



9. Participation

This chapter details the MIC’s process for ensuring timely and substantive public participation during the development of the MTP.

Duluth-Superior Long-Range Transportation Plan



Sustainable Choices 2050

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Engaging the Public in Transportation Planning

A major theme of this Plan is that the cost of needed improvements to the transportation system far exceeds the funding available to address those needs. Difficult choices must be made regarding the use of scarce transportation dollars.

The long term effect such decisions will have means that public engagement and stakeholder involvement are critical elements of the MTP process.

The MIC's Planning Process

The MIC is committed to reaching out to and engaging diverse community members throughout the transportation planning process. All of the MIC's planning activities embody the [cooperative, continuous and comprehensive \("3-C"\) framework](#) for making transportation investment decisions in metropolitan areas as reaffirmed in the federal IJA legislation.

The MIC aims to ensure that all stakeholders are given ample opportunity to have a real influence throughout the planning and decision-making processes and thus help to shape the transportation policies, programs and projects in the Duluth-Superior area. Throughout the process, MIC staff followed its [Public Involvement Plan](#) which incorporates the public participation requirements of 23 CFR 450.316.

Public Participation Initiatives for the MTP

As detailed in Appendix C, more than two years prior to the completion of *Sustainable Choices 2050*, MIC staff conducted or participated in numerous public participation activities with a broad and diverse group of stakeholders. The first step was to devise and document a public participation process specific to the MTP, in keeping with federal regulations and the MIC's Public Involvement Plan. The PEP structured engagement in two phases:

Issues and Opportunities

The process of identifying and reaching out to key stakeholders, to identify key transportation issues in the planning area.

Draft and Final MTP

This phase of direct outreach will feature opportunities for the MIC's oversight agencies (FHWA, FTA and Minnesota and

FEDERAL MTP OUTREACH REQUIREMENTS

Throughout the process, MIC staff followed its [Public Involvement Plan](#) which incorporates the public participation requirements of 23 CFR 450.316:

- Provide reasonable public access to information.
- Incorporate the use of electronic methods and visualization techniques.
- Provide early & continuous opportunities for involvement.
- Offer timely information to citizens, affected agencies, private entities and other interested parties.
- Give adequate notice of public involvement activities and ample time for public review and comment at key decision points.
- Hold public meetings at convenient times and accessible locations.
- Ensure the inclusion of non-motorized users, the disabled, the elderly, minority, low-income and other traditionally "underserved populations".
- Include the consideration of the potential impacts of decisions on social and natural resources and reach out to relevant agencies and stakeholders.
- Develop and regularly review a public participation plan.

Wisconsin DOTs) as well as members of the public and area stakeholders to review and comment on the transportation system solutions identified in the draft 2050 MTP.

Stakeholder Engagement Goals and Objectives

The goal of stakeholder engagement activities is to improve and facilitate decision making and create an atmosphere of understanding that actively involves stakeholders in a timely manner, and that these groups are provided sufficient opportunity to voice their opinions and concerns so that they may influence project decisions.

The key objectives of the public engagement activities are:

- Provide guidance for stakeholder engagement such that it incorporates best practices as well as meets MIC requirements;
- Identify key stakeholders that are affected by or able to influence the plan;
- Identify the most effective methods and structures through which to disseminate study information and accomplish regular, accessible, transparent and appropriate consultation that provides stakeholders with an opportunity to contribute to plan outcomes;
- Define reporting and monitoring measures to ensure the effectiveness of the PEP and periodic reviews of the PEP based on findings, and;
- Establish formal concern/resolution mechanisms and outline methods to incorporate input into the planning process and report back to stakeholders regarding the use of their input.

Stakeholder Identification

Stakeholders are persons or groups who are directly or indirectly affected by a proposed action, as well as those who may have interests in the MTP process or the ability to influence or contribute to its outcomes.

Identify Stakeholders and Develop Contact List

An extensive effort was made to obtain and verify current email addresses for a broad range of organizations and individuals, in keeping with federal requirements and the MIC's commitment to seek out and consider the needs of

STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION TOOL

The MIC's Stakeholder Identification Tool translates the requirements of CFR 450.316 into a detailed listing of local organizations and individuals potentially interested in and/or affected by the transportation policies and projects included in the MIC area MTP. Briefly, those interested parties included:

- Citizens/General Public
- Government and Public Agencies
- Public Transportation Operators and Users
- Private Transportation Operators
- Multimodal Freight Providers and Customers
- Non-Motorized/Active Transportation Advocates
- Human Services Providers and Recipients
- Natural and Historical Resource Preservation and Protection Groups and Agencies
- Business and Economic Development Interests
- Educational Institutions
- Tribal and Federal Lands Agencies

In addition to those identified by MIC staff, visitors to the Sustainable Choices 2050 website were invited to submit their email address if they were interested in receiving updates.

those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems.

A comprehensive mailing list was compiled that included interested parties (agencies, groups and individuals) as well as traditionally underserved groups and individuals as identified in the MIC’s Title VI plan.

Identified stakeholders also included current MIC Board and committee members as well as participants in MIC plans and studies over the past several years.

Example stakeholder groups are shown in Table 9.1.



Figure 9.1 Example Stakeholder Groups

Traveling Public, Residents and Employees	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Commuters
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Visitors
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Residents within the MPA
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Workers employed within the MPA
Government Officials	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Municipal elected and appointed officials
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	County elected and appointed officials
Transit Agencies	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Duluth Transit Authority
Special Interest Groups and Agencies	
	Duluth Area Chamber of Commerce
	Duluth Business Association
	West Duluth Business Club
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Emergency service providers
	School District Transportation Officials
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Sierra Club or other Environmental Organization
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Bicycle Organizations

Environmental Justice, ADA, Low English Proficiency, and Other Groups with Specialized Transportation Needs

Federally funded projects may not generate disproportionate adverse impacts on communities of environmental justice concern. By executive order, these groups include certain racial minorities, ethnic groups, and low-income persons. Similarly, the Americans with Disabilities Act requires transportation facilities be designed to adequately serve disabled persons. Other populations may also have specialized needs, such as young people and the elderly. The PEP recognized that



effectively engaging these persons in the planning process requires culturally sensitive outreach and developing partnerships with organizations serving environmental justice populations. The study team worked with MIC to determine appropriate organizations for consultation, relying on input from regional stakeholders.

Stakeholder Engagement Activities

Details about specific engagement activities are provided in Appendix C. Key activities included:

Develop a Brand

A project brand and logo was developed for use throughout the project to consistently identify the MTP for use across all print and electronic media and during public engagement activities.

Sustainable Choices 2050 web page

The project web page <https://dsmic.org/planning/long-range/> was developed and maintained as the primary resource for current information about the MTP. including:

- Background info and scope of work
- Link to online public survey
- Notifications of upcoming public meetings
- Links to draft plan chapters

Public Survey

The study team developed an online survey during the existing conditions and needs assessment phase of the MTP. The survey was publicized via a link to be distributed through the outreach contact list, MIC mailing lists, partner organization distribution,

Figure 9.2 Facebook Ad—MTP Public Survey



and via MIC social media. The survey allowed participants to describe their vision for the region’s transportation system, key areas of concern, and ideas for the future. Survey results were used to complement technical analyses in confirming the MTP goals and objectives and will also identify key transportation issues to be addressed through project development and evaluation. Over the course of the first phase of planning, 422 survey responses were received. A summary of survey outcomes is included in Appendix C.

MTP Advisory Committee

The MIC’s Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC), consisting of Duluth and Superior area planners, engineers and modal representatives, as a voice of many key stakeholders, was enlisted as the primary advisory group for the MTP.

Its purpose was to provide input on all aspects of the MTP during its development, by reviewing the vision and goals, providing feedback on chapters as they were drafted, and assessing key take-aways from data collected and public comments.

The MIC Board also received much the same information as the MTP Committee at several of its monthly meetings, and was appraised of primary comments and suggestions of the Advisory Committee.

Jurisdictional Consultations

As part of developing of the transportation project list and fiscal constraint components of the Plan , MIC planning staff met with officials from every MIC-area jurisdiction. For the first time these consultations were held as a group (Minnesota and Wisconsin) instead of individually.

The purpose of the consultations was for our jurisdictional partners to learn about the vision and goals of the MTP, and to share the key takeaways from our public involvement efforts to date.

It also served as an opportunity for a group discussion among the jurisdictions to share their transportation wants, needs and short– mid– and long-range projects to be considered for inclusion within the MTP.

They were also asked to share any known project ideas or

Who Was Involved

Public involvement is integral to good transportation planning. Key participants and opportunities included:

Advisory Committee—The MIC’s Transportation Advisory Committee was consulted on a nearly monthly basis during all phases of the Plan’s development.

MIC Policy Board—The MIC Policy Board was updated on a nearly monthly basis during all phases of the Plan’s development.

Public Survey—The online survey platform Survey Monkey was utilized in the early development of Sustainable Choices 2050.

Agency & Modal Consultations—MIC staff held 13 meetings with representatives from MIC-area jurisdictions and multimodal stakeholders to discuss key issues and gather information specific to each.

Focus Groups—AECOM & MIC staff facilitated 5 group discussions.

suggestions for future additional study within the next 25 years, and to identify which of the five planning perspectives/goals of *Sustainable Choices 2050* would be key drivers of each project idea or suggested study. Detailed information about the results of these consultations are presented in Appendix C.

Targeted Stakeholder Focus Groups

To develop in depth understanding of issues and opportunities, AECOM conducted individual focus groups with leaders of stakeholder groups with special interests in regional transportation. These groups were identified with MIC staff based on key transportation issues indicated in the issues and opportunities analysis. AECOM and MIC staff, conducted three individual focus groups with leaders from stakeholder groups who have special interests in regional transportation in December 2023. These stakeholder groups were identified based on the key transportation issues highlighted in the issues and opportunities analysis:

- Pedestrian issues
- Sustainable transportation
- Equity and environmental justice
- Port and freight interests
- Older adults
- People with disabilities

Detailed information about the results of these consultations are presented in Appendix C.

Release of Draft Plan for Public Comment

The first draft of the document was submitted for initial review and comment by the FHWA, FTA, MnDOT and WisDOT on July 10 and 16. After incorporating many of those comments, the draft was released for the required 30-day public review and comment on 8/5/2024. A formal agency consultation will be held on August 8 and two public open houses will be held on August 14 and 15, at locations in Duluth and Superior, respectively. Public comments received, as well as the MIC's responses, will be included in the final plan.

Focus Groups

The stakeholder focus groups complement the MTP's public engagement effort in two ways:

First, it allowed a more in depth exploration of stakeholder values and perceptions in two focus areas that are important to the region's residents and elected and appointed officials.

Second, it allowed the plan to reflect the multiple viewpoints and voices of the Duluth-Superior region. As with the results of the public survey, findings from the focus groups were used in conjunction with analysis of transportation system performance to develop recommendations for long-term improvements to serve all travelers in the region.