, acceptance of emailed comments), states are willing to explore new methods, including virtual meetings, social media, and online mapping. However, use of online methods, to date, is hovering near the low end of the participatory spectrum. Moreover, State DOTs' use of exploratory techniques (both virtual and face-to-face) must be carefully evaluated to ensure benefits outweigh temporal and monetary costs. Additionally, states that prioritize planning at high levels both within the agency as well as outside, benefit from high levels of administrative support.

While state DOTs are using a diversity of participatory methods in statewide long-range transportation planning, a handful of states appear to be drawn toward more traditional methods (such as public hearings) that tend to hover around the lower levels of the participatory spectrum. On the other hand, the fifteen or so states that use techniques at the other end of the spectrum (like citizen advisory groups and listening sessions) tend to employ an assortment of participatory techniques that is fairly balanced with respect to the participatory goal. Still others tend to use in-depth qualitative techniques (like focus groups and interviews) to supplement quantitative techniques (like surveys).

Appendix B provides detailed descriptions of the 23 primary participatory methods used by states in developing their SLRTPs. Each method is briefly discussed, including examples where unusual or stellar cases were found. Then, for each technique, the appropriate planning purpose(s), participatory goal(s), phase(s), and public scale(s) are identified to call attention to the usefulness and application of each technique. Next, Chapter 5 will discuss value-added opportunities gleaned from the analysis of these plans.

## **5) Discussion: Value-Added Opportunities**

With today's limited resources, participatory programs must combine methods that will maximize reach. This is even more critical for large states, like Texas, with a greater distribution of rural populations and a rapidly diversifying population. Yet, simply applying more techniques is not necessarily better. As Bailey, et al., point out, sheer quantity of participation will not produce quality results if the participation lingers around the lower levels of participatory scales.<sup>61</sup> Good participatory programs should employ a broad set of strategies that inform, consult, and involve the public. Furthermore, states should look for opportunities to partner with citizens on components of the SLRTP where the effort is practical, the outcome is substantive, the participation is meaningful, and the agency is comfortable going that extra step. In this section, five opportunities to optimize participation in statewide long-range transportation planning are presented along with examples from states' SLRTPs or other literature, as appropriate.

### **A) TAKE THE PROCESS TO THE PEOPLE**

Low participation in public meetings is a challenge felt by all DOTs, especially in rural areas.<sup>62</sup> However, some have found that reach can be markedly extended by getting out in the community and taking the message to where people already are. This type of effort is often used to simply inform communities of the planning process, plan status, or previous planning products to increase interest in the process. Examples typically include offering speakers' bureaus to present plan information to community

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<sup>61</sup> Bailey et al., "Planning, Technology, and Legitimacy."

<sup>62</sup> Herr, "Opportunities Exist to Transition to Performance-Based Planning and Federal Oversight."

organizations or taking traveling exhibits to community fairs.<sup>63</sup> In a recent survey, over 80% of state DOTs said they now take their SLRTP on the road.<sup>64</sup>

Taking the planning process out to the public can also lead to increased participation in consultative efforts. The North Carolina DOT published videos encouraging participation in surveys. In addition to making the videos available online, they ran them in waiting areas at the Department of Motor Vehicles statewide to increase exposure.<sup>65</sup> Maryland and Nebraska DOTs each solicited participation in surveys through invitations posted at computer terminals at public libraries.<sup>66</sup> Finally, in another example, Tennessee DOT took a traveling exhibit to festivals and other locations to reach people who do not normally participate.<sup>67</sup> These actions succeeded in increasing the level of participation by individuals who lack home computer access and who may otherwise have been unaware of the planning process.

The Indian Nations Council of Governments (INCOG) in Oklahoma offers another award-winning example from regional transit planning that elevated the level of public information and consultation achieved by getting out in the community. INCOG renovated a rented, decommissioned bus to serve as a mobile participation station, featuring a video-viewing area, informational displays, a survey, refreshments, and an area for one-on-one discussions with transit planners.<sup>68</sup> The bus visited 117 locations, including parades and other community events, shopping centers, schools, and libraries, ensuring a broad spectrum of participants. The charter bus received over 2,000 visitors<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Tennessee Department of Transportation, "Plan Go: Tennessee's 25-Year Transportation Plan."

<sup>64</sup> Herr, "Opportunities Exist to Transition to Performance-Based Planning and Federal Oversight."

<sup>65</sup> Atkins, "NCDOT: From Policy to Projects, 2040 Plan, Appendix C."

<sup>66</sup> Maryland Department of Transportation, "2009 Maryland Transportation Plan"; Nebraska Department of Roads, "Vision 2032: Mapping Nebraska's Future."

<sup>67</sup> Tennessee Department of Transportation, "Plan Go: Tennessee's 25-Year Transportation Plan."

<sup>68</sup> Stromberg, "Public Participation Delivered."

<sup>69</sup> Indian Nations Council of Governments, "Mobile Outreach Schedule."

– 90% of whom had never participated in transportation planning before.<sup>70</sup> See Figure 5, below, for statistics revealing the widespread reach of this mobile participatory form.

Figure 5: Fast Forward mobile outreach highlights



## B) LISTEN AND LEARN

Early efforts to gauge public understanding of complex transportation issues can help an agency craft a participatory strategy that will be more meaningful and effective overall. The Maine DOT conducted focus groups early in the process of plan development to better appreciate the public’s understanding of challenging topics such as transportation finance and budgeting.<sup>71</sup> Beginning with a solid understanding of the public’s knowledge on key issues, the agency could better target its public education to deepen the value of informed participation throughout the process.

Opportunities for learning from the people can be as simple as offering open-ended questions. Washington State DOT’s online public input tool included a series of

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<sup>70</sup> *APA National Planning Awards 2012 - Fast Forward Mobile Outreach Bus.*

<sup>71</sup> Maine Department of Transportation, “Connecting Maine: Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan 2008-2030.”

open-ended questions to learn more from participants than could be achieved through multiple choice surveys or questionnaires alone. Open-ended questions in the tool included asking the public to identify transportation needs that were important to them and to list funding sources that the state should consider.<sup>72</sup>

Certainly surveys and questionnaires do not allow for as deep a discourse on the issues as face-to-face dialogue, but they have their role in the process due to their potential for expansive reach and possible representativeness. Open-ended questions allow these hands-off forms of participation to reveal to the planner some of the thought behind the answers. By leaving these questions open to public interpretation, the agency is signaling its openness to innovative idea generation from the public.

### **C) LEVERAGE EXISTING RELATIONSHIPS**

State DOTs can stretch limited participatory resources, including staff and funds, further by teaming up with metropolitan planning organizations, regional planning organizations, and other local and regional partners to conduct public involvement activities. Local partners can help advertise planning products and related activities, potentially reaching a broader audience while expending fewer resources. Several DOTs extended outreach by asking elected officials, transportation organizations, representatives of transportation underserved groups, and professional organizations to share plan materials with their constituents. For instance, Idaho DOT's partners distributed electronic postcards to over 1,000 members of regional organizations, saving money on postage, printing, and database management.<sup>73</sup> Other states, like North

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<sup>72</sup> Washington State Transportation Commission, "Washington Transportation Plan 2030: Stakeholder Outreach Summary."

<sup>73</sup> Idaho Transportation Department, "Idaho on the Move: Improving Safety, Mobility and Economic Vitality - Public Involvement and Collaboration."

Carolina and Maine, reached out to local and regional organizations and agencies to assist with survey and plan information delivery.<sup>74</sup>

Additionally, joint planning processes prevent planning fatigue and confusion from would-be participants who may not have the stamina to participate in multiple similar but distinct planning processes. Moreover, joint processes help maintain strong ties between agencies at multiple levels of government and enrich communication and collaboration as partners converge on a common message. Utah and Kentucky, for example, relied primarily on metropolitan and rural planning organizations to conduct public participation for their SLRTPs.<sup>75</sup> Relying on other agencies for outreach can be a prudent strategy to optimize reach and resources but is best when balanced with other state-led techniques.

**D) USE DIGITAL MEANS TO COMPLEMENT FACE-TO-FACE CONTACT**

With the warning that “...e-participation and e-democracy are coming, and coming fast, whether or not the processes involved are meaningful and valid,”<sup>76</sup> French et al., remind us that quality must be at the forefront of web-based participatory processes. Web-based participation offers a cost-effective way to reach dispersed populations across large areas – in fact, it can be particularly useful to broadcast large-scale statewide informative and consultative processes. Moreover, internet-based dialogic techniques that could foster long-distance collaboration among participants<sup>77</sup> are entering the market, raising the participatory potential of online methods.

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<sup>74</sup> Atkins, “NCDOT: From Policy to Projects, 2040 Plan, Appendix C”; Maine Department of Transportation, “Connecting Maine: Statewide Long-Range Transportation Plan 2008-2030.”

<sup>75</sup> Kentucky Transportation Cabinet, “Kentucky Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan 2006”; Seager, “Utah’s Unified Transportation Plan - Public Involvement Summary?”

<sup>76</sup> French, Insua, and Ruggeri, “E-Participation and Decision Analysis.”

<sup>77</sup> Brabham, “Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning.”

Yet, challenges to full online accessibility exist. Still today, 15% of adults are not connected to the internet, so digital means are unlikely to reach a segment of society which disproportionately represents retirees, those with less than a high school education, Hispanics, low income households, rural residents,<sup>78</sup> and the disabled<sup>79</sup>. Additionally, the skill and equipment needed to participate in certain interactive methods, such as web mapping, could create a barrier for some users.<sup>80</sup> Thus, it is essential to complement online techniques with other more personal or telephone-based methods. The potential exists as well for misuse of online platforms (e.g., stuffing the virtual ballot box) but this can be mitigated by diligent policing of the program,<sup>81</sup> if integrity of the process may be at risk. Yet, an even greater facilitation challenge could arise from online deliberative events, particularly as the number of participants and the duration of the event grows.<sup>82</sup>

Despite these disadvantages, French, et al., suggest that representativeness may be less crucial for idea generation than decision-making.<sup>83</sup> Moreover, web-based participation has the potential to be more inclusive than traditional public meetings because it is flexible with regard to location, time commitment, and level of participation if a variety of digital means are provided.<sup>84</sup> For example, a study of a participatory transit

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<sup>78</sup> Zickuhr, *Who's Not Online and Why*.

<sup>79</sup> Susannah Fox, "Americans Living with Disability and Their Technology Profile." It should be noted that some of these individuals live in a household with someone who does have a computer or internet access and could potentially participate either directly with assistance or indirectly.

<sup>80</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Toolkit."

<sup>81</sup> Tang and Waters, "The Internet, GIS and Public Participation in Transportation Planning"; Brabham, "Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning."

<sup>82</sup> French, Insua, and Ruggeri, "E-Participation and Decision Analysis."

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*; Tang and Waters, "The Internet, GIS and Public Participation in Transportation Planning."

design contest revealed that two-thirds of participants had never participated in a traditional public meeting before.<sup>85</sup>

To optimize internet-based techniques, planners should consider attractive website design, ease of use,<sup>86</sup> and an easy to find/remember domain name. Other considerations could include offering real-time trade-offs,<sup>87</sup> objective learning opportunities, fun interactive activities, and opportunities for other participants to provide positive (but not negative) feedback<sup>88</sup> (e.g., “likes” or checkboxes for preferred ideas).

Another way to expand reach is by using mobile technology or applications. In some cases, mobile technology is replacing home computers for internet access. According to the latest data from the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 56% of American adults use smartphones, and the proportion of African American and Hispanic adults who access the internet with their smartphones now exceeds that of whites.<sup>89</sup> In addition, civic engagement via social networking sites is more evenly distributed among income levels compared with civic engagement in-person which tends to increase with income.<sup>90</sup> Mobile applications allow citizens to participate on-the-spot with familiar technology. Most state DOTs tend to offer travel information on mobile apps. However, others, such as Mindmixer ([www.mindmixer.com](http://www.mindmixer.com)), which is already in use by a number of Departments of Transportation,<sup>91</sup> can elevate the level of participation to include more dialogue and deliberation.

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<sup>85</sup> Brabham, “Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning.”

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>88</sup> Brabham, “Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning.”

<sup>89</sup> Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, “Pew Internet: Mobile.”

<sup>90</sup> Smith, *Civic Engagement in the Digital Age*.

<sup>91</sup> “Code for America Commons.”

Aside from social media and questionnaires, however, most online participatory methods currently used in SLRTP development have been limited to unidirectional public information. Among these, Virginia’s month-long virtual open house did, in fact, reach a broader audience than its face-to-face open house, receiving 180 unique website visits compared with the 100 participants who signed in at statewide open houses.<sup>92</sup> While there is potential to extend online methods to include dialogic exercises to deepen the participatory experience, because of the facilitation challenges and the time commitment required to actively participate in an online dialogue, these methods can supplement but cannot adequately replace face-to-face methods for states that wish to involve the public at a higher participatory level in statewide transportation planning.

**E) INTEGRATE PUBLIC INPUT**

Public input is the cornerstone of the participatory process; however, what happens with that input once it is conveyed determines where participation sits on the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum. Dissatisfaction with the process – and, as a result, the agency – may occur if the public feels that their input is requested too late in the process to make a difference or that it is simply “lip service” to fulfill legal requirements, leading to disillusionment with the process.<sup>93</sup> When input is clearly reflected in planning outcomes, the process – and thereby, the agency – seems more transparent and trustworthy. Citizens are more motivated to participate when they feel public involvement is a worthwhile use of their time and when they can see how their participation matters in the development of statewide goals and planning products.<sup>94</sup> Moreover, meaningful and effective public participation can encourage a broader

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<sup>92</sup> Virginia Department of Transportation, “An Update to Virginia’s Statewide Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan.”

<sup>93</sup> McComas, “Trivial Pursuits.”

<sup>94</sup> Tang and Waters, “The Internet, GIS and Public Participation in Transportation Planning.”

spectrum of the community, beyond the usual outspoken individuals, to perform this essential civic duty. These reasons illustrate the importance of establishing, up front, the level of participation for each element of the planning process with which the agency is comfortable and in communicating this clearly with participants.

From the agency's perspective, input that is informed is more constructive and easily incorporated. Thus, it is the agency's responsibility to conduct thorough and balanced public education and to inclusively engage the community in dialogue that leads to useful inputs into the planning process. Creating the space for dialogue among participants – with experts, advocates, and each other – allows citizens to evolve their opinions. This all begins with discovering the public's understanding of transportation policy issues, as mentioned above.

#### **F) SUMMARY**

Participation can become more meaningful and effective when planners take the time to verify the existing level of public knowledge. The process can be made more efficient and effective when planners make the effort to visit people in their communities and when they work with local planning bodies to present unified plans. Moreover, efforts that pair traditional methods with online ones have the potential to expand the reach of the planning process. Finally, integrating public input clearly into the plan validates the integrity of the process and builds public confidence in the agency.

## **6) Conclusion**

Offering a comprehensive approach to public participation can allow state DOTs to reap diverse benefits. An inclusive process has the power to foster relationships between the community and the agency, it honors the values of the community, and it motivates citizens to become invested in their transportation system. Multidimensional participatory processes provide opportunities for citizens to become engaged at different levels of their choosing at different stages in the process. All of this can be done with limited fiscal resources.

Reviewing the participatory methods employed by the fifty State DOTs during preparation of their last adopted SLRTP demonstrated the diversity of actions that the public process can embody. More importantly, this review reinforced the need for flexibility in the public process to allow for context-sensitive methods tailored to the specific planning situation. This review incorporated four parameters to characterize the methods used by the States. Each was placed in context of the planning purpose, the participatory goal, phase, and the scale of the public that should be involved.

The most common techniques used by State DOTs were websites, public meetings and hearings, surveys or questionnaire, and newsletters, brochures or factsheets. Several states explored variations to the standard public meeting, elevating the participatory level of the public meeting by including dialogic components, such as listening sessions. These variations offer states, like Texas, where public meetings and hearings are required by state law, opportunities to heighten the value of participation through dialogue.

Use of online methods has grown in recent years, enabling the public to participate in civic discourse on its own time at the level at which they are interested.

Today, online methods tend to be used as unidirectional informative or consultative techniques but they have the potential to be developed to involve citizens at a higher participatory level. Surveys can be developed that provide instant feedback on tradeoffs, for instance. Citizens could also be invited to document local transportation needs or suggest alternative financing strategies on web-based forums where other participants can add their support or planners can provide feedback.

Additionally, inclusion of citizens on advisory committees and decision-making bodies elevates the role of citizens to higher levels on the participatory spectrum. Such processes offer participants a deeper education on important issues, increase transparency, and enhance public ownership of planning products.

This paper discussed five optimization strategies, garnered from the review of states' practices, whereby state DOTs can add value to their SLRTP participatory processes. First, by taking the planning process to the community, DOTs are able to engage more citizens – in both diversity and number – than by hosting public meetings and websites and expecting the community to come to them. Second, by taking the time to listen to the community, the state can discover the level of public understanding of complex issues, and the state can gain from public innovation. Both aspects of listening will foster the creation of a more effective public process. Next, by coordinating with local planning partners, states can substantially broaden their reach without substantially impacting the budget. Moreover, efforts to reach out to local and regional agencies strengthens ties with those entities. Fourth, states should use online participatory tools to supplement face-to-face activities rather than replace them. As mentioned above, interactive online tools have the potential to geographically expand reach to citizens as well as to stimulate creativity and dialogue. Finally, visibly integrating public input into the plan builds public confidence in the outcome and in the agency.

Planners today realize that a deeper appreciation of state decisions will follow public discourse and ownership through a seemingly fair process. Because very few participatory processes truly reveal representative public preferences – and the most common methods that are representative (surveys) do not typically offer dialogue – participatory efforts must be many and varied in order to reach different stakeholder populations and fit citizens’ diverse levels of attention and interest. Through utilizing an assortment of methods, like those described in Chapter 4, and looking for value-added opportunities to optimize participation (Chapter 5), State DOTs can realize greater success in reaching large numbers of diverse and dispersed citizens.

## **Appendix A: Statewide Long-range Transportation Planning Public Participation Documents**

### Alabama

Alabama Department of Transportation. "Alabama Statewide Transportation Plan." Prepared by: Jacobs Carter Burgess, June 2008.

<http://cpmsweb2.dot.state.al.us/TransPlan/SWTP/Docs/ALDOTSWTPFINAL.pdf>.

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Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities. "Let's Get Moving 2030: Alaska Statewide Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan," February 2008.

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The Arizona Department of Transportation. "Participation Plan," June 2010.

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California Department of Transportation (CalTrans). "California Transportation Plan 2025." *Division of Transportation Planning*, April 2006.

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### Colorado

Colorado Department of Transportation. "Colorado 2035 Statewide Transportation Plan: Public Involvement Technical Report," March 2008.

<http://www.coloradodot.info/programs/statewide-planning/documents/2035-plan-technical-reports/Public%20Involvement%20Technical%20Report.pdf>.

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### Kentucky

Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. "Kentucky Long-Range Statewide Transportation Plan 2006," April 2007.  
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Wilbur Smith Associates. "Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan." Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, December 2003.  
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Michigan Department of Transportation. "MI Transportation Plan: Moving Michigan Forward, 2035 State Long-Range Transportation Plan," September 2012.  
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Utah Department of Transportation. "Utah's Unified Transportation Plan 2011-2040."  
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<http://www.dot.state.wy.us/files/live/sites/wydot/files/shared/Planning/Long%20Range%20Transportation%20Plan%202010.pdf>.

## **Appendix B: Participatory Methods Used in Statewide Long-range Transportation Planning**

The following is a detailed discussion of the reported participatory techniques used by states in developing their SLRTPs. Each method is briefly discussed with examples provided where unusual or stellar cases were found. Then, for each technique, the appropriate planning purpose(s), participatory goal(s), phase(s), and public scale(s) are listed to help the practitioner understand the usefulness and application of a particular technique.

### **i) EARLY CONSULTATION**

#### **a) Survey/questionnaire**

Approximately 28 states implemented surveys during the planning process. Another four states relied on questionnaires alone. Washington state used an online public input tool that operated much like a questionnaire with both multiple choice/ranking and open-ended questions. Nearly half of these surveys were conducted using a random representative telephone survey. These were often supplemented or supplanted entirely by making surveys available online, at public meetings, through mailings, or at department offices. While these auxiliary surveys were not representative, much can be gained from offering both if the results of each are analyzed separately.<sup>95</sup> Many DOTs used customer satisfaction surveys to obtain feedback on previous activities or products generated during the planning process, as well as overall satisfaction with the department's services or facilities.

Depending on the instrument, surveys can be used to understand the preferences of the entire population or a specific demographic group, or they can be used to gauge

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<sup>95</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, "Citizens and Resource Allocation."

general sentiments of the actively interested public.<sup>96</sup> Typically, representative samples require well-structured mechanisms conducted by professionals. This is best implemented using telephone, mail, or even online means. Representative samples of targeted demographic groups may be reached through structured means; otherwise, targeted groups can be reached by distributing paper or online surveys through advocacy groups or social service organizations. General public surveys can involve any of the above means plus handing out surveys at meetings.

It is important to remember that non-representative surveys and questionnaires are limited to the preferences of “highly motivated” individuals who are already interested in the topic – who opt in<sup>97</sup> – and may not be appropriate for policy level decision-making.<sup>98</sup> Surveys, even open-ended ones, are limited in the richness of information that can be gained as they disallow dialogue on the topic.<sup>99</sup> As such, responses fail to reflect underlying or interconnected issues that could affect the respondent’s answers.<sup>100</sup> Some interactive computer-based surveys, however, can be designed to present real-time trade-offs in response to selected options, offering a deeper dimension of participation and understanding.<sup>101</sup> Either way, it is essential to ensure objectivity in the wording of the instrument.

Surveys can also be used to evaluate the effectiveness of public participation during the process by illuminating areas of confusion or why a technique failed to garner

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<sup>96</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>97</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

<sup>98</sup> Gaber and Gaber, “Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs.”

<sup>99</sup> Nigel, “Mistaken Interests and the Discourse Model of Planning”; U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>100</sup> Vigar, “Deliberation, Participation and Learning in the Development of Regional Strategies.”

<sup>101</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, “Citizens and Resource Allocation.”

the anticipated interest.<sup>102</sup> Moreover, surveys can reveal public opinion on products of the planning process, or they can reveal trends in public perceptions over time.<sup>103</sup>

**What?** Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Prioritize options

**How?** Consult

**Who?** Self-selecting general population; Representative population; Targeted demographic.

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**b) Focus groups**

Nine states reported using focus groups to supplement their SLRTP input. In all cases, focus groups were paired with surveys. Focus groups tend to be limited to a dozen or fewer participants and five or six questions or topics of discussion with the purpose of revealing areas of agreement and disagreement on the topic among participants.<sup>104</sup> Focus groups allow for some context on the topic up-front but facilitation is limited to avoid shaping opinions.<sup>105</sup> Compensation is often provided.

Focus groups offer more in-depth understanding of community preferences than surveys by adding an element of facilitated discussion among participants. The relaxed, small group atmosphere of a focus group is conducive to authentic dialogue and can inject fresh perspectives into the planning process.<sup>106</sup> As a result, this dialogue can serve as a learning experience for both participants and the agency.

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<sup>102</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

Focus groups can be used to qualitatively supplement broader participatory outreach to understand the opinions of a small group on a particular issue.<sup>107</sup> While they can be designed to accommodate randomly selected representative samples, it may be difficult to generalize the results,<sup>108</sup> possibly due to their small size. Focus groups can effectively solicit opinions from specific community groups<sup>109</sup> and can be used to compare the opinions of one group with another<sup>110</sup> either by balancing the make-up of a single panel or in separate groups.<sup>111</sup> Moreover, focus groups can be particularly useful for an SLRTP since they are well-suited for discussing broad policy implications as opposed to technical information.<sup>112</sup>

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Prioritize options; Develop alternatives

**How?** Inform; Consult; Involve

**Who?** Representative population; Targeted demographic

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process

### c) Interviews

While interviews with community leaders are fairly common, five states conducted interviews with members of the general public or representatives of specific subsets of the citizenry. These included interviews with representatives of transportation underserved communities and interviews with rural residents. Like focus groups,

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<sup>107</sup> Ibid.; Gaber and Gaber, "Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs."

<sup>108</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, "Citizens and Resource Allocation."

<sup>109</sup> Gaber and Gaber, "Qualitative Assessment of Transit Needs"; Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, "Citizens and Resource Allocation."

<sup>110</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>111</sup> Robbins, Simonsen, and Feldman, "Citizens and Resource Allocation."

<sup>112</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

interviews are used to supplement other participatory techniques, such as surveys, but they reflect the opinions of individuals and are never representative of the community as a whole.<sup>113</sup> Unlike focus groups, they do not allow for interaction and discussion aside from limited discussion with the interviewer. While traditionally held at the beginning of the planning process, they can be effectively used near the end of the process to reflect evolving attitudes.<sup>114</sup> Interviews are typically conducted in person or on the telephone,<sup>115</sup> but they can even be conducted over the internet via instant messenger for appropriate audiences.<sup>116</sup>

Interviews, like focus groups, offer a safe environment for opinions to be expressed and are most beneficial when they are inclusive of perspectives and communities.<sup>117</sup> They can help the agency understand motivations and preferences of particular groups, and they can serve to clarify antagonistic viewpoints.<sup>118</sup> This important tool can build relationships with the community by opening communication with advocates and community leaders.<sup>119</sup> They can also be used to evaluate the performance of public participation programs<sup>120</sup> in an effort to continuously improve the process.

**What?** Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information

**How?** Consult

**Who?** Targeted demographic

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

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<sup>113</sup> Ibid.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Brabham, "Motivations for Participation in a Crowdsourcing Application to Improve Public Engagement in Transit Planning."

<sup>117</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

## **II) TYPES OF PUBLIC MEETINGS**

### **a) Public meetings**

A full 32 states report hosting public meetings during plan development. Public meetings can take many forms. Many traditional public meetings are held in a style similar to a public hearing with a presentation followed by recorded comments from members of the public. Depending on the format, public meetings can be more or less interactive, enabling more or less dialogue among participants and agency staff. This makes public meetings versatile and an oft-selected participatory tool. Variations on the public meeting reported in states' SLRTPs are described below. However, this section focuses on more traditional public meetings.

McComas has studied citizen perspectives on public meetings and hearings associated with environmental health issues. She notes that citizens became frustrated with the process when they did not feel their input would be considered in decision-making but rather was used to simply certify legal compliance. To establish credibility with participants, she recommends the sponsoring agency exemplify “openness, accuracy, trustworthiness, [and] impartiality,” while being forthcoming with information. McComas found that despite citizens' overall low expectations of and dissatisfaction with these public meetings, many citizens saw their merit – specifically to be informed, to be involved in planning, and to hear the views of other community members.<sup>121</sup> However, participants' preconceived perceptions going in to public meetings appeared to color citizen satisfaction coming out of the meetings.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> McComas, “Citizen Satisfaction with Public Meetings Used for Risk Communication.”

<sup>122</sup> McComas, “Trivial Pursuits.”

Furthermore, her research indicates that public meeting participants were not comfortable making comments that dissented from the perceived audience consensus opinion. She also found that those with the least faith in the process felt the most comfortable speaking out.<sup>123</sup> Such behavior reinforces an imbalance in public comment toward dissenters and advocates.<sup>124</sup> It is important to keep in mind that public meeting comments are not representative of the sentiment of the population as a whole, so this method should be paired with others.

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information

**How?** Inform; Consult

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase

**b) Listening sessions and deliberative break-out sessions**

Listening sessions were conducted by four states in developing their SLRTPs; another five states report using break-out sessions for deliberative exercises. Listening sessions are an example of small group, break-out sessions that can be incorporated into large group public meetings. For example, after an opening presentation, Washington State DOT separated participants of its listening sessions into smaller discussion groups focusing on four questions, after which the groups would report back to the whole.<sup>125</sup>

Creighton describes, in detail, using this method in nationwide forums for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to identify water-related concerns and solutions to solving them. This example is particularly relevant to large states conducting broad-scale public

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> O'Connor et al., "State of the Practice."

<sup>125</sup> Washington State Transportation Commission, "Washington Transportation Plan 2030: Stakeholder Outreach Summary."

involvement activities to identify statewide planning issues and complex solutions. During the Corps' geographically-dispersed, interactive forums, small group participants worked independently to identify concerns before discussing them within their group. Small groups then reported their most important concerns to the plenary. Participants then ranked the concerns to determine which ones would be carried forward for further discussion later in the meeting. Subsequently, participants again split up into small groups to generate solutions for the water-related problem of their choosing.<sup>126</sup>

This type of meeting has the benefit of engaging participants to actively identify problems and solutions. The activities also focus participants on the purpose of the meeting rather than extraneous issues that are outside the scope of the meeting.<sup>127</sup>

**What?** Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Develop alternatives; Analyze data; Prioritize options

**How?** Involve; Collaborate

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process

**c) Ranking and voting exercises**

Six states reported using ranking or voting exercises to gauge public opinion during the course of public meetings. Ranking exercises, such as the use of dots or play money to distribute among priority programs, can compensate for disparate weights assigned to preferences.<sup>128</sup> For example, if given \$100 (or 10 dots) to spend on transportation improvements, one participant may choose to allot \$50 (or 5 dots) to safety programs and spread the other \$50 (or 5 dots) among the remaining options, due to his

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<sup>126</sup> Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook*.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid.

strong affinity toward safety issues. Electronic voting allows participants to “vote” using an electronic device. The “votes” are recorded by a computer and projected in front of the audience providing real-time feedback to questions.<sup>129</sup>

These methods allow and encourage everyone to participate actively.<sup>130</sup> However, two potential drawbacks raise concern for caution. First, voting itself may incorrectly give the community the illusion that votes are binding. Second, if voting/ranking is based on participant-generated ideas, then participants may become disillusioned if those ideas are not considered feasible for further evaluation by the agency.<sup>131</sup>

**What?** Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Develop alternatives; Prioritize options

**How?** Consult; Involve

**Who?** Self-selected general public; Targeted demographic

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase

**d) Question and answer**

Often offered to limited stakeholder groups, two states reported incorporating question and answer forums within open house or traditional public meetings. Question and answer forums offer the public an opportunity to gain information or clarification from planners to enhance their understanding of the issues; however, they do not, in and of themselves, allow input from the public.<sup>132</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

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<sup>129</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, “Toolkit.”

<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook*.

**Who?** Self-selected general public; Targeted demographic

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

e) **Open house**

Ten states reported using open house-style public meetings. Open houses allow participants to review exhibits and interact with staff at their discretion anytime during a certain timeframe. Open houses can be augmented to improve participation by providing large pads of paper for participants to record comments or questions at each station or by providing planning-related activities for children.<sup>133</sup> Open houses can be beneficial due to their flexibility, informality, and potential for brevity.<sup>134</sup> They can also focus attention on the planning issues at hand.<sup>135</sup>

Conversely, open houses may be perceived by some as lacking transparency because participants do not have a forum to air their concerns for a public audience.<sup>136</sup> Creighton suggests ways to make the process more transparent “by combining open houses and public meetings, reserving open houses for those times when the primary purpose of the meeting is to inform the public, or allowing stakeholder groups to set up a station at the open house.”<sup>137</sup> Allowing outside space or a separate, clearly labeled area for special interest groups distinguishes their message from that of the agency.<sup>138</sup>

**What?** Educate the public; Gather information

**How?** Inform; Consult

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*; Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook*.

<sup>135</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>136</sup> Creighton, *The Public Participation Handbook*.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

<sup>138</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

**Who?** Self-selected general public; Targeted demographic

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**f) Public hearing**

Just five state DOTs reported holding a public hearing to present their completed plan. Public hearings are not generally held in high esteem with planning professionals (or the public), as they are perceived to allow little influence on decision-making and do not accommodate public dialogue.<sup>139</sup> Occurring late in the process, if public hearings are not paired with other participatory methods, they may trigger a more defensive, reactionary stance from participants.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, comments received during hearings tend to represent those in attendance— those with the most extreme viewpoints or special interest groups – rather than the general public.<sup>141</sup>

Recall McComas’ research on public comment at meetings and hearings discussed above. One of the most relevant concerns raised in reference to public hearings is citizens’ frustration at feeling that their input would not be considered in decision-making but was simply used to certify legal compliance.<sup>142</sup> Public hearings must be paired with other participatory methods that allow for active participation throughout the process.<sup>143</sup>

**What?** Influence, make, or review decisions

**How?** Inform; Consult

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Mid-Process; Decision phase

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<sup>139</sup> Laurian and Shaw, “Evaluation of Public Participation The Practices of Certified Planners.”

<sup>140</sup> Innes and Booher, “Reframing Public Participation.”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.; O’Connor et al., “State of the Practice.”

<sup>142</sup> McComas, “Citizen Satisfaction with Public Meetings Used for Risk Communication.”

<sup>143</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

**g) Statewide symposium/forum**

A statewide symposium, summit, or forum was conducted by six states to present aspects of the plan or planning process to large groups of stakeholders, including the public. The format of these large meetings varies, but they often highlight milestones such as a process kick-off or concluding event. They often require invitations or registration due to their formal nature.<sup>144</sup>

For example, Louisiana conducted two statewide symposia at different stages of plan development that combined presentations, open houses, comment forums, and deliberative break-out sessions over 1½- to 2-day long events.<sup>145</sup> New Hampshire and Kansas each held a statewide summit or symposium that gathered large groups of the public and stakeholders and incorporated deliberative break-out sessions, similar to those described under Listening Sessions, above. High profile events like these highlight the planning process in an attempt to foster community awareness and interest.<sup>146</sup>

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Develop alternatives; Prioritize options; Influence, make, review decisions

**How?** Inform; Involve

**Who?** Self-selected general public; targeted demographic

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase

**h) Speakers' bureaus**

Fifteen states reported giving presentations to community, special interest, professional, or governmental entities during development of their most recently adopted SLRTP. This appears to be an increasing practices, as 42 states report taking their

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid.

<sup>145</sup> Wilbur Smith Associates, "Louisiana Statewide Transportation Plan."

<sup>146</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

SLRTP on the road, according to a 2010 survey by the Government Accountability Office.<sup>147</sup> Speakers' bureaus take information about the plan out to the community, involving presentations at meetings or events organized by outside bodies. Involving people on their own turf increases awareness and participation<sup>148</sup> and builds relationships. Speakers' bureaus can be particularly useful just before crucial decision points in the process.<sup>149</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Targeted demographic

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

### III) VIRTUAL MEETINGS

#### a) Virtual open house

To complement regionally distributed public meetings, Virginia DOT hosted a month-long virtual open house on their website to make planning documents and information presented at public meetings available to a wider audience. The virtual meeting “provided interactive features to help guide participants through the site.”<sup>150</sup> While the regional public meetings received 100 attendees, the virtual open house

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<sup>147</sup> Herr, “Opportunities Exist to Transition to Performance-Based Planning and Federal Oversight.” This likely includes SLRTPs that are currently underway.

<sup>148</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Virginia Department of Transportation, “An Update to Virginia’s Statewide Multimodal Long-Range Transportation Policy Plan.”

clocked 180 unique views,<sup>151</sup> demonstrating the potential to reach a broader public with internet-based meetings.

Depending on the content and format, it is possible to elevate the participatory level of these virtual meetings to incorporate dialogic and deliberative mechanisms. However, because online format meetings are asynchronous, deliberative interactions would involve an additional investment of time, as participants must check back in to evaluate progress of discussions.<sup>152</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**b) Statewide webinar**

Florida held a statewide webinar to reveal the draft of their long-range plan. The webinar was open to the public and viewings were held at all regional Florida DOT offices. Participants, including planning professionals, special interest groups, agency representatives, academics, and journalists, “responded positively to the format.”<sup>153</sup> The webinar briefly described the results of the planning process, the status of the plan, and the methods available to provide comments.<sup>154</sup> A few other states offered webinars to stakeholders only.

While participation was dominated in this instance by stakeholders as opposed to members of the general public (as these terms are used in this report), the potential to reach a diverse and dispersed public is great. Online meetings afford participants the

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> French, Insua, and Ruggeri, “E-Participation and Decision Analysis.”

<sup>153</sup> Wilson, “FDOT 2060 Transportation Plan - Partner and Public Involvement Plan.”

<sup>154</sup> Florida Department of Transportation, “Horizon 2060 Florida Transportation Plan Web Site.”

opportunity to investigate the issues further during the forum,<sup>155</sup> potentially allowing for deeper understanding of the issues. Moreover, specific community groups can be conveniently targeted through webinars, although tracking who participates could present a challenge.<sup>156</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public; Targeted demographic

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase

#### IV) PUBLIC COMMENT

##### a) Review period

Review periods are required by law and consist of notifying the public of the availability of a draft plan for their review and comment. Minimum review periods tend to be dictated by state laws or common practice and may be extended by the agency to offer additional time for comment as circumstances arise. Typical review periods are advertised using legal notices in large-circulation newspapers. Legal notices can be supplemented with display advertisements, news stories, radio announcements and interviews, posters, banners, social media, mail, email blasts, and flyers or displays at community events. Notifications inform the public of an impending decision and request comments on the completed plan.

**What?** Educate the public; Influence, make, or review decisions

**How?** Inform; Consult

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<sup>155</sup> French, Insua, and Ruggeri, “E-Participation and Decision Analysis.”

<sup>156</sup> Wilson, “FDOT 2060 Transportation Plan - Partner and Public Involvement Plan.”

**Who?** Self-selected general public; targeted demographic

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase

**b) Public comment**

Public comment is the minimum requirement in federal law for public input in the statewide long-range transportation planning process. Comments are solicited from the public “at key decision points”<sup>157</sup> such as formation of state transportation goals, identification of future scenarios, and approval of the plan itself. To meet this requirement, states accepted verbal comments by opening the floor during public hearings and meetings for comments to be included in the record and by establishing 1-800 telephone numbers. Written comments were accepted via email, fax, webform, and mail, and in person. Recognizing that formal public comment is provided by a self-selected subset of the general public and is not representative of the population, state DOTs should precede this step with a complement of other participatory methods to inform and involve a state’s diverse citizenry.

The effectiveness of public comment is determined by how it is reflected in decision-making. In many SLRTPs, DOTs simply note that comments were considered and incorporated as appropriate. Others provided catalogued comments with notes about how the comment was addressed (e.g., substantive or minimal revision required). Other states, like Georgia and Texas, summarized and evaluated trends resulting from input. To address comments on their plan, California DOT created a Comment Advisory Committee composed of public and private sector partners, community advocates, and transportation interest groups who were charged with assessing comments and making recommendations on comment resolution.<sup>158</sup> Responses to public comments by DOTs

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<sup>157</sup> 23 CFR 450.214

<sup>158</sup> California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), “California Transportation Plan 2025.”

varied from newsletter summaries of comment disposition and spreadsheets posted on plan websites, to personalized responses to the commenter in the format of the original comment.

**What?** Influence, make, review decisions

**How?** Consult

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

## **VI) TECHNOLOGY-BASED TECHNIQUES**

### **a) Website**

Building momentum over the last decade, websites were implemented by 33 of the 50 State DOTs during their last adopted SLRTP. Plan websites can be embedded into the state's transportation department website or they can have unique domain names that make them easy to remember and navigate to.

A plan website is only as good as its content. Web sites can offer a one-stop shop of planning information including links to other participatory mechanisms, interactive content (such as surveys and maps discussed elsewhere in this report), schedules, and reports. While they have the potential to enable discussion between and among planners and participants, at this stage, it appears websites are being used to simply warehouse project information. As such, it is important that agencies upload documents as soon as they are available and that they document plan progress (including completion) on their websites. An intuitive user interface and comprehensive content can enhance public trust

and transparency. However, practitioners caution that too much information can overwhelm and distract participants from the purpose of the plan.<sup>159</sup>

With modern web browsers like Google Chrome, users can translate content into virtually any language. Planners should be aware of those who are less likely to have access to the internet including the elderly, high school dropouts, low income households, rural residents,<sup>160</sup> the disabled,<sup>161</sup> and non-English speaking Latinos.<sup>162</sup> As well, attention should be paid toward obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency”. California DOT, for instance, provided a Spanish-language translation of its website and text-only versions of online documents to accommodate slower internet download speeds.<sup>163</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**b) Social media**

A more recent internet phenomenon, ten states reported using social media and one used a blog to engage the public during development of their SLRTPs adopted within the last four years. Social media provides an informal method to engage the public in conversation, provide information, and build interest. Social media is “most effective when outreach is critical and achieving high levels of participation is difficult.”<sup>164</sup> Due to

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<sup>159</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, “Toolkit.”

<sup>160</sup> Zickuhr, *Who’s Not Online and Why*.

<sup>161</sup> Susannah Fox, “Americans Living with Disability and Their Technology Profile.”

<sup>162</sup> John B. Horrigan, PhD, *Broadband Adoption and Use in America*.

<sup>163</sup> California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), “California Transportation Plan 2025.”

<sup>164</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, “Toolkit.”

the prevalence of social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, access to this technology has a low threshold.<sup>165</sup>

Social media has the opportunity to become highly interactive and ascend the participatory scale, by inviting the public to document transportation concerns, needs, and issues through photographs and comments.<sup>166</sup> However, agencies may need to take a proactive role to moderate content added by the public to ensure discussions do not degenerate into disorder.

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Prioritize options

**How?** Inform, Consult, Involve, Collaborate

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

### c) **Videos**

Videos can be presented online or at public meetings to educate the public. Visual aids or expert opinion can be adeptly used to elucidate complex topics or to simulate hypothetical future conditions. Similar to the use of social media, the use of videos is a recent practice, with seven DOTs reporting their use in SLRTPs adopted within just the last four years. Arizona DOT skillfully crafted a series of three videos to explain (1) the connection between the SLRTP and other statewide planning efforts, (2) transportation challenges, and (3) the anticipated transportation funding shortfall. The agency posted the videos on their plan website and paired two of the three videos with surveys. The third video, describing the funding shortfall, helped the public and

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<sup>165</sup> Apostol, Antoniadis, and Banerjee, “Flânerie between Net and Place Promises and Possibilities for Participation in Planning.”

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

stakeholders understand the state's investment choices. This video was additionally broadcast on YouTube.com, statewide public television stations, and at SLRTP workshops, and it earned 2,500 online views.<sup>167</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**d) Interactive maps**

Two states, Utah and Nevada, used interactive Geographic Information Systems (GIS) or webmaps as a participatory tool in developing their SLRTPs. Use of interactive mapping as a participatory tool is relatively recent, as both of these states' plans were adopted in the last two years. Web mapping allows the public to view the data planners use to make decisions. Interactive mapping has the potential to expand participation to allow the public to provide input with geographically related information (e.g., geo-tagged photos, environmental features, community landmarks, and site characteristics) and could offer a space for dialogue with planners.<sup>168</sup> Alternatively, maps can be dynamically updated based on participant input during the course of a public meeting.<sup>169</sup> This could be especially useful for plans that have a site-specific (e.g., project, corridor) focus. Today, however, DOTs' use of web mapping is limited to viewing geography-based plan information – possibly due to the high cost and technical expertise involved in generating internet-based, interactive GIS programs.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> The Arizona Department of Transportation, "What Moves You Arizona: Long-Range Transportation Plan | 2010-2035."

<sup>168</sup> Drummond and French, "The Future of GIS in Planning."

<sup>169</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Toolkit."

<sup>170</sup> Drummond and French, "The Future of GIS in Planning."

Nevada’s webmap, for example, was an interactive tool embedded in their website that allowed interested individuals to explore map data that was used as inputs in the planning process, including transportation, topographic, and environmental data. The map also included a “suitability analysis” layer that combined environmental, land ownership, and slope information to determine “suitability for development”.<sup>171</sup> This type of webmap is used to inform and educate the public on planning challenges. In contrast, Utah’s map allowed the public to zoom into locations of interest and view the variety of transportation improvements included in their project-based SLRTP and the funding status of each.

**What?** Educate the public; Gather information

**How?** Inform; Consult; Involve

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

**e) Interactive visual demonstrations**

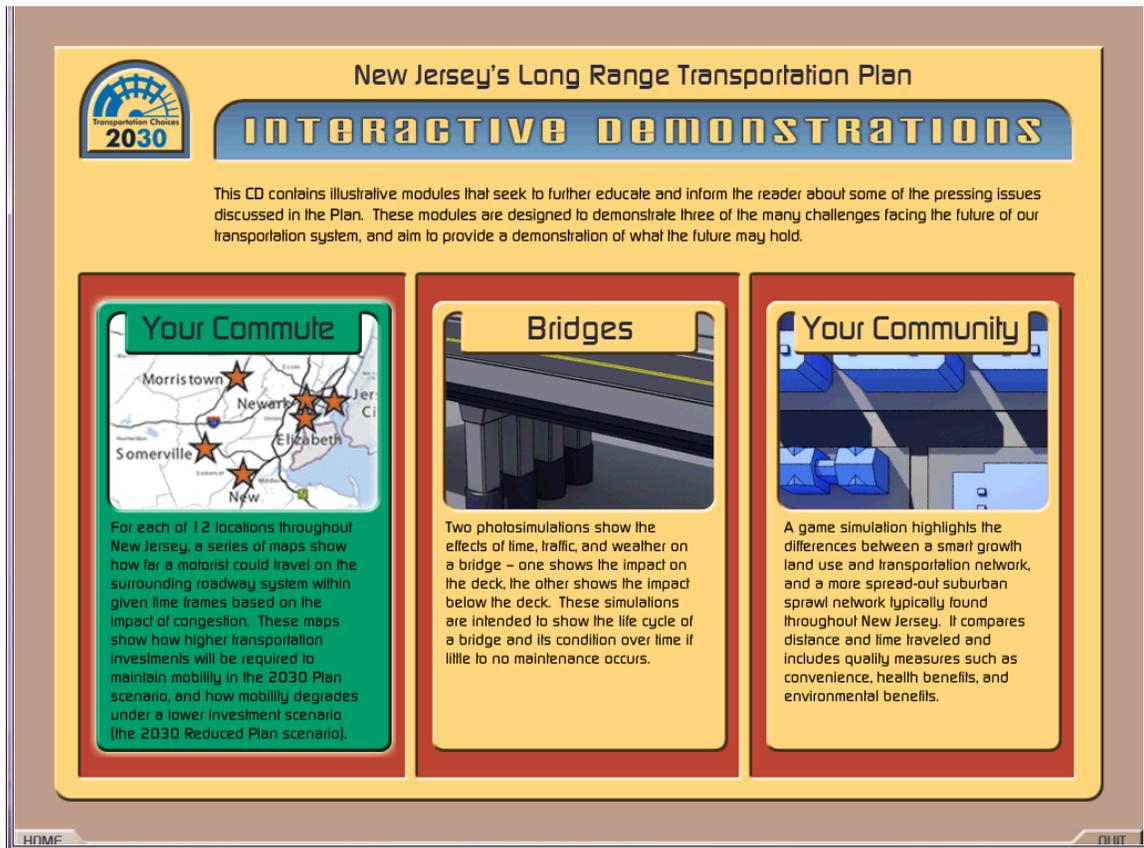
New Jersey used interactive visual demonstrations for its plan adopted back in 2006, and Virginia incorporated interactive content in their virtual open house (discussed above) in support of their recently adopted plan. New Jersey’s interactive visual demonstration is still available on its website. In an effort to educate the public, this custom program demonstrates some of the challenges faced by planners during plan development, such as commute-shed maps and progressive bridge deterioration due to lack of maintenance.<sup>172</sup> See Figure B-1.

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<sup>171</sup> Nevada Department of Transportation, “Connecting Nevada Phase II: Planning Our Transportation Future.”

<sup>172</sup> New Jersey Department of Transportation, “New Jersey Long Range Transportation Plan.”

Figure B-1: New Jersey DOT's interactive demonstration<sup>173</sup>



Interactive visual demonstrations can be used to explain complex issues and the agency's method for analyzing them. They can be used as visual aids during public meetings or can be available on the internet. Internet-based demonstrations may present a barrier for those without access to broadband internet or speedy computers. Additionally, the tool could be challenged if participants mistrust underlying assumptions and results.<sup>174</sup>

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Toolkit."

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process

#### **VIII) FACTSHEETS AND NEWSLETTERS**

Twenty states prepared and distributed newsletters, factsheets, brochures, and the like, making it the fourth most common technique. These information sheets were distributed by mail, by email, or in person at meetings and events. Factsheets and newsletters can conveniently inform a broad swath of the public of plan progress and general issues which can be graphically demonstrated in order to maximize understanding.<sup>175</sup> Newsletters can reach those who are remotely located or lack the time and interest to attend public meetings but still may have some curiosity about the process.<sup>176</sup> They also help fill the gap during lull periods in the planning process to reassure the public that the process is ongoing.

**What?** Educate the public

**How?** Inform

**Who?** Self-selected general public

**When?** Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

#### **IX) OUTREACH TO /EDUCATION OF YOUNG DRIVERS AND FUTURE DRIVERS**

Two East Coast states – New Jersey and Rhode Island – initiated middle or high school curricula or educational programs. New Jersey’s eighth grade lesson plan focused on transportation’s connection with public health and the environment.<sup>177</sup> Rhode Island

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<sup>175</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> New Jersey Department of Transportation, “New Jersey Long Range Transportation Plan.”

teamed up with a local university to conduct classroom lectures and participatory exercises to encourage input from inner-city high school students.<sup>178</sup>

Such programs educate young drivers to encourage civic engagement and awareness of transportation issues and processes. Educational programs may also have a multiplier effect in the community, as kids talk to their peers and parents about what they learned. This method offers an opportunity to reach young people before their opinions on transportation issues are established.<sup>179</sup> However, coordinating curricula with educators and school boards to meet educational requirements can pose a challenge.<sup>180</sup>

Other states found creative ways to involve youth, as well. For example, California sponsored scholarships and subsidized transportation costs for high school students to attend its statewide transportation symposia (described above).<sup>181</sup> In addition, North Carolina sent information to the principal of a high school with a request for students to participate in the SLRTP process.<sup>182</sup>

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.

**How?** Inform; Consult

**Who?** Targeted demographic

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

#### **X) CITIZEN ADVISORY ROLE**

There are a variety of ways to get citizens directly involved in plan processes. Five states reported having citizens involved at a high level on boards and committees.

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<sup>178</sup> State of Rhode Island, "Transportation 2035."

<sup>179</sup> North Carolina Department of Transportation, "Toolkit."

<sup>180</sup> Ibid.

<sup>181</sup> California Department of Transportation (CalTrans), "California Transportation Plan 2025."

<sup>182</sup> Atkins, "NCDOT: From Policy to Projects, 2040 Plan, Appendix C."

In Missouri, citizens acted as “partners, advisors, and planners” during development of their plan as members of citizen-led Regional Working Groups.<sup>183</sup> In Florida and Oregon, citizens sat on advisory or steering committees.<sup>184</sup> In Delaware, a Public Advisory Committee was established for the one county in the state that is not part of a metropolitan planning organization.<sup>185</sup> Finally, in New Hampshire, a Citizens’ Advisory Committee prepared a “first-in-the-nation citizen’s transportation plan”.<sup>186</sup>

A creation of New Mexico DOT and the University of New Mexico’s Institute of Public Policy, citizen conferences empowered members of the public to become informed on the issues and to provide “recommendations to the department about how to invest taxpayer dollars in the long-term to meet the future transportation needs of New Mexico.” The Conferences included an educational component by an expert panel and deliberation by members to prepare recommendations. Citizen panels were randomly selected for each of New Mexico DOT’s ten geographical regions and were compensated for their participation in the conferences.<sup>187</sup>

Citizen committees are typically composed of interested persons hand-picked by the agency to participate; because of this, it is essential to balance perspectives on the committees.<sup>188</sup> Members must dedicate significant time to these committees, learning about the issues, analyzing information, and coming to consensus on group planning products. Small group size enables negotiation and consensus development on

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<sup>183</sup> Missouri Department of Transportation, “Missouri Advance Planning: Missouri’s Long-Range Transportation Plan.”

<sup>184</sup> Florida Department of Transportation, “Horizon 2060 Florida Transportation Plan Web Site”; Oregon Department of Transportation, “Oregon Transportation Plan.”

<sup>185</sup> Delaware Department of Transportation, “Delaware Long Range Transportation Plan: Policy Plan.”

<sup>186</sup> New Hampshire Department of Transportation, “Long Range Transportation Plan Web Page.”

<sup>187</sup> New Mexico Department of Transportation, “New Mexico 2030: Statewide Multimodal Transportation Plan.”

<sup>188</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

transportation issues. As a result, participants can more effectively discuss the issues within the group and, subsequently, within the public realm.<sup>189</sup> As well, the agency gains a deeper understanding of community perspectives on the issues.<sup>190</sup> For example, Missouri's Regional Working Groups and New Hampshire's Citizen Advisory Committee produced reports that were used as a basis for the SLRTP.

Arnstein included citizen advisory committees in the bottom rung of her ladder with the heading "manipulation".<sup>191</sup> This can happen if participants do not feel that the agency is being transparent or that they are being "outclassed or overwhelmed by technical information."<sup>192</sup> It is essential for participants – citizens and agency alike – to operate in a clear and open manner to ensure accountability and trust.<sup>193</sup> With the advent of internet meeting assistants, citizen advisory committees can be used effectively on a statewide level with limited cost, although in-person interaction is essential to build rapport among participants, and compensation for travel expenses should be considered for face-to-face meetings.

**What?** Educate the public; Identify transportation goals/needs/values, etc.; Gather information; Develop alternatives; Analyze data; Prioritize options; Influence, make, or review decisions

**How?** Involve; Collaborate; Empower

**Who?** Select pool; Random sample

**When?** Pre-planning; Early planning; Mid-process; Decision phase; Post-process

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid.

<sup>191</sup> Arnstein, "A Ladder Of Citizen Participation."

<sup>192</sup> U.S. Department of Transportation, *Public Involvement Techniques for Transportation Decision-Making*.

<sup>193</sup> Ibid.; Pero and Smith, "Institutional Credibility and Leadership."

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