

# Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation **Public Participation Plan**

FINAL APPROVED

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# Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation Public Participation Plan

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## Acronyms & Definitions

**ADA – Americans with Disabilities Act** is a 1990 civil rights law that prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in all areas of public life, including jobs, schools, transportation, and all public and private places that are open to the general public.

**Administrative modification** means a minor revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), or Statewide Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) that includes minor changes to project/project phase costs, minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. An administrative modification is a revision that does not require public review and comment, a redemonstration of fiscal constraint, or a conformity determination (in nonattainment and maintenance areas).

**ACS – American Community Survey** is an ongoing survey carried out by the U.S. Census Bureau that provides vital information on a yearly basis about the U.S. and its population. The survey helps to determine how federal and state funds are distributed each year.

**Amendment** means a revision to a long-range statewide or metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP that involves a major change to a project included in a metropolitan transportation plan, TIP, or STIP, including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in project cost, project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or design scope (e.g., changing project termini or the number of through traffic lanes or changing the number of stations in the case of fixed guideway transit projects). Changes to projects that are included only for illustrative purposes do not require an amendment. An amendment is a revision that requires public review and comment and a redemonstration of fiscal constraint.

**CFR – Code of Federal Regulations** is the codification of the general and permanent regulations published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the federal government of the United States.

**DOT&PF – Alaska Department of Transportation and Public Facilities** is a department within the government of Alaska focused on the state's transportation and public infrastructure.

**FHWA – Federal Highway Administration** is a division of the United States Department of Transportation that specializes in highway transportation. The agency's major activities are grouped into two programs, the Federal-aid Highway Program and the Federal Lands Highway Program.

**FTA – Federal Transit Administration** is division of the United States Department of Transportation that provides financial and technical assistance to local public transportation systems. The FTA is one of ten modal administrations within the DOT.

**GIS – Geographic Information Systems.** Computerized mapping programs that are helpful in visualizing existing conditions and proposed transportation planning interventions.

**LEP – Limited English Proficiency** refers to a person who is not fully fluent in the English language, often because it is not their native language.

**Long-range statewide transportation plan** means the official, statewide, multimodal, transportation plan covering a period of no less than 20 years developed through the statewide transportation planning process.

**MPA – Metropolitan Planning Area** means the geographic area determined by agreement between the MPO for the area and the Governor, in which the metropolitan transportation planning process is carried out. The MPA must be comprised of, at minimum, the “urbanized area” as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within the next 20 years.

**MPO – Metropolitan Planning Organization** means the policy board of an organization created and designated to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process.

**MSB – Matanuska-Susitna Borough** is the ‘county-level’ government for the Mat-Su Valley region.

**MTP – Metropolitan Transportation Plan** means the official multimodal transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon that the MPO develops, adopts, and updates through the metropolitan transportation planning process.

**MVP – Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation** is the metropolitan planning organization for the Mat-Su Valley region.

**PPP – Public Participation Plan** is the blueprint outlining an MPO’s public participation strategies and activities.

**TBD – to be developed or to be determined.** Means that the document, process, or item being referred to has yet to be developed, finalized, and/or approved by MVP Transportation.

**TIP – Transportation Improvement Program** means a prioritized listing/program of transportation projects covering a period of 4 years that is developed and formally adopted by an MPO as part of the metropolitan transportation planning process, consistent with the metropolitan transportation plan, and required for projects to be eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. chapter 53.

**STIP – Statewide Transportation Improvement Program** means a statewide prioritized listing/program of transportation projects covering a period of 4 years that is consistent with the long-range statewide transportation plan, metropolitan transportation plans, and TIPs, and required for projects to be eligible for funding under title 23 U.S.C. and title 49 U.S.C. Chapter 53.

**UPWP – Unified Planning Work Program** means a statement of work identifying the planning priorities and activities to be carried out within a metropolitan planning area. At a minimum, a UPWP includes a description of the planning work and resulting products, who will perform the work, time frames for completing the work, the cost of the work, and the source(s) of funds.

**UZA – Urbanized Area** means a geographic area with a population of 50,000 or more, as designated by the Bureau of the Census.

## I. Introduction

The Matanuska-Susitna Borough (MSB) is located just north of the Anchorage Municipality. It has approximately 25,260 square miles with a population of 107,081 according to 2020 census data. Between 2010, when the last census was conducted and 2020, the population of the Mat-Su Borough has grown by approximately 20.3%. The core of the Ma-Su Borough, which is comprised of the cities of Wasilla and Palmer, as well as the Lakes and Knik-Fairview areas, has exceeded the population density of an “urban cluster”. As such, per federal requirements, a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must be formed in the Mat-Su Borough as the population is 50,000 or greater.<sup>1</sup>

Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation (MVP) is in the process of becoming the officially designated MPO for the Mat-Su Valley region’s urbanized area (UZA). The purpose of an MPO is to coordinate federal transportation funds to support local transportation priority projects. It is a transportation policy-making group made of representatives from local governmental agencies including borough, cities, and tribes, as well as representatives of the state Alaska Department of Transportation & Public Facilities (DOT&PF), transit providers, and active transportation advocates. The MPO receives federal funding from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) through the DOT&PF, which follows a formula to divide those funds between the MPOs in the state. The MPO then makes decisions about which projects are local priorities within the UZA, called the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). In this way, the MPO structure allows for local control and prioritization of federal transportation funds to best meet the unique needs of the community.

### A. Planning Area [Location, Location, Location!]

#### 1. The Mat-Su: A Brief History

The land of the MSB was originally settled by Dena’ina Alaska Natives and was named due to its proximity to the Matanuska and Susitna Rivers. The Alaska Railroad was extended to Wasilla in 1916 and then to Palmer in 1917. In the 1930s, over 60 years after the U.S. purchased Alaska as a U.S territory, Palmer was the subject of a farming experiment which brought volunteers primarily from Minnesota to determine if farming would be feasible in Alaska. Since that time, the population of the MSB has been growing steadily. However, in between 2000 and 2010, the MSB experienced population growth of over 50%, making it the fastest growing place in Alaska, and at one point, in the entire U.S. This is partially due to its proximity to Anchorage, price of property, and ease of development. Now that the MSB has a population density requiring development of an MPO, once established the MPO will help determine the dispersal of federal funds for transportation projects in the new urbanized area.

#### 2. Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA)

The Mat-Su Valley region is in the process of developing its very own MPO in anticipation of the release of the 2020 Census urbanized area designations. The Census Bureau defines an “urbanized area” as one with at least 50,000 total people and at least 1,000 people per square mile in population density. Based on 2010 Census data for the Mat-Su, population growth projections, and intermediate population counts such as through the American Community Survey, the Mat-Su Valley is expected to be designated as a brand-new urbanized area with the 2020 Census. With this new designation comes new federal requirements for the Mat-Su that apply to all urbanized areas across the country. These new

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<sup>1</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.310](#).

requirements include development of a new Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to carry out a cooperative, comprehensive, and continuous (three C's) transportation planning and decision-making process in the growing Mat-Su Valley region.<sup>2</sup>

During the ongoing MPO development process, the Mat-Su Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board will work together to define the most logical boundary within which the MPO will operate. Ultimately, the final boundary of the MPO will be determined by agreement between the MPO (Policy Board) and the Governor. Per federal guidelines, the MPO boundary, or MPA, must encompass, at a minimum, the entire existing urbanized area as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, plus the contiguous area expected to become urbanized within the next 20 years.<sup>3</sup>

The Mat-Su Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board are currently in the process of developing a draft Boundary Development Strategy for the Mat-Su MPA. Once finalized, this strategy will outline a methodology that the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board can follow to define the MPA boundaries using population and density metrics released with the 2020 Census. The Boundary Development Strategy will also utilize growth and development forecasting to determine what areas of the Mat-Su are expected to become urbanized over the next 20-year period.

The Mat-Su MPA is expected to include the most urbanized areas within the borough, including the cities of Palmer and Wasilla and the Knik-Fairview area.

*Figure 1: The Lakes-Knik-Fairview-Wasilla, AK Urban Cluster ACS 2019 5-year characteristics.*



## B. Purpose of the PPP [Blueprint for Public Participation]

The MPO will engage in extensive public outreach efforts to guide decision-making about local transportation projects and needs. The Public Participation Plan (PPP) is the primary means through which the MPO will outline its public engagement processes and activities. The purpose of the MPO's PPP is to define and create a process for the local community's comment on and participation in transportation planning efforts. The PPP is designed to allow equal opportunity for all who wish to participate and does so through designated public comment periods along with a variety of innovative public engagement and visualization strategies.

<sup>2</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.310](#) and [23 CFR § 450.306\(b\)](#).

<sup>3</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.312](#).

## II. Public Participation Process

The PPP is the primary document that guides and defines MVP Transportation's public participation goals and strategies and measures their effectiveness. The goal of the MPO through its PPP is to provide early and continuous opportunities for public participation, timely responses to public comments, reasonable public access to documentation including policies and plans, and effective public notification. As outlined in this PPP, the MVP will use a variety of innovative public involvement techniques to ensure that community members' diverse voices are heard and integrated into the metropolitan transportation planning process. Early, ongoing, and successful public involvement improves planning outcomes to better achieve transportation goals and satisfy local needs.

### A. General Guidelines [Basic Blueprint]

Federal requirements state that the MPO is responsible for providing a transportation planning and decision-making process that is cooperative, comprehensive, and continuous ("three C's).<sup>4</sup> MVP strives to achieve a three C's transportation planning process by acting as a liaison between local government agencies, communities, residents, and the state DOT&PF. The public participation process of MVP Transportation is designed to support broad engagement by residents of the Mat-Su Valley by utilizing a variety of outreach, engagement, and public participation strategies outlined in the following sections. Outreach is targeted to include the following:

- Individuals
- Affected public agencies
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Public ports
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation services
- Private providers of transportation (including intercity bus operators, employer-based commuting programs, such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program)
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities
- Representatives of the disabled
- Other interested parties<sup>5</sup>

Public comment can also be submitted at any time through a variety of methods including:

*Table 1: MVP contact information.*

Method	MPO Contact Info
<b>By Phone:</b>	(XXX) XXX-XXXX
<b>By Fax:</b>	(XXX) XXX-XXXX
<b>By Email:</b>	<a href="mailto:mvptransporation@mvpt.com">mvptransporation@mvpt.com</a>
<b>On the Web:</b>	<a href="http://www.matsumpo.com">www.matsumpo.com</a>
<b>Via U.S. Mail:</b>	MVP Transportation Street Number City, Alaska, Zip

<sup>4</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.306\(b\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.316\(a\)](#)

### 1. Public Meetings

All MVP Policy Board and Technical Committee meetings will be open to the public and have regular public comment periods to encourage residents to contribute their ideas, needs, and concerns to the planning effort. The following guidelines will apply to the public process at all MVP Policy Board and committee meetings:

- A sign-in sheet will be available at each in-person and virtual meeting. Attendees will be encouraged to sign in so that they may receive notification of future meetings.
- One general public comment period will be provided at every meeting for any members of the public who are present to comment on items not on the agenda. The length of the comment period per speaker may be determined at the beginning of any public meeting by the Chair.
- Members of the public will also have an opportunity to comment on specific agenda items as they are introduced.
- Members of the public who would like to provide written comments may submit their comment in writing at any time before the scheduled meeting.
- Items on a meeting agenda may be voted on or action may be deferred, tabled, or referred back to the board or committee for further consideration at the board or committee's discretion.
- Past meeting materials including agendas, minutes, packets, and approved planning documents can be found on the MVP website.

### 2. Online Access

MVP utilizes online public participation tools along with traditional methods to broaden its public engagement reach. While doing so, the MPO also understands that not all Mat-Su residents have internet access or prefer to engage with the MPO in this way. Online strategies will be used to complement and build upon more traditional tried and true methods such as public meetings held in accessible locations in the community, informational fliers, radio and newspaper advertisements, and making draft plans available for individual review at key community locations.

The MPO's online capabilities will also ensure that public participation can still be achieved when in-person gatherings are limited due to factors such as COVID-19 and other disruptions. Where appropriate, virtual and hybrid participation strategies may be used when in-person gatherings are not possible.

To support online accessibility for the greatest number of people, the MVP website will offer an online translation tool that can translate the website into several languages commonly spoken in the Mat-Su Valley region. Additionally, the website will allow for font size adjustments to accommodate visually impaired users. MVP will provide closed captioning for virtual meetings and video recordings via the virtual meeting platform and/or YouTube.

### 3. Underrepresented Communities

MVP Transportation recognizes the value of diversity in the Mat-Su Valley region and the necessity of full and fair participation in the transportation planning and decision-making process of groups that have traditionally been underrepresented in planning efforts. Some examples of underrepresented groups

include limited English proficiency (LEP), minority, and lower income residents. MVP will implement strategies on a regular basis to better engage and inform underserved populations. These strategies may include the following:

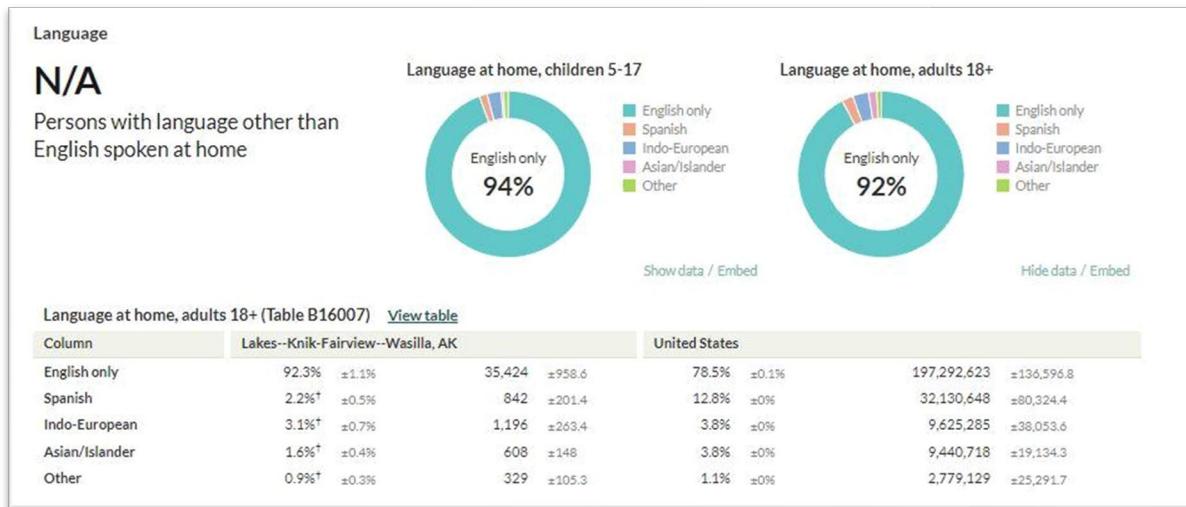
- MPO participation in planned community events in the areas and neighborhoods where underrepresented residents live, work, and play.
- Locate public workshops and engagement events during the plan development process in locations and at times accessible to traditionally underrepresented groups.
- Connect and partner with local organizations that work with traditionally underrepresented groups to advertise meetings, comment periods, and planning efforts.

#### 4. Equity & Non-discrimination

MVP will solicit public participation without regard to race, color, national origin age, sex, gender, religion, disability or family status. MVP will develop and implement strategies to be inclusive of those who have difficulty or are unable to read, write or speak English in line with federal guidance. MVP will outline these strategies and activities in its *Title VI Plan*.

As a direct recipient of federal funding, MVP is actively engaged in the Title VI activities that are mandated by the Federal government. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forbids discrimination against anyone in the United States because of race, color or national origin by any agency receiving Federal funds. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1973 added the requirement that there be no discrimination on the grounds of sex, and the Civil Rights Restoration Act of 1987 defined the word “program” to make it clear that discrimination is prohibited through an entire agency if any part of the agency receives federal financial assistance. The to-be-developed *MVP Transportation Title VI Plan* will ensure that all races, income levels, ages, abilities, and genders have equal input in, and equally benefit from, the planning and project delivery processes of MVP.

**Figure 2:** Census Bureau ACS 2019 data on persons in the Lakes-Knik-Fairview urban cluster who speak languages other than English at home.



#### 5. Requests for Special Accommodations & Complaints Procedure

For complaints, questions, or concerns about civil rights or nondiscrimination; to request special accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); to request a printed copy of a

meeting agenda; or to request translation services or translated materials, please contact the MVP Title VI Coordinator at **(XXX-XXX-XXXX)**.

The role of MVP Title VI Coordinator will be carried out by the MVP Transportation Coordinator or Planner. Some Title VI Coordinator tasks may be delegated to other MVP employees in order to ensure compliance.

Any person who believes themselves, or any specific class of persons, to have been excluded from, denied the benefits of, or subjected to discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, or gender under any MVP program or activity, may by themselves or by a representative file a formal written complaint with the MVP Title VI Coordinator.

A complaint must be filed no later than 180 days (unless the time for filing is extended by the U.S. Secretary of Transportation) from:

- The date of the alleged discrimination
- The date when the person(s) became aware of the alleged discrimination, or
- Where there has been a continuing course of conduct, the date on which that conduct was discontinued.

The complaint should include the following information:

- The complainant's name, mailing address, and contact information (phone number or email address)
- How, when, where, and why the complainant believes they were discriminated against (please indicate the names and contact details of any witnesses)
- Any additional information that complainant deems necessary and pertinent to the grievance(s).

Any complaints received by the MPO Coordinator are to receive a prompt response, with a target of no more than seven days. Anyone expressing a complaint may be referred by MPO staff to the complaint form available in both English and Spanish in the MPO's Title VI Plan and ADA Nondiscrimination Policy.

A Title VI Complaint Form will be made available on the MVP Transportation website and also included in the forthcoming *Title VI Plan*. Upon request, the Title VI Coordinator can mail a physical Title VI Complaint Form, or these can be obtained at the MVP Transportation office.

Completed complaint forms should be mailed to:

**MVP Transportation**  
**Street Address, Suite, City, State, Zip**

Alternatively, complaints may be mailed to:

**Alaska DOT&PF Civil Rights Office**  
200 East 42nd Avenue, Anchorage, AK, 99508

**FHWA Alaska Division, Civil Rights Division**  
PO Box 21648, 709 West 9th Street, Room 851, Juneau, AK 99802-1648

**U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division**

950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Office of Assistant Attorney General, Main, Washington, D.C., 20530  
 If a complaint is received in a language other than English, the Title VI Coordinator will work with the Alaska DOT&PF Civil Rights Office to translate it. Upon request, assistance in the preparation of any necessary written materials related to the complaint will be provided by the Title VI Coordinator or DOT&PF Civil Rights Office.

Upon receipt of a complaint, the MVP Title VI Coordinator will date stamp the complaint to establish a timeline for response. The Title VI Coordinator will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within five (5) working days via registered mail. The Title VI Coordinator will notify the MVP Policy Board Chair of the complaint and determine if there is a need for additional information from either the complainant or staff. Review of the complaint by MVP staff and the Title VI Coordinator will be completed no later than 30 calendar days after the stamped date of receipt.

All Title VI complaints against MVP Transportation, together with any additional information obtained during the staff review, shall be referred to the Alaska DOT&PF Office of Civil Rights Office and/or the FHWA Alaska Division Office for investigation. The Alaska DOT&PF complaint process is available at the following website: <http://www.dot.state.ak.us/cvrlts/titlevi.shtml>.

The Alaska DOT&PF Civil Rights Office investigator shall work with the MVP Title VI Coordinator and other staff to implement recommended improvements to any FAST Planning process relative to Title VI.

#### **6. Administrative Modifications & Amendments**

MVP Transportation will follow specific procedures for conducting administrative modifications and amendments to key plans including the TIP, MTP and UPWP. Definitions of each type of revision are summarized below. More detail is provided for each plan in **Section III. MVP Plans & Programs**. The MVP Technical Committee and Policy Board may develop and approve an additional policy providing more detail on revisions at a later date.

*Table 2: Administrative modification and amendment definitions.*

Type of Change	Definition & Participation Requirements
<b>Administrative Modification</b>	A <i>minor revision</i> to a plan or program such as the TIP, MTP, or UPWP that includes minor changes to project and/or phase costs, minor changes to funding sources, and minor changes to project or phase initiation dates.
	This type of minor revision does not require a public review and comment period.
<b>Amendment</b>	A <i>major revision</i> to a plan such as the TIP, MTP, or UPWP that involve a major change including the addition or deletion of a project or major change in project cost, project or phase initiation dates, design concept, or scope.
	Amendments require a 30-day public review and comment period.

## B. Planning Participants [Builders]

### 1. Policy Board

The MVP Policy Board is the decision-making body of the MPO. Leadership and elected representatives from MPO member organizations sit on the Board. In the Mat-Su, these member organizations include local and tribal governments (City of Wasilla, City of Palmer, Mat-Su Borough, Chickaloon Native Village, and Knik Tribe), state DOT&PF, local public transit providers, and local active transportation organizations. The MVP Policy Board receives and reviews recommendations from the MVP Technical Committee and provides the final vetting and approval of all MPO activities, decisions, and plans.

The Policy Board meets on a regular basis to conduct the normal business of MVP Transportation. Additional or special meetings may be called by the Policy Board Chair or at the request of more than one (1) member. A public comment period is included on the agenda for each meeting, and the public may also comment on specific agenda items at the meeting. Written comments or testimony on agenda items can be submitted to the MPO any time before the Policy Board meeting. Notice of all Policy Board meetings will be published on the MVP website and social media accounts, in the *Frontiersman*, broadcast on local radio, and posted on the State of Alaska's Online Public Notice system.

*Table 3: Policy Board summary table.*

<b>Policy Board Summary</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Decision-making body of the MPO.
<b>When does it meet?</b>	TBD
<b>Where does it meet?</b>	TBD
<b>How do I hear about it?</b>	Meeting notices are posted on the MPO website and social media accounts, in the Frontiersman, broadcast on local radio, and posted in the State's Online Public Notice system.
<b>How should I prepare to comment at a meeting?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Review the Policy Board meeting agenda posted on the MPO website before the meeting.</li> <li>→ Consider the issues presented and think about what you would like to say.</li> <li>→ What action would you like the Policy Board to take, or not take?</li> <li>→ Writing down some talking points may be helpful if you plan to comment in-person at the meeting.</li> <li>→ Try to make your “ask” as clear, concise, and actionable as possible.</li> <li>→ Reach out to the MVP Coordinator (<a href="#">XXX-XXX-XXXX</a>) if you would like to discuss the transportation issue with someone in more detail.</li> </ul>
<b>How do I comment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Attend the meeting and comment during the general public comment period on the agenda, or comment on specific agenda items.</li> <li>→ You can also submit written comments to the MPO before any Policy Board meeting.</li> </ul>

## 2. Technical Committee

The MVP Technical Committee is the technical advisor to the MVP Policy Board. Instead of elected officials and agency leaders, technical staff of member organizations sit on the Technical Committee.

The MVP Technical Committee is comprised of staff-level representatives from local and tribal governments, the state DOT&PF, local transit providers, active transportation and health advocates, and the railroad. The Technical Committee advises the Policy Board on all matters relevant to plans, policies, and programs of MVP Transportation.

The Technical Committee meets regularly to conduct the normal business of MVP Transportation. Additional or special meetings may be called by the Technical Committee Chair or at the request of more than one (1) member. A public comment period is included on the agenda for each meeting, and the public may also comment on specific agenda items at the meeting. Written comments or testimony on agenda items can be submitted to the MPO any time before the Technical Committee meeting. Notice of all Technical Committee meetings will be published on the MVP website and social media accounts, in the Frontiersman, broadcast on local radio, and posted on the State of Alaska's Online Public Notice system.

*Table 4: Technical Committee summary table.*

Technical Committee Summary	
<b>What is it?</b>	Technical advisor to the MVP Policy Board.
<b>When does it meet?</b>	TBD
<b>Where does it meet?</b>	TBD
<b>How do I hear about it?</b>	Meeting notices are posted on the MPO website and social media accounts, in the Frontiersman, broadcast on local radio, and posted in the State's Online Public Notice system.
<b>How should I prepare to comment at a meeting?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Review the Technical Committee meeting agenda posted on the MPO website before the meeting.</li> <li>→ Consider the issue(s) and think about what you would like to say.</li> <li>→ What recommendation would you like the Technical Committee to make, or not make to the Policy Board?</li> <li>→ Writing down some talking points may be helpful if you plan to comment in-person at the meeting.</li> <li>→ Try to make your “ask” as clear, concise, and actionable as possible.</li> <li>→ Reach out to the MVP Coordinator (<a href="#">XXX-XXX-XXXX</a>) if you would like to discuss the transportation issue with someone in more detail.</li> </ul>
<b>How do I comment?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>→ Attend the meeting and comment during the general public comment period on the agenda, or comment on specific agenda items.</li> <li>→ You can also submit written comments to the MPO before any Technical Committee meeting.</li> </ul>

### 3. Public Participants

All members of the Mat-Su community are welcome and encouraged to participate in the transportation planning process with MVP Transportation. Federal regulations require that a number of “interested parties” must be consulted and engaged within the metropolitan transportation planning process. These include:

- Persons with limited English proficiency
- Representatives of the disabled community
- Representatives of public transportation users
- Representatives of pedestrian facility users
- Representatives of bicycle facility users
- Representatives of low-income communities
- Representatives of minority communities
- Freight shippers and haulers
- Private providers of transportation
- Representative of affected public agencies<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.316](#).

Engagement with the above groups will be accomplished through all of the MPO's activities including Policy Board and Technical Committee membership and meetings, planning workshops, and the online and traditional outreach strategies outlined below in the Public Participation Strategies Toolkit.

### III. MVP Plans & Programs

MVP Transportation develops four key plans to guide the transportation planning and programming in the Mat-Su Valley. These plans focus on the urbanized area, called the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA).

These plans include the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Public Participation Plan (PPP).

Each plan plays an important role in bringing transportation projects to life in the Mat-Su, serving as the beginning (UPWP), middle (MTP), and end (TIP) of the transportation planning process.

#### A. UPWP – MVP Budget and Business Plan (2-year outlook)

The UPWP is the operating budget and business plan of MVP Transportation. It shows the proposed use of federal planning funds and identifies the biennial activities and programs planned to accomplish the MPO's goals. MVP will use a 30-day comment period to gather public input on the draft UPWP.



MVP will place an advertisement in the Frontiersman to announce the public comment period for the UPWP development process.



In addition to the MVP website, notification of the UPWP public review and comment period will be posted on the Mat-Su Borough website and the State's Online Public Notice System. Additional proactive outreach may include the utilization of targeted email lists and the timely publication of the newsletter announcing the comment periods.



The draft UPWP will be posted online on the MVP website with an online comment form during the 30-day public comment and review period.



An amendment<sup>7</sup> is triggered when task budget amounts exceed 20% of the original approved program budget, when there are individual changes of \$35,000 or more to task budgets, or when there are significant scope changes. Amendments require the concurrence of the MPO, Alaska DOT&PF, FHWA, and FTA before becoming effective. Amendments to the UPWP will require a 30-day public comment and review period.



An administrative modification<sup>7</sup> is triggered when task budget amounts do not exceed 20% of the approved program budget or when individual changes are for \$35,000 or less of a task budget. These require the concurrence of the MPO and Alaska DOT&PF before becoming effective. The FHWA and FTA will be notified as soon as possible of these changes. Administrative modifications will be announced and posted to the MVP website, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on these by attending the Policy Board meeting where the changes are considered.

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<sup>7</sup> Changes in work assignments and studies to be performed to meet transportation planning requirements may be made by MVP at the times and extent deemed necessary. Total funds to be made available for the performance of the work and services will not exceed the amount specified in the UPWP.

*Table 5: UPWP summary table.*

<b>Unified Planning Work Program Details</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The MPO's operating budget and business plan.
<b>Updated:</b>	Every 2 years
<b>Outlook:</b>	2 years, Comment period typically in June or July for Adoption in August.
<b>Next Update:</b>	Summer 2022
<b>Adoption Process:</b>	Reviewed by the Technical Committee, Adopted by the Policy Board
<b>Public Comment &amp; Review Period:</b>	30 Days
<b>Administrative Modifications:</b>	Posted to website, opportunity to comment at Technical Committee and Policy Board meetings.
<b>Amendments:</b>	30-day comment period

### B. MTP – Long Range Plan (20-25 year outlook)

The MTP is the long-range transportation planning document of MVP. It is the multimodal transportation plan addressing no less than a 20-year planning horizon that the MPO develops through the metropolitan planning process. The MTP looks 20-25 years into the future using population and traffic projections and is updated every 5 years to remain current with future trends and public sentiment and needs. The MTP includes short, middle, and long-range projects to develop a transportation network for all modes, including pedestrian paths and bicycle facilities. It is a performance-driven, outcome-based approach to planning. The MTP serves as a guide for local officials to make transportation improvements using Federal funds. A transportation project must appear in the MTP to receive federal funding from the FTA or FHWA. The MTP ensures that all transportation projects of agencies operating within the MPA are coordinated, achieve planning goals, meet performance targets, and satisfy local needs. The MPO may submit to FHWA and FTA for approval a procedure for developing an abbreviated MTP and TIP as long as it meets federal requirements.

The MTP process provides one of the best opportunities for the public to participate in the transportation planning process. The public's input will be gathered early and continually using a variety of methods including public meetings and interactive online applications. A separate public involvement plan will be developed with each MTP update to outline the specific strategies that will be used to gather and integrate public input into the plan. At minimum, MVP will host one public meeting in a convenient and accessible location during the MTP process. The public review and comment periods and public meeting(s) will be advertised using the following strategies:



MVP will place an advertisement in the Frontiersman to announce a public meeting and any public review and comment periods for the MTP.



Notification of the public meeting will be posted on several websites (MVP, DOT&PF, Mat-Su Borough, Chickaloon, Knik, City of Wasilla and City of Palmer websites), as well as the State's Online Public Notice System. Additional proactive outreach will include the utilization of the targeted emailing lists, the notification of related community service groups and organizations and low-income neighborhoods.



The draft MTP will be posted online on the MVP website with an online comment form during the 30-day public comment and review period.



The draft MTP will be available for review during normal working hours at the MVP Office, DOT&PF Planning Department, the Mat-Su Borough Planning Department, Wasilla City Hall and at Palmer City Hall. Additional locations for after-work hours viewing may also be identified including the Public Library or community center.



Notification will be sent to all that have requested notification of comment periods or public meetings on the topic of transportation planning. MVP will have a newsletter that will include quarterly updates on the development of the MTP and provide opportunities to comment throughout the process on its website and on Facebook.



Online Surveys will be made and distributed on the MVP website and social media. An online comment map may be used to gather geospatial data about transportation issues and needs.



Facebook live, Microsoft Teams, Zoom, or another virtual platform may be utilized as needed during public meetings to provide a virtual participation option.



Comments received from this process will be documented, distributed and posted on the web so that the Policy Board may consider all comments. All comments received throughout the process will be included with the final MTP as an appendix.



An amendment is triggered by major revisions including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in the project cost ( $\geq 20\%$ ), project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or scope. Amendments require re-demonstration of fiscal constraint and concurrence of MVP, Alaska DOT&PF, FHWA, and FTA before taking effect. Any amendments to the MTP require a 30-day public comment and review period.



An administrative modification is triggered by a minor revision, including minor changes to project/project phase costs ( $< 20\%$ ), minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. These do not require a public comment period or redemonstration of fiscal constraint. Administrative modifications do require the concurrence of MVP and the Alaska DOT&PF before taking effect. The FHWA and FTA will be notified as soon as possible of these changes. Administrative modifications will be posted to the MVP website, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on these by attending the Policy Board meeting where the changes are considered.

*Table 6: MTP summary table.*

<b>Metropolitan Transportation Plan Details</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The MPO's long-range transportation plan.
<b>Updated:</b>	Every 5 years
<b>Outlook:</b>	20-25 years
<b>Next Update:</b>	TBD
<b>Adoption Process:</b>	Reviewed and recommended by Technical Committee, Adopted by Policy Board
<b>Public Comment &amp; Review Period:</b>	30 Days
<b>Administrative Modifications:</b>	Posted to website, Comment at Policy Board meeting
<b>Amendments:</b>	30-day comment period

### C. TIP – Short Range Plan (5-year outlook)

The TIP is the short-range transportation project funding and programming document of MVP Transportation. It covers a timespan of no less than four years and is updated at least every four years and approved by the MPO and the Governor. If the TIP covers more than four years, the FHWA and FTA will consider the projects in additional years as informational.<sup>8</sup> The TIP is used as a management tool for monitoring progress and implementing the MTP. It prioritizes and programs funds for projects identified in the MTP. All transportation projects in the MPA of *any* agency receiving federal funds must appear within the TIP. Because of this, the MPO plays a strong coordinating role for all projects, including those led by local governments (for example, Wasilla, Palmer, Chickaloon, Knik, and the Mat-Su Borough) and the State DOT&PF. Projects are scored and ranked using project evaluation criteria developed under the MTP and integrated into the MPO's policies and procedures. The highest scoring projects are prioritized.

The TIP includes a short description of each included project, its funding source(s), agencies responsible for each project phase, and a breakdown of costs by phase for the four federal fiscal years (FFY) covered by the TIP. The TIP also identifies new policy and planning needs and how proposed projects will impact the performance targets developed in the MTP. The MVP Policy Board approves the TIP and self-certifies that it was developed in accordance with all applicable regulations.

The TIP has specific public participation requirements to ensure that the community's voice is heard in prioritizing transportation investments in the urbanized area. Prior to the development of the TIP, the project evaluation criteria may be reviewed and modified to reflect any changes in the goals and objectives of the MPO. If the evaluation criteria are updated, a 30-day comment period will be provided to gather public input on the proposed criteria changes. A 30-day public comment period will also be provided for the public to review the draft TIP and any amendments.



MVP will place an advertisement in the Frontiersman to announce each public comment period for the TIP development process.



In addition to the MVP website, notification of the TIP public review period will be posted on the Mat-Su Borough website and the State's Online Public Notice System. Additional proactive outreach may include the utilization of the targeted email lists and the timely publication of the newsletter announcing the comment periods.



The draft TIP will be posted online on the MVP website with an online comment form during the 30-day public comment and review period(s).



The draft TIP will be available for review during normal working hours at the MVP Coordinator's Office, DOT&PF Planning Department, the Mat-Su Borough Planning Department, Wasilla City Hall and at Palmer City Hall. Additional locations for after-work hours viewing may also be identified including the Public Library or community center.



Notification will be sent to all that have requested notification of public input periods and meetings on the topic of transportation planning.



Comments received from this process will be documented, distributed and posted on the web so that the Policy Board may consider all comments.

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<sup>8</sup> See [23 CFR 450.326a](#) for more details on TIP requirements.



An amendment is triggered by major revisions including the addition or deletion of a project or a major change in the project cost ( $\geq 20\%$ ), project/project phase initiation dates, or a major change in design concept or scope. Amendments require re-demonstration of fiscal constraint and concurrence of MVP, Alaska DOT&PF, FHWA, and FTA before taking effect. Any amendments to the MTP require a 30-day public comment and review period.



An administrative modification is triggered by a minor revision, including minor changes to project/project phase costs ( $< 20\%$ ), minor changes to funding sources of previously included projects, and minor changes to project/project phase initiation dates. These do not require a public comment period or redemonstration of fiscal constraint. Administrative modifications do require the concurrence of MVP and the Alaska DOT&PF before taking effect. The FHWA and FTA will be notified as soon as possible of these changes. Administrative modifications will be posted to the MVP website, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on these by attending the Policy Board meeting where the changes are considered.

*Table 7: TIP summary table.*

<b>Transportation Improvement Program Details</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	The MPO's short-range program and funding plan.
<b>Updated:</b>	Annually
<b>Outlook:</b>	4 years
<b>Next Update:</b>	TBD
<b>Adoption Process:</b>	Reviewed and recommended by Technical Committee, Adopted by Policy Board
<b>Public Comment &amp; Review Period:</b>	30 Days
<b>Administrative Modifications:</b>	Posted to website, Comment at Policy Board meeting
<b>Amendments:</b>	30-day comment period

#### D. PPP – How to Engage with the MPO

The PPP is the very plan that you are reading right now! It serves as both a guide for MVP staff and stakeholders on how to engage the public in the transportation process, as well as a how-to guide for the public—you!—on making sure that your voice is heard. The PPP helps MVP carry out its mission by ensuring an open process that provides the public with complete information, timely notification of comment periods and meetings, full access and input into key decisions, and early and continuous participation in the transportation planning process.

The PPP is based on federal code that requires public participation in the transportation planning process. The federal regulations specify a 45-day public comment and review period for PPP development.<sup>9</sup> This differs from most other MVP plans that have a 30-day public comment period. The PPP will be re-addressed and may be updated prior to MTP development. The following public participation strategies will be used in the PPP development process:



MVP will place an advertisement in the *Frontiersman* to announce the 45-day public comment and review period for the PPP development process.



Notification of the draft PPP review period will be posted on the MVP website, as well as the State's Online Public Notice System. Additional proactive outreach will include the utilization of the targeted mailing lists, the notification of related community service groups and organizations and low-income neighborhoods.



The draft PPP will be posted online on the MVP website with an online comment form during the 45-day public comment and review period.



The draft PPP will be available for review during normal working hours at the MVP Coordinator's Office. Additional locations for after-work hours viewing may also be identified including the Public Library or community center.



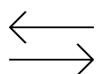
Notification will be sent to all that have requested notification of meetings or public comment periods on the topic of transportation planning. MVP will have a newsletter that will include quarterly updates on the development of the PPP and provide opportunities to comment throughout the process on its website and on Facebook.



Comments received from this process will be documented, distributed and posted on the web so that the Policy Board may consider all comments.



Any amendments to the PPP will also trigger a 45-day public comment and review period. The PPP will be re-addressed and may be updated prior to MTP development.



Smaller, administrative modifications will be announced and posted to the MVP website, and the public will have the opportunity to comment on these by attending the Policy Board meeting where the changes are considered.

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<sup>9</sup> See [23 CFR § 450.316](#).

*Table 8: PPP summary table.*

<b>Public Participation Plan Details</b>	
<b>What is it?</b>	Blueprint for how MVP conducts public engagement.
<b>Updated:</b>	As needed
<b>Outlook:</b>	No expiration date
<b>Next Update:</b>	As required or prior to the development of the MTP
<b>Adoption Process:</b>	Reviewed by Technical Committee, Adopted by Policy Board
<b>Public Comment &amp; Review Period:</b>	45 Days
<b>Administrative Modifications:</b>	Posted to website, Comment at Policy Board meeting
<b>Amendments:</b>	45-day comment period

## E. Public Participation Strategies [Toolkit]

### 1. MVP Website & Social Media

MVP will maintain an accessible and engaging website to inform and update the community about meetings, public comment periods, planning processes, and transportation issues impacting the Mat-Su Valley region community. All meeting and public comment and review period notices for MVP plans such as the UPWP, MTP, TIP, and PPP will be posted to the website, along with draft plans, public comment summaries, and notices of plan amendments and administrative modifications.

The website will serve as a venue for innovative public participation and visualization strategies used by the MPO such as survey questionnaires, online comment maps, and 2D and 3D representations and interactive renderings of transportation projects. Creative methods of virtual communication such as podcasts and videos may be utilized to support remote public participation efforts during the COVID-19 pandemic.

MVP's social media accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram will provide periodic updates about meetings, comment periods, and planning milestones and direct residents back to the MVP website for more information.

### 2. "Building the Mat-Su MPO" 101 Document

MVP is in the process of developing an introductory "Building the Mat-Su MPO" document that will be distributed to residents in the MPA to introduce them to the MPO, its mission, and how to get involved in transportation planning decisions through the MPO. The document is meant to be visual and engaging, using the metaphor of "building a house" to illustrate the process of developing the MPO and to communicate the important role that the organization will soon play in the Mat-Su region community moving forward.

### 3. Local Media Advertising

MVP will advertise all meeting and event notices and planning process updates in the *Frontiersman* and on the public calendar on the MSB's website. Additionally, local radio and public television may be used to advertise for special events.

### 4. Quarterly Newsletter

MVP will develop and distribute a quarterly newsletter to update the community and partners on upcoming planning processes and milestones and happenings at the MPO.

### 5. Public Meetings & Workshops

MVP will host public meetings and workshops to gather input into various planning efforts, including the MTP. These meetings will be virtual on a platform widely accessible to the public or held in locations that are fully ADA accessible and convenient to a broad range of residents including traditionally underrepresented groups.

### 6. Public Review & Comment Periods

Public review and comment periods for all MVP plans will be widely advertised following the notice requirements outlined in the MPO Plans & Programs section and in the following Notice Requirements Summary matrix at the end of this chapter.

During review and comment periods, all draft plans, plan amendments, and/or administrative modifications will be posted on the MVP website with a virtual public comment form. Additionally, draft plans will be available for individual viewing with written comment forms at the MVP office during regular business hours and at the library/community center during evening and weekend hours during comment periods.

#### 7. Innovative Visualization Strategies

To ensure that all residents, including limited English speakers, are able to understand and provide input on proposed transportation projects, MVP will use innovative 2D and 3D visualization strategies as budget allows to provide visual representations of proposed transportation projects. It is often challenging for the layperson and especially those with limited English proficiency to view engineering plans for a proposed project and to easily grasp its implications.

MVP will utilize GIS, 2D and 3D renderings, and multimedia applications to create visual representations of projects and their impacts. Aerial imagery will be used as much as possible to orient residents to project locations, with key locations including major thoroughfares and landmarks clearly labelled to support participants' understanding of the scope and location of proposed transportation investments.

#### 8. Stakeholder Email List

A robust stakeholder email list will be developed and constantly updated to ensure that anyone interested in learning about MVP activities and participating in planning efforts is informed and able to do so. MVP will coordinate with local partner organizations on the stakeholder list to reach underrepresented communities and spread the word about how to get involved.

#### 9. Public Comment & Responsiveness Summaries

For each plan, MVP staff will document and organize all comments received and develop a Public Comment & Responsiveness summary describing how submitted comments were addressed and/or integrated into the final plan. The Summary will be added as an appendix to the MTP and posted online for all other plans. The comments and summary will also be shared with the Technical Committee and Policy Board during the plan development process so that all comments may be considered in the decision-making process.

#### 10. Support Participation of Traditionally Underrepresented Communities

MVP follows a number of strategies to broaden its reach and engage with traditionally underrepresented communities in the Mat-Su Valley region. These strategies range from offering free translation services at meetings and hosting events in lower income neighborhoods, to using visualization strategies to illustrate the impacts of transportation projects.

The full breadth of MVP's strategies for supporting the participation of underserved communities will be outlined in the *MVP Transportation Title VI Plan* (to be developed). FAST Planning and AMATs Title VI plans are great documents to reference once the MPO begins developing its own Title VI Plan.

## F. Notice Requirements Summary [Construction Schedule]

*Table 9: Meeting and plan notice requirements summary table.*

<b>Plan Notice Requirements</b>			
	<b>Draft Plan Review</b>	<b>Amendment</b>	<b>Administrative Modification</b>
<b>UPWP</b>	30-day public review & comment period	30-day public review & comment period	
<b>MTP</b>	<u>Public meeting</u> & 30-day public review & comment period	30-day public review & comment period	
<b>TIP</b>	30-day public review & comment period	30-day public review & comment period	Change posted to website, opportunity to comment at Policy Board meeting
<b>PPP</b>	45-day public review & comment period	45-day public review & comment period	
<b>Meeting Notice Requirements</b>			
<b>Meeting Type</b>	<b>Public Notice Activities</b>		
<b>Regular Policy Board or Technical Committee Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting packet with agenda and materials posted to MVP website at least 10 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> <li>Notice of meeting published in the <i>Frontiersman</i> at least 10 days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> <li>Notice of meeting announced on local radio at least 10 calendar days prior and up until scheduled meeting, as budget allows.</li> <li>Notice of meeting posted on State of Alaska Online Public Notice System at least 10 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> </ul>		
<b>Special Policy Board or Technical Committee Meetings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting packet with agenda and materials posted to MVP website at least 7 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> <li>Notice of meeting published in the <i>Frontiersman</i> at least 7 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> <li>Notice of meeting announced on local radio at least 7 calendar days prior and up until scheduled meeting, as budget allows.</li> <li>Notice of meeting posted on State of Alaska Online Public Notice System at least 7 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> </ul>		
<b>Plan-Specific Meeting</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting advertised for at least 30 calendar days prior to scheduled meeting.</li> <li>Follow public participation requirements for the specific plan (See PPP Plans + Programs Chapter).</li> </ul>		

## IV. Achieving Public Participation

Measuring the effectiveness of the MPO's public participation activities will be an important part of ensuring that existing strategies are adequate and identifying areas where methods can be improved.

The PPP will be updated on a regular basis at the discretion of the MPO to ensure that public participation strategies remain relevant and effective. The MPO will reevaluate the PPP prior to each MTP and may update the PPP in conjunction with the MTP update process.

The following subsection, **A. Mission & Goals**, outlines the mission and goals of MVP Transportation, and how these related to the ten federal planning objections that MPOs strive to achieve. The next subsection, **B. Measuring Success**, provides an evaluation framework for measuring the success of MVP's public participation efforts.

### A. Mission & Goals

Per 23 CFR § 450.306(b), all metropolitan planning organizations shall conduct a continuous, cooperative, and comprehensive (three C's) planning process that addresses the following ten federal planning factors:

- (1) Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- (2) Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- (3) Increase the security of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- (4) Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.
- (5) Protect and enhance the environment, promote energy conservation, improve the quality of life, and promote consistency between transportation improvements and State and local planned growth and economic development patterns.
- (6) Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.
- (7) Promote efficient system management and operation.
- (8) Emphasize the preservation of the existing transportation system.
- (9) Improve the resiliency and reliability of the transportation system and reduce or mitigate stormwater impacts of surface transportation.
- (10) Enhance travel and tourism.

The MVP Steering Committee, in starting to develop the organizational mission for MVP Transportation, identified three of the above planning factors as especially relevant planning factors to consider for the Mat-Su Valley urbanized area. These include:

- Increase the safety of the transportation system for motorized and non-motorized users.
- Support the economic vitality of the metropolitan area, especially by enabling global competitiveness, productivity, and efficiency.
- Increase accessibility and mobility of people and freight.

- Enhance the integration and connectivity of the transportation system, across and between modes, for people and freight.

These prioritized planning factors can help inform the mission and goals development process for MVP Transportation.

#### B. Measuring Success

The following matrix details the methods used to gather and monitor public participation data to evaluate the effectiveness of MPO public participation strategies. The matrix will assist MVP staff in self-assessing whether current public participation strategies are effective, and where they could be improved. Improvements to this PPP will be made based on this self-assessment with the goal of increasing public awareness and improving the quality and quantity of information collected from and provided to the public.

**Table 10:** Public participation evaluation framework.

Methods for Collecting Evaluation Data	Measures of Effectiveness (MOE)
<b>Evaluation / Comment Forms</b>  <b>Verbal Comments from Meetings, Workshops or Forums</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total Number of MVP Public Meetings</li> <li>• Number of Attendees by gender, age, race, when available.</li> <li>• Totally number of forms turned in</li> <li>• Nature of Comments and Remarks</li> <li>• Community Groups represented</li> </ul>
<b>Telephone Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total calls received per quarter</li> <li>• Nature of calls</li> <li>• Number of positive/negative calls received</li> <li>• Type of follow-up required</li> <li>• Time spent on follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>Letters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total letters received per quarter</li> <li>• Number of positive/negative letters received</li> <li>• Translation of letter from members of the public who have limited English proficiency</li> <li>• Nature of letters</li> <li>• Type of follow-up required</li> <li>• Time spent on follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>MVP Website</b>  <b>Social Media</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of hits per month</li> <li>• Number and nature of comments received</li> <li>• Type of group representation</li> <li>• Total number of posts by MVP Transportation</li> <li>• Type of follow-up required</li> <li>• Time spent on follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>Proactive Public Outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of radio and TV interview conducted</li> <li>• Total number of feature stories in newspaper</li> <li>• Total number of community service group meetings attended</li> <li>• Total number of Transportation Committee Meetings attended</li> <li>• Total number of presentations delivered</li> <li>• Total number of comment sheets collected at presentations</li> </ul>
<b>E-mail Comments</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total comment messages per month</li> <li>• Number and nature of messages received</li> <li>• Type of follow-up required</li> <li>• Time spent on follow-up</li> </ul>
<b>Survey/Interactive Map Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Total number of responses received</li> <li>• Summarize comments</li> </ul>

## V. Meeting Federal Requirements

There are several requirements for a PPP as described in 23 CFR § 450.316. The MPO is required to develop a PPP that includes all transportation plan stakeholders. These stakeholders are considered to be anyone from an affected public agency, freight transportation services, to every user of the transportation network. Anyone who would like to participate in the process will be provided reasonable opportunity to do so.

The PPP should be developed with the participation of interested parties. In this case, since the MPO is not finalized yet, the Pre-MPO Steering Committee is the first interested party to participate which is made up of representatives of local government agencies, tribal governments, transportation providers, state representatives, representatives of transportation and health-related non-profits, and representatives from peer Alaskan MPOs. The purpose of the PPP is to develop clear instructions for how residents can participate in the public process, what the MPO's strategies are to reach a wide range of people for participation, and how to measure the outcomes of public participation strategies.

The MPO must provide adequate notice for public participation opportunities and offer convenient and accessible ways for the public to comment at key points in the planning and decision-making process. The notice must be given prior to any sort of comment or participation period and any information must be easily accessible to the public. The information must be presented so that the lay person can understand and also provide several means of presenting the information, such as displaying the information electronically via the internet and/or also using visual presentations in an in-person format so that everyone has adequate time to understand what is presented. Public presentation and meetings must be held in ADA accessible locations and be held at reasonable times to include all who want to participate.

When comments are made, care and response are given for each comment to ensure that participants understand that their comments are valued and integrated into plans and decisions of the MPO. Care must especially be given to receiving comments from traditionally underserved communities. The plans and decisions of the MPO should also be carefully analyzed to understand how these may impact different sub-groups and underserved communities differently. The comments will be provided in a summary, analyzed, and then added to the final transportation plan and/or posted online.

In the event that the final version of an MPO plan differs greatly than the original, an additional comment period must be provided as new issues may arise that were not originally anticipated by those that had provided comment the first time.<sup>10</sup> To prevent undesirable outcomes and adverse impacts on communities, the public participation process will be evaluated, measured, and reviewed for its effectiveness.

Although not a requirement, it is in the best interest of the MPO and its transportation plan to coordinate with other organizations and agencies that are responsible for other planning activities. Organizations that are responsible for economic development or natural disaster preparedness, for example, may be affected by MPO decisions and those decisions may impact operations or provide

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<sup>10</sup> See MVP Transportation's Operating Agreement and the FAST Planning Amendment and Administrative Modifications Policy for more details on triggers and an example policy from a peer MPO, respectively.

insights. The MPO will be responsible for considering actions within the MPO area as they relate to other planning activities.

Since the MPA will most likely include lands that are Indian Tribal Lands and/or Federal Public lands, the development of the transportation plan must appropriately include and consult with federal and tribal land managers.

In accordance with Title VI, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, it is prohibited to discriminate against people on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs that receive federal funding. Title VI applies to the creation and operations of an MPO because they use federal funding. To provide an inclusive public process, notice may be released in different languages and the MVP Title VI Coordinator may be designated to direct people that identify as non- or limited-English speakers to translation services to further facilitate an environment that is continuing, cooperative, comprehensive, and inclusive.

## VI. Conclusion

MVP Transportation is deeply committed to conducting a public participation process that engages the diverse community of the Mat-Su Valley early and consistently throughout the metropolitan transportation planning process. This PPP is the first step towards developing MPO plans that respond to local priorities and satisfy local transportation needs in the Mat-Su.

MVP will periodically update and reevaluate this PPP to ensure that it remains consistent with trends and needs within the local community. The PPP will be reevaluated and may be updated prior to each MTP update as a part of that planning process. It may also be updated through amendments and administrative modifications approved by the MVP Policy Board at any time by following the public notice, review and comment period requirements outlined in this plan.

MVP is committed to increasing the public's understanding of the metropolitan transportation planning process and to encouraging active engagement of the community in the decision-making process.

# Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation 2022 Public Participation Plan Addendum for Pre-MPO Formation

## I. Purpose

The purpose of this addendum to the Matanuska-Susitna Valley Planning for Transportation (MVP Transportation) Public Participation Plan (PPP) is to outline the public participation strategies that will be used during federal fiscal year (FFY) 2022 to develop and finalize the founding documents and general operating agreements of the MPO.

## II. Timeline

MVP Transportation will not be officially designated by the Governor until April 2023. The full PPP document will not apply to the MPO until after this official designation date. This addendum to the PPP shall be applicable once approved by the MVP Pre-MPO Policy Board until the day that the MPO is officially designated by the Governor, expected April 2023.

## III. Meetings

During FFY 2022, the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board hold regular meetings during the year. The final Technical Committee and Policy Board will become official after MPO designation by the Governor no later than April 2023.

Monthly meetings of the MVP Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board are all free and open to the public. Meetings may be fully virtual or in-person, as local health and safety conditions and regulations allow. Meetings will be held in accessible public locations (or virtually, on a platform easily accessible to the public) and will generally be scheduled on a recurring day each month (for example, the third Wednesday). Every MVP board and committee meeting agenda contains a general public comment period (called “Voices of the Visitors”) as well as public comment opportunities for each item being discussed. All meeting packets including approved minutes from the previous meeting will be made available online on the pre-MPO website and/or MVP Transportation website.

Public meetings of the MVP Pre-Policy Board and all advisory committees (including the Steering Committee) will be advertised at least one week prior to the meeting date in the following venues and locations:

- Pre-MPO website at [www.matsumpo.com](http://www.matsumpo.com), prior to MVP official website establishment
- Official website of MVP once it is established
- Mat-Su Borough (MSB) website
- State of Alaska Online Public Notice system
- Frontiersman (local newspaper)

The following guidelines shall apply to the public process of public meetings.

1. A sign-in sheet will be available at each in-person and virtual meeting. Attendees will be encouraged to sign in so that they may receive notification of future meetings.

2. One general public comment period will be provided at every meeting for any members of the public who are present to comment on items not on the agenda. The length of the comment period per speaker may be determined at the beginning of any public meeting by the Chair.
3. Members of the public will also have an opportunity to comment on specific agenda items as they are introduced.
4. Members of the public who would like to provide written comments may submit their comment in writing at any time before the scheduled meeting.
5. Items on a meeting agenda may be voted on or action may be deferred, tabled, or referred back to the board or committee for further consideration at the board or committee's discretion.
6. Past meeting materials including agendas, minutes, packets, and approved planning documents can be found on the MVP website.

The following subsections provide additional information about each board and committee active during FFY 2022.

#### A. Pre-MPO Policy Board

The MVP Pre-MPO Policy Board is the interim leadership-level decision making body of MVP Transportation. Its mission is:

*"To oversee the development of all federally required documents necessary to be designated by the Governor as the Metropolitan Planning Organization of the Mat-Su Valley urbanized area and that area, which is expected to be designated, by the Department of Commerce, as urban in the next 20 years."*

The Pre-MPO Policy Board was established and began meeting in September 2021. The Pre-MPO Policy Board will continue to meet monthly until the final MVP Policy Board is established. The Pre-MPO Policy Board meets regularly on the third Wednesday of each month from 11:30am to 1:00pm.

#### B. Pre-MPO Steering Committee

The MVP Pre-MPO Steering Committee is the interim staff-level advisory committee of MVP Transportation. Its mission is:

*"To guide the pre-MPO formation process for the Mat-Su Valley as it relates to presenting recommendations to the Pre-MPO Policy Board regarding organizational and operational structure."*

The Pre-MPO Steering Committee was established and began meeting in October 2020. The Pre-MPO Steering Committee will continue to meet monthly until the MVP Technical Committee is established after official MPO designation by the Governor. The Pre-MPO Steering Committee meets regularly on the second Tuesday of each month from 2:00pm to 3:30pm.

#### C. MVP Policy Board

The MVP Policy Board is the final governing body of the MPO. The official Policy Board will be established and begin meeting in the second quarter of FFY 2022. The purpose of the MVP Policy Board will be to act as the leader and final decisionmaker for MVP Transportation to carry out the metropolitan transportation planning process for the UZA.

#### D. MVP Technical Committee

The MVP Technical Committee is the final staff-level advisory committee of the MPO. The MVP Technical Committee will be established and begin meeting in the second quarter of FFY 2022. The

purpose of the MVP Technical Committee will be to provide technical guidance and recommendations to the MVP Policy Board to assist with carrying out the metropolitan transportation planning process.

## IV. 2022 MPO Plans, Programs & Agreements

The following plans and programs will be developed and finalized during FFY 2022. All planning documents and agreements in this addendum will have a 30-day public comment period unless otherwise noted.

### A. MPA Boundary Development

The Boundary Development process for the MVP metropolitan planning area (MPA) will follow the Boundary Development Strategy document approved by the Pre-MPO Policy Board on October 20, 2021.

The MPO shall review the comprehensive plans and capital improvement programs (CIP) of the borough and local governments as a part of the boundary development process. As outlined in the strategy, MVP will consult with members of the public and community representatives with information pertinent to projecting future growth in the borough, including, but not limited to representatives of:

- MSB School District
- Public transportation providers
- Port, rail, and freight operators
- Utility providers
- Local commercial businesses
- Non-profit organizations
- State of Alaska DOT&PF and DEC
- Tribal governments
- Local governments

At least one public meeting will be held to gather the public's input into the boundary development process. The meeting will be held virtually or in-person and be easily accessible to the public.

Visualization strategies will be used to help build public understanding of the boundary development process and potential alternatives for the MPA boundary, and their implications.

The public meeting will be advertised at least one month in advance of the meeting date in the same locations and venues that board and committee meetings are advertised (See **III. Meetings**).

The finalized boundary will be posted for a 30-day public review and comment period on the pre-MPO and/or final MVP website. All public comments and feedback will be recorded and forwarded to the MVP boards and committees for consideration and subsequently posted on the website. If significant changes are subsequently made to the preferred boundary alternative that were unforeseen by the Pre-MPO Policy Board, additional opportunity for public comment may be provided. Final board action will take place at a scheduled Pre-MPO Policy Board meeting.

### B. Intergovernmental Operating Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding for Transportation Planning (Operating Agreement)

The *MVP Transportation Intergovernmental Operating Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding for Transportation Planning* (Operating Agreement) defines the relationships between the State of Alaska and the Mat-Su Valley's local and tribal governments and other stakeholders, as appropriate, in

carrying out metropolitan transportation planning to meet federal planning requirements through the MPO. The document defines the make-up of the official Policy Board and Technical Committee of the MPO.

The purpose of the Operating Agreement is to comply with 23 USC § 134 – 135, 49 USC § 5303 – 5306, and 23 CFR 450.300 to provide the structure and process for the continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive consideration, consultation, development, and implementation of transportation plans and programs for intermodal transportation in the MPA. The agreement describes the legal authority for the operation of the MPO, member organizations and their responsibilities, required plans and programs of the MPO, and operating procedures related to consultant contracts, reporting requirements, procurement and management, audits, and Title VI and disadvantaged business enterprise (DBE) requirements.

The Operating Agreement will be developed by the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and approved by the Pre-MPO Policy Board and then sent to the Governor for final designation. A 30-day public comment period will be provided for the public to review the Operating Agreement. All public comments and feedback will be recorded and forwarded to the MVP Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board for consideration.

#### C. Memorandum of Understanding for Office Operations (MOU for Office Operations)

The *Memorandum of Understanding for Office Operations* (MOU for Office Operations) defines the operating procedures of the MPO office and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the MPO member organizations as they relate to the office operations of the MPO. The MOU for Office Operations and the responsibilities defined therein will vary based on the final structure of the MPO. The MOU for Office Operations outlines the various resources and types of support that each member organization will contribute to the MPO, such as office and/or meeting space, membership dues, risk management, accounting services, procurement services, human resources, project planning and development, IT support services, payroll, computers and hardware, software licenses, and other types of in-kind and financial support.

The MOU for Office Operations will be developed by the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and approved by the Pre-MPO Policy Board. A 30-day public comment period will be provided for the public to review the agreement. All public comments and feedback will be recorded and forwarded to the MVP Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board for consideration and posted on the website. If significant and unforeseen changes result, the public may be provided an additional opportunity to comment.

#### D. Bylaws

The Bylaws of the MPO define the members and officers of the organization such as the Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, how those positions are chosen, and what their responsibilities are. The Bylaws also define at minimum when meetings will occur, and outline standard processes related to meetings, ethics, conflicts of interest, and other standards of conduct for the MPO. The Bylaws are submitted along with the Operating Agreement in the Governor's packet for final MPO approval.

The Bylaws will be developed by the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and approved by the Pre-MPO Policy Board. A 30-day public comment period will be provided for the public to review the Bylaws

simultaneously along with the Operating Agreement. All public comments and feedback will be recorded and forwarded to the MVP Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board for consideration and posted on the website. If significant and unforeseen changes result, the public may be provided an additional opportunity to comment on the MOU.

#### E. Tribal Consultation Agreements

The MPO will work with local tribal governments, Chickaloon Native Village and Knik Tribe, to develop agreements defining coordination between the MPO and each tribal government. The agreements will outline the consultation processes that will be carried out by the MPO with each tribal government for each major plan and program of the MPO, including the MTP and TIP. Consultation requirements for MPOs who receive funds through the FHWA are outlined in 23 CFR 450.316. Key provisions include:

- “When the MPO includes Indian Tribal lands, the MPO shall appropriately involve the Indian Tribal government(s) in the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP” (23 CFR 450.316(c)).
- “MPOs shall, to the extent practicable, develop a documented process(es) that outlines roles, responsibilities, and key decision points for consulting with other governments and agencies, as defined in paragraphs (b), (c), and (d) of this section, which may be included in the agreement(s) developed under §450.314.” (23 CFR 450.316(e)).
- Include in their plans and programs “a discussion of types of potential environmental mitigation activities and potential areas to carry out these activities, including activities that may have the greatest potential to restore and maintain the environmental functions affected by the metropolitan transportation plan. The discussion may focus on policies, programs, or strategies, rather than at the project level. The discussion shall be developed in consultation with Federal, State, and Tribal land management, wildlife, and regulatory agencies. The MPO may establish reasonable timeframes for performing this consultation”(23 CFR 450.322 (f) (7)).”

The Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board will utilize the following resources in its consultation and coordination with tribal governments”

- Tribal Consultation Best Practices Guide for Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations in Washington State
- Executive Order 13175 Consultation and Coordination with Indian Tribal Governments
- Millennium Agreement between the Federally Recognized Tribes of Alaska and the State of Alaska
- Guidance from the State of Alaska Civil Rights Office

MPO coordination with tribal representatives will occur at the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board levels to establish the consultation agreements.

#### F. Memorandum of Understanding for Performance Based Planning (MOU for Performance Based Planning)

MVP Transportation may choose to sign onto the existing Memorandum of Understanding for Performance Based Planning between AMATs, FAST Planning, and the state of Alaska, or develop its own performance measures. This agreement defines how the state and Alaskan MPOs cooperatively develop and share information related to transportation performance data, including the selection and reporting

of performance targets as defined in the Performance Planning Target Setting Procedures document. These procedures are used in tracking progress towards attainment of critical outcomes for the region. This data will also be collected for the state's asset management plan for the National Highway System (NHS).<sup>1</sup>

#### G. Member Organization Coordination Agreements

The MPO will work with local governments, state DOT&PF, and member organizations to develop agreements defining coordination between the MPO and each entity. The agreements will outline how the MPO will coordinate with member agencies on developing the major plans and programs of the MPO, including the MTP and TIP.

MPO coordination with member agency representatives at the Pre-MPO Steering Committee and Pre-MPO Policy Board levels will help to define and establish the coordination agreements.

#### H. Transportation & Grandfather Agreements

Agreements related to the transition of the Mat-Su Valley from an urban cluster to a UZA may be deemed necessary to define the new relationships between the MPO, member agencies, and the state of Alaska DOT&PF in regard to funding programs and eligibility.

One example is an agreement between the MSB and the Alaska DOT&PF regarding eligibility for the Community Transportation Program (CTP). Once the MPA is established and the MPO has been officially approved by the Governor, transportation projects within the MPA are no longer eligible for funding through the state's CTP. However, the MSB currently has several projects included in the 2020-2023 CTP. A grandfather agreement should be developed between the MSB, MVP Transportation and Alaska DOT&PF stating that these projects will be "grandfathered in" to the CTP program even if the MPO is approved within the 2022-2023 timeframe.

#### I. Consolidated Planning Grant Agreement

MVP Transportation will work with the Alaska DOT&PF to develop a Consolidated Planning Grant Agreement<sup>2</sup> to outline the consolidated Metropolitan Planning (PL) and Transit Planning (FTA 5303 funds) to be distributed to the MPO by formula and match amounts. The Alaska DOT&PF is currently in the process of drafting separate Consolidated Planning Grant Agreements for FAST Planning and AMATs, and MVP Transportation will need to do the same once the MPO is officially designated.

#### J. Other Agreements

Other agreements may be deemed necessary between the MPO and other entities engaged in transportation and transportation planning within the MPA. These agreements will be developed by the Steering Committee and approved by the Policy Board. All additional agreements will have a 30-day public comment period.

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<sup>1</sup> See [23 CFR 450.314\(h\)](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [FTA Circular 8100.1D](#)

