

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT



THE OCARTS PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

Essential to the transportation planning process, public participation ensures that Central Oklahoma citizens, community leaders, and transportation stakeholders will help shape the region's transportation future from the policy to the project-specific level. Much of ACOG's plan development work occurs within the Metropolitan Planning Organization's (MPO) transportation committee meetings, but it is the public's reaction and input to that work that allows the long-range planning process to move forward.

Public participation is an opportunity for citizens to help define the goals upon which the region's transportation policies and investments will be based, as well as to make more specific recommendations. Therefore, public participation needs to begin early, continue throughout the plan development process, and ensure timely access to key decisions in order to be meaningful. To accomplish this, the MPO updated the OCARTS Public Participation Plan in 2014. This plan described the public outreach opportunities envisioned for the long-range plan, general timeframes and milestones, and the various stakeholders and resource agencies that should be involved.



In order to help the public easily and quickly identify the efforts and products of the long-range plan update, the MPO updated the logo used for the 2035 Oklahoma City Area Regional Transportation Study (OCARTS) Plan, formally known as Encompass 2035. The original logo featured a compass. This visual metaphor of a directional instrument was continued in the logo redesign for Encompass 2040. The "encompass" brand is designed to "include comprehensively"—the primary purpose of the MPO's public outreach and long-range planning efforts. The plan web page is located on the ACOG website. (<http://www.acogok.org/transportation-planning/encompass-2040/>) During the plan development process, this web page was used as a communications portal to distribute plan information and notifications of public meetings and public availability sessions.

Today, it provides Encompass 2040 background information and products—the Encompass 2040 Plan Summary and Plan Report—as well as more detailed reports documenting individual tasks associated with the plan.

ENCOMPASS 2040 STAKEHOLDERS

Central Oklahoma's transportation stakeholders consist of four general categories—elected officials from OCARTS cities and towns, local citizens, transportation interests, and advocacy organizations. Citizen stakeholders include individuals of all ages, incomes and backgrounds who live and work within Central Oklahoma, as well as organizations that represent the interests of specific citizen groups, such as neighborhood associations, churches, minorities, persons with disabilities and others. Transportation interest stakeholders include:

- Bicycle coalitions
- Walking groups
- Transit advocacy groups
- Passenger rail advocacy groups
- Transit providers
- Representatives of public transportation employees
- Highway Users Federation
- Oklahoma Turnpike Authority
- Oklahoma Trucking Association
- Oklahoma Railroad Association
- Freight shippers
- Providers of freight transportation services
- State and local emergency service providers
- Federal Highway Administration
- Federal Transit Administration
- Federal Aviation Administration

Although many of the stakeholders reflected above represent advocacy organizations for a particular population group or transportation interest, additional advocates are also important participants in the transportation planning process, including:

- Major employers
- Environmental groups
- Chambers of commerce
- Social services agencies
- Developers

As reflected in Figure 1.3 of Chapter 1, the region’s transit providers, the Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT), and ACOG members are the MPO’s transportation planning partners. Assistance and data is also provided by additional local, state, tribal and federal agencies responsible for land use, transportation planning, natural resources and other environmental concerns. The collaboration and data provided by these agencies are described in Chapter 12 of this report.

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GETTING THE WORD OUT

Public involvement opportunities are publicized through numerous traditional and social media channels. This includes news releases to print, radio and TV, and the ACOG newsletter, which boasts an email distribution list of 6,000. In addition, social media channels include the ACOG website, acogok.org; Facebook; LinkedIn and Twitter.

All the methods referenced above were used to announce the Encompass 2040 plan development public participation activities described in the following paragraphs.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES

TRANSPORTATION SURVEY

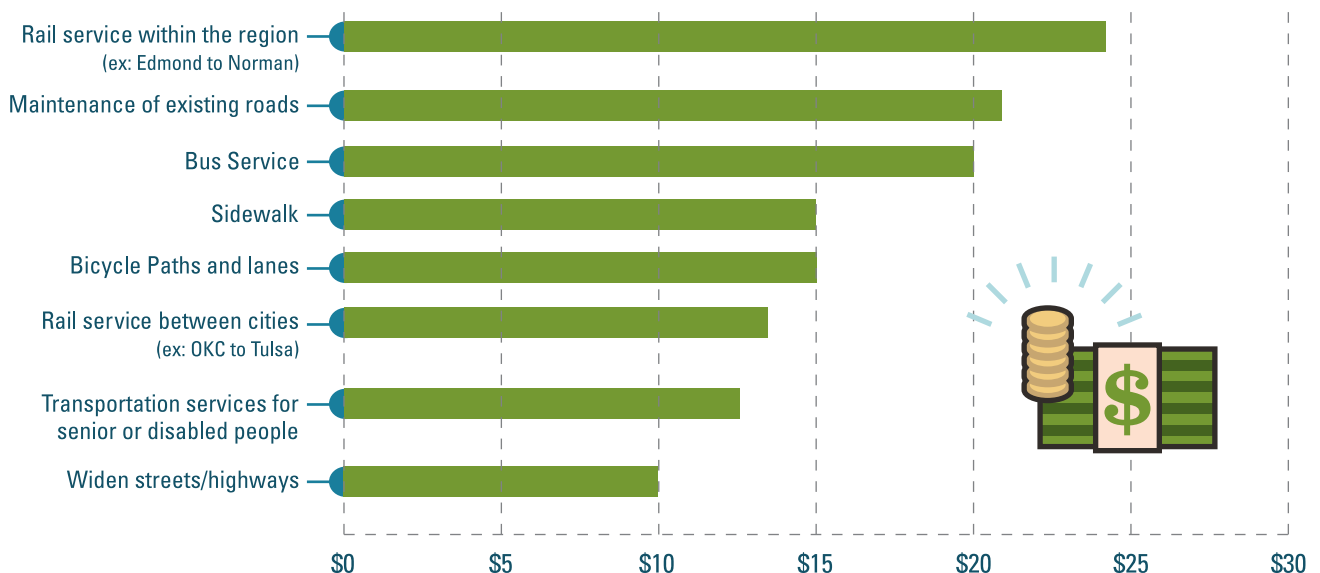
As part of the public engagement process for the long-range, metropolitan transportation plan, ACOG launched a web-based survey in August 2014. In total, 470 responses were received. Although it was not a scientific survey, the responses provided planners with insight into the public’s needs and desires concerning their transportation and development priorities, interest in alternative transportation modes, and the most acceptable means of financing transportation improvements.

According to the survey results, 74 percent of the respondents believed that Central Oklahoma is moving in the right direction. When asked what improvements to the transportation system should be the top priority, 69 percent stated that it should be easier to take transit. The survey also focused on development patterns within the region, a first for Central Oklahoma’s metropolitan transportation plans. When asked what the focus for future development should be, 76 percent said that “revitalizing the region’s downtowns, commercial districts, and neighborhoods with new bus and rail connections” was the most important.

ACOG planners and MPO transportation committee members used the survey results to draft the goals and strategies that would guide development of the long-range plan. See Figure 5.1.

FIGURE 5.1: SURVEY QUESTION RESULTS

Q8: You have a total of \$100 to spend on transportation in Central Oklahoma. How would you divide that \$100?



PUBLIC AVAILABILITY SESSIONS

Although the MPO staff had been engaged for several years in updating the region’s land use, population, employment, and other socioeconomic foundation for the long-range plan update, the plan process was formally introduced to the public through a series of public meetings and public availability sessions.

In the spirit of true public participation, ACOG has created a broad calendar of events to accommodate various publics and ensure ample opportunity for public comment. Public meetings and/or public availability sessions were planned from September 16 - October 7, 2016, and included outreach to Edmond, Norman, west Oklahoma City and downtown Oklahoma City as well as the Hispanic, Vietnamese, and African American communities. Availability Sessions featured:

- Visits with ACOG’s Transportation & Planning Services Division Staff
- Informal Question and Answer Sessions
- Copies of the Encompass 2040 Plan
- Maps of Proposed Transportation Projects

PUBLIC MEETINGS

In addition, two public meetings were held as well as a virtual public meeting. The traditional public meetings featured a briefing from the ACOG Executive Director, copies of the Encompass 2040 plan, presentation maps, and a formal question and answer session with the Executive Director and members of ACOG’s Transportation & Planning Services Division.

CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

ACOG utilized a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC) to assist with the review of plan data, assumptions, and products as they were developed, and to provide a non-technical perspective to the long-range planning process. The Encompass 2040 CAC consisted of voting members who represent various citizen, neighborhood, business, minority, modal, environmental, and social service interests throughout the region, as well as non-voting members from federal, state, and local government agencies who serve as technical assistance/resource support to the committee. The CAC’s recommendations were provided directly to the Intermodal Transportation Policy Committee (ITPC), and the Committee continues to meet, as needed, to review requests to amend Encompass 2040 or to provide input into other transportation studies affecting Central Oklahoma.

ENCOMPASS 2040 DRAFT PLAN SUMMARY

In an effort to raise public awareness about Encompass 2040, ACOG engaged the services of a graphic designer who created original illustrations of the Central Oklahoma community. Artwork included many local landmarks and icons including historic sites in the Vietnamese and African American communities. This was done to attract more local interest and ownership in the plan. The draft plan summary was prepared by MPO staff and made available for public review and comment prior to and during the public meetings. It was announced in a news release and posted on ACOG’s website in order to present the recommended plan to the public prior to final action by the MPO policy board. It included an overview of the long-range plan development process, adopted goals and objectives, policy and project-specific recommendations proposed for adoption in the final plan, and financial strategy to ensure that the plan would be affordable.