PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN
2019 Update
Public Involvement Plan
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PACTS
PORTLAND AREA COMPREHENSIVE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM

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Photography courtesy of Tom Bell.

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PACTS – the Portland Area Comprehensive Transportation System – created this updated and expanded Public Involvement Plan to drive its effort to better engage the public in the transportation decision-making process. PACTS believes that broad and robust public involvement will result in transportation investments that better address the transportation needs of all those using the system. This plan provides guidance and tools for member municipalities, staff, and consultants on policies, requirements, and best practices. While the previous plan laid out the requirements and basic policy, this new plan outlines a pathway and offers practical tools for achieving robust and equitable public engagement.

HISTORY, STRUCTURE & GOVERNANCE

PACTS was designated in 1975 as the federally mandated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Greater Portland region. PACTS is governed by five standing committees: Policy, Executive, Planning, Technical, and Transit. GPCOG is the organizational home for PACTS, providing staffing for its committees as well as project management and technical assistance for its planning and studies.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

This plan is required by the Federal Transit Administration and the Federal Highway Administration and is approved by the Maine Department of Transportation. The plan will be updated every two years to align with the Unified Planning Work Program. The next update is scheduled for 2021.

GOALS & STRATEGIES

Public Involvement Plan

- Increase understanding of PACTS’ role and priorities
- Build relationships with key stakeholders
- Advance inclusion of underrepresented communities
- Make involvement more accessible and engaging
- Assess effectiveness

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

PACTS provides numerous ways for stakeholders and the public to be informed, engaged, and involved. During the development and adoption of its federally mandated plans and programs, PACTS has specific timelines and requirements for public noticing and comment, which are outlined in this plan.

EVALUATION

With this update and expansion of the PACTS Public Involvement Plan, PACTS is introducing tools for tracking and assessing the effectiveness of public involvement policies and practices. PACTS will develop and maintain an implementation matrix to be updated annually. PACTS will also develop and adopt performance measures and draft a Measures of Effectiveness report every two years.

PACTS encourages public comment. This plan is available on the PACTS website at PACTSPlan.org or by contacting info@gpcog.org or 207-774-9891.
II. INTRODUCTION

PACTS believes that transportation decisions are best made when informed by broad public engagement. The more robust and diverse public involvement PACTS has when making important transportation investments, the better PACTS can address the transportation needs of the people using the system. Additionally, as a federally-designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO), PACTS is required to engage in a regional planning process that creates opportunities for public participation in its plans, studies, and projects.

PACTS is committed to ensuring its transportation plans and future investments comply with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and that its planning process and its decisions on funding transportation projects strive for equitable distribution of services, facilities, and resources within the PACTS planning area.

PURPOSE

This plan serves as a resource and handbook for transportation planning and investments within the PACTS region, outlining policies, requirements, and best practices for informing, engaging, and involving the public.

This plan is also an aspirational document, laying out a set of goals and strategies for improving PACTS’ public involvement practices and adopting an ongoing evaluation.

WHO SHOULD USE THIS PLAN

This plan is intended for use by all parties involved with transportation planning in the PACTS region, including planning professionals, the public, and everyone in between:

- Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG) – the organizational home of PACTS, which provides staffing for all PACTS work
- Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission
- Consulting firms
- Member municipalities
- Transit agency staff and governance
- Elected leaders
- Stakeholder organizations
- People who live, work, and play in the region

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

In 2019, PACTS undertook a reforms process to chart the course for improving operations and becoming a stronger leader in the region. The reforms process concluded that PACTS “should make a more concerted effort to better engage the public in the decision-making process”.

Updating the Public Involvement Plan was a key recommendation of the PACTS Reforms (Appendix A). The previous document (last updated in April 2018 – Appendix B) was more confined in scope, focusing on the policies, practices, and requirements. To advance the capacity and quality of PACTS’ public involvement, staff worked with PACTS committees, stakeholders, and the public to create this updated and expanded plan.
PACTS 2020-2021 PRIORITIES

COORDINATION AND ADMINISTRATION

Set Regional Direction for Whole Network
The PACTS Policy Committee will set the direction for funding in the MPO for the entire transportation system (roads, bike/ped, transit, land-use), prioritizing and implementing recommendations from planning and civic engagement efforts that align with PACTS goals.

Focus on Customers
Addressing the needs of the region’s people is at the core of our investment decisions. This demands a systems approach to building a transportation network. PACTS will prioritize investments of regional significance, enhancing mobility across different modes, individual agencies and municipal borders.

Communicate with and Engage the Region’s Residents
Engaging the public in the PACTS decision-making process strengthens projects and increases the effectiveness of PACTS investments. PACTS will enhance its efforts to inform and engage a broad range of stakeholders and the public on transportation issues and investments.

Stay Current
Transportation is changing at a rapid rate. PACTS will stay current on autonomous and shared mobility technologies, the electrification of transportation, mobility approaches, and demographic and climate trends. By staying informed, PACTS will be more successful in ensuring our planning and investments take into account future needs and opportunities.

Drive System Efficiency
To use taxpayer dollars wisely and efficiently, PACTS will aggressively pursue opportunities to enhance efficiency and encourage collaboration across all modes, municipalities, and agencies.

Plan with a Purpose
PACTS’ Unified Planning Work Program activities will be scoped to leverage discretionary funding.

Prepare for Growth
Transportation and land use planning needs to be done together, in both our near and long-range planning. PACTS will prepare for future jobs and housing growth by using high quality data, modeling and scenario planning to demonstrate the expected results of different land use and transportation decisions.

Expand Mobility for All
To better meet the diverse transportation needs of people with mobility challenges, PACTS will integrate mobility management solutions into our public transportation and capital improvements planning.
III. PACTS – HISTORY, STRUCTURE, & GOVERNANCE

PACTS plays a critical role in people’s daily lives and the regional economy through its planning and programming decisions. PACTS was designated in 1975 as the federally mandated MPO for the Greater Portland region. The federal government established MPOs in all urbanized areas of the country in order to improve the coordination of transportation planning and investment decisions by states, municipalities, and public transportation providers. PACTS oversees transportation studies, identifies needs, and sets priorities for federal transportation funds available to the area as well as state and local contributions.

THE PACTS REGION
The PACTS region encompasses 18 municipalities with a total population of approximately 280,000 people. The region spans two counties and includes rural, suburban, and urban municipalities. It is the largest urbanized area in Maine and home to the State’s largest public transit network. While many rural areas of the State are losing population, the PACTS region has grown steadily over the past several decades.

GOVERNANCE AND ORGANIZATION
PACTS’ highest level of governance is its Policy Committee. In addition to the Policy Committee, PACTS has an Executive Committee, a Planning Committee, a Technical Committee, and a Transit Committee. The membership and roles of these committees are described in detail in the next section “PACTS Governance.” GPCOG is the organizational home for PACTS, providing staffing for its committees as well as project management and technical assistance for its planning and studies.

THE 3-Cs PLANNING PROCESS
MPOs carry out a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive (3-C) planning process in partnership with MaineDOT, public transit operators, and other agencies that undertake transportation planning and project selection in urban areas. The 3-C process is:

1. Continuous: The process is ongoing and cyclical.

2. Cooperative: Transportation stakeholders work together to develop the best strategies for a metropolitan area.

3. Comprehensive: Programs and strategies address all modes of transportation, all options, and the benefits and drawbacks of all alternatives.
CORE PLANS AND PROGRAMS

PACTS provides a continuing, coordinated, and comprehensive planning process for the Greater Portland urbanized area and serves as a forum for collaborative decision-making among members. PACTS approves the use of FHWA and FTA funds for transportation investments in the PACTS area, and produces the following federally required plans and documents:

- **LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN:** Long Range Transportation Plans, or LRTPs, are required of each MPO through an Act of Congress. Every five years PACTS is required to adopt a new or updated LRTP looking forward at least 20 years. The LRTP describes a long-term regional vision for transportation investments and identifies the policies, goals, and strategies needed to meet the region’s demand for transportation services. In 2018, PACTS adopted Destination 2040, its most recent LRTP.

- **TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP):** The TIP is a four-year, fiscally constrained programming of FHWA and FTA funded investments that are scheduled within each MPO. The TIP lists all projects to be completed with available federal funds in the PACTS area, including those programmed by MaineDOT. The PACTS TIP is updated annually and is included in the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP).

- **UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAMS (UPWP):** The UPWP describes transportation studies and other planning tasks that PACTS intends to undertake in its region with federal, state and local planning funds. PACTS updates its UPWP every two years, during odd-numbered calendar years.

- **PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT PLAN:** Public involvement is a key component of the transportation planning process. PACTS is required to have an approved Public Involvement Plan that provides citizens with complete information, timely public notice, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement in the transportation planning process. PACTS must update its plan as needed to stay current with relevant federal regulations. This plan serves as PACTS’ Public Involvement Plan.

- **CIVIL RIGHTS PLAN:** PACTS must also have a plan for complying with federal civil rights protections including Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, Executive Order 12898, “Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-income Populations,” issued in 1994, and Executive Order 13166, “Improving Access to Services for Persons with Limited English Proficiency (LEP)” issued in 2000.

- **MOBILITY FOR ALL PROGRAM:** This program involves a broad range of community members and organizations in improving transportation access for people with barriers. Mobility For All initiatives use inclusive practices to engage older adults, people with disabilities, people of color, and other underserved communities in transportation planning and decision-making. See appendix I.
COMMITTEE STRUCTURE

PACTS has five standing committees to inform its decision-making, and the general public has several ways to participate in the meetings of these committees. The five committees are explained in more detail below. All meetings of PACTS committees are open to the public, and the agendas include an opportunity for public comment.

The Technical, Planning, and Transit Committees each have two general public voting members who are appointed by the Executive Committee. Appointees serve for three-year terms and may serve for successive terms at the discretion of the Executive Committee. The PACTS Bylaws, available on the PACTS website (www.pactsplan.org), include other procedures and protocols for PACTS committee meetings.

• **POLICY COMMITTEE**: The Policy Committee is the primary decision-making body of PACTS. Among other responsibilities, it oversees the strategic direction of PACTS, endorses or adopts all projects, plans, policies, and procedures, and ratifies budget recommendations. The Policy Committee is comprised of voting representatives from all PACTS member municipalities (the number of representatives is determined by total population), as well as one representative each from the MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority, and the Planning, Technical, and Transit Committees.

• **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**: The Executive Committee was established in 2009 to help make the work of the Policy Committee more efficient and manageable. The primary functions of the Executive Committee are to oversee the development of several project-based work plans, and to appoint representatives to the Planning, Transit, and Technical Committees.

WHAT IS AN MPO?

*Metropolitan Planning Organizations, or MPOs, provide a critical link in the chain of planning and decision-making that serve to build our nation’s transportation system.*

Over the last century, regional economies have emerged that span local government boundaries and often state lines. The fragmented political authority in most metropolitan areas makes it difficult to address regional transportation impacts and needs. The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1962, which originated largely in response to the construction of the Interstate Highway System, sought to address this shortcoming by requiring states to establish MPOs for any urbanized area with a population greater than 50,000. Composed of local elected officials and state agency representatives, MPOs review and approve transportation investments in metropolitan areas.

The Act required, as a condition attached to federal financial assistance, that transportation projects in urban areas be based on a continuing, comprehensive, urban transportation planning process undertaken cooperatively by the states and local governments. (Also known as the 3-C, "continuing, comprehensive, and cooperative" Process).

While state Departments of Transportation build and manage our Interstate Highway System, and cities and counties represent local priorities and needs, the nation’s MPOs provide the regional perspective that enables surface transportation projects to be planned and delivered at the right scale.
• **TECHNICAL COMMITTEE:** The Technical Committee focuses on technical project and program review issues which relate to a broad scope of transportation issues (including, but not limited to, road and highway preservation and construction, traffic control, and performance measures). The Technical Committee is comprised mainly of municipal public works and engineering staff from member municipalities and advises all other committees.

• **PLANNING COMMITTEE:** The Planning Committee is comprised largely of municipal planning staff from PACTS member municipalities and advises all other committees and staff on strategic transportation planning issues. The Committee focuses on long-range planning issues and relationships with other public planning issues, such as land use, economic development, environmental protection, resource conservation and community well-being.

• **TRANSIT COMMITTEE:** The Transit Committee is comprised of representatives of the region’s seven transit agencies (including two demand response providers, three fixed-route bus agencies, a ferry operator, and passenger rail service), and one representative each from MaineDOT and MTA, two Executive Committee appointees, a Planning Committee appointee, and a private transit operator. The Transit Committee advises all other committees on public transit issues and provides recommendations regarding the allocation of FTA formula funds.
IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

As an MPO, PACTS is required to follow certain federal and state rules and regulations. Also, Maine’s Sensible Transportation Policy Act (STPA) requires the state’s four MPOs to establish and follow public participation processes that are effective, timely, and efficient.

The federal rules for public participation in transportation planning are found in Title 23 of the United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 450. They require all MPOs to develop a Public Involvement Process for the development and update of Transportation Plans and TIPs. CFR Section 450.316 (b) requires public involvement programs to allow for multiple, accessible participation formats, including electronic and in person.

These plans also must include a proactive public involvement process that provides complete information, timely public notice, and full public access to key decisions, and supports early and continuing involvement of the public in developing plans and TIPs and meets the requirements and criteria specified below:

(i) Require a minimum public comment period of 45 days before the public involvement process is initially adopted or revised;

(ii) Provide timely information about transportation issues and processes to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, other interested parties and segments of the community affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects (including but not limited to local jurisdictions);

(iii) Provide reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of plans and TIPs and open public meetings where matters related to the Federal-aid highway and transit programs are being considered;

(iv) Require adequate notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points including, but not limited to, approval of plans and TIPs;

(v) Demonstrate explicit consideration of and response to public input received during the planning and program development processes;

(vi) Seek out and consider the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems including, but not limited to, low-income and minority households in an effort to ensure that the requirements of Title VI and Environmental Justice have been met during the planning and project process;

(vii) When significant written and oral comments are received on a draft transportation plan or TIP (including the financial plan) as a result of the public involvement process or the interagency consultation process required under the U.S. EPA’s conformity regulations, a summary, analysis, and report on the disposition of comments shall be made part of the final plan and TIP;
(viii) If the final transportation plan or TIP differs significantly from the one which was made available for public comment by the MPO and raises new material issues which interested parties could not reasonably have foreseen from the public involvement efforts, an additional opportunity for public comment on the revised plan or TIP shall be made available;

(ix) Public involvement processes shall be periodically reviewed by the MPO in terms of their effectiveness in assuring that the process provides full and open access to all;

(x) These procedures will be reviewed by the Federal Highway Administration and the Federal Transit Administration during certification reviews for transportation management areas, and as otherwise necessary for all MPOs, to assure that full and open access is provided to the MPO decision-making processes;

(xi) Metropolitan public involvement processes shall be coordinated with statewide public involvement processes wherever possible to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans, and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

PACTS considers the requirements and criteria above when periodically reviewing our public involvement process to determine the effectiveness in providing transportation stakeholders and other interested parties with full and open access to the work of PACTS staff and committees.

The Federal Fixing America’s Surface Transportation (FAST) Act and federal Metropolitan Planning Regulations list the following transportation stakeholders (referred to in this document as the general public) which must have an opportunity to participate in the MPO public involvement process:

- Citizens
- Affected public agencies
- Representatives of users of public transportation
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation
- Privately owned passenger transportation providers
- Representatives of pedestrians and bicyclists
- Representatives of people with disabilities
- Public ports and certain private providers of transportation, including intercity bus operators and employer-based commuting programs (such as carpool program, vanpool program, transit benefit program, parking cash-out program, shuttle program, or telework program).

Maine’s STPA requires MaineDOT and MPOs to establish and follow a public participation process that is effective, timely, and efficient. MaineDOT partners with Regional Planning Organizations (RPOs) and the State’s MPOs to develop public outreach strategies that:

- are tailored specifically to their region,
- are consistent with the requirements of the STPA,
- encourage stronger regional partnerships,
- increase grassroots and local government involvement, and
- develop a more consistent statewide approach.

PACTS works with MaineDOT, the Maine Turnpike Authority and the RPOs in the development and execution of the PACTS public involvement process. Where a project has yet to be classified and where the project affects PACTS and the RPO, findings of Significant Highway Projects (defined in Subchapter 1, Section 3(k) and Substantial Public Interest Projects described in Subchapter 1, Section 7 of the STPA rule) will be determined cooperatively with the RPO and MaineDOT. The PACTS public involvement process incorporates all STPA public participation requirements.
V. GOALS & STRATEGIES

BACKGROUND
The PACTS Reforms, adopted in July 2018, identified “Engage the Public” as a key recommendation for how PACTS can better lead the region. Within that recommendation, a first step was to update the Public Involvement Policies and Practices, which was last updated in April 2018. As PACTS embarked on the update process, staff determined that a more robust update was warranted. Thus, the plan has been expanded to include a set of goals and strategies, along with an implementation plan.

INPUT COLLECTED
Scan of Public Involvement Plans
Through outreach to the Association of Metropolitan Planning Organizations and the American Planning Association, staff identified and reviewed exemplary public involvement plans from planning organizations across the United States. Plans from the Broward County (Florida) MPO and the Atlanta Regional Commission were especially informative for the design and composition of this plan update.

Inclusive Transportation Planning Project
With funding from the Transit Planning 4 All initiative, GPCOG and PACTS have been engaging older adults, people with disabilities, and people of color to assist with improving the inclusiveness of regional transportation planning. Led by a Steering Committee with strong participation by older adults, people with disabilities, and people from other underrepresented communities, the Inclusive Transportation Planning Project seeks to ensure that PACTS decision-making involves people who experience barriers to transportation. The Steering Committee worked in Fall 2018 to develop recommendations to inform the update of the PACTS Public Involvement Plan. In January 2019, the PACTS Policy Committee voted unanimously to approve using these recommendations to inform the update. The Inclusive Planning Toolkit (Appendix E) is one result of the recommendations.

PACTS Committee Outreach and Member Survey
In April 2019, GPCOG staff provided an overview of the update process and held discussions with the Executive, Transit, Planning, and Technical Committees. Staff followed up with a survey of PACTS members requesting their input on the plan update. The survey received 40 responses, including 15 out of the 18 municipalities and members of all PACTS committees. A summary of the survey responses is included as Appendix E.

MPO Outreach
As part of updating this plan, staff surveyed several other MPOs about their public involvement processes, reviewed their plans, and, conducted interviews to learn more about how their processes work, what works well, and what could be improved. Of interest were the ways the various MPOs sought and incorporated input from traditionally underrepresented populations in their planning processes. The MPOs interviewed were:
All five of the MPOs use some form of advisory committee to comment on plans and proposals that went to the MPO board. The committees go by different names – Regional Transportation Advisory Committee, Citizens Advisory Committee (2), Regional Council for Coordinated Transportation, and Transportation Advisory Board. These are typically made up of municipal officials from member communities, representatives from a wide range of community organizations and advocacy groups, especially for underrepresented populations, other regional, state, and federal agencies, and citizens not specifically affiliated with a group or organization.

Staff from all the MPOs emphasized the need to develop and nurture relationships with community groups and organizations, to be present at meetings and events on a regular basis, and not just when we need something from them. Other common themes were:

- Using a variety of interactive modes to gather input, including meetings, surveys, tables at events, informal pop-ups, and social media
- Being sensitive to the design of these opportunities (time, location, accessibility, making it welcoming) as well as the visuals and other materials used.

None of the advisory committees are part of the governance structure per se, but all are charged with commenting on and/or recommending plans, plan amendments, programs, and other items going to the MPO board for approval. The committees ranged in size from 20 to 45. Some are required by state law; others are creatures of the MPO’s governing body. Though not advisory committees in the same sense, Florida state law requires its MPOs to have Transportation Disadvantaged Local Coordinating Boards. These boards are set up specifically to gather input from agencies and other representatives of underrepresented populations, particularly when it comes to transit planning and services.
GOALS & STRATEGIES

GOAL A: Increase the Public’s Awareness of PACTS’ Role and Priorities

Strategy 1: Develop high-level messaging about transportation planning and investments in the PACTS region.
- Work with PACTS Committees, stakeholders, and staff to develop messaging that is easily understood by the average person

Strategy 2: Produce communications and materials that the public can easily understand.
- Develop a PACTS brochure and poster
- Develop a transportation data dashboard as part of GPCOG’s community profiles
- Develop a “Resident’s Guide to Regional Planning”

Strategy 3: Adopt contemporary communications strategies and tools.
- Roll out project and committee portals using the new PACTS website
- Develop a social media policy and cultivate a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and Snapchat or Instagram
- Maintain ongoing media relations about the MPO process and transportation issues in the region

GOAL B: Build Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Strategy 4: Increase communication and engagement with key regional leaders and organizations.
- Identify the best approaches for engaging thought leaders, anchor institutions, and organizations from sectors outside of transportation – including business, education, healthcare, environment, and human services
- Offer meaningful channels for ongoing communication with key leaders and organizations

Strategy 5: Maintain a visible and engaging presence in the community.
- Attend civic and community events that reach stakeholders from a wide variety of sectors and interests
- Develop a traveling booth that provides an engaging and visual way to engage with the work of PACTS
GOAL C: Advance the Inclusion of Underrepresented Communities

**Strategy 6:** Expand use of best practice tools and techniques for inclusive engagement in PACTS plans and studies.
- Require use of the Inclusive Transportation Planning Toolkit by staff and consultants
- Engage PACTS members in opportunities to learn more about the transportation needs and experiences of underrepresented communities

**Strategy 7:** Strengthen partnerships with local organizations and champions to better inform and engage underrepresented communities.
- Pursue formal arrangements with key organizations to provide engagement support to staff and consultants during the implementation of the two-year Unified Planning Work Program
- Explore adopting the Community Transportation Leaders Training (see appendix J) as an ongoing opportunity for community members to gain the knowledge and tools for meaningful participation in transportation planning and decision-making

**Strategy 8:** Pilot approaches for supporting meaningful involvement by underrepresented communities on PACTS Governance Committees.
- Adopt changes to the PACTS Committee structure that allow for membership by individuals from underrepresented communities

GOAL D: Make Public Involvement More Accessible and Engaging

**Strategy 9:** Make use of technology to engage different audiences.
- Use new and innovative tools for engagement and outreach, such as instant polling and gamified survey platforms
- Support participation of people with disabilities, and those who experience other barriers to access, using approaches such as simultaneous translation, audio support, and virtual meetings

**Strategy 10:** Meet people where they are.
- Conduct quarterly listening sessions in which PACTS staff and members visit other agencies, groups, and organizations to solicit input and involvement

**Strategy 11:** Partner to reach out in fun, creative, and interesting ways.
- Enlist stakeholders and members of the public to become hands-on partners in community engagement efforts
- Use games, art, and new partnerships to attract more participation

GOAL E: Assess the Effectiveness of PACTS Public Involvement

**Strategy 12:** Adopt measures of effectiveness to help track progress.
- Draw on best practices of innovative MPOs to develop performance measures

**Strategy 13:** Map and Evaluate Public Involvement Efforts
- Develop a Measures of Effectiveness report to assess and communicate progress made on goals and objectives
VI. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT POLICIES & PRACTICES

PACTS provides numerous ways for stakeholders and the public to be informed, engaged, and involved. During the development and adoption of its federally mandated plans and programs, PACTS has specific timelines and requirements for public noticing and comment. The policies and practices for both of these are outlined below.

GENERAL INFORMATION AND UPDATES

General Interested Parties Email Distribution List
PACTS maintains a list of stakeholder email addresses and sends emails to:
- Solicit input into substantial changes in the PACTS Public Involvement Plan
- Solicit input into the development every other year of the 2-year Unified Planning Work Program
- Invite people to PACTS forums and events
- Provide notice of the start of the TIP project selection process
- Solicit input into the endorsement of the Transportation Improvement Program

To be added to the PACTS Interested Parties Email Distribution List, contact: info@gpcog.org

Website
The PACTS website, www.pactsplan.org, provides public access to all committee documents, plans, and studies. The website is being updated in 2019 to upgrade the look and feel, provide better navigation, and to offer a more user-friendly experience.

- Postings for Public Comment – PACTS posts on its website all documents that are available for public comment, including pending MPO actions and draft plans
- Meeting Calendar – PACTS maintains a calendar of all upcoming PACTS committee meetings, including agendas and other relevant information, on its website.

Social Media
During 2020, PACTS will launch and maintain a social media presence on Facebook, Twitter, and other relevant platforms.

COMMITTEE INVOLVEMENT
There are three ways for members of the public to be involved with PACTS committee activities:

Public Comment at Committee Meetings
All meetings of PACTS committees are open to the public. Each agenda includes time devoted to receiving public comment.

Committee Interested Parties List
Each of PACTS’ five standing committees maintains an email distribution list. Meeting packets and agendas, as well as correspondence regarding other committee business, are delivered via email. Agencies and individuals wishing to be added to one or more of these email distribution lists should contact info@gpcog.org

Committee Membership
PACTS Technical, Planning and Transit Committees each have two general public voting members who are appointed by the Executive Committee. Appointees serve for three-year terms and may serve for successive terms at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

MEDIA RELATIONS
PACTS keeps the media informed about the MPO process and transportation issues in the region through press events, media advisories, and development and submission of opinion pieces to local news outlets of record.
COMMUNICATIONS AND MARKETING MATERIALS
PACTS creates and disseminates brochures, fact sheets, and reports to educate stakeholders and the public on programs, plans, and projects. These materials are distributed online through the PACTS website, the GPCOG website, and through social media. Print copies are distributed to relevant locations including municipal offices, libraries, and community centers. PACTS makes efforts to ensure that digital files are screen reader compliant, and offers translations by request.

WORKSHOPS, FORUMS AND PRESENTATIONS
PACTS makes presentations to civic, community, and professional groups to raise awareness about the work of PACTS and to hear about stakeholders’ transportation interests. PACTS also convenes workshops and forums to engage the public in plans, programs, and studies.

PUBLIC OPINION SURVEYS
PACTS completes a statistically valid regional public opinion telephone survey every three to five years. The survey enables PACTS staff to poll residents of the PACTS region about their travel behavior and attitudes regarding transportation. Results of the survey are used to inform PACTS plans and programs. The last survey was completed in 2018.

MAPPING AND DATA
PACTS provides maps, charts, and other data visualizations to support public understanding of plans and programs. In 2020, PACTS will launch an online transportation dashboard.

PUBLIC NOTICES
PACTS has required public comment periods and notification processes for each of its policy, plan, and program areas (Table 1, below). In all cases, the public comment periods in Table 1 are calendar days and are the minimum that PACTS will use. In some cases, PACTS will offer additional time and make extra efforts to collect public feedback.

Public Notices
Public notices are sent by email to committee members, the media, and the interested parties lists. PACTS also posts these notices on the PACTS website. Periodically, PACTS also displays ads in local newspapers.
## [TABLE 1] PACTS PUBLIC INPUT PERIODS AND NOTIFICATION PROCESSES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Plan or Process</th>
<th>Public Comment Period</th>
<th>Notification Processes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start of Long-Range Plan Update Process</td>
<td>30 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Long-Range Plan Update</td>
<td>30 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft Update of Public Involvement Plan</td>
<td>45 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solicit public input into development of Unified Planning Work Program every odd-numbered year</td>
<td>30 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start of biennial review of PACTS process for development and administration of Transportation Improvement Projects</td>
<td>30 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Draft PACTS Transportation Improvement program every year</td>
<td>10 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Email to Interested parties, and post on website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proposed TIP amendments</td>
<td>10 calendar days from receipt of notice</td>
<td>Post on website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM**
Every two years, PACTS updates the UPWP, which outlines all planning work over a two-year period. The public has several opportunities to participate in the development of the plan and the performance of the planning work itself.

*Public Input to the Development of the UPWP*

PACTS staff and committees develop the two-year UPWP during the summer and fall of each odd-numbered year. Copies of the draft final UPWP and approved UPWP can be accessed on the PACTS website, or in hard copy by request. Members of the public can:

- Serve on or provide input to standing municipal boards involved in transportation planning, or otherwise provide input to such a board. Municipal boards submit study proposals for funding in the UPWP.
- Provide comments on the draft UPWP during public comment period.
- Serve on PACTS standing committees.
- Attend and provide comment at PACTS committee meetings during the standing public comment agenda item.

*Public Input to PACTS-Funded Studies*

During the two-year implementation of the UPWP, members of the public have opportunities to be involved with the funded studies and other planning efforts. Members of the public can:

- Serve on or provide input to municipal-level committees convened to advise PACTS-funded studies.
- Serve on or provide input to municipal boards involved in transportation planning.
- Attend public forums or workshops hosted by PACTS.
- Serve on PACTS standing committees.
- Attend and provide comment at PACTS committee meetings during the standing public comment agenda item.

**LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN**
Every four years, PACTS updates the LRTP. The last update – Destination 2040 – was adopted in 2016. This section outlines opportunities for members of the public to participate in the development of updates to the LRTP.

*Public Notification of Transportation Plan Update Development*

Every four years, PACTS provides notice to the public of the intent to update the LRTP. This notice is posted on the PACTS website and sent to the Interested Parties email list. PACTS will also attempt to reach additional persons interested in the Plan’s development by using various public outreach strategies including but not limited to: newsletters, news releases, newspaper inserts, bulletin boards, and public service advertisements.

The public notice shall include at least the following information:

- A brief description of the planning process tied to a schedule of decisions to be made,
- How the Plan may affect the region,
- Opportunities that exist for public participation, and
- PACTS contact information for obtaining further information.

*Public Forums/Workshops for Update Development*

PACTS will hold public forums to discuss the various components of the current LRTP at the beginning of the quadrennial LRTP update and then again after the completion of a Draft Plan Update (as noted below).

Public notices for these meetings will be posted on the PACTS website and sent to the Interested Parties email list at least ten days prior to the meeting. PACTS shall endeavor to identify neighborhoods affected by system deficiencies and attempt to involve them as an “interested party.”
Upon request, PACTS provides access to technical and policy information and assumptions underlying the planning and emissions models used in transportation decision-making and air quality conformity determinations.

To the extent possible, PACTS will hold the workshops, forums and open houses at convenient and accessible locations, dates, and times.

**Public Forums on Draft Update**

Upon completion of the Draft Plan Update, PACTS will hold a public forum to present the Update and collect comments. The Update will be available for review at the time of the forum notice, with copies made available at the PACTS office, website, and the municipal offices of PACTS communities. Individuals and organizations identified on the Interested Parties email list shall be notified and offered the opportunity to participate in the forum and/or offer comment on the Update.

PACTS will post on its website a public notice encouraging the submission of written comments by those unable to attend the forum. A comment period of 30 days from the hearing notice, and at least 10 days from the forum, will be provided. Comments will be considered by the PACTS Policy Committee.

All substantive comments received during the proceedings will be documented.

**Preparation of Final Transportation Plan Update**

PACTS considers all comments and input received from the public process in preparing the final Transportation Plan Update, and relevant comments are included in the final Plan. If the final Plan includes significant substantive changes from the draft version, PACTS will provide an additional comment period of at least ten days on the revised draft Plan. The final Plan will include responses to all substantive comments on the draft Plan and the final Plan. Copies of the final Plan will be provided to each municipal office and municipal library in the PACTS area. Updated copies will be provided as revisions are made to the Plan.

The Transportation Plan is updated every four years and, per the USDOT’s Metropolitan Planning Regulations, may be amended between updates. Should the Plan be amended, PACTS will:

- Publish the proposed amendment(s) and a brief summary of each
- Make available all technical analysis related to the amendment, including any air quality/conformity analysis, for a 30-day public comment period beginning from the date of the public notice
An exemption from the public involvement process may be granted only where proposed projects are determined to be exempt from air quality conformity determination under the provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 and 40 CFR 93.134. For purposes of the Transportation Plan or TIP, these exempt projects would be considered minor in nature. PACTS will consult FHWA and EPA in determining if an amendment requires public involvement.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

Each January, the PACTS Policy Committee endorses a list of federally funded transportation projects for the PACTS Federal Urbanized Area for submission to FHWA, FTA and MaineDOT. This list, and the report in which it is located, is the PACTS Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The PACTS TIP includes federally funded projects that the PACTS participants have selected for funding and other federally funded projects selected by MaineDOT. Adoption of the TIP constitutes a formal statement of support by the Policy Committee for the projects in the document initiated by MaineDOT. The process of selecting projects is complex due to the many federal programs, state requirements and PACTS rules and guidelines.

For the most up-to-date TIP, interested parties should refer to the PACTS Transportation Improvement Program section of the website www.gpcog.org/178/transportation-improvement-program. PACTS encourages the general public to identify problems, propose possible solutions, and participate in municipal and transit provider decision-making processes during the development of projects to be funded via PACTS and MaineDOT.

The PACTS Public Involvement Process for TIP project priority-setting involves a combination of contacts with member organizations and the general public,

- All feasibility studies funded by PACTS (which often produces funding proposals for capital improvement projects from MaineDOT and/or PACTS) include a public outreach component. The Enhanced Project Scoping process also includes a public input component. Together, these feasibility studies and project scoping efforts are designed to provide meaningful opportunities for public involvement in regional transportation planning and funding.

- PACTS maintains an up-to-date TIP section on its website, www.pactsplan.org. Comments may be made via the info@pactsplan.org at any time.

- At the beginning of the project selection process, PACTS staff advises municipal, state, transit, other regional organizations, and Interested Parties email list participants of the deadlines for submitting MPO Allocation proposals.

- PACTS requests that city and town councils, municipal officers, and transit system boards submit written endorsements of the TIP proposals submitted to PACTS. PACTS also requests written endorsement for the projects from their municipality that the Policy Committee votes to include in each biennial MPO Allocation list.

Any substantive change in the PACTS TIP project selection criteria or formula is subject to public review and comment. Amendments shall be completed before the initiation of the biennial TIP development process. PACTS will notify the public of its intent to update the TIP selection criteria and/or formula and make the relevant material available to the public for comment.
Program of Projects
The FTA requires each recipient of a Section 5307 grant to develop, publish, afford an opportunity for a public hearing on, and submit for approval, a Program of Projects (POP). FTA allows a grantee to rely on the locally adopted public participation requirements for the PACTS TIP in lieu of the process required in the development of the POP if the grantee has coordinated with the MPO, and ensured that the public is aware that the TIP development process is being used to satisfy the POP Public Participation requirements.

The PACTS public participation process satisfies the POP participation process requirements for the following FTA Direct Recipients in the PACTS region:

- Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit Committee
- Casco Bay Island Transit District
- Greater Portland Transit District
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
- South Portland Bus Service

PACTS’ public notices for the TIP contain a statement that notice of public involvement activities, and time established for public review of any comments on the TIP, will satisfy the POP requirements.

Amendments to the TIP
The PACTS Policy Committee periodically needs to amend the TIP. An amendment is either the addition or deletion of a project, a major change in a funded project’s budget, or a major change in the design or scope of a project that alters the intent of a project. Before the Policy Committee makes an amendment, PACTS staff posts to the website for public comment the proposed amendment to the TIP. All technical analysis in support of the amendment, including any air quality/conformity analysis, will be made available to the public for review and comment. A comment period of 10 days beginning from the date of the posting will be provided during which comments may be submitted to PACTS for consideration.
This PACTS TIP amendment process satisfies the POP participation process requirements for all these FTA Direct Recipients in the PACTS region:

- Biddeford-Saco-Old Orchard Beach Transit Committee
- Casco Bay Island Transit District
- Greater Portland Transit District
- Maine Department of Transportation
- Northern New England Passenger Rail Authority
- South Portland Bus Service

An exemption from the public involvement process may be granted only where proposed projects are determined to be exempt from air quality conformity determination under the provisions of the Clean Air Act Amendments (CAAA) of 1990 and 40 CFR 93.134. For purposes of the TIP, these exempt projects would be considered minor in nature. PACTS will consult the FHWA and Environmental Protection Agency in determining if an amendment requires public involvement.

PACTS and MaineDOT make administrative modifications for relatively minor changes that do not require a public comment period, including:

- A moderate change in the total cost of a project
- Combining or separating projects that are part of an approved TIP
- Combining or separating phases of a project that are part of an approved TIP
- Adding a new phase to an existing project that does not have a substantial cost associated with it
- Creating a lineage PIN that does not have a substantial cost associated with it
- Making a minor change in the scope of a project, including an insignificant change in the termini
- Making a change to the project termini with no change in overall project cost.

VII. EVALUATION

With this update and expansion of the PACTS Public Involvement Plan, PACTS is introducing tools for tracking and assessing the effectiveness of public involvement policies and practices.

TRACKING IMPLEMENTATION
To support implementation of the goals and strategies outlined in Chapter 4, PACTS will develop and maintain an implementation matrix (see Appendix G for the draft matrix) to be updated annually.

ASSESSING EFFECTIVENESS
During the 2020-2021 UPWP, PACTS will develop and adopt performance measures drawn from the best practices of innovative MPOs. PACTS will then begin to map and evaluate its public involvement policies and practices and produce a Measures of Effectiveness report every two years.