

Community Engagement Plan for Regional Planning in Southeastern Wisconsin

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Southeastern
Wisconsin
Regional
Planning
Commission

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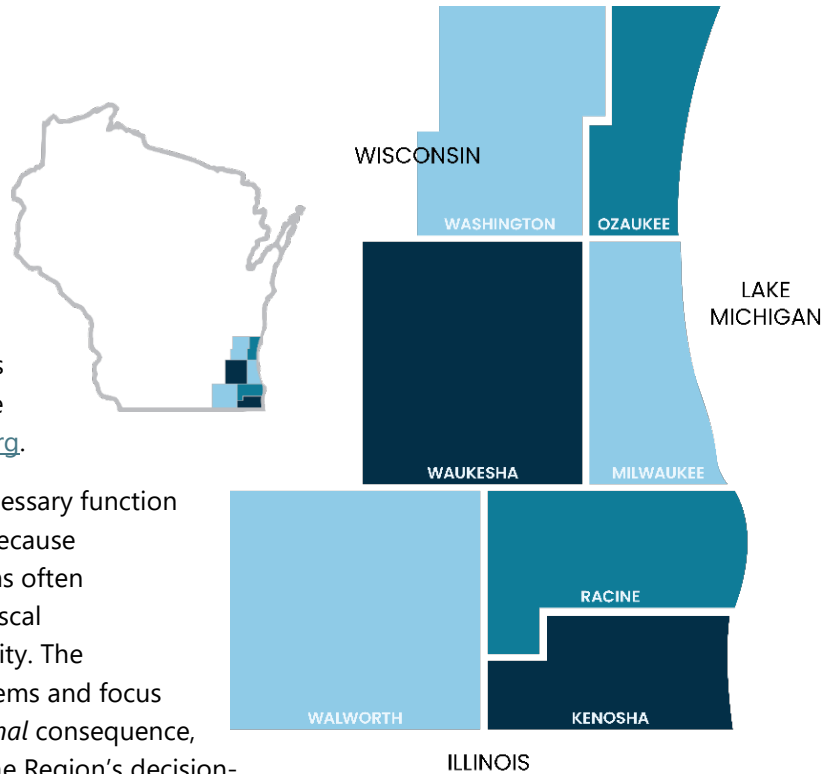
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SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This section of the Community Engagement Plan (CEP) provides background on the Regional Planning Commission, our approach to community engagement, and our overarching public participation goal.

About the Commission

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission is the official areawide advisory planning agency for Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Walworth, Washington, and Waukesha Counties. While Southeastern Wisconsin makes up about 5% of the State's land area, it contains about 35% of the State's population, jobs, and wealth. Learn more about the Commission at www.sewrpc.org.



Regional Planning is recognized as a necessary function in large metro areas across the Nation because development and infrastructure problems often transcend the political boundaries and fiscal responsibilities of an individual community. The Commission's role is to help solve problems and focus *regional* attention on key issues of *regional* consequence, providing objective information to aid the Region's decision-makers.

Planning for needs like efficient transportation systems, beneficial parks and open spaces, affordable housing, major land use changes and employment centers, and the quality of the natural and built environment with clean water and air, require working together. These needs require a multi-county planning effort and benefit from the participation of many residents and perspectives.

Serving as the Region's MPO

The Commission serves as the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, Round Lake Beach (Wisconsin portion), and West Bend urban areas and the federally designated six-county metropolitan planning area, including Kenosha, Milwaukee, Ozaukee, Racine, Washington, and Waukesha Counties, and a small portion of Jefferson County. Urbanized areas with a population of 50,000 or more (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau) are required to have a designated MPO. As the MPO, the Commission is responsible for preparing the regional transportation plan and transportation improvement program (TIP) for Southeastern Wisconsin.

The CEP documents the Commission's MPO-required public participation plan with respect to public participation and outreach requirements identified in 23 CFR 450.316. In addition, the CEP satisfies the public participation process requirements for the Program of Projects, as prescribed in accordance with Chapter 53 of Title 49, United States Code, and the current metropolitan and statewide planning regulations, for the following Federal Transit Administration grantees: City of Hartford, City of Kenosha, Kenosha County, City of Milwaukee, Milwaukee County, Ozaukee County, City of Racine, Walworth County, Washington County, Waukesha County, City of Waukesha, City of West Bend, and City of Whitewater.

Our Approach to Community Engagement

Community engagement is an important part of government decisions affecting many aspects of our lives. The Regional Planning Commission believes that having people participate in its work can help to:

- Create plans that are more likely to be carried out due to community understanding and support.
- Expand knowledge about planning issues and choices.
- Enable residents to provide ideas and comments that can improve planning efforts in their communities.
- Establish key regional community partnerships and maintain advisory committees including key representatives and topic experts.

The CEP explains, in detail, how the Commission plans to engage residents, provide opportunities for participation, consider the ideas and comments received, and be prepared to evaluate and improve its community engagement efforts.

Suggestions are always welcome on how the Commission can meet participation needs and best receive public comments (see back cover for ways to contact us). The Commission's Community Engagement Division is responsible for managing and implementing the CEP and collaborating with staff to ensure consistent application of the plan and its principles.

Public Participation Goal

The Commission's goal for achieving community engagement and public participation consists of three major parts or objectives:

- Ensure early and continuous public notification about regional planning efforts.
- Provide meaningful information and obtain input concerning regional planning efforts.
- Include all residents in the regional planning process, particularly those who have traditionally had lower levels of participation.

The Commission works to achieve its public participation goal cooperatively with other public agencies and units of government by coordinating efforts when possible. It coordinates particularly with the Region's counties, cities, villages, and towns, and the Wisconsin Departments of Transportation and Natural Resources.

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BLUEPRINT

The Regional Planning Commission strives to ensure transparency and encourage participation from all community members, as described in our blueprint for community engagement below.

Open and Accessible Meetings

Meetings of the Commission and its advisory committees are open to the public. Agendas are posted on the Commission website at least five calendar days in advance. Locations accessible by public transit are considered desirable and are used for committee and public meetings if practical, especially for transportation planning, depending on the subject matter and expected audience. All locations comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990 and people needing ADA accommodations or language translation are encouraged to participate. Meeting notifications request that people needing disability-related accommodations or language translation contact the Commission a minimum of three business days in advance.

Engagement Levels

The Regional Planning Commission recognizes and appreciates that diverse audiences approach regional planning topics from different perspectives. Some people may initially be unaware, or struggle to see the relevance. Others may wish to become active participants or even engagement partners.

The Commission uses a range of informational materials, activities, and events to meet various needs. In this process, the Commission respects that some people may want to participate only at a distance, if at all, while others may seek a great deal of information and involvement. In all cases, providing meaningful opportunities for participation is considered a key for success.

Methods of Engagement

There are multiple engagement methods that may be used to obtain participation and input on planning efforts. Using multiple methods of engagement helps to reach community members who traditionally may not have participated in the planning process. Below is a list of methods the Commission uses, which may evolve and expand to continually reflect best practices in public engagement and utilize new technology and engagement tools. In particular, during major planning efforts like updating the Region's long-range land use and transportation plan, the Commission explores additional, creative means to obtain public involvement and input. For example, staff may use focus groups, small group techniques, visioning, brainstorming, or engagement at non-traditional meeting places and events, such as expos and festivals.

One-On-One Meetings

One-on-one meetings allow staff to meet with individuals or representatives of an organization on general Commission work or a specific planning effort. These meetings allow the participants to share their perspectives, develop trust and transparency, and may be helpful in answering specific questions.



Public Meetings

Public meetings provide opportunities to obtain public comment and input, as well as to notify and inform the public about the Commission's planning efforts. Public meetings typically utilize a variety of techniques to provide information, including distributing materials, using visual displays, providing presentations, and having individual staff in attendance to answer questions. Public meetings may also use a variety of techniques to obtain public comment, including online and in-person polling/surveys and interactive small group discussions, as appropriate.

Open Houses

An open house is an in-person public meeting with a drop-in format, which allows residents to attend when it is convenient to their schedule. These meetings are less formal than a public hearing and may serve as a stand-alone event.

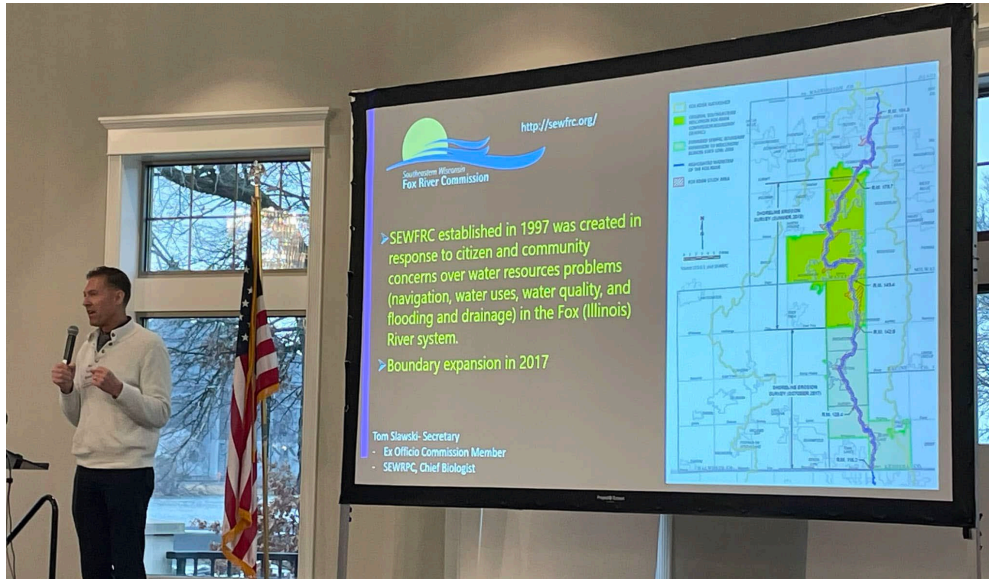
Virtual/Hybrid Meetings

The use of virtual meetings has expanded in recent years. Virtual meetings offer benefits including convenience and accessibility, broadening the Commission's audience. Hybrid meetings include attendees in the same physical location meeting with attendees who join remotely through a virtual meeting

platform or by phone. This flexible format allows for an inclusive mix of in-person and virtual participation, facilitating collaboration amongst all attendees. An important benefit of virtual and hybrid meetings is the opportunity for better documentation of attendee feedback and opinions because the meeting may either be recorded or attendees may provide their feedback/opinion directly into the online chat.

Presentations

Presentations are used to bring awareness about current Commission projects, so that residents can engage in the planning process. Relevant presentations may occur as a standalone event, an agenda item for an established group or committee, or in a virtual setting.



Community Events and Expos

Community events and expos across the Region bring residents together for a variety of reasons. Commission staff attend community events and expos focused on pertinent issues such as employment, transportation, land use, economic development, housing, and environmental quality to share information on current projects and answer questions.



Student Engagement

Commission staff actively seek to engage students within the Region about Commission plans, providing a bridge between academia and continued community education. Students may be engaged through career fairs, science expos, in-classroom hands-on activities, project-based learning, or other means. This helps to empower students to engage in Commission planning efforts that affect them directly, nurture community goodwill, and educate students and their families about what the Commission does. Building relationships with educational institutions is an important part of student engagement, fostering opportunities to share the work of the Commission with students across the Region in fun and engaging ways.



Surveys

Planning efforts may involve surveys to gather feedback and community opinions. Typically, they are offered online but may also be offered in print and are distributed and promoted through the Commission website, social media, email communications, or events.

Mail and Email Correspondence

The Commission employs mail and email communications to interested groups and organizations in the Region. For example, personal letters are sent to groups and organizations during various planning efforts and emails are sent to the Commission's contact list to share opportunities for public participation, major project announcements, and other relevant information.

Newsletters

The Commission publishes a quarterly electronic newsletter, *Regional Planning News*, that includes general news, information about current and upcoming projects, and opportunities for community engagement. The newsletter also provides contact information for questions and comments. Residents can sign up to receive *Regional Planning News* and review past issues at www.sewrpc.org/news.

News Releases

The Commission maintains and uses a list of media outlets in the Region—including minority media outlets—for use in distributing news releases as appropriate for each work effort.

Social Media

The Commission actively uses social media to communicate with and engage the public. Uses for social media include sharing current work efforts, publicizing opportunities for public participation, and sharing meeting recordings when appropriate. Staff continually evaluate social media platforms that are applicable to the messages and audiences of the Commission.

Website

The Commission website (www.sewrpc.org) is a ready source of information—from newsletters and meeting details to draft recommendations and complete plans—offering an open opportunity to contact Commission staff or comment on regional planning at any time. The website was redesigned in 2024 with a focus on making information easier to find.

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Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

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Passenger Rail Corridor Study Underway
The Commission is currently assisting with a study exploring the possibility of establishing passenger rail service in the corridor between Kenosha, Racine, and Milwaukee. Currently, there is no passenger rail serving this corridor, as Metra commuter rail service stops in Kenosha. The City of Racine obtained \$5 million in Congressionally Directed Spending and is using part of those funds to complete the study, including the Commission's work (no regional tax levy dollars are being used for the current study).

The Commission previously participated in studies related to establishing a commuter rail line in the Kenosha-Racine-Milwaukee (KRM) corridor, which is recommended in VISION 2050 as part of a larger commuter rail network. While the current study will incorporate the previous studies and their results, the study will differ in important ways to reflect changes since the previous studies were completed in 2011. It will explore alternative service designs, station locations, organizational structures, and funding mechanisms.

The Commission's role in the current study is to provide project management support through an intergovernmental agreement with the City of Racine. This includes assisting with study scoping; forming and participating on the project team, the advisory Steering Committee, and the advisory Technical Working Group; procuring consultants and overseeing their work; and supporting an anticipated request to enter a federal funding program.

Public and stakeholder engagement will be conducted to obtain input as the study toward a preferred alternative. Stay tuned for announcements on how to get involved. For more information visit www.sewrpc.org/Passenger-Rail-Corridor-Study.

VISION 2050
One Region, Focusing on Our Future

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Press Contact: Eric Lynde
Chief Special Projects Planner
elynde@sewrpc.org | 262.953.3222

Regional Planning Commission Invites Participation in VISION 2050 Update

The Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission invites the Region to a conversation about land use and transportation for an update to VISION 2050. VISION 2050, originally adopted in 2016, makes recommendations to local and State government to

Facebook, LinkedIn, X, Instagram

www.sewrpc.org

Advisory Committees

Advisory committees are formed by the Commission to guide the development of planning efforts. Advisory committees are made up of public officials, agency representatives (including State and Federal transportation and environmental resource agencies), and interested residents. The Commission seeks diversity, especially from population groups that have traditionally been underrepresented, as it considers and solicits committee appointments.

Advisory committee meetings take place throughout each planning process. Plan chapters are carefully reviewed by committees for approval, along with planning data and other relevant information. The committees also review all written comments and agendas may include an opportunity for public comments. For example, meetings of the Commission’s Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning include a public comment period of up to 15 minutes. For meetings open to the public, agendas are posted on the Commission website at least five calendar days prior to the meeting to allow for appropriate review and requests for language or disability-related accommodations. To access current committee rosters, agendas, and meeting materials, visit www.sewrpc.org/advisorycommittees.



Ensuring Environmental Justice in Planning

The Commission continually works to ensure that environmental justice (EJ) occurs in all its efforts, including public participation. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 forms the basis of EJ, stating in part that, “No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation...” As embodied in Executive Order 12898,¹ and further articulated in the U.S.

Department of Transportation’s Environmental Justice Strategy,² the three EJ principles are:

1. To ensure full and fair participation by all potentially affected communities in the transportation decision-making process.
2. To avoid, minimize, or mitigate disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects, including social and economic effects, on people of color and low-income populations.³
3. To prevent the denial of, reduction in, or significant delay in the receipt of benefits by people of color and low-income populations.

The population that may be affected, and the potential benefits and impacts of a plan or program to be considered, help determine the amount and type of public participation efforts.

Environmental Justice Task Force

The Commission established the Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) in 2007 to enhance the consideration and integration of environmental justice throughout the regional planning process. The EJTF is made up of 15 members appointed by the Commission, who meet regularly to gain an understanding of the Commission’s technical work program and to provide input to that program through an EJ lens. Members are appointed as representatives for specific geographies to provide perspectives from across Southeastern Wisconsin and ensure representation from communities with the highest concentration of population groups represented by the EJTF. More information on the EJTF can be found at www.sewrpc.org/ejtf.

The EJTF and Commission staff evaluate impact of the EJTF in terms of process and outcomes. The evaluation includes determining the degree to which EJTF recommendations have been acted upon or implemented in practice by the Commission.

¹ Executive Order 12898, www.transportation.gov/civil-rights/civil-rights-library/executive-order-12898, February 11, 1994.

² U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Environmental Justice Strategy, www.transportation.gov/transportationpolicy/environmental-justice/environmental-justice-strategy, November 15, 2016.

³ U.S. DOT Order 5610.2C defines a minority person (i.e., person of color) as someone who is Black, Hispanic or Latino, Asian American, American Indian and Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander. Low-income means a person whose median household income is at or below the Department of Health and Human Services Poverty Guidelines, www.transportation.gov/sites/dot.gov/files/Final-for-OST-C-210312-003-signed.pdf, May 16, 2021.

Engaging Traditionally Underrepresented Population Groups

The Commission seeks to involve all interested and concerned segments of the public in its planning. The Commission maintains and routinely updates demographic data used to identify the general size and location of people who have been traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, including people of color, low-income populations, and people with disabilities. Recognizing that these groups may face additional challenges accessing employment and other services, transportation-related planning efforts encourage participants to specifically identify their transportation needs.

Some practical applications, described below, identify how certain public participation steps unfold in major planning efforts to engage people of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities:

- Personal letters are sent to lead contacts of groups and organizations at each major stage of planning corresponding to study updates and/or public meetings, highlighting key points of potential interest.
- Various methods of contact, such as in-person interactions, emails, update letters, online surveys/polls, and phone calls, are used to arrange meetings, encourage participation, answer questions, and take any comments.
- The Commission continuously works to strengthen partnerships and other deeper relationships with nine Community Partners (described below) that serve and represent the Region's people of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities.
- Opportunities are explored for more intensive engagement, including co-sponsored events, special meetings involving full memberships—particularly with the Community Partners—and employing small group discussion techniques.
- Concurrent with certain public meetings, the Commission works with its Community Partners to provide engagement opportunities best suited for their constituents, as a way to enhance or maintain engagement with people of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities.
- Primary organizational contacts are identified and cultivated, to provide a basis of regular or ongoing involvements with a subset of very active and broad-based representative groups.

Primary Organizations and Community Partners

The Commission maintains a contact list of organizations that represent the interests of people of color and low-income populations, which is reviewed and updated annually. Communication with these organizations occurs, at a minimum, two times per year to provide updates on Commission projects and request input. During significant phases of a plan or study, Commission staff make personal contacts or offer to hold meetings or presentations with groups, their staff, and/or their leadership. A subset of these organizations—referred to as “Primary Organizations”—have been identified for more frequent and/or more intensive contact.

The Commission also maintains partnerships with nine community organizations (part of the Primary Organizations) specifically targeted at reaching and engaging people of color, low-income individuals, and people with disabilities within the Region. These nine organizations—referred to as “Community Partners”—provide engagement opportunities for their constituents that correspond with, and augment, public meetings held during certain regional planning efforts.

For the current list of Primary Organizations and Community Partners, visit www.sewrpc.org/Community-Engagement.



Title VI and Limited English Proficiency Considerations

The Commission is committed to, and has implemented procedures, policies, and actions to ensure, nondiscrimination in all its programs and activities. This commitment is demonstrated in the Commission’s Title VI Assurances Plan, which is included in the annual Overall Work Program, available at www.sewrpc.org/Budget-and-Funding.

To ensure the involvement of populations considered to be limited English proficient (LEP)—having a limited ability to read, write, speak, or understand English—the Commission follows measures in its Title VI Program LEP plan, which can be accessed on the homepage of the Commission website at www.sewrpc.org. A detailed examination of the LEP population and their needs in Southeastern Wisconsin, based on guidance developed by the U.S. Department of Transportation, is conducted every three years as part of the Title VI Program in accordance with the Federal Transit Administration Circular 4702.1B. Key components of the LEP plan include cultivating partnerships with organizations that serve people who are LEP, placing meeting notifications in minority publications in the Region’s predominant non-English languages, and providing summary materials at various stages of a study in relevant languages. The Commission provides translators at public meetings if Commission staff determine the plan area has significant LEP needs or upon the request of an attendee.

Accommodating People of All Abilities

The Commission is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), including as it relates to community engagement in its planning and programming efforts. Measures are taken to ensure that people with disabilities have opportunities to be involved in these efforts. In addition to all Commission public meetings being held in ADA-compliant venues, the Commission arranges to accommodate requests for disability-related accommodations. As stated earlier in the CEP, all public notices and advertisements of public meetings indicate that people needing disability-related accommodations should contact the Commission offices to allow for arrangements.

SECTION 3: GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The guidelines below provide specific information related to the Commission's commitment to community engagement, focused on fostering meaningful interactions between the Commission and the communities we serve. By following these guidelines, the Commission aims to build trust, promote inclusivity, and create collaborative environments for regional planning efforts.

Public Meetings and Comment Periods

Ongoing public comments are encouraged through a variety of options. Formal comment periods are used at times, with minimums noted below. Public meetings, if conducted, are scheduled during these formal comment periods.

- 45 days for a Community Engagement Plan update
- 30 days for most plan updates, amendments, or adoptions
 - Update or amendment of the regional land use and transportation plan
 - Adoption of the transportation improvement program (TIP)
 - Adoption of a transit development plan
 - Adoption of a jurisdictional highway system plan
 - Other planning or programming efforts if a public meeting is deemed necessary by the Commission or one of its advisory committees
- 14 days for major TIP amendments that do not require a regional land use and transportation plan amendment

If significant changes are made to a draft plan or program following the completion of a public participation process, an additional formal comment period may be provided prior to adoption.

Targeted Format and Frequency

Public meetings and informational materials used with them provide opportunities to obtain community input, as well as to inform the public about the Commission's planning efforts. A variety of techniques may be used to provide information, including summary handouts, visual displays, survey/polling, interactive small group discussions, and availability of Commission staff to answer questions and make presentations. In addition, all public meetings, whether virtual or in person, include the opportunity to provide comments to Commission staff.

Regional Land Use and Transportation Plan Updates

About every 10 years, the Commission prepares a major update to the Region's land use and transportation plan, guided by the Commission's Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning. During this process, multiple rounds of public meetings are held in person and/or virtually. At least one round is held early in the process and one round seeking input on plan alternatives and/or a draft plan is held later. Typically, at least one meeting is held in each county during each round. Minor updates to the plan occur about every four years to keep the plan current and meet federal requirements and include at least one round of public meetings (may be accomplished through a virtual meeting(s) targeted to all seven counties). During both major and minor updates, a 30-day public comment period coincides with the last round of public meetings, although comments are welcome throughout the planning process. Comments are considered by the committees prior to approving a plan update and by the Commission prior to adoption. In addition, the plan is made available for review and comment during at least one public meeting every year.

Other Major Plans and Studies

The Commission prepares and updates a number of regional plans or studies that may inform the regional land use and transportation plan. Staff also prepare numerous sub-regional plans and studies working with counties, communities, and other regional stakeholders. Public meetings and comment periods may be held to obtain input from residents impacted by these plans or studies, depending on the effort and the interest of the partners involved in each effort. Typically, one round of public meetings is held for new or updated regional plans and studies (may be accomplished through a virtual meeting(s) targeted to all seven counties), with additional meetings held as determined by the Commission or the advisory committee guiding the effort.

Transportation Improvement Program

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is a listing of federally funded transportation projects proposed to be carried out by State and local governments over the next four years. During the preparation of a new TIP, which typically occurs every two years, a 30-day comment period and at least one public meeting occur to obtain input on the draft TIP. Public comments received on the draft TIP are presented to the Committees on Transportation System Programming when considering approval of a final TIP and are considered by the Commission prior to adoption. Responses to public comments are provided in the final TIP, along with public meeting attendance records.

Periodically, amendments to the TIP are necessary and an opportunity for public review and comment is provided before these changes are incorporated into the TIP. The criteria used to determine the type of change and level of advisory committee and community engagement are described in the TIP. Major amendments that do not require a regional land use and transportation plan amendment have a comment period of at least 14 days. Notice of the comment period for these amendments is provided through the Commission website. Information on proposed minor amendments that do not require a comment period are provided on the Commission website while the amendments are being considered by the appropriate advisory committee(s) and Commission for approval. All administrative modifications and approved amendments are also provided on the Commission website.

Broad Notification

- Paid advertisements may be placed by the Commission in newspapers appropriate for the study area and meeting locations, published at least 10 calendar days prior to the first meeting announced.
- Newspapers serving communities of color and low-income populations may be used for paid ads, with translations into non-English languages as appropriate, notably Spanish.
- Press releases announcing public meetings may be distributed for an area appropriate for each planning effort, and a media list is maintained for this purpose.
- Development and distribution of summary materials via mail and email may be used for notification of public meetings.
- Website updates are used to make meeting notifications and associated materials quickly and readily available.

Convenient Scheduling

For major regional land use and transportation plan updates that involve multiple series of public meetings, the Regional Planning Commission considers the following guidelines:

- Hold at least one meeting per county during each meeting series, all at accessible locations substantially complying with ADA requirements.
- Look for convenient central city locations for meetings held in Kenosha, Milwaukee, Racine, and Waukesha Counties.
- Work with Community Partners during a comment period to engage their members through methods that garner the largest response, whether that be an in-person meeting, virtual meeting, online poll/survey, or another engagement option available to them.
- Select meeting sites with consideration to public transit availability, notably in urban areas.
- Make arrangements for Limited English proficiency in accordance with the LEP Plan.
- Hold meetings at times of day that allow for greater participation.

Outreach and Presentations/Briefings

Presentations or briefings are given throughout planning efforts. Even though this type of outreach is typically offered to governmental units and organizations that represent traditionally underrepresented populations, any group may request a presentation or briefing. The Commission both welcomes and encourages these requests. Any comments received are directed into the planning process and given equal weight to those collected through public meetings.

In addition to consistent community contact and the EJTF, the Commission continues to seek engagement opportunities, including the practices listed below.

- Contact community groups in affected/concerned areas with an offer to provide briefings and presentations, either held specially or during regularly scheduled meetings.
- Use non-technical language, to the extent possible, and offer to work with organization representatives to develop materials or presentation styles that best meet community needs.
- Approach people of color, low-income residents, and people with disabilities both early in each study, and later as alternatives have been developed and evaluated. Meetings, including comment sessions, are conducted any time there is interest from a group.
- Continually add groups and organizations to contact lists and renew offers to meet at a mutually convenient location in an attempt to broaden group participation.
- Use other means to obtain public participation, for example, interactive activities, focus groups, small group techniques, visioning or brainstorming, and non-traditional meeting places and events such as expos, festivals, or social media sites

Incorporation of Public Input

The results of public participation are documented and considered by the Commission and its advisory committees guiding planning efforts prior to any final recommendations.

- The input received during each public participation process is documented, provided to the Commission and the advisory committee, published on the Commission website, and made available at the Commission offices.
- Individual comments, whether provided online, orally, in writing, or another type of engagement method, are published.
- Either a full account or a summary of public comments is contained in the primary plan or program document being produced.
- Responses to public comments are also documented, addressing each issue raised, and are included in the primary document or a separate document.
- If a plan or program undergoes significant changes that were not previously available for public review and comment, the Commission or the applicable advisory committee may call for additional public notification and a formal comment period.

Document Availability and Notification

- All draft plans are made available for public review on the Commission website or by appointment at the Commission offices. Documents, including published plans, are also made available for public review on the Commission website or may be reviewed by appointment at the Commission offices.
- The Commission maintains a contact list of approximately 3,000 recipients, including governments, individuals, agencies, groups, and organizations that have expressed interest in receiving information.
- Summary materials, such as newsletters, fact sheets, brochures, and eblasts, are distributed during each major planning effort to provide updates, announce public meetings, and describe planning content.
- Summary material may be emailed to interested parties, used as handouts at public meetings or other events, or mailed with personal letters to contacts of groups representing communities of color and low-income populations.

Evaluation of Public Participation

The Commission continually seeks improvements to its public participation practices to ensure a full and open participation process. This includes monitoring, evaluating, and modifying policies and practices in the CEP based on experience, consideration of suggestions, agency requirements, and/or the changing state of the art of public participation. Annually, the criteria outlined in Table 1 are evaluated and made available through the Commission website (www.sewrpc.org/Community-Engagement).

The Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration review the Commission's public involvement process as part of recertification reviews conducted every four years. During recertification, or more frequently if needed, the CEP is reviewed internally. Substantial updates to the CEP follow specified public meeting and comment period guidelines described previously in this section.

At the conclusion of a planning process, Commission staff evaluate the methods of engagement used to guide future planning efforts. This evaluation considers:

- Commission publications, social media, community engagement techniques and conclusions regarding the overall engagement.
- How community engagement shaped the planning effort and the final plan.
- Any written or oral comments provided during the planning effort about public participation.

Transportation-related project evaluations are provided to the Wisconsin Department of Transportation and the U.S. Department of Transportation through the Commission's quarterly Progress Report, in which the Commission reports on the progress of the transportation work program. The Commission also considers the effectiveness of ongoing public participation processes and makes modifications as necessary based on factors such as meeting attendance, attendee demographics, website or social media interactions, and more.

Table 1
Commission Public Participation Process Evaluation Criteria

| Measured Activity Descriptions by Public Participation Goal Objectives | Evaluation Criteria/Mechanisms | Target or Measurement |
|---|---|--|
| Objective 1: Ensure early and continuous public notification about regional planning efforts | | |
| Traditionally underrepresented group updates via personal letter, often with informational materials, and follow-up as appropriate | Letters correspond to all major stages in relevant planning programs, notably transportation, otherwise routine updates are given | At least 2 updates per year to the Primary Organizations |
| Formal notices for public meetings and/or planning program announcements and amendments in multiple methods of engagement (dependent on number of planning programs active and their respective stages of planning) | Publication in newspapers of record for counties as appropriate, minority-owned newspapers, websites, social media, direct mail, and public service announcements | Approximately 10 events or activities noticed per year |
| Website hits and comments to be monitored for trends | Recent Commission website use patterns; monitoring of use changes and comments | Increase hits by 5% |
| Objective 2: Provide meaningful information and obtain input concerning regional planning efforts | | |
| Briefings, presentations, or other meetings with groups representing environmental justice (EJ) interests | In-person or virtual contacts with group directors, boards, clientele, membership, or other parties | Reach at least 100 groups, totaling at least 200 meetings annually (includes Primary Organizations and Community partners) |
| Commission newsletter development and distribution to share information and maintain continuity | Newsletter published and distributed to interested parties and contacts | At least 2 issues per year |
| Summary publications of Commission work, including brochures, project newsletters, executive summaries, annual reports, and other planning material | Publications are developed and used, matching needs | Approximately 3 products per year |
| Objective 3: Include all residents in the regional planning process, particularly those who have traditionally had lower levels of participation | | |
| Scheduled engagement opportunities with representatives from the Primary Organizations identified by the Commission and its Environmental Justice Task Force (EJTF) | Written summary of key concerns and suggestions; follow-up contacts; and involvement in joint activities | At least 1 direct contact with Primary Organizations each year, totaling at least 60 meetings by Commission staff |
| Public meetings held at each major stage of planning efforts | Numbers and locations of meetings are appropriate to the planning study/program; meetings are held in each appropriate county, including central cities | At least 1 meeting or a round of meetings each year, regardless of planning activity (often more) |
| Nontraditional public outreach techniques used in addition to the more traditional efforts noted above | Commission presence is exhibited at festivals, fairs, student outreach, community events, and/or similar opportunities | Approximately 6 times per year |
| EJTF quarterly meetings to update and receive feedback on current Commission projects/plans and provide opportunities to share issues impacting EJ communities with Commission staff | Publish meeting agendas, presentations, minutes, and the EJTF Action Item List on the Commission website | Approximately 4 meetings a year |

Regional Transportation Consultation Process

In addition to actively seeking participation by Southeastern Wisconsin residents, the Commission obtains considerable input during its transportation planning and programming efforts through its consultation process. This process involves coordination with and gathering input from agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities affected by transportation, as well as transit operators for public and other transit services, Indian Tribal governments, and Federal land management agencies. This valuable consultation is conducted primarily through Commission advisory committees, task forces on key issues, work with community partners, and consulting with numerous groups representing people of color and low-income populations.

Advisory Committees

The Commission develops the regional land use transportation plan under the guidance and direction of the Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning. These advisory committees review and approve each step of the planning process and are responsible for proposing a recommended plan to the Commission after careful study and evaluation. The advisory committee structure is intended to promote intergovernmental and interagency coordination and to provide direct liaisons between the Commission's planning effort and the local and State governments responsible for implementing the plan's recommendations. The development of the regional land use and transportation plan also includes consultation with each of the seven jurisdictional highway planning advisory committees (one for each county). These advisory committees are involved throughout the planning process, including during development of alternative plans and the preliminary and final recommended plans.

Together, the Advisory Committees on Regional Land Use and Transportation Planning and the jurisdictional highway planning advisory committees include the units of government, agencies, and officials in Southeastern Wisconsin responsible for land use planning and growth, economic development, environmental protection, airports, ports, freight movement, and transit operations (both public and specialized service for seniors and people with disabilities).

The TIP, which includes projects consistent with the regional plan to be implemented over the immediate four-year period, is guided by five committees—one for each of the Region's five MPO areas. These committees include units of government, agencies, and officials responsible for land use planning and growth, economic development, environmental protection, airports, ports, and transit operators (both public and specialized services).

More information on these committees, including the current membership, can be found at www.sewrpc.org/advisorycommittees.

Consultation with Traditionally Underrepresented Population Groups

The Commission conducts several additional consultation efforts while preparing the regional land use and transportation plan. As described previously in the CEP, the Commission has several ways of engaging traditionally underrepresented population groups, including people of color, low-income populations, and people with disabilities. During the regional land use and transportation planning process, Commission

staff regularly engages its Primary Organizations and Community Partners, specifically encouraging participants to identify their transportation needs.

Consultation with Issue-Specific Task Forces

Another consultant effort involves convening a series of task forces to examine specific land use and transportation issues during the process to prepare the regional land use and transportation plan. Consultation occurs throughout the process and includes meetings and other direct communications with task force members. These task forces include the EJTF and others focused on issues such as human services transportation needs, non-motorized transportation (e.g., bicycle and pedestrian facilities), freight movement, public transit, land use, natural resources, transportation needs of various stakeholders, transportation systems management, and women's land use and transportation issues. Descriptions of these task forces are below.

- **Freight Movement:** This task force's intent is to identify freight transportation problems and needs in the Region and potential improvements for consideration in the regional plan. The task force includes air, rail, and highway freight movement interests. These groups and organizations include the Wisconsin Department of Transportation (WisDOT), Port Milwaukee, Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport, freight logistics and parcel express companies, bulk freight transportation interests, railroads, trucking companies, freight transportation associations, and major industries.
- **Human Services Transportation Needs:** The object of this task force is to consider the transportation needs of seniors, particularly related to addressing challenges associated with seniors being able to age in place, as well as consider ways to meet the transportation needs of people with disabilities independently. Through this task force, the Commission consults with representatives of governmental agencies and nonprofit organizations that receive federal assistance to provide non-emergency transportation services from a source other than the U.S. Department of Transportation. The Commission also consults with these representatives to conduct other transportation planning activities, such as preparing coordinated public transit-human services transportation plans for each of the seven counties in the Region.
- **Land Use:** The purpose of consulting with this task force is to identify and consider issues related to land use development, redevelopment, and open space preservation. As part of land use planning activities, such as preparing the regional land use and transportation plan, the Commission consults with representatives of governmental agencies such as the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR); nonprofit organizations such as land trusts and conservancies, farm bureaus, and builder and realtor associations; and the University of Wisconsin-Extension.
- **Non-Motorized Transportation:** The intent of this task force is to identify bicycle and pedestrian problems and needs in the Region and potential improvements for consideration in the regional plan. The task force includes representatives from local governments, WDNR, WisDOT, nonprofit organizations and university researchers interested in improving bicycle and pedestrian travel in the Region, and bicycle manufacturers and retailers.

- **Natural Resource Agencies:** This task force aims to link regional transportation planning with the National Environmental Policy Act and project preliminary engineering. Through this linkage, there is an improved understanding of the data and alternatives considered, recommendations made through the regional transportation planning process, and an enhanced consideration and evaluation of the environmental impacts of regional plan alternatives. The task force includes representatives from: WDNR; WisDOT; Wisconsin Historical Society; Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection; U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway and Transit Administrations; U.S. Coast Guard; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service; U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service; U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; U.S. Environmental Protection Agency; and Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council.
- **Public Transit:** The objective of this task force is to identify existing public transit problems and needs, and potential public transit improvements for consideration in the regional plan. The task force includes representatives of the Region’s public transit service operators, local governments, WisDOT, nonprofit organizations interested in improving public transit service in the Region, and private sector firms involved with planning public transit improvements. Outside the task force setting, the Commission also consults directly with the public transit operators.
- **Transportation Needs of Business, Industry, Workforce Development, and Higher Education:** This group is consulted to identify the transportation needs of business, industry, workforce development, and higher education. The consulted business and industry groups include business alliances, economic development corporations, chambers of commerce, the Greater Milwaukee Committee, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Association of Commerce, the Milwaukee 7 Regional Economic Development Council, and the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation. Workforce development and higher education groups that are consulted include workforce development/investment boards and major technical colleges and universities.
- **Transportation Systems Management:** This task force involves consulting with transportation system operations professionals to identify existing transportation systems operations actions and systems, and to identify alternative operations actions and systems to be considered for inclusion in the regional plan. This group includes highway commissioners and directors of public works from the Region’s seven counties; city engineers and directors of public works from selected representative municipalities; and WisDOT engineering and traffic operations staff, including WisDOT’s Bureau of Traffic Operations Director.
- **Women’s Land Use and Transportation Issues:** This task force identifies land use and transportation issues for women and families in the Region, such as access to jobs, affordable housing, social services, and safety and security concerns. The task force primarily includes representatives from nonprofit organizations such as Habitat for Humanity, Interfaith Caregivers, Sojourner Family Peace Center, United Way, Women’s Resource Center, and YWCA.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Your participation is valued! For more information, to provide comments, to request a meeting, or to be added to the Commission's mail/email distribution list, please contact us:

Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission

Stephanie Hacker, AICP, LEED AP, Executive Director

Benjamin McKay, AICP, Deputy Director

Christopher Hiebert, PE, MPO Director

Nakeisha Payne, Chief Community Engagement Specialist

W239 N1812 Rockwood Drive

P.O. Box 1607

Waukesha, WI 53187-1607

Global Water Center

247 W. Freshwater Way

Milwaukee, WI 53204

www.sewrpc.org | (262) 547-6721

